

Switzerland supports access to socio-economic data in Laos

Times Reporters

Switzerland will provide US\$4.2 million (around 33.8 billion kip) to improve access to cross-sectoral socio-economic information through the third phase of the Lao DECIDE Info project.

Deputy Minister of Planning and Investment Mr Somchit Inthamith and the Regional Director of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) for the Mekong Region Ms Ruth Huber signed the agreement on Thursday.

It is expected that the support contributed by Switzerland will make a significant contribution to integrated and evidence-based planning and decision making information in Laos.

According to a statement from SDC, the project will be implemented with the technical support of the Centre of Development and Environment (CDE) at the University of Bern.

The third phase of the project will improve already existing instruments to generate information for policy makers to use when making decisions on fundamental issues related to the development of the country.

To ensure the institutionalisation and sustainability of the project, the third phase of Lao DECIDE info is geared towards the realisation of a Government



Mr Somchit Inthamith (right) shakes hands with Ms Ruth Huber after the signing ceremony.

owned and managed "One-stop access point" to development information and analytical resources.

"This project addresses a new challenge by creating a hub or platform with five different ministries, under the lead and coordination of the Ministry of Planning and Investment.

Through the involvement of different ministries this third phase will have an even stronger focus on collaboration and data-sharing between different sectors, on cross-sector integration of data and on cross-sector analysis", said Ms Huber.

The project will play a critical role in enhancing the quality of key information related to the socio-economic situation in Laos, which will contribute to the monitoring of the development path and the national goal of graduating from least developed country status.

"The government of Switzerland has been supporting the Lao DECIDE Info Project since 2007 and agreed to continue its support to the third phase of the Lao DECIDE Info project. An important aim of this phase is to significantly broaden the institutional partnership

among key government partners, and through that substantially widen the thematic breadth of the cross-sectoral integrated database for development analysis and planning," Mr Somchit said.

Representatives from the Ministry of Planning and Investment, the Lao Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Ministry of Home Affairs and the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications were on hand to witness the signing ceremony.

The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation

is Switzerland's public agency for social and economic development in developing nations. In the Mekong Region, SDC's focus countries are Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia and Myanmar.

Active in Laos since 2006, SDC manages and implements Swiss support in response to the needs of the marginalised rural poor and contributes to the country's efforts to graduate from the group of Least Developed Countries by 2020. The 2013-2017 budget for development and cooperation in Laos is 86.5 million Swiss Francs.

First civil servant exam takes place today

Phetsamone Chandala

The first of the annual civil servant exams officially takes place today nationwide, with a total of 32,235 applicants.

Minister of Home Affairs Mr Xaysy Santivong made an announcement last Thursday at a press conference detailing the exam process.

Those 32,235 applicants consist of 29,534 students with higher diplomas, 2,701 students with under higher diplomas and 850 students who graduated from abroad.

This was the second year that the two-exam testing system has been employed in the process of

recruiting state employees, Mr Xaysy said.

Last year, a total of 37,452 applicants sat for the first exam and some 32,500 passed the general knowledge test, a pass rate of almost 87 percent.

Last fiscal year, the government accepted 16,500 new civil servants bringing the total to about 156,000 state employees.

He said the ministry began to open registration and sell study manuals for test preparations at the end of June at the home affairs departments in all the provinces as well as the capital, until July 11 when the ministry closed registration for the exam.



Mr Xaysy Santivong.

The first annual exam on general knowledge will take place together at the ministry and its provincial-level departments.

To become a state official recruits must pass the first exam on general knowledge to receive certificates so they are eligible to take the second exam. The certificate is valid for two years only. The second exam on academic knowledge will be undertaken by the particular organisations at ministries and local level that seek to recruit new civil servants.

However the quota on the numbers of civil servants to be accepted for next fiscal year, which starts in October, has not been officially disclosed, according to the ministry.

Mr Xaysy said in the past some state organisations at

central and local levels recruited new civil servants by themselves and job opportunities were not normally made public, so there were complaints from members of the public about the old recruitment practices.

Therefore, the current testing system aims to ensure that recruitment for job opportunities is a fair and transparent process at state organisations, he added.

The result of exams will be a significant foundation contributing to the recruitment of new quality civil servants and build adequate state officials to serve in line with party and government policy effectively, Mr Xaysy said.

Inside

ADB poverty reduction, growth support affirmed
PAGE 2



Global leaders express shock over downed plane
PAGE 4



Buckle up and drive through mesmerising Laos
PAGE 14



Lao Women's Union: 59 years of achievement
PAGE 16

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