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The images are currently being kept at the Horphakeo museum.

Stolen Buddha statues await rightful owners

Phonesavanh Sangsomboun

Five stolen Buddha statues are waiting to be reclaimed by their rightful owners after police and officials last month handed them over to the Horphakeo museum in Vientiane.

The statues were seized by police last year in the middle of an illegal transaction in which they were about to be sold to foreigners.

One statue is made from brass, measuring 60 centimetres and weighing 20 kilograms. It is believed to be about 50 years old and came from Vangvieng district, Vientiane province. The other

four Buddha images are carved from wood.

Vientiane police seized the items at the rented house of Mr Dy in Huayhong village, Chanthabouly district.

Mr Dy confessed that he and Mr Sinhone went to Vangvieng district, where they saw the statues in a cave.

Together they bought the statues from the cave's keeper for about 40,000 baht (about 10 million kip), expecting to sell them to foreigners for around 80,000 baht (20 million kip).

But police in Vientiane were informed by an upstanding local citizen that illegal trading of Buddha statues was taking place,

so they went to the area to investigate and arrest the offenders.

"Villagers in Vangvieng district say they've been sad since they lost the images and they want them back," said the head of the Technical Unit at Horphakeo Museum, Mr Khochone Keomanivong.

However, the decision is still under consideration. If villagers want the 50 year old image they will have to follow procedures to ensure it will not be stolen again, he said.

Under national heritage law, villagers or individuals can reclaim Buddha images if it is determined that the images originally belonged to them.

Library Week at university promotes love of reading

Phaisythong Chandara

The National University of Laos and the World Bank yesterday jointly opened the third annual Library Week 2009-2010 in Vientiane, held at the university's Central Library.

The three-day event, which ends tomorrow, aims to promote information and knowledge sharing and focuses particularly on promoting a love of reading among students, teachers and the general public.

One major goal is to provide more information to students about cooperation between the university and the World Bank as well as improving access to study and research materials.

The opening ceremony was attended by university Vice President Associate Prof. Dr Saykhong Saynasine and the World Bank's Country Manager to Laos, Mr Patchamuthu Illangovan. Teachers and representatives from participating bodies including multi-laterals, public and private universities, international organisations, and mass and youth organisations also attended.

Under the theme 'Build your knowledge', this year's

library week is a big expansion from previous years with more participation in information-sharing activities from international organisations, private universities, and youth organisations.

Several presentations to enhance knowledge-sharing are being conducted during the three-day period, in addition to information displays.

Topics include Lao history, culture and literature, reading promotion activities, open access to information and communication, an overview of Asian Development Bank (ADB) operations in Laos and ADB-Japan scholarships, an overview of the World Bank, and an economic update.

More importantly, students who were involved in the joint World Bank and university youth activities would share their experiences, a press release said.

This year's activities emphasised a different approach towards learning and information sharing.

"Whether a person is a student, an analyst or a manager, reading and information is a key to one's learning and advancement," Mr Illangovan said.

He encouraged everyone to take advantage of the information and resources personnel available this week and to remember that learning does not end with a book.

"Ask lots of questions and not only will you benefit personally, but others will also learn from them," he said.

The library week is part of a joint cooperation on knowledge sharing and youth initiatives between the World Bank and the university that was established in 2007.

Other activities that have taken place under this partnership include the establishment of the InfoSpace at the Central Library, field studies of World Bank projects and a series of knowledge-sharing seminars related to development.

There are also internship programmes aimed at strengthening public knowledge-sharing capacity and increasing teachers' and students' participation in development agenda.

Dr Saykhong said he was sure that university students and academic staff would benefit through enriching their knowledge at this year's library week.



Mr Patchamuthu Illangovan (left) cuts a ribbon to open the event along with Associate Prof. Dr Saykhong Saynasine.

Wetlands Day focuses on climate change solutions

Souknilundon Southivongnorath

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the World Conservation Union expressed hope that events to mark World Wetlands Day yesterday would succeed in raising awareness of the value of wetlands.

IUCN said that every year since 1997, government agencies, non-governmental organisations, and citizens at all levels of the community have worked together to raise public awareness of the value of wetlands and the Ramsar Convention.

The activities were intended to raise awareness of the importance of wetlands

to society, to the environment and to the economy of Laos.

IUCN is working with the Lao government, international organisations and non-governmental organisations to conserve the wetlands of the Lower Mekong Basin.

The theme of World Wetlands Day this year was "Caring for Wetlands - an answer to climate change".

The aim was to emphasise the strong relationship between biodiversity loss and climate change, and to explore what it means for wetlands and people. IUCN Country Representative Ms Latsamy Silavong said "We are looking at the human role in driving the loss of biodiversity and climate change, and at what

we can do to find solutions."

"Wetlands are vulnerable to human-induced climate change but, if we manage them well, wetland ecosystems and their biodiversity also have a role to play in the mitigation of climate change. They will be important in helping humans adapt to climate change through their critical role in ensuring water and food security," she said.

The IUCN in Vientiane promoted the day through local media to raise awareness and understanding of the importance of wetlands.

Last week, the organisation invited local media to the capital to a press conference to mark the day at a central wetland area in Nongtha village, Chanthabouly district.

Vietnam funds school expansion

Times Reporters

Vice Mayor of Hai Phong City in Vietnam, Mr Do Trung Thoai, last week donated about 230 million kip (500 million dong) for the expansion of Pakchaeng Secondary School in Vientiane province.

Mr Do presented the funds to a provincial authority official, Mr Vanxay Songsayou, during a visit to the province on January 28, according to a report from the province.

The ceremony was also

attended by Vietnamese Ambassador to Laos, Mr Ta Minh Chau, provincial officials, and school teachers and students.

The funds will be used to build six classrooms to cope with the increasing number of students at the school.

"This generous support from Hai Phong City will help to develop education in Laos and enhance the special solidarity and cooperation between Laos and Vietnam," Mr Vanxay said.

Mr Do also presented

10 tonnes of rice seeds to the Pakchaeng Agriculture Research Centre which will distribute the seeds to farmers in the province.

Mr Do said Hai Phong City hopes to further contribute to the province, particularly in improving teachers' knowledge and skills and developing economic infrastructure.

In 2006, Hai Phong City donated 2 billion dong for the construction of Pakchaeng Secondary School, as well as 29 computers for students.

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