Thailand plans to sign electricity accord with Laos and Malaysia

BANGKOK (The Nation/ANN) - Thailand is preparing to sign a tripartite electricity-trading agreement with two neighbouring countries at the upcoming Asean Ministers of Energy Meeting.

Energy Ministry permanent secretary Areepong Bhoocha-Oom said the agreement would pave the way for the Laos-Thailand-Malaysia electricity deal, enabling the Asean Power Grid to materialise.

“The agreement will be for the sale and purchase of electricity between Laos and Malaysia, using Thailand’s transmission system. We will be the link for the two neighbours,” he said. “The volume of electricity involved is 100 megawatts.”

The concept of an Asean Power Grid was first floated at an informal Asean summit in late 1997. Areepong said this upcoming agreement could make the grid a reality.

Laos will generate and sell electricity to Malaysia under the agreement. Laos will get paid for electricity while Thailand will get paid for its transmission,” he said. He added that in the future, Malaysia might consider selling to Singapore some of the electricity it acquired from Laos.

He said he hoped that this power-grid integration by Thailand, Malaysia and Laos would encourage other Asean nations to head in the same direction.

He said there was a possibility of Thailand becoming an electricity-transmission hub, because China has invested in many hydroelectric dams in Laos and Cambodia and has

PM directs agro development projects in Vientiane province

Prime Minister Thongloun Sisoulith and other senior government officials yesterday visited Vientiane province as the government aims to encourage more effective livestock breeding and organic vegetable projects in the province.

As part of the government’s effort to alleviate poverty through sustainable rural development, several agricultural and cattle feeding projects are now currently being carried out in the province.

Various agriculture pilot projects are based on the Korean model of Saemaul Undong, a participatory approach to rural community-building introduced in the 1970s.

PM Thongloun examines a newly-finished woven rice basket at Nayang village, Phonhong district, Vientiane province yesterday.

Ministry orders action to address land disputes, unlawful land occupation

The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment has ordered provincial and district line departments to take action to address land disputes, unlawful land occupation and related issues.

The order came as increasing numbers of cases involving land issues have emerged in recent years prompting the government to form a taskforce committee to investigate and address the issues.

Deputy Director General of the Ministry’s Land Administration Department Mr Anothai Chanthalasy told Vientiane Times yesterday that the taskforce committee was required to conclude their works and report their outcomes to the government by October.

It was reported previously that the government has told the committee to inspect land concessions and the transfer of land use rights in various cases after learning these issues had been causal factors in disputed cases emerging in recent years.

The committee will also inspect the implementation of the government’s policy to turn assets into capital, which was required to conclude properly included in relevant capital scheme were not included in relevant socio-economic development plans thus were not approved by the National Assembly.

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Souksakhone Vaenkeo

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CONTINUED PAGE 3
Travel industry professionals share experiences on sustainable tourism

**Times Reporters**

Travel and tourism industry professionals exchanged lessons and experiences to promote competitive, inclusive, and sustainable tourism at the recent 2017 Mekong Tourism Forum (MTF 2017).

Topics discussed at the forum included child protection, heritage preservation, green urban development, women’s empowerment, human resource development, wildlife protection, community-based tourism, youth tourism, sustainable investment, and emerging markets, according to Mekong Tourism Coordinating Office.

The Mekong Tourism Forum 2017 was hosted by the Luang Prabang province and the Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism from June 5-9 in collaboration with the Mekong Tourism Coordinating Office. The theme of the 2017 forum was: ‘Prosper with Purpose’ which has been chosen to reflect the focus of the tourism development activities in the region.

The forum demonstrated that smaller towns without large conference halls can innovate to host world-class events. Luang Prabang’s historic district was transformed into the venue, where delegates joined highly relevant thematic sessions moderated by subject experts from various countries.

“Tourism is a key economic driver in many countries, providing millions of jobs and are increasingly recognized as an effective tool to promote sustainable development,,” Ms Anna Pollock, the UK-based moderator of the forum was Ms Anna Pollock.

In the traditional meeting room on a river cruise boat on the Mekong River, the debate not only promote tourism products away from the traditional meeting room setting.

Delegates joined highly relevant thematic sessions moderated by subject experts from various countries.

This new and innovative approach may open up future opportunities for collaboration among the travel industry in Luang Prabang,” Ms Duanratchada added.

The expo in Chiang Mai, Thailand from June 23-27 was focused on showcasing goods and services from Thailand’s upper northeastern provinces including Chiang Mai, Lamphun, Lampang and Mae Hong Son provinces.

The organisers of Lanna Expo 2017 told local press that the expo this year will not only promote local products, tourism and other related services, but also help to promote businesses in the region to share, exchange and co-promote with each other for future cooperation.

Organisers of an expo focusing on products and services from the northern parts of Thailand held a press conference in Chiang Mai yesterday to promote business cooperation from the region for entrepreneurs in Laos as well as Cambodia, Myanmar and Vietnam (CLMV) countries.

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**Lao and Japanese officials discuss the water supply sector.**

**New water supply operations, maintenance pose national challenge**

**Times Reporters**

**The operation and maintenance of new as well as existing water supply systems still poses a major challenge for the water sector in Laos. In order to achieve the government target of 80 percent of water supply coverage in urban areas in 2020 and ‘water for all’ in the SDGs by 2030, water supply development in small towns was essential.**

This information was stressed during the Project MaWaSU National Dissemination Workshop on Operation and Maintenance in Water Treatment Plants held recently in Luang Prabang province.

The meeting was attended by the Ministry of Public Works and Transport’s Director General of Water Supply Department, JICA experts and representatives from provincial water state enterprises.

During the meeting Lao and Japanese officials heard about ecological purification systems such as rapid sand filtration treatment and membrane filtration treatment which have been found to be suitable for small towns in Laos because the essential equipment can be prepared onsite.

An ecological purification system has been introduced at the Ch램 포하게 완 Staff Management, Administration Department, JICA and the Ministry of Public Works and Transport.

Meanwhile, Director of Water Quality Management Centre of Sattani Prefecture, Japan, Mr Hisasi Fukushima noted that “Operational management is to manage water quantity, water pressure and water quality.”

For efficient operation, Mr Fukushima highlighted that maintenance management is to prevent equipment failure in advance for stable water supply through implementation of daily inspection, regular inspection and regular maintenance,” Mr Fukushima added, who is supporting the establishment of model water treatment plants in Vientiane plus Luang Prabang and Khammuan provinces through the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Partnership Programme.

During the meeting important operational and maintenance issues were discussed.

Lao and Japanese officials heard about ecological purification systems such as rapid sand filtration treatment, cost-effective and safe non-chemical water production methods and other related issues were discussed.

The use of technology in 24 hour operational monitoring to reduce maintenance was suitable for small towns in Laos, the meeting heard.

The meeting is part of the five-year MaWaSU project from August 2012 to August 2017, aiming to strengthen the management capacity of the government in the water supply sector and Water Supply State Enterprises for sustainable and stable water supply now and into the future.

Mr Suthon Wachirat (left) and Mr Puripan Bunngag respond to media questions during the press conference in Vientiane.

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Government and private sector representatives of Laos and Thailand exchanged information on using a geographic information system (GIS) to build a single map for improved natural resources management. Thailand’s geographic information system will benefit natural resources management while saving time and budget resources for investment on information surveys and mapping.

It also benefits communication, sharing and collaboration between government and private sectors, officials in charge informed the meeting held yesterday in Vientiane. Minister of Science and Technology, Prof Dr Booviangkong Vongdara said that the project is organised by Technology and Innovation Department under Ministry of Science and Technology, Thepsymenung Trading Company, companies from Thailand and their development partners.

The purpose is to raise understanding and exchange of technologies, fully development on “one map one community one nation,” to build one systems for closer integration between government and private sectors.

The meeting highlighted the role of GIS to enable everyone to easily discover, analyse and share data from world anywhere and anytime.

The benefits of a single shared map include authoritative data, high-quality mapping, improved visualisations, decision support, analysis and models and rich applications.

It also allows greater sharing and co-ordinating for government operation centres and clarifies administrative boundaries, transportation, hydrology, land parcels, forest boundaries and other topographic features.

Ministry orders action...

Additional, Prime Minister Thongloun Sisoulith said recently that a number of fake documents had been produced claiming usage rights of state lands by various individuals and organisations.

The inspection will also find out if local people’s lands have been occupied unlawfully as well cases of the inappropriate occupation of proximate state lands by members of such communities.

Mr Anothai said Minister of Natural Resources and Environment, Mr Sommad Phanom issued several notices giving guidance on how best to take actions to address these issues. Authorities in charge will carry out a comprehensive inspection into land issues including the inspection of land registrations,” Mr Anothai said.

In his notice issued late last month, Mr Sommad recommended local people facing land disputes approach district offices in charge to seek solutions in line with the relevant laws and regulations.

The minister also called for the district and provincial authorities to collate submissions made by respondents and take appropriate actions to address the particulars of respective cases based on the law.

For those issues which district and provincial departments are unable to address, the officials are called upon to report to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment or higher authorities to seek guidance and solutions.

Those wanting to submit petitions concerning land disputes to the Ministry’s Land Department directly can do so through its reception desk, its petition box or through the ministry’s hotline No 154.

Mr Sommad said that the ministry would work with local concerned authorities to address the submitted issues.

He also told the provincial Natural Resources and Environment departments to report progress made in addressing identified land-related issues to the ministry on a regular basis.

Times Reporters

One map to benefit natural resources management

Thailand plans to sign...

PM directs agro...

Rural Development, is supporting an integrated rural development project, which is linked to the overall initiative and Lao rural development policy.

Prior to departing for Vientiane province, PM Thongloung made a visit to the Saemau Training Centre in Xaythany district, Vientiane to hear about progress of its construction which is now over 90 percent complete.

The centre will aim at enhancing capacities of officials and village leaders on the Saemau Undong approach, and training of farmers through demonstration farms.

The centre was established under the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, with support from the government of the Republic of Korea through KOICA.

Following that, the Prime Minister and other government officials visited the Lao PDR Energy Efficient Data Centre supported by the government of Japan, established under the Ministry of Science and Technology.

Shorty after visiting several sites in Vientiane, PM Thongloung also made his way to Hadsay village in Thoulakhom district, Vientiane province where the Undong initiative is being implemented in Laos by an INGO.

In the village, the project has been helping farmers to grow organic vegetables in a shade house along with infrastructure and environment improvements since 2009.

In addition, PM Thongloung’s government delegation visited a cattle breeding project at Thinyoung village, Vientiane district which is also supported by the government of the Republic of Korea through KOICA.

Furhtermore, a short visit was made to a rattan furniture factory in Viengkhamb district and handicraft groups in Nanyang village, Phomhong district, Vientiane province which aim to promote local businesses and encourage improvements to household incomes.

At Aekvang village in Phomhong district, Vientiane province, a similar project to boost integrated rural development is also being implemented.

On-going activities at this village include improvements to infrastructure, the promotion of a shade house organic vegetable project as well as building a community fresh market.

During his visit the Prime Minister called on local Vientiane province authorities and other parties to ensure farmers’ produce had viable markets as well as ensuring the sustainability of projects so they could continue even after outside assistance had ceased.