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University promotes gender awareness

SOULIVAN VONGMANY

Female staff from the National University of Laos (NUOL) gathered at the university on Tuesday to learn about gender equality in development at a lecture delivered by a World Bank expert to mark the 53rd Lao Women's Union Establishment Day.

The seminar was organised by the university and the World Bank to inform women of their rights as they prepare to celebrate the founding of the Lao Women's Union on July 20.

NUOL Vice President Associate Professor Dr Saykhong Saynasin and World Bank Sector Director of Gender and Development in Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Ms Mayra Buvinic led the meeting, which was attended by about 100 university administrative staff, teachers and students.

Ms Buvinic delivered a lecture titled 'Where do we Stand?' in relation to the progress made in gender equality developments.

The presentation reviewed the progress women have made in various areas of development, government policies on gender, and financial resources needed to upgrade the role of women in every sphere to overcome gender inequalities.



Dr Saykhong Saynasin and Ms Mayra Buvinic address the seminar on gender equality at the National University of Laos.

Ms Buvinic said gender equality was an important aspect of human rights.

She said the subject of her presentation was part of a book the World Bank would publish in the next couple of months.

The information she gave showed progress had been made in improving gender equality in Laos but some challenges remain, especially in the area of literacy. Only 61 percent of women are literate compared to 72 percent of men.

Gender gaps are greater in remote areas and among certain ethnic groups. This is partly the result of limited access to roads, electricity, water, markets, schools and health facilities.

Dr Saykhong said many countries would be unable to alleviate poverty or achieve sustainable development without progress on gender issues.

He said the Lao government had formulated policies to build the capacity of its citizens and was giving women more opportunities.

Dr Saykhong said the promotion of gender equality and development was the responsibility of the top management in all areas of NUOL.

"We have to improve the capacity of women and give them equal treatment with men in all situations," he said.

New printing course to advance industry

PHAISYTHONG CHANDARA

Designing a curriculum for a new vocational printing course was the aim of a meeting held between private and government printing houses and teachers in Vientiane this week.

Drafting teaching plans and industry needs were major elements of the two-day workshop which ends today.

Vocational Education Department Deputy Director General Phouvieng Phouvilay said the workshop aimed to improve training courses to meet industry demands.

The objective is to develop a course that would equip students with the practical skills that companies and factories need from employees.

Mr Phouvieng said staff in the printing industry who lacked proper training slowed down production and delayed the country's development because they could not effectively manage

their work.

"Improving printing and publishing systems is very important in Laos so our country can keep up with world economic growth," he said.

Mr Phouvieng said the three-year course would begin in October 2008 in Vientiane and could be running in other provinces by 2010.

He said the new course was being developed so the Lao printing and publishing sectors could remain competitive in international commercial markets.

"Everybody must learn to improve and develop their company or organisation constantly, in order to succeed in their work," he said.

"The publishers will also learn how to draft teaching plans and organise their work to succeed."

Mr Phouvieng said about 30 trainees from technical schools, development centres and private and state printing houses in Laos would take part

in building the curriculum together.

He said the meeting would advance participants' leadership and management skills.

The workshop was attended by Vocational Education Development Centre Director Soulikhamkone Sisulath and GTZ Human Resource Development Consultant, Mr Peter Pozorski.

The workshop was supported by the Lao German Cooperation and the Lao Printing Association.

Since 1993, GTZ has worked in Laos on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development.

During this time, GTZ has supported its Lao partners in conducting formal and non-formal vocational training, training young forestry personnel, developing health systems, combating drug abuse and consulting on developing a market economy.

Murder suspects arrested in Khammuan

VIENTIANE TIMES

Police have arrested two men after they confessed to the murder of a Vietnamese trader in Khammuan province last month, Khammuan Police Headquarters reported yesterday.

"We arrested two males, Mr Somnuek, 18, and Mr Lamphanh, 17, on June 5. We spent two weeks tracking them down after the murder of a Vietnamese trader in Bualapha district," Khammuan Police Headquarters Chief Lieutenant Colonel Bounkong Thammavongsa said.

He said the two men had confessed they had killed the man to steal 2,800,000 kip from him.

The incident occurred on May 14 on the road between Vangkhone and Langkhang villages. It is believed the trader left his home in Vangkhone village to buy steel in nearby Langkhang village. On the way his motorbike had a problem and he apparently stopped to

repair it. Later that afternoon he was found dead by the roadside.

Provincial police suspected the man had been murdered for his money because the money he had with him was missing.

They launched a manhunt and found the suspects within two weeks.

"We were helped by information we received from the people of both villages. We pieced the evidence together and started to follow up the suspects. Once we had enough evidence we charged them with the man's murder," Lieutenant Colonel Bounkong said.

The two accused men have been sent to the provincial law court, which will pass judgment on the case.

Concerning other crimes in the province, Khammuan Police Headquarters reported that most offences were either bag snatching or amphetamine consumption.

"The Khammuan governor has asked us to get tough in our efforts to protect people from crime, so we are cooperating

with the provincial defence department to crack down on thieves, drug dealers and users, murderers and bag snatchers," Lieutenant Colonel Bounkong said.

In the last two days, the police have arrested seven bag snatchers in central Thakhek district.

"The thieves lived in different villages but worked as a team to snatch bags and valuables from motorcyclists," he said.

The bag snatchers arrested were aged 15 and upwards and were unemployed.

"They confessed they had stolen money this way on many occasions. Most of them are not in school and need money to buy drugs and go out drinking with their friends each day," Lieutenant Colonel Bounkong said.

Police are tracking down suspected thieves after the bag snatchers they arrested gave information about other thieves in the province. They hope to make more arrests soon.

War torn village finds prosperity in weaving



A girl in Phiavat village in Khoun district, Xieng Khuang province, weaves traditional silk textiles. —Photo Sisay

SISAY VILAYSACK

The weaving of traditional textiles is gaining in popularity in a village in Xieng Khuang province that was once devastated by war, and the silk products made here are fast becoming a tourist attraction.

The village of Phiavat in Khoun district now has about 130 families who weave textiles for sale to add to the income they earn from agriculture. The community is 31km south of the provincial capital Phonsavan.

One villager, Mrs Chanpheng Phompanya, said "Nearly every family in our village is producing silk

textiles and many families have at least three looms."

"Two or three people working together can make one item in a day. We sell most of our products to vendors who sell them in the market in Phonsavan. The vendors come to buy them from us directly," she said.

"The weaving we do is not just a means of making money but has turned this village into a showpiece for tourists, both from Laos and overseas. Many visitors who come here buy handmade silk to take home as souvenirs for their friends and themselves. We sell items from prices starting at 150,000 kip."

Khoun district used to be

the main town in Xieng Khuang province many years ago. But the provincial capital moved to Phonsavan in 1974 because there was more room for development and the town was closer to the airport, according to the Provincial Tourism Department.

Khoun was heavily bombed during the Indochina War in the 1960s and 1970s and some of the temples and buildings that were struck have also become tourist attractions.

Last year more than 25,000 tourists visited the province, and local tourism officials believe this number will increase to 40,000 by 2010.



Director General Savankhone Razmouny

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