

## Students deepen insight into gender-related issues



Students browse items on sale during an event to discuss the elimination of violence against women and girls, held at the National University of Laos on Friday.

### Sangkomsay Bubphanouvong

Students at the National University of Laos (NUOL) on Friday engaged in discussions on participation in development and access to social services by men, women, people with disabilities, and people of sexual and gender diversity. The university's Women's Union organised the event for participants to share their experiences and

bolster their understanding of the topic to mark the Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and Girls on November 25. The talks were attended by the Vice President of NUOL, Associate Professor Dr Khamphong Nammavongmixay, Oxfam representative Ms Kathy Richards, and representatives of other organisations. Participants discussed the roles played by men and women and the elimination

of violence against women and girls.

Talks centred on the protection of women and girls, labour, abuse of disabled people, health issues, human trafficking, drug abuse and the sex trade.

Assoc. Prof. Dr Khamphong said the gathering was a good opportunity to share experiences and that it was important for students to have a broader perspective of the roles played by men and women and the roles of people's groups in the country's development and social development.

A group of young performers took to the stage to enact a play called "Time to Care", for which they won a competition held in July. There are more than 20 disabled students taking courses at NUOL.

The university and Oxfam co-organised the awareness-raising programme, which was attended by representatives of several organisations, who also exhibited their goods and services at the event.

## University, partners discourage trade in wildlife products

### Times reporters

Souphanouvong University (SU) in cooperation with the Department of Forest Inspection (DOFI) under the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, and World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) in Laos are continuing to enhance awareness about the importance of saving wildlife.

At a workshop, Chinese investors in Luang Prabang province were made aware of green investments and the importance of not dealing in illegal wildlife products.

A training workshop at SU for tourism students, tour guides, and investment companies was held on December 9, which was supported by WWF, the Wildlife Trade Monitoring Network (TRAFFIC), and the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) in Laos aimed to address the challenges of discouraging trade in illegal wildlife

products. Speaking at the event, the Dean of SU, Mr Vixay Chansavang, said that Lao PDR is a major hub for wildlife trade in Asia. Endangered wildlife such as elephants, rhinos, tigers, pangolins, and bears are sold in markets and malls for Chinese tourists.

Consumer surveys commissioned by TRAFFIC and WWF indicate China's regular overseas travellers are persistent buyers accounting for 58 percent of the buyers, with most intending to buy ivory (GlobeScan, 2018).

Mr Vixay urged tourism students, tour guides, and Chinese companies to not encourage trade in illegal wildlife products. He suggested that this can be done by increasing awareness about the issue and capacity building.

The Deputy Director of (DOFI), Mrs Lormkham Sengchan-Oudom, said tour guides play a crucial role as most potential buyers get in

touch with them. They can play an important role in changing this trend.

Meanwhile, Chinese companies and workers in Laos also run the risk of violating laws and regulations by purchasing illegal wildlife products.

WWF and TRAFFIC are working together to address the challenges by facilitating training and advocacy opportunities for tour guides and Chinese companies and workers in Laos.

The activity will be followed up with the commitment made by tour guides, companies and authorities in Laos together with awareness raising on the knowledge and skills of the risk of tourism, illegal wildlife product consumption linking with the pandemic of COVID 19 as a transmission disease which transmitted from the animals to the human by engaging with the WHO and the Health sector and other agencies in the Lao PDR.



The road linking between the Tanmixay crossroads in Xaythany district and the Sikeuth junction in Naxaithong district, Vientiane, now open for public use following the completion of a major upgrade of this 9.4-km road.

## Upgraded city road paves way for easier traffic flow

### Phomphong Laoin

Driving between the Tanmixay crossroads in Xaythany district and the Sikeuth junction in Naxaithong district, Vientiane, is now much smoother following the completion of a major upgrade of this 9.4-km road.

A ceremony last week saw the completed project handed over by the Chairman of the Tangchaleun Group (the contractor), Mr Hua Sengaloun, to Director of the Vientiane Public Works and Transport Department, Mr Soulivanh Phommahaxay.

The event was attended by Minister of Public Works and Transport Dr Bounchanh Sinthavong, Vientiane Mayor Dr Sinlavong Khouthaythoune, and other guests.

Construction was initially scheduled for completion within two years, with the upgrade set to take place from November 2016-2018 at a cost of US\$45.1 million or about 367 billion kip, which was borne by the contractor. The government will repay this amount to Tangchaleun Group Co., Ltd. over a period of seven years with an interest rate of 3.5 percent per annum.

The project agreement was extended twice when financial difficulties meant work fell behind schedule. It also took longer than expected to remove all of the obstacles that were impeding construction and to install electricity and water connections.

The completed road is 28 metres wide and has six lanes.

The road upgrade was one of the priority projects earmarked to improve infrastructure in the capital.

The improved road will facilitate the passage of heavy trucks travelling between the northern and southern provinces, or to and from the Vientiane Friendship Bridge, to avoid the congested city centre.

The new road will also improve conditions for local vendors and residents.

The road connects Road No. 13 North, 450 Road and Kaysone Phomvihane Road via the National University of Laos.

It is one of the capital's main access routes and carries a large volume of traffic, especially during the rush hour, as it is located close to several schools and the university.

## Govt, Laos-China Railway... FROM PAGE 1

for the growth of industry, logistics, commerce, and local economies.

The targeted areas are the station in Vientiane, a station in Vangvieng district, Vientiane province, a station in Xay district, Oudomxay province, and a station in Luang Prabang province.

As of December 10, work on the tunnel railroad, tunnels, and bridges was about 95 percent complete, while railroad tracks and buildings were 41.3 percent complete, Mr Xiao said.

The 422.4-km railway, which connects Vientiane to the Chinese border, traverses

the provinces of Vientiane, Luang Prabang, Oudomxay and Luang Namtha, passing through 75 tunnels with a combined length of 197.83km, according to the Laos-China Railway Co., Ltd. Construction of the US\$5.986 billion (37.4 billion yuan) railway began in December 2016 and is scheduled to be complete and open for use in December 2021.

The Laos-China railway is a strategic part of China's Belt and Road Initiative and the government's plan to transform Laos from being landlocked to a land linked

within the region.

When it is operational, the railway will cut the cost of transport through northwestern Laos by 30-40 percent compared to transport by road.

The 422.4-kilometre railway runs from the Boten border crossing in northern Laos, bordering China, to Vientiane, with trains running at a maximum speed of 160km per hour.

The government is confident the railway will spur socio-economic development and enable Laos to make greater progress.

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