

# European partners reaffirm support for Laos' development efforts



Dr Kikeo Chanthaboury speaks at a consultation meeting on Monday. --Photos EU



European Union Ambassador to Laos Ms Ina Marčiulionytė

## Times Reporters

European partners have expressed their commitment to further support Laos' development efforts to enable graduation from Least Developed Country status.

The group of European partners, which is composed of the EU, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Luxembourg and Switzerland, held a consultation event with the government on Monday to discuss priority areas of intervention over the next five years in support of the 9th National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSED).

The meeting was co-chaired by Deputy Minister of Planning and Investment Dr Kikeo Chanthaboury and European Union Ambassador to Laos Ms Ina Marčiulionytė and was attended by European ambassadors, European

partners and representatives of the Lao government's line ministries.

"We want to strengthen our partnership in support of green and inclusive growth, while promoting trade and investment, and consolidating good governance," Ambassador Marčiulionytė said.

"There is a renewed policy drive behind this new joint programming process, which is based on strategic priorities and interests for EU's external action worldwide, within the framework of the Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals," she added.

On that basis, the European partners agreed to focus on six priority cooperation sectors in 2021-2025: agriculture and rural development; natural resources and environment; private sector development;

trade and tourism; education, including technical vocational education and training; health; and good governance.

Their objectives, in each of the sectors, were discussed with government representatives, who appreciated the alignment to the 9th NSED priorities and advocated to address the numerous long-term consequences of the Covid-19 crisis.

On behalf of the Lao government, Deputy Minister Dr Chanthaboury appreciated the proposed focus of European partners on supporting green growth in Laos, while synchronising the Joint Programming cycle with the Lao government's NSED cycle.

"This is a very good indication of our common efforts to align our priorities, and to deliver on our commitment for the partnership for effective development cooperation as stated in the Vientiane Declaration," he said.

The European group remains a strong and faithful group of development partners. The group reported having awarded grants of up to 680 million Euro (7.7 trillion kip) in support of development efforts over the past seven years, 512 million Euro (5.5 trillion kip) of which was disbursed during the course of the 8th NSED cycle from 2016-2020.

## Vientiane police carry out truck safety checks

### Phomphong Laoin

Many road accidents involve heavy trucks travelling on main roads in the capital, with drivers reportedly ignoring the traffic regulations, so police are working to improve the situation.

Director of the Vientiane Traffic Police Department, Lieutenant Colonel Vilaphong Saneha, told *Vientiane Times* that trucks have been involved in accidents on Thadeua Road, Road No. 11, Road No. 10 and the 450 Road.

Many truck drivers show blatant disregard for the traffic rules and engage in dangerous behaviour, he said.

On Wednesday, police set up a checkpoint to check the condition of trucks carrying soil along the 450 Road, where most accidents have been recorded.

This fast road links with other main roads in the capital, notably Road No. 13 South and Thadeua Road, which leads to the Thai border. Trucks also frequently use this road to access economic zones in Vientiane.

At the beginning of this month, five people were injured when an SUV was involved in a collision with a 10-wheel truck on the 450 Road at the Xoknoy traffic lights in Xaysettha district.

Fortunately, no one died but the SUV was badly damaged.

Another accident occurred on Road No. 10 in Xaythany district, when a 10-wheel truck carrying soil hit a motorbike and killed the two young women riding the bike.

Road accidents continue to kill and maim people across the country, with Vientiane recording the highest number of incidents. In January, 106 people were killed in 713 road accidents, causing 11 billion kip worth of damage to vehicles and other property.

These accidents resulted in 1,076 people being injured and 1,286 vehicles being damaged.



Police stop trucks at a safety checkpoint on the 450 Road in Vientiane. --Photo Pathedlao



Candidates running for seats in parliament meet voters in Oudomxay province. --Photo Oudomxay News

## Election committee pledges smooth voting process on Sunday

### Somsack Pongkhao

Mobile units and prior voting can be organised to ensure that all ballot papers reach polling stations across the country on Sunday, according to the National Election Committee (NEC).

In some areas it takes hours or days to reach polling stations as people must go on foot, so prior voting is possible but must be approved by the district election committee.

Mobile units will be arranged for people who cannot get to polling stations, especially older people, NEC Spokesperson Dr Somphou Duangsavanh told *Vientiane Times* on Wednesday.

"All polling stations will open at 7am and close at 5pm, after which those in charge of voting must report to the district election committee," he said.

More than 7,200 polling stations are being set up across the country and voting cards and ballot boxes have been produced and prepared.

Dr Somphou said the

results of the election of members of the National Assembly (9th legislature) and Provincial/Capital People's Councils (2nd legislature) will not be known on the same day (February 21).

"I think the results will be revealed before the end of this month," he said, adding that it would take days to finalise the whole process before the NEC announces the names of NA and PPC members.

The National Election Committee is monitoring the progress made by all provinces as they prepare for the election as well as challenges that need to be urgently addressed.

Election committees at all levels are encouraging all eligible voters to go to polling stations and are working to ensure that the voting process on Sunday takes place amid tight security, with no altered ballots.

Campaigning for seats in the national and provincial legislative bodies is intensifying, with candidates meeting voters and explaining

the importance of the election.

In Luang Prabang province, candidates met voters in several villages in Nambak and Pak-Ou districts from February 13-16 and urged them to vote.

In Bokeo province, voters met with candidates in Paktha district on Tuesday and expressed their eagerness to exercise their right to elect the most qualified candidates to represent their interests.

Voters will elect 6 out of 9 candidates as National Assembly members representing Bokeo and 21 out of 31 candidates as Provincial People's Council members.

In Phongsaly province, candidates met with voters in Bounneua district, pledging that if elected they will truly serve people's interests.

In Oudomxay province, district and provincial election committees are informing villagers about the role of the legislative bodies and how they can help to push for significant changes in national development.

## Micro-businesses dominate... FROM PAGE 1

capital Vientiane.

The survey indicates that microbusinesses represent the smallest percentage in terms of access to finance from banks, even though they constitute the largest number of all types of enterprise.

Medium-sized enterprises were shown to have the most bank loans with 29.7 percent reporting a loan. This was followed by large and small enterprises accounting for 27 and 24.6 percent respectively. Access to loans by microbusiness represented just 8.7 percent of the total.

Wholesale and retail businesses make up the largest percentage of businesses registered in Laos, followed by car and motorbike repair shops with a combined figure of 61.2 percent. Processing plants account for 14.7 percent, while hospitality businesses constitute 10.6 percent.

According to the survey, these enterprises employ 490,373 workers, of whom females comprise 50.1 percent. Some 90.6 percent of all enterprises employ just 1-5 workers each.

The total registered

capital of all enterprises was recorded at 649,000 billion kip. In 2018, these enterprises generated a combined income of 107,584 billion kip.

Head of the Lao Statistics Bureau, Mrs Phonsavath Souksavath, said she was confident that the survey would be useful and a good reference for policymakers, researchers, students and others during the course of their work.

The first economic census was conducted in 2006, the second in 2013, and the latest in 2019-2020.



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