

# Projects aim to attract investments

By WEN ZONGDUO  
and LI YINGQING

Landlocked Laos looks forward to becoming a land-linked emerging economy with investments from outside, according to the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation Dianchi Forum.

Khamchan Vongsenboun, vice-minister of planning and investment of Laos, said at the opening ceremony in Kunming, Southwest China's Yunnan province, on Nov 23 that her country has been building up rail and expressway links with neighbors. These will pave the way for a better investment environment and potential industrialization.

At the China-Laos Investment Talks on Nov 24, she said Laos has not only coordinated development strategies with river valley nations but also adopted favorable policies to welcome investors.

Among the large projects, the China-Laos high-speed rail, when completed in 2021, could enhance the flow of people and goods not only between the two countries, but also with Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore.

Sengduen Sayasone, division director with the investment promotion department of the Ministry of Planning and Investment of Laos, explained its measures on taxation, land use, labor and customs, as well as administrative approval procedures.

Preferential treatments are available for special economic zones (SEZ) across Laos, in locations including Boten, Thakhek, Champasak, Savan-Seno, Dongphosy, Thatluang Lake,



**Pictured** at the China-Laos Investment Talks during the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation Dianchi Forum in Kunming, Southwest China's Yunnan province on Nov 24, are (from left) Sengduen Sayasone, an official with the Ministry of Planning and Investment of Laos; Lu Xinghua, chairman of Phoukyo Special Economic Zone of Laos; Khamchan Vongsenboun, vice-minister of planning and investment of Laos; and Wang Ruiyu, director of programming and construction department of Phoukyo SEZ. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY ASIA WEEKLY

Golden Triangle and Vientiane.

A committee to promote investment and supervision, which will offer one-stop services for businesses, is in the making, she said.

Lu Xinghua, chairman of Phoukyo SEZ in the Khammouane province of Laos, said: "The land lease period from the Laos authorities could be 99 years." Other notable factors include tax-free periods and a special visa valid for 10 years.

Oudet Souvannavong, president of the Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said that due to cooperation mechanisms with

neighbors, more than 80 projects are under construction, with a focus on industries, agriculture, tourism and logistics.

A total of 26 cooperation projects were signed at the China-Laos Investment Talks, which was part of a series of activities at the Dianchi Forum and the five-day Lancang-Mekong Cooperation Exposition in Kunming from Nov 23 to 27. More than half of the deals were related to the Phoukyo SEZ.

The SEZ plays an important role in the local economy and one-stop services will be available for invest-

mentors, said Wang Ruiyu, director of the programming and construction department of Phoukyo SEZ.

Wang said about 80 new projects for potential investors are on offer in Laos, including those in Phoukyo, a processing zone for farm produce and woods between old and new neighborhoods in the capital Vientiane, a culture and tourism zone in Vientiane, and a tourism zone in Luang Prabang, in northern Laos.

He also echoed the concerns of entrepreneurs on selecting suitable projects, financing, raising technology levels, and the different rules in

planning and transport. Still, "once you land there, you will always be able to find a project that suits you well," he said.

Sayasone from the investment promotion department said the related sectors are reviewing and amending legal stipulations and enhancing links between the public and private sectors to further facilitate a sound investment environment.

Also highlighted at the event were the Saysettha Development Zone in Vientiane and investment projects in areas including water and energy.

Xiong Jun, a senior manager of the Yunnan Provincial Overseas Investment Co of China Yunnan Construction and Investment Holding Group, said a number of enterprises from China, South Korea and others have been operating in the Saysettha Development Zone. Started in 2011, the zone has entered its third phase of land development.

The overall framework of the zone is proposed as "one city and four areas", meaning the Vientiane Eco-Industrial New City plus specific areas for international industry cooperation, demonstration for China-Laos cooperation, a core part for the new city and a harmonious habitat.

Representatives from Yunnan Water Investment Co and Zhaotong Development and Investment Co of Yunnan Industrial Investment Group also highlighted their projects in Laos and other parts of the region.

A subsidiary of Yunnan Water, which listed its shares at the Hong Kong stock exchange in 2015, has put into operation a power-generating plant using waste-disposal technology in Thailand's Phuket City, said Liu Hang, a senior manager.

## Tourism to be a growth catalyst

By WEN ZONGDUO  
and LI YINGQING

Beautiful natural scenery and valuable historical sites are the pride of nations along the Lancang-Mekong River Delta. However, inadequate facilities like roads and hotels remain challenges along the path to economic development.

Though tourism can be a great source of income for poverty-stricken villages and a growth catalyst for developing economies, a lot more needs to be done, according to the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation-Yunnan Cultural Tourism Development Forum, held in Kunming, Southwest China's Yunnan province, on Nov 24.

Among the speakers, Khamchan Vongsenboun, vice-minister of planning and investment of Laos; Chhun Dara, secretary of state of the Ministry of Commerce of Cambodia;

and Nitivadee Manitkul, Royal Thai Consul General in Kunming voiced their countries' determination to create better conditions for tourists and investors.

Dai Bin, president of the China Tourism Academy, noted that despite high expectations for growth, tourism in the region still faces weak infrastructure and insufficient market players.

"Limited by economic level, the tourism resources in a number of areas in the region are still to be tapped," Dai said.

Moreover, Dai suggested that the economies of the Lancang-Mekong River Delta join hands to develop river valley tourism routes and brands, paying closer attention to accommodating tourists who travel in their own vehicles. China could pass on its expertise in establishing guidelines and prioritizing general planning for

tourism development, he said.

Meng Rui, vice-president of the Yunnan Tourism Planning Institute, largely agreed with the proposals, adding that once expressway networks are developed, the vast area could become a huge market for travelers from inland China.

Chen Lijun, vice-president of the Yunnan Provincial Academy of Social Sciences and China (Kunming) Research Center on South and Southeast Asia, drew attention to tourists who visit destinations along the river for healthcare services. As China's aging population increases fast, many people would love to relax in natural settings across the border.

However, forum participants said the bottom line for sustainable development and ecological civilization should be the need to maintain a harmony with nature in these areas.

Wang Gang, dean of OCT Tour-



**The Lancang-Mekong Cooperation-Yunnan Cultural Tourism Development Forum** took place in Kunming, Southwest China's Yunnan province, on Nov 24.

ism Institute, said the OCT Group's strength is in integrating traditional cultural elements into specific projects for tourism development.

OCT Group senior manager Liu Kaixin said at the forum that after restructuring branches in Yunnan province in 2017, the group is keen to share its expertise in developing

cultural and tourism projects with neighboring nations.

OCT Yunnan coorganized the forum with the Yunnan Expo Tourism Group and Yunnan Culture Industry Investment. Three OCT projects now under construction in Yunnan involve cooperation with Cambodia and Vietnam.