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Vientiane Times

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finished in December; the two-storey building can house 57

course is six months. The centre takes students all year

to improving working conditions in Laos," he added.

carried a lot of traffic and helped to relieve congestion on the main thoroughfares.

New rice cultivation method proves fruitful

□ EKAPHONE PHOOUTHONESY

LAOS has conducted successful trials of rice cultivation using a method that requires less water but achieves higher yields than traditional farming practices, according to a senior irrigation official.

Director General of the Irrigation Department, Mr

Khamphad Sourinphoumy, said on Friday that experiments run by the Rice Intensification System in Vientiane, Luang Prabang and Xayaboury provinces had achieved yields of six to eight tonnes of rice per hectare.

Traditional methods of cultivation typically produce 3 to 4 tonnes per hectare.

The Irrigation Department introduced the new system in late 2007 with support from Pro-net 21, a Japanese non profit organisation, and the Japan International Cooperation Agency.

Mr Khamphad said the Lao government was planning to introduce the rice intensification system around the country because it provides farmers with greater yields from fewer resources, such as water and fertiliser.

"The introduction of this system will bring great benefits to our country as well as to impoverished farmers," he said during his opening remarks at the Workshop on System of Rice Intensification, held on Friday

at the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry in Vientiane.

A senior project official, Mr Sailom Chansouk, said the workshop was part of efforts to circulate information to farmers about the success of the project.

Rice specialists from several provinces attended the workshop, where they listened to a presentation on the implementation of the rice intensification system in Indonesia given by a Japanese expert, Mr Shuichito Sato.

According to the organisers of the workshop, Mr Sato is devoting much of his time and energy to the system of rice intensification. After three years of farm comparison trials, some farmers in Indonesia have been able to increase their rice yields, even though they used 40 percent less water and half the amount of fertiliser they would normally apply.

Mr Sailom said the Irrigation Department hoped that provincial agricultural officials attending the

workshop would share what they had learned with local farmers, adding that the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry would issue a notice to its district offices to promote the new method of cultivation.

He said government leaders had visited trials of the new system in the provinces and expressed their satisfaction at the success of the pilot project. They had also urged the sectors involved to introduce the system to farmers nationwide.

Mr Sailom said that once the system was in widespread use, it would help Laos to increase rice yields from the present 2 million tonnes per year to 3.3 million tonnes annually in 2010.

The rice intensification system was initiated by Fra. Henri de Laulanie in 1980, and was introduced into Indonesia in 1990. About 18 countries, including China, now make use of this method of farming, which can generate seven to 10 tonnes of rice per hectare.

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