

NA sitting opens for debate.

National Assembly President Thongsing Thammavong declared the assembly's 8th ordinary session open yesterday to debate eight laws and consider proposed amendments to the 2009-10 budget plan presented by the government.

The opening of the meeting of the 6th legislature was attended by Party Secretary General and President Choummaly Sayasone, members of the Party politburo, government officials, diplomatic corps and international organisation representatives.

During the two-week session, NA members will debate four new draft laws relating to tobacco control, youth affairs, the construction sector and public investment. They will also debate four amended draft laws on notary offices, family registration, and laws regarding the People's Court and public prosecutor.

Members will review a report regarding activities conducted by NA standing committees since the last assembly session.

In his opening remarks, Mr Thongsing urged all NA members to heighten their sense of responsibility and concentrate on debating the various matters raised in a comprehensive and substantive manner.

He spoke highly of the NA's role in the country's development and highlighted areas for further improvement.

While Laos has encountered a number of recent difficulties and constraints caused by the global economic recession, as well as natural disasters such as tropical storm Ketsana, the assembly has used its mandate to contribute to the efforts of all Lao people under the Party's guidelines to overcome the challenges, he said.

“The NA has acted with a high sense of responsibility, monitoring the implementation of the socio-economic development plan and state budget plan and scrutinising the implementation of the nation's constitution and laws,” he told the session.

“As a result, national security, political stability and social order have been further maintained and developed.”

The national economy has kept growing at a sustainable pace and poverty has been alleviated, he said.

Education, public health and culture have been promoted in rural and remote areas. Additionally, the government's actions have relieved the damage caused by recent floods in the southern provinces, Mr Thongsing said.

These achievements reflect the endeavours of the Party, state and armed forces to implement the 8th Party Congress Resolution and the government's socio-economic development plan.

Successes have also been made possible with support and assistance from friendly countries and international organisations.

Despite such accomplishments, there are still weaknesses and challenges to be addressed including the government's failure to achieve its revenue collection target last financial year, Mr Thongsing said.

He called on the relevant sectors to address fluctuations in prices to encourage regular commercial production.

Macro-economic management needs to be improved. Though administrative reforms at grass-root levels and rural development initiatives to tackle poverty have been conducted with great effort, they have not yet achieved set targets.

Effective and efficient public sector management and administration have not improved sufficiently since the last NA session, he said.

Anti-social behaviour continues to be a problem in some areas of society and the rule of law has not been fully enforced in an effective and strict manner. In addition, a number of civil servants, armed and security forces and citizens still lack proper respect for the law, he said. "Unless these problems are addressed and fully resolved, national socio-economic development will certainly be affected in the immediate and long-term," said Mr Thongsing.

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