Education ministry to promote labour skills

Phasiythong Chandara

State-owned vocational schools around the country will accept more students for this academic year amid a rising demand for skilled labour, a senior education official has said.

It is official from the Ministry of Education and Vocational Education Department told Vientiane Times recently that more than 20 state-owned technical and vocational schools around the country will accept over 10,000 students for this academic year.

Meanwhile the number of students studying at vocational schools is expected to increase over the next few years to meet the demand of the labour market, he said.

The official explained that the ministry had video to accept more students into vocational education programmes was also part of new government plan to boost skilled labour force.

“Accepting more students will produce more skilled human resources and preparation for integration with the Asean Economic Community in 2015,” he said.

“The vocational courses provide skills to suit the needs of the labour market and give young students the expertise needed for the development of their careers.”

To meet demand the vocational schools have introduced new courses locally, including mining, electrical engineering, construction, electronics, auto mechanics, hospitality and other related subjects, for which Laos is currently facing a shortage.

Courses can improve the students’ chances of setting up a business and are offered as either a two or three year programme.

With support from its development partners, the ministry provides financial incentives for the students so as to encourage them to study at vocational schools.

At present most secondary school graduates do not want to go to vocational schools simply as they believe that they will not get good jobs at the end of it. Some think that if they finish vocational school, they will only end up working as labourers for paltry salaries.

Demand for skilled labour saw a rapid increase over the past few years thanks to the government policy to promote foreign investment.

At present a number of foreign firms are having to import foreign labour due to a shortage in the domestic supply.

Besides state-owned vocational institutes, the ministry plans to encourage the private sector to build vocational colleges and schools in order to produce skilled labour to help develop national socio-economic growth.

At present, there are over 80 private vocational institutes around the country offering courses in business, IT, agriculture and other related subjects.

These institutes also offer opportunities for school leavers to attend short or long-term courses locally, according to the department.

Although student numbers entering vocational education have gradually increased over the past few years, Laos is still suffering from a lack of skilled labour.

The Lao government has identified payments for environmental services as a way to achieve environmental management goals and improve smallholder livelihoods.

It is recognised that villagers in Laos need some financial incentive and long term interest in the preservation of biodiversity if they are to be encouraged to participate in conservation efforts.

However the issue now for policy makers is how they can be rewarded financially for not degrading forests or ecosystems through inappropriate harvesting of trees or forest products or the illegal hunting off wildlife.

In this regard, a Memorandum of Understanding to implement a Payments for Environmental Services (PES) scheme in Borikhhamxay province was signed recently between the project ‘Effective Implementation of Payments for Environmental Services in the Lao PDR’ and the Provincial Department of Natural Resources and Environment.

The MOU was signed in Borikhhamxay province between the project leader Mr Khamphan Nanthouang from the Nature Based Resources (MONRE) and the Director of the Provincial Department of Natural Resources and Environment Mr Khampaosong Vongtanga.

The MOU is signed in Borikhhamxay province to implement the PES scheme.

Borikhhamxay villagers to be paid for environmental services

Times Reporters

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Child drowns in Champassak province

Times Reporters

One child drowned in a river in Champassak province on Saturday after flash flooding caused it to rise rapidly, Deputy Governor Mr Somxanith Bounthiphong told Vientiane Times on Sunday.

The child was two years of age, he said. Apparently, the child’s father did not see his child lying in the river as he was wading out to check the rice fields.

In a tragic outcome, the man checked the net and found that his child had drowned in the Khakham River.

In a tragic outcome, the man checked the net and found that it did not contain any fish but had entangled his son instead.

The preliminary report from local authorities stated that the districts of Soukhounma, Khong, Champassak, Sanasomboun and other localities in the province experienced flash flooding after heavy rains on Friday.

Soukhounma district experienced the most serious flooding, which saw flash flooding and inundation of low lying areas in 36 villages after torrential rains.

The report did not detail exactly how many households, rice fields, roads and schools suffered damages due to the flooding because each district will report this information separately, according to the provincial administration office.

The heavy rains and flash flooding also saw the level of the Mekong river rise over the weekend as flood waters made their way down the catchment. Officials from Soukhounma district office reported on Sunday morning that the flood waters had receded by about 3cm.

People in all 36 villages have now moved their livestock and possessions to higher ground where necessary, authorities reported.

According to the Meteorology and Hydrology Department on Sunday, the level of the Mekong river in Champassak province had fallen by about 5cm and is not expected to flood unless further heavy rains arrive.

There are about 20 major storms that occur yearly in the region between June and September and so far nine have been recorded this year.

Typhoon Rammasun formed near the Philippines and then brushed past Laos last month before hitting Vietnam and China.

Laos was fortunate on this occasion as the typhoon's path meant that it only caused some rain to fall on the country without the major devastation that struck neighbouring countries.

According to the Meteorology and Hydrology Department, a new tenth storm for the season has developed near the Philippines but is still only relatively small in size. However, weather authorities will keep monitoring its path.

Some houses were flooded in Pakxe district of Champassak province over the weekend.