

New font drives IT development in Laos

The government yesterday officially authorised the use of the Phetsarath font for ICT users and multimedia projects.



Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Defence Lieutenant General Duangchay Pichit and Mr Hiem Phommachanh (centre) officially announce the Phesarath font.

The launch to promote the use of the font was hosted by the Ministry of Science and Technology in cooperation with the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications.

Minister of Post and Telecommunications Mr Hiem Phommachanh said the font was an important technological advancement for Laos and that the Party Central Committee had advised its development. IT technology was advancing at a steady pace but because so much equipment is costly, many Lao people still had limited access to it.

"The main reason for designing this particular font is because there is no Lao alphabet on existing IT equipment, so some users are developing their own which they are integrating into software systems," Mr Hiem said.

The Phetsarath font was adopted by the government in 2009 but most ICT users could not adapt it to their computers or mobiles.

Mr Hiem said "The Ministry of Post and Telecommunications asked technicians to develop a software system of international standard that would enable the Phetsarath font to be like any other IT language and be accessed by local users."

During yesterday's pre-sentation, technicians explained to an enthusiastic audience how the font related to software programmes and how it could be used in conjunction with computers and mobiles.

Faculty of Science student Mr Arpixon said it would be great to be able to use Laos' own ICT language, and it would be better still if it could be developed so that users could integrate it into ordinary cell phones.

"Now we'd like you to develop a system that people like me with cheap phones can use."

An informal survey carried out by *Vientiane Times* showed that to send e-mails and chat on Facebook, most teenagers were using karaoke language or a similar one instead of Lao.

Mr Arpixon said the new font would entice ICT users to use the Lao language instead.

**By Souknilundon Southivongnorath
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