

Newsletter

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Laos and Vietnam further legislative cooperation



The National Assemblies of Laos and Vietnam have agreed to fortify and develop their traditional friendship, special solidarity and comprehensive cooperation, as a result of bilateral talks between two high-ranking assembly delegations held here in Vientiane Capital in the end of April, when the high-ranking delegation of the Vietnam National Assembly, led by Mr Nguyen Phu Trong, Member of the Political

Bureau of Vietnam Communist Party Central Committee, Chairman of Vietnam National Assembly (Vietnam NA) paid a three-day visit to the Lao PDR, in response to the invitation of Mr Thongsing Thammavong, Member of the Political Bureau of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party Central Committee, President of the Lao National Assembly (Lao NA).

The two national assembly leaders signed a Memorandum of Understanding to boost cooperation between the two legislative bodies in the coming years. Accordingly, the two sides have agreed to exchange visits between national assembly high-ranking, office, committee and technical delegations and various organisations, increase cooperation and exchange information in various assembly activities and organise study tours to exchange lessons and experiences between Offices of the National Assemblies, Laos and Vietnam.

The two National Assemblies have agreed to organise conferences and symposiums on particular themes and appropriate activities with the aim of exchanging lessons in various fields between the two legislative bodies. The host and the guest will coordinate closely at regional and global parliamentary forums and exchange legal documents and other areas of mutual interest.

In the press conference, Lao NA President Thongsing Thammavong highly valued the visit to Laos by the high-ranking delegation of Vietnam NA, saying this visit is a milestone and approval of the growth and expansion of the friendship, special relations and all-round cooperation between Parties, Governments and people of Laos and Vietnam, particularly between the two National Assemblies. The visit was made on the occasion, when the two countries are preparing for commemorating the 30th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between Laos and Vietnam and the 45th anniversary of the establishment of Lao-Vietnamese diplomatic relations.

Vietnam NA Chairman Nguyen Phu Trong confirmed Vietnam NA is ready to provide and transfer its knowledge and expertise to the Lao legislative body. He pledged to do his best to cooperate for tangible results coming from the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). The details of the MoU signed between the two assemblies would be implemented. However, there are many things that needed to be done, particularly educating the younger generation to better understand the special solidarity between Laos and Vietnam. He explained that the special solidarity between Laos and Vietnam started from tradition of assistance to each other. This solidarity, which is difficult to find elsewhere in the world, was established by the beloved late Presidents Kaysone Phomvihane and Ho Chi Minh, and leaders for generations have preserved and increased this tradition.

The two delegations agreed to fortify and develop the traditional friendship, special solidarity and all-round cooperation between Laos and Vietnam, particularly the two National Assemblies.

Apart from the above-mentioned agreement, in the meeting Lao NA President Thongsing welcomed Vietnamese counterpart's visit, which he said will help further strengthen the traditional friendship, special solidarity and comprehensive cooperation between the countries, particularly the two legislative bodies. He informed the Vietnam National Assembly Chairman of the socio-economic development achievements gained by the Lao people in recent years.

In 2006 a GDP growth rate stands at 7.5 percent and 2.7 billion USD in investment capital from more than 40 countries were attracted. Vietnam now ranks second among foreign investors in Laos, said Mr Thongsing. The Lao NA President expressed thanks to Vietnam for supports, which have been extended to Laos.

The Vietnam NA Chairman also informed of the achievements of the socio-economic development, activities of Vietnam NA (11th legislature) and preparation for upcoming National Assembly (12th legislature) election and touched upon regional and international issues of mutual concern.

During the visit to Laos, Vietnam NA Chairman Trong paid a courtesy visit to General Secretary of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party and State President Choummaly Sayasone and met with Mr Samane Vignaket, Politburo Member, in charge of the Party's Ideology, Theory and Cultural Affairs and Bouasone Bouphavanh, Politburo Member, Prime Minister of the Lao PDR and received a courtesy visit from Sinlavong Khoutphaythoun, Governor of Vientiane Capital. He met with representatives from the Vietnamese Embassy and Vietnamese nationals, who live in Laos.

Chairman Trong gave a lecture to some 500 officials and students at the National Institute of Politics and Administration on the significance of socialist construction in Viet Nam and what needed to be done to fulfill this task. Lao NA President Thongsing Thamavong also attended the lecture.

Vietnam NA Chairman Trong and his entourage laid a wreath at the Monument of Unknown Soldiers to pay respect to fallen combatants, who sacrificed their life for salvation of the nation and visited the Kaysone Phomvihane Museum, as well as the late Lao President Souphanouvong museum.

Accompanied by Mrs Viphavanh Phomvihane, spouse of Lao NA Vice President Xaysomphone Phomvihane, Chairman Trong' spouse Mrs Ngo Thi Man and her entourage visited Lao Ekalak Handicraft Centre, Favathana Jewelry Shop and wood processing factory in Vientiane Capital.

Lao NA attends IPU Assembly in Indonesia

A delegation of the National Assembly (NA) of the Lao PDR led by Ms Pany Yathotu, its Vice President joined other members of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) at their 116th Assembly held in Bali, Indonesia from 29 April to 4 May.

Speech of the Lao Delegation

“Women's role in decision making”

By Ms Singkham Khongsavanh, NA member, Vientiane Constituency to the 116th IPU assembly in Bali, Indonesia, 30 April 2007

Thank you Madame Chair,

Good afternoon to honorable delegates.

On behalf of the Lao Delegation, I would like to share some experiences of the women's role in decision making

...The Lao PDR is a small landlocked country with a population of 5.7 million. We have only one party. The Lao PDR is ranked 30th in high female members of parliament. More than 30 years the Lao PDR is highly committed to the promotion of equality between men and women, like other countries do.

As you can see, there are more women involved in politics nowadays. The National Assembly of the Lao PDR (1st Legislature) in 1975, we had only 4 female members, covering only 8.8% of the total member (45).

At present, the sixth legislature, the female parliamentarian number increased to 29, covering 25.2 % of the total member (115). We also have Women's Parliamentarian Caucus, which is considered as machinery for promoting women in decision-making and looking after women's issues in the parliament. We have one female Vice-President of the National Assembly; four female ministers and equivalent ministers; four deputy ministers, several female directors general and district chiefs.

Obviously, in 2006 the National Assembly (sixth legislature) enacted and amended six laws, two of which are Labour Law and Law on Protection of Children's Rights and Interests. During the debate of amendment of the Labour Law, female members proposed to have equal right to get retired at 60 years of age as men. This was a big challenge for us to convince male members to understand what women need. After a long debate, the National Assembly approved that women can get retired at 60 years of age like men, and they also have rights to get retired earlier if they would like to do at 55. As for the Law on Protection of Children's Rights and Interests, more voices were from female members than male ones. It shows that the women's role in the parliament has been improved, approving that our Party and Government policy on promotion of gender equality has been implemented effectively.

I really do hope that gender equality will be continuing implemented effectively in the Lao PDR, as well as in other countries in the world.

Thank you very much Madame Chair.

NA Vice President visits factories in Vientiane

In the middle of April Dr Xaysomphone Phomvihane, Vice President of the National Assembly (NA), Chairman of the NA Foreign Affairs Committee visited Vientiane Electrical Engineering Group and Jiplai Enterprise Co., Ltd in Vientiane Capital to find out insufficiency and weak points, which will be considered in the NA.



Dr Xaysomphone heard reported from the two companies on their business operations and received proposals from business people. Chairman of Jiplai Enterprise Co., Ltd proposed that at present, the company is willing to plant palm trees in Laos because palm oil is very useful. Palm oil

contains a high amount of betacarotene. It is used as cooking oil, to make margarine and is a component of many processed foods. Oil palm is the most productive oil seed in the world. A single hectare of oil palm may yield 5,000 kilograms of crude oil or nearly 6,000 liters of crude according to data from JourneytoForever. Today almost half of Malaysia's cultivated land consists of oil palm, and the country has become the world's largest producer and exporter of palm oil, though Indonesia is quickly gaining ground. If the Lao PDR has potentials for growing such palm trees, this business will contribute to reduce poverty among people.

Dr Xaysomphone promised to propose this idea to the government of the Lao PDR for further consideration of investment in the palm tree plantation.

New Year needs new achievements

The National Assembly (NA)'s leaders (each legislature) make efforts in improving and strengthening the NA. "I regularly contribute to the NA and urge all to participate in the national development, enhance the NA role and get rid of weak points. New year – new achievements!" said Mr Thongsing Thammavong, NA President at the celebration of Lao New Year held by the NA on 12 April in Vientiane Capital.

In the past year the NA gained several achievements, but there are many things to do in order to help the country to be a state of law. The NA successfully organized its first and second ordinary sessions and was able to solve many issues, including law formulation, law amendment, oversight on the socio-economic development and poverty reduction, organization of the first-ever party cell conference of the NA and improvement of facilities of the NA office and constituencies.



Even though there are several achievements, the NA must pay attention to many issues as follows, he said. The laws that were formulated, adopted and amended are still in small number. The campaigns for law publicity, law enforcement and law awareness are not

carried out well. Many laws were promulgated but they are not implemented well and law violation occurs.

Previously, the publicity on the NA role and seminars on NA capacity building were organised but they are not enough, compared with the needs. Law formulation is slow and low quality. Some laws, which were already promulgated not for long time, brought to the NA for amendment. The NA President urged NA members and officials to pay attention to oversee justice in the society, implement their own duties, improve and implement laws and contribute to get rid of social ills.

NA leaders receive foreign guests

H.E. Mr Thongsing Thammavong, President of the National Assembly (NA) received courtesy visit from H.E. Mr Pan Guang Xue, Chinese Ambassador to Laos and H.E. Mr Park Jae Hyum, Ambassador of the Republic of Korea (RoK) to Laos in the beginning of April, in Vientiane capital. Both Chinese and RoK Ambassadors presented the credentials to the Lao President in March.

Mr Thongsing highly valued the new missions of the two new ambassadors in Laos, saying their new tasks further enhance and strengthen the friendly relations and cooperation between Laos and their respective countries. The new ambassadors informed of their missions and pledged to do their utmost to carrying out strengthening the friendships and cooperation between Laos and their respective countries.

In the end of April NA President Thongsing also received a courtesy visit from Mr Nguyen Van Hien, President of Vietnamese People's Supreme Court and his entourage, who paid a working visit to the Lao PDR on 23-28 April.

The guest informed of result of the meeting with the delegation of Lao Supreme People's Court, saying the Supreme People's Court of Vietnam is studying the feasibility of providing professional development to its Lao counterpart.

NA President Thongsing also received here in the middle of April a courtesy visit from Mr Le Thanh Hai, Member of the Vietnam Communist Party Central Committee, Secretary of the Ho Chi Minh City Party cell organisation and his entourage.

Dr Xaysomphone Phomvihane, NA Vice President, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee recently received here in Vientiane Capital a courtesy visit from Mr Cai Changsong, honorary Chairman of Hainan People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries, deputy secretary of the Hainan Provincial Party Committee. NA Vice President also received a courtesy visit from H.E. Mr Park Jae Hyum, Ambassador of the Republic of Korea (RoK) to Laos.



• Lao-Chinese relations and cooperation Being closely linked by common mountains and rivers, China and Laos have been keeping a profound traditional friendship since the ancient times.

The two countries have established the diplomatic relations since 25 April 1961. Since then the friendly relations and cooperation between the two nations have constantly developed to meet the interests and aspiration of the two people, Laos and China. The approval shows the two countries have made frequent exchange of visits between high-ranking officials from both sides.

Laos has constantly developed friendly relations and comprehensive cooperation between two Parties, Governments and peoples, Laos and China, meanwhile China has always been taking efforts to enhance the bilateral ties of good neighborliness, friendship and cooperation. Laos always insists on the "One-China Policy."

The border demarcation between the two countries was successfully settled in 1992, becoming a peaceful and friendly boundary, where both countries increasingly exchange visits of their citizens.

According to figures presented by the Committee for Lao-Chinese Cooperation, from 1989 to September, Chinese firms have invested in 74 Lao projects with a total value of 997 million USD among which 49 are pure Chinese investments, the rest are joint ventures. Most of the projects now are in good condition. In 1992-2000 China offered Laos with considerable amount of non-interest and low-interest loans and donations. In 1990-2005 China provided over 1.5 billion Yuan (Chinese currency) in both grant and loans to support the implementation of 34 projects. The assistance includes a

grant of almost 500 million Yuan for 24 projects and loans of over 246 million Yuan for 11 projects.

Vang Vieng cement factory in Vientiane province is one of the outstanding projects, which built under Chinese assistance. Thanks to the cooperation, in 1995, for



the first time in history, Laos eventually manufactured cement products by herself. Besides the economic cooperation, the focus is also placed on cultural exchange. China offers scholarship for Lao students every year to study

in Chinese educational institutions and Lao officials also attend training in China.

- Lao-RoK relations and cooperation The diplomatic relations between Laos and RoK was established on 25 October 1995. The RoK embassy was built in 1996, in Vientiane Capital; meanwhile Laos constructed its embassy in January 2001 in Seoul, RoK capital city.

Since the diplomatic relations was established, the governments of the two countries have signed agreements on economic, scientific and technological co-operation.

Since the reestablishment of the diplomatic relations until the end of 1998, RoK had provided Laos with roughly 2 million US dollars of Grant Aid. It provided computerized communication equipment to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, assisted the construction of the embankment of the Mekong River in Vientiane Capital and conducted two feasibility studies, one in the Luangprabang province for the construction of irrigation dam, the other one in Savannakhet province for a small scale hydroelectric power plant.

The Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) has granted 2.3 million USD for rural development in Viengkham and Keo-oudom districts in Vientiane province for 2007-2008. From 1991 to 2006, KOICA provided grants to Laos amounting to 15 million USD, making Laos one of the agency's 10 leading development partners.

Delegation of the Social and Cultural Affairs Committee Visits Vietnam

A delegation of the Social and Cultural Affairs Committee of the Lao National Assembly (Lao NA) led by Dr. Somphou Duangsavan, its Deputy Chairman visited Vietnam on 22-26 April to share lessons of prevention of seizing opportunity for using alcohol and beer.

The delegation consists of representatives of the Information and Culture Ministry, the Education Ministry, the Public Health Ministry and the National Commission for Drug Control and Supervision. The visit



was supported by Sweden IOGT (International Organisation of Good Templars, formerly known as the International Order of Good Templars and the Independent Order of Good Templars).

The Lao delegation met with the delegation of Vietnam National Assembly's Social and Cultural Affairs Committee led by Mr Le Van Giao, its Deputy Head. The Vietnamese side informed of the prevention of seizing opportunity for using alcohol and beer in Vietnam, highlighting alcohol as an obstacle to development. The two sides showed the dangers of over drinking, which harm health and society and cause road accidents. The Lao delegation also shared experiences with the Public Health Service of Ha Noi and the relevant project in Nam Dinh province.

According to IOGT International, since 1972 the IOGT-NTO Movement of Sweden has been involved in development assistance, initially in Sri Lanka where they still are involved in projects together with their sister organisation in Norway, under the common name FORUT Sri Lanka. Presently, the IOGT-NTO Movement carries out development projects with partners in Sri Lanka, Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, the Baltic countries, Ukraine and Belarus.

Some villages of Sing districts needs electricity access

Proposals for electricity access, clean water, schools and dispensaries were raised during the talk to people by Ms Latsamy Mingboupha, NA member (constituency 3, Luang Namtha) in six villages, Sing district, Luang Namtha province. Six villages are Phiyer (Ikor tribe), Oudomsin, Choungca, Nammai, Saylek (Yao tribe) and Mon (Lu tribe). 603 people, including 209 females reported attending the talk, which held on 9-12 April.

Besides receiving the proposals, Ms Latsamy urged the people to enhance solidarity in villages and excavate potentials for developing the family economy with the aim of reducing poverty. She also encouraged them to heighten gender role and participate in the scio-economic development, particularly development of the family economy.

While talking to people in the six villages, Ms Latsamy informed of the results of the second ordinary session of the National Assembly (sixth legislature), highlighting the main issues considered and adopted by the session such as the NA oversight on the socio-economic development and budgetary plans, the government strategy on poverty eradication and three new laws: Law on Commercial Banks, Law on Protection of Children's Rights and Interests and Law on Value-added Tax and other three amended laws: Law on State Budget, Law on Labour and Law on Court's Fees.

Many projects in Paksong districts implemented effectively

Recently, Dr Nickham Bouasisouk, NA member (constituency 15, Champassack province) oversaw Farming Contract in Paksong district, Champassack province with the aim of promoting the socio-economic development and the implementation budgetary plan and found that many projects are implemented successfully, following the above-mentioned contract, while some aspects of the contract are implemented ineffectively.

The talk to people by Dr Nickhma was held in Phou-oy and Setkhot villages where the production sites are located. The Farming Contract helps expand and promote the goods production in the district, started from families and production clusters in order to push forward the rural development and alleviate poverty among people.

The NA member also found that some aspects of the Farming Contract are implemented ineffectively. The village production clusters reported that since the beginning of April, cabbages have been harvested in huge number; however, the production cost is higher than the contact price. Points for sending and receiving products that were made do not follow the contract so this matter constrains and challenges the production.

The NA member has informed the authority and cooperated with relevant organization to find a way for solving this issue, following the Decree of the Provincial

Party Cell Committee No 199 and 200. She has urged the people to enhance spirit of industriousness, self-reliance, self-sufficiency and self-building and continue pushing forward the production in order to reduce poverty and improve their living conditions.

Phamuang focal development area on the move to success

Phamuang focal development area in Borlikhan district, Bolikhamxay province now is better than before, Mr Noupanh Douangpanya, its Head reported, when Dr Thongphanh Chanthalanon, member of the NA Standing Committee, Chairwomen of the Ethnic Affairs Committee talked to people in this area in the beginning of April.

Phamuang consists of 11 villages, 162 houses, 205 families and 1,164 people, including 559 females. To date, the infrastructure has been improved such as road access, electricity, market, primary and secondary schools, dispensary, irrigation system and so on. There is the fund for promoting rice farming and animal husbandry. People living in this area actively participate in the socio-economic development, following the party and government policies and state laws. The social order is maintained and solidarity among all ethnic groups is heightened. Even though many achievements were gained, the area will emphasize goods production and poverty reduction.

Dr Thongphanh expressed appreciations to the authority and people for these achievements and urged them to enhance the spirit of patriotism, self-reliance, self-sufficiency and self-building and to concentrate on materializing the resolutions of the VIII Party Congress.

NA CAPACITY BUILDING CONTINUES

A capacity building project supported by the European Union and the UN Development Program for the Lao National Assembly (NA) aims to narrow the gap between what the National Assembly is expected to do and what it is able to do. In order to reach the target, annual work plan for 2007 has been formulated with the aim of



gaining more successes.

The project goal for 2007 is to enhance legislative functions, increased capacity for oversight, implement more effective representation of constituents, strengthen human resources and rationalize complaints procedure.

There are three outcomes, which are expected to be gained as follows: outcome 1 “enhanced lawmaking skills and improved procedures in legislative functions”: legislative capacity building, training to increase capacity to analyze proposed laws, law committee workshops to review draft legislation, advocacy and awareness raising, facilitating meetings between NA members and constituents, public consultations on proposed laws, law seminars with students, fact-sheets for local authorities on the NA role, coordination in legislative drafting, establishing a coordination mechanism between the NA and the Government.

Outcome 2 “a strengthened committee system, especially regarding oversight”: systems and procedures for oversight, assessment of the NA Committee system, drafting terms for NA Committees, developing handbooks and training material, training workshops, building expertise, establishing a roster of experts, providing briefings on key development issues, capacity for financial oversight, developing training material, training workshops and study tour.

Outcome 3 “more effective representation of constituents”: empowering female NA members, promoting dialogue between NA and members and constituents and raising awareness of the representative function.

Outcome 4 “strengthening the human resources at the NA”: training programmes, legal sectors, English language training, management training, IELTS training, post-graduate studies, training on ethics, access to information, strengthening the information centre, translating international best practice and upgrading the NA website: www.na.gov.la.

Outcome 5 “rationalizing complaints procedures at the NA”: complaints handling, development of ‘ombudsman-like’ office, training on complaints resolution at the provincial level for NA members and constituency office staff.

In the past year, a number of achievements was gained, including the training of female candidates who ran for election, support for the Economic and Finance Committee on macroeconomic management and the government budget, and a workshop on how to better access and review draft laws.

Thanks to the project, NA members now have a clearer understanding of their Constitutional mandate, a more in-depth appreciation of socio-economic development issues and a greater capacity to analyze macro-economic policy and national budgetary processes. The project received expert advice from several UN agencies, including ILO, UNICEF, UNFPA, WHO and from the World Bank and the IMF.

The project also helped introduce NA members to international best practice in parliamentary affairs. Members of Parliament from Sri Lanka and the Netherlands have visited Laos to advise the Lao National Assembly, and several international exchange visits have also been organized to provide National Assembly Members with first hand experience of parliament in other developing countries. The project has also provided support to female National Assembly Members. In the last elections, held in April 2006, more women gained seats in the National Assembly than ever before, bringing the total proportion to 25 percent. It may be no small coincidence that the project arranged for a senior Australian Senator to train all female candidates in campaign methods and public relations. Indeed, proportionally more female candidates were elected than men.

In April last year, the citizens of the Lao PDR have been convened to early elections, to elect their 115 members in the NA. Out of 175 candidates in total, 29 women have been successful, thus increasing over one point the female representation in it, up to over 25 percent. The interest of the constituents for the previous elections, their active participation in local campaigning meeting, has shown the increasing interest of the people of Lao PDR in the development of the NA being their representative body.

COMMEMORATE THE TWO HISTORICAL EVENTS IN LAO-VIETNAMESE COOPERATION

As we aware, this year Laos and Vietnam commemorate the 30th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between Laos and Vietnam and the 45th anniversary of the establishment of Lao-Vietnamese diplomatic ties. To remark these historical events, the NA Newsletter republishes articles relating to the traditional friendship, special solidarity and comprehensive cooperation between the two Parties, Governments and people, Laos and Vietnam, particularly between the two legislative bodies.

Being linked by common boundaries, Phouluang mountain chains and rivers, Laos and Vietnam have traditional solidarity and shoulder to shoulder fought against invaders.

In the past as well as at present the two nations support and help each other. Victories gained by the two countries in each stage are a result of mutual assistance and support, which are the main factor for existence and growth of each country. During the national liberation, defence and construction, the Party, Government and people of Vietnam have constantly supported Laos. In particular, during the 30 years of the growth and expansion of the Lao National Assembly (Lao NA), Vietnam National Assembly (Vietnam NA) has consistently extended both spiritual and material assistance and support to the Lao NA.

The Lao PDR faced an economic shift in 1986, when the Fourth Congress of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party adopted the policy of reform Chitanakanmai, meaning New Thinking, usually referred to as the New Economic

Mechanism (NEM). Meanwhile Vietnam also adopted a reform programme known as Doi Moi, meaning Renovation in 1986.

Chitanakanmai and Doi Moi aimed at transforming economic management from centralized planning to a market-orientated system, privatising State-owned enterprises, liberalising prices and removing barriers to international trade. It also opened Laos to foreign investment, changed agriculture to private household system and removed most quotas and other quantitative import restrictions.

They urged economic reform, encouraging a multi-sectoral economy (State, cooperative, private, joint-venture and so on) to develop, leaving the old measure Keuakune (Dependency on State subsidies), which was employed in the centralised planning economy. The Government did not want to support state enterprises, which were not profitable and depended on government subsidies. 'Under the NEM, market forces were to operate with the implication that state enterprises incapable of making profit would go to the wall' (Stuart-Fox 1997, p.196).

Even though the two nations adopted the market-oriented economy, the traditional relations, special solidarity and all-round cooperation between the two Parties, Governments and people of Laos and Vietnam remain stronger. Vietnam NA extends valuable assistance and support to many fields of the Lao NA, particularly law formation, oversight, law enforcement, lessons of Inter-parliamentary Union and AIPA (including lessons of AIPO Meeting organization), information and data centre other basic facilities for the Lao NA.

The Lao NA as well as the Lao people expresses gratitude and thanks to the fraternal Party, Government and people of Vietnam, particularly the Vietnam NA for this valuable assistance and support.

Implementing hard and honourable tasks, the Lao NA pays attention to maintain and promote the traditional relations, special solidarity and comprehensive cooperation between Laos and Vietnam. In particular, it will enhance operation in the law field and promote the implementation of treaties and agreements signed by the two Governments, enhance lesson and visit exchange between delegations of national assembly members and technical officials and exchange information and data of the two National Assemblies' operations.

The above-mentioned will promote the development of each country and contribute overall cooperation and development in the region and in the world. The aim is to protect and enhance traditions of the special solidarity and all-round cooperation between the two nations.

v **Example of Lao-Vietnam legislative cooperation**

The Information Centre and Library of the Lao NA was established in 2000, following the Decree No 58/SC of the Lao NA Standing Committee, dated 25 July 2000, with technical and financial supports from the Vietnam NA. The Office of the Vietnam

NA was assigned to carry out the project worth 7,574,000,000 Dong (Vietnamese currency), which was divided into three phases. The project duration is two and half years.

The project objectives are to build the basic facility with modern hardware and software, collect some necessary data for the Lao NA works, heighten the capacity of sharing information between committees, departments within the Lao NA and between the Lao NA Office and constituency offices and train officials in office automaton computer system and English language ability.

The success has been gained in these three phases:

The Phase I was implemented in September-December 2000, becoming the beginning of the project, when documentations, buying and transporting materials, installation, handing over the materials and training were carried out. In this phase 43 computer sets, including 40 desktops and 3 laptops were installed for Lao NA leaders and Lao NA departments and divisions. Three photocopy machines, one server, 32 printers, one scanner and equipment for maintaining electric current were also installed. In addition, 40 computer tables were brought to use in the centre and some technical officials joined the technical training in Vietnam.

Phase II that was implemented in 2001 concentrated on survey and networking line placement and use of intranet of the Lao NA Office and creating and uploading the official website of the Lao NA. Some technical officials were sent to join short-term training in Vietnam, computer trainings for Lao NA leaders and officials were organised, two officials were sent to improve six-month English skill training, one official was dispatched to join 12-month English skill training and another one joined long-term learning.

In accordance with the proposal of the Lao side, Vietnam agreed to send some equipment for the Lao NA Office, including one laptop, three printers, one set of networking linking equipment. It was agreed the Lao side to buy one photo camera, one video camera, one digital photo camera and three tables for the server.

In the Phase I and Phase II the Vietnam NA Information, Library and Scientific Research Centre dispatched two experts to suggest and instruct Lao officials, in parallel with sending technical officials to help install equipment for 10 months.

Phase III emphasized the establishment of database and expansion of the project to constituencies, consisting of following works. 26 sets of computers, 18 printers and 26 computer table sets were installed in 18 constituencies. Two Lao technical officials were sent to learn and practice in Vietnam; many computer training courses for both central and local officials were organised; database of laws, history of the Lao NA, biographies of the Lao NA officials and lists of entering and leaving documents were created basically; and Vietnam sent 1,644 books and some funds to Laos to buy books in Lao language to improve the library.

Phase IV follows the agreement between the Lao NA Office and the Vietnam NA Office, which states after the project was implemented in 2002, the Vietnam NA Office has agreed to continue assistance from 2003 to 2006 (500 million Dong each year).

In 2003, 170 million Dong was left in Vietnam, while 330 million Dong was sent to the Lao NA Information Centre; in 2004, 125 million Dong left in Vietnam, while 375 million Dong sent to the Lao NA Information Centre; in 2005, 200 million Dong left in Vietnam, while 300 million Dong sent to the Lao NA Information Centre; in 2006, 300 million Dong left in Vietnam, while 200 million Dong sent to the Lao NA Information Centre. The aid fund in the four years is 2,000,000,000 Dong, which consists of 195 million Dong left in Vietnam and 1,205 million Dong sent to the Lao NA Information Centre.

The above-mentioned fund was used in the following target works: The amount left in Vietnam was spent for working and exchange visit of the technical delegations of the Lao NA Information Centre and Library and the Lao NA Office, organising computer trainings for the Lao officials in Vietnam, improving Vietnamese Language ability for those who know Vietnamese language (a month course attended by six officials) and organising Vietnamese language beginning courses (three and two-month courses attended by eight officials).

The fund sent to Laos was spent for the following works: project management, repairing and maintaining equipment, buying some computers and materials, improving some data, collecting necessary data in relevant ministries, organising computer courses for officials of the Lao NA, improving library works and buying some books, organising workshops for information officials in constituencies, publishing research news bulletin for the Lao NA leaders, creating collections of documents of the Lao NA ordinary sessions, joining UNDP project to improve the server and website and continuing organising Vietnamese language learning courses.

Through the six years of the project implementation, strengths have been gained as follows: the project was successfully implemented to meet the set target. The information base of the Lao NA was established and facilitates the Lao NA works and operations. Thanks to the project the Lao NA has its own website (www.na.gov.la), which is the means for disseminating the Lao NA information to the world. The Internet access helps the officials search for necessary information for using in their works. The intranet facilitates within the Lao NA, particularly exchanging information between departments and the Lao NA Offices and constituencies. The Lao NA library is improved, being a place where the Lao NA leaders and officials search for news, information and data. Computer skills of the Lao NA officials were improved. The project success enhances and strengthens the special solidarity and comprehensive cooperation between the Lao and Vietnam National Assemblies, particularly between the two NA Offices.

Even though there many achievements were gained, some insufficiency and weak points occurred. The Lao NA Information Centre and Library has limited number of officials. On other hand, they lack experiences and lessons. Their knowledge and experiences of management is not high due to Information Technology (IT) that is a new field of the Lao NA.