

Laos honours former Vietnamese volunteer soldier

Times Reporters

The Lao government has honoured Mr Toan Son (also known as Nguyen Van Vien), a former Vietnamese volunteer soldier and expert who made a heroic contribution to the task of the Lao revolution.

Lao Ambassador to Vietnam Mr Somphone Sichaleune, on behalf of the government, delivered the posthumous award, an Issara order (second class) to Mr Nguyen, which was received by one of his relatives in a ceremony held at the Lao Embassy in Hanoi on Tuesday.

Mr Nguyen played an important role in the Lao revolution as he used to be a commander for Vietnamese troops fighting in the northern regions of Laos, notably Xamneua district in Huaphan province.

Between 1945 and 1948, he



Mr Somphone hands over an Issara order to a representative of Mr Nguyen on behalf of the government.

and his Vietnamese comrades joined the Lao army to fight with the French colonialists to liberate Huameuang and Xiengkhor districts in Huaphan province. He also joined the Lao patriotic force in the task of grass roots political consolidation in the liberation zone.

Eventually, Mr Nguyen was shot dead while fighting with the colonialists. As he was killed while fighting for the revolutionary cause, the Lao government wanted to express its gratitude to him for making the ultimate sacrifice.

The honour bestowed

signifies the deep gratitude of the Party, government and multi-ethnic people of Laos towards the Party, government and people of Vietnam, especially the award recipient, for their valuable dedication and great support to the Lao people's revolution.

Better coordination against child sex tourism called for

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Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam are seeking to improve coordination and law enforcement in combating child sexual exploitation in travel and tourism in the Mekong sub-region.

Officials and experts from the four countries in the sub-region have gathered in Vientiane to share their experiences on the issue to establish better coordination and cooperation in protecting children from sexual exploitation.

The two-day discussion which continues today is part of the Project Childhood (Prevention and Protection Pillars combined) built on Australia's long-term support for programmes that better protect children and prevent them from being abused.

Originally starting early last year, the project has encouraged its Protection Pillar team to work with police, prosecutors, and judges in the four countries to help them review and, as appropriate, revise their domestic legislative frameworks so that they meet international standards for prosecuting offences related

to the sexual abuse of children by travelling sex offenders.

According to the Academy for Educational Development, Thailand is a source, transit point and destination country for human trafficking. It is a hub of exploitation in the Greater Mekong Sub-region, for both sex and labour exploitation.

With regard to Laos the UNICEF Child Protection factsheets which refer to the survey conducted by Ministry of Health in 2008, said that half of the women who sell sex are adolescents.

In Cambodia there were 51 sexual abuse cases occurring last year involving 51 offenders and 73 victims. Of these, three are related to child sex purchases with three accused and six victims.

Around 950 cases relating to child sexual assaults occur every year in Vietnam while the authorities have cracked down on and arrested 1,990 connected targets.

"Every child sexual assault target has got to be processed under trial and given the toughest punishment," a participant from the Vietnamese Department of

Criminal Police said.

He reminded the gathering about a case which occurred in Hanoi when a Dutchman, Jone Erri Kan, and a 32 year old Vietnamese citizen who both committed sexual assaults on children, were sentenced by the courts to life imprisonment.

According to Cambodian laws, offenders who use child sexual services will be subjected to a prison term from 2 to 15 years, while people who are involved in pornographic publication and distribution will be subjected to prison from 2 to 20 years.

Deputy Director of the Cambodian Department of Anti-Trafficking and Child Protection, Brigadier General Yim Verak, said that besides the criminal law, anti-trafficking and sexual exploitation law and the law on tourism, his country also has specific regulations on the management of tourists in tourism sites and entertainment venues, covering their investigation and court submission.

Representatives from Thailand suggested that an important measure to protect

children from sexual exploitation would be building stronger communities which are secure enough to give assistance to disadvantaged children and young people.

They also called for enhancing communications which provide information and awareness building for communities on the impact of child sex tourism on children, young people and society.

Deputy Minister of Justice Prof Ket Kiattisak, Australian Ambassador to Laos Ms Linda Worthaisong, and the United Nations Office on Drug and Crime Deputy Regional Representative and Country Representative of Laos, Mr Leik Boonwaat, called on the participants to actively participate in the discussions and come up with outcomes which will lead to better coordination, cooperation, and law enforcement in combating the abuse of children in the sub-region.

A police liaison officer from the Australian Federal Police, Kel Mansfield, also attended the meeting to present a case study on the investigation of child sexual exploitation.