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Vehicle number plates set to change

Times Reporters

The two ministries responsible for vehicle registration are planning to alter the number plates of vehicles in the capital following a change to the official name of the city.

Some years ago the government renamed the capital of Laos, Vientiane (occasionally Vientiane capital) from the former Vientiane Municipality, but the registration plates of vehicles in the capital remained the same - still using the term Vientiane Municipality.

The Director General of the Transport Department, Ministry of Public Works and Transport, Mr Viengsavath Siphandone, told the *Vientiane Times* yesterday that officials at the ministry and the Ministry of Public Security are working on factors necessary to prepare for the change.

"We have a plan to change them," he said, adding that this should be done in line with the capital's official name change.

But the director was unable to confirm as to exactly when



Officials plan to change the number plates of vehicles in Vientiane.

the officials will start to take action on the matter. It is also still unclear as to who is going to pay for the new plates to replace the old ones.

"Further talks are needed to decide who will be responsible for the cost of replacement - car

owners or the government," he said, adding that this is the main concern as the total cost for all vehicles in Vientiane will be high.

However, it is understood that the public could have a reasonable complaint if they are

made solely responsible for the cost as they have already paid for registration once, when the vehicle was first allowed on the road.

After the capital's official name change, the public has been closely following the situation,

especially owners of new cars as they, not unreasonably, are afraid of having to pay twice in a short period for the same thing.

Mr Viengsavath said that the Ministry of Public Works and Transport is responsible for all vehicle registering and the issuing of registration numbers, while the Ministry of Public Security is responsible for producing and attaching the number plates.

The Ministry of Public Security will calculate the amount of funds needed to produce the new plates before the officials in charge finalise plans for submission to the government to seek recommendations and approval, according to Mr Viengsavath.

He stated that the cost of producing new registration plates would be huge, saying that vehicles in the capital represent half of the total number of vehicles registered in Laos.

At the present, there are about 556,000 vehicles in Vientiane, while the total population of the city is 850,000, according to city authorities.

Property prices in Vientiane continue to soar

Times Reporters

Property prices in the capital Vientiane saw a remarkable increase in 2012 as land purchasers grew more confident about the economic growth prospects of the country, thus willing to speculate on future increases.

RentsBuy.com is one of the leading real estate agents in Laos. Their Vientiane Managing Director, Mr Houmphan Sayalath said yesterday that the price of houses and land in Vientiane saw an increase of between 10 to 15 percent in 2012, thanks to growing investor confidence.

"There are a number of mega land development projects underway in Vientiane and this is making people feel more confident that the price of the land will continue to increase," Mr Houmphan told *Vientiane Times* yesterday.

The government has given the green light for Chinese

firms to develop the That Luang wetlands, Nongchan pond and the Donchan riverfront green field sites into new urban centres, while a Vietnamese firm has received permission to develop Nongtha wetlands into an accommodation and recreation precinct as well.

Planned infrastructure development projects such as the construction of a high speed railway from China to Laos, the accession of Laos to the World Trade Organisation and the establishment of the Asean Economic Community is also generating confidence in the investment potential of houses and land in Laos.

The Lao government also has a policy to allow foreign investors who invest more than US\$500,000 to own 800 square metres of residential and office land in their own right, aiming to entice more overseas investors to come and set up business in Laos, which will further boost the market.

He said the price of prime locations in Vientiane such as land along the Mekong river bank in the Vat Chan area was now about US\$3,000 per square metre, increasing from around US\$2,000 last year.

"The price of land in the Vat Chan area has seen a remarkable increase since the development of the river embankment and the public park took place," Mr Houmphan said.

People who had information on road and infrastructure development could use it to their advantage to make profits from trading in houses and land, he explained, pointing out that the price of land along newly built roads and renovated roads saw a more than 50 percent increase in short periods of time.

"Once the road is built, prices of land see a big surge," Mr Houmphan said. However, despite the recent increase of property prices in Laos, the prices of houses and land in Laos

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Laos, Thailand reach agreement on phone signal intrusion

Times Reporters

Laos and Thailand have reached an agreement to limit cell phone signals within one kilometre from the border line as part of efforts to protect the commercial interests of telecommunications businesses in the respective countries.

The Ministry of Posts and Telecommunication's Planning and Cooperation Department Director General, Mr Snith Xaphakdy said yesterday that Laos and Thailand had reached the agreement, hoping that the two nations will put the policy into practice.

He made the comments following complaints from Lao cell phone users, who are losing money due to Thai cell phone signal intrusion into Laos.

A number of Lao cell phone users told *Vientiane Times* that their mobile phones sometimes automatically switch to Thai

mobile operators when they visit towns along border areas, forcing them to pay international roaming rates despite receiving domestic calls.

Meanwhile, Thai tourists who travel to a number of tourist sites in Laos which are located away from the border line can still use their cell phones despite the fact they do not have international roaming switched on.

Officials from Lao telecoms companies welcomed the agreement between the Lao and Thai authorities, adding that limiting the cell phone signal intrusions not only helps to protect the security of the nation but also the interests of the telecom firms.

One telecom official said that it was not reasonable for Laos to allow Thai mobile phone operators to provide services in the country as they do not pay

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Announcement

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