

Lao Media in Brief

The media plays a key role in shaping and promoting socio-cultural and economic development. It informs the public about government policies and criticises what goes wrong in the implementation of those policies. It gives a voice to the people. It is at the forefront of all campaigns to improve people's lives, protect the environment and promote peace and stability.

The Lao media is experiencing its own challenges with regard to the simultaneous development of globalisation, the information explosion and the rapid changes in technologies and methodologies used to generate and propagate information. Media is at the centre of all information generation, information dissemination and information interpretation.

History of Lao Media

The first Lao newspaper appeared in 1930 when a group of Lao and Vietnamese people living in Vientiane began publishing a one-page news bulletins in Lao. Their purpose was to build patriotism among the masses and encourage them to join forces with the people of the Indochina Peninsula in the fight for independence.

Today, thousands of journalists work for media organisations around the country, including newspapers, radio and television.

Print Media

There are 142 publications, including daily, weekly, monthly and annual magazines, as well as journals and news bulletins in the country. They are published in Lao, English and French. Most of them are produced in the Lao capital Vientiane, under the ownership of state bodies, institutions, public organisations and private companies.

There are now 11 daily newspapers: nine in Lao and two in English, including KPL News and Vientiane Times.

The daily Lao language newspapers are Education & Sports, Kongthap, LaoPhatthana, Pasaxon, Pathet Lao, SetthakitKankha, SetthakitSangkham, Security, and Vientiane Mai.

Three of the newspapers have launched a mobile service to provide information via news flashes in Lao and English, which is sent to mobile phones via SMS. Most media outlets in Laos have their own websites and social media addresses such as Facebook and YouTube.

Vientiane Times is published daily from Monday to Saturday. It set up an online subscriber access service at the Vientiane Times website in 2007. (www.vientianetimes.la).

The newspaper also launched a mobile service to provide information via news flashes in Lao and English, which is sent to mobile phones through the SMS services of four telecom companies.

Printing Houses

There are more than 105 printing houses across the country, including eight state printing houses and 97 private enterprises.

Most of the printing and page folding machines have been imported from Germany, Japan and the Republic of Korea. Each year these printing houses spend billions of kip importing ink and paper from various countries.

However, most people still send magazines or brochures to be printed in Thailand and Vietnam because of the higher quality methods used and the low prices charged.

Radio

Lao radio was launched in the 1960s and there are currently 61 radio stations scattered throughout the provinces, broadcasting on the FM and AM frequencies. These include state,

private and community radio stations. Each has its own editorial and technical board that produces educational and informational programmes. Some of the programmes are broadcast in local dialects.

Laos plans to switch from terrestrial analogue radio and television broadcasting to the standard digital system of Digital Terrestrial Multimedia Broadcast and to end analogue broadcasting in 2020, along with other ASEAN member states.

Television

Laos has six television channels, three of which are privately owned. There are 30 television transmission stations located in the bigger population centres around the country.

Lao National Television began broadcasting on December 2, 1983, in Vientiane. It transmits news programmes in French, English and some ethnic languages such as Hmong and Khmu. The Lao television channels provide information through the Thaicom 5 satellite, which enables the station to reach 23 countries in Asia as well as Canada and the United States of America.

A private television station, Lao Star Channel, was launched in April 2008 to provide entertainment and news for viewers around the country, owned by the Lao Ethnic Art and Culture Promotion Club. It is very popular amongst Lao viewers, both in Laos and overseas. In 2012, the Ministry of Public Security launched a television channel to provide news and entertainment for viewers around the country.

In 2013, the private companies TV Lao and MV Lao launched television channels offering sports news, entertainment and movies for viewers around the country.

Telephone

Laos has four telecommunication companies to provide fix line, mobile and internet service throughout the country.

Mobile phones are used by 91 percent of about the 5.6 million Lao population and most of these telephone users have access to internet. Lao people can use computers to access the internet through–dial-up, broadband, satellite, optic fiber, ADSL and wireless of WiFi, WiMax and USB air cards.

The Ministry of Post and Telecommunications plans to connect its Internet cable with the international gateway so that even greater access is provided. At present, there are six Internet service providers in Laos: Sky Telecom State Company, Planet, Lao Telecom, ETL, Beeline and Unitel and all of these internet service providers are partly or fully owned by the Lao government.

The 3G and 4G network is accessible in provinces nationwide, enabling people to use the Internet and other telecom services, according to a report from the ministry.

Satellite

Reception of direct satellite television programmes is increasing, in Vientiane and the provinces. In May 2002 a private cable television company began operating in Vientiane with more than 60 programmes accessible via satellite.

In 2007 another wireless television company began operations in Laos. Subscribers are on the increase along with the number of local and foreign private cable television companies operating in the larger towns.

People living in remote areas also enjoy access to satellite television and can view programmes transmitted from overseas. Those who speak French, English, German, Russian or Chinese can now enjoy programmes in these languages. The government's decision to

allow people full access to foreign media is one of the best reflections of the media freedom now evident in Laos.

The Lao Cable TV Company broadcasts 60 local and international channels. People in both remote and urban areas can also access satellite television via satellite dish and can view more than 60 channels transmitted directly from overseas. Several types of satellite dishes are available in markets around the country.

Lao Asia Pacific Satellite Co., Ltd. (LAOSAT) was incorporated on February 25, 2016. As the only satellite operator in Laos, LAOSAT is fully responsible for the commercial operation of the LAOSAT-1 satellite and is mainly engaged in satellite telecommunications, satellite television and WBCN services.

Internet

The Internet was officially launched in Laos in 1996 and is managed by the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications. Currently, there are six Internet service providers, and the number of users is increasing rapidly.

The number of registered Internet users in Laos is increasing rapidly, especially young people, and they have easy access the Internet.

Lao and foreigners alike have unlimited access to all Internet websites of countries around the globe. It is very easy to access mobile phone users over the Internet through the third and fourth generation wireless system (3G and 4G), which is run by seven Internet service providers, including 4 different telephone companies.

Some 36 percent of the Lao population have their own social media addresses, including Facebook, YouTube, What'sApp, WeChat, Line and Skype, which are widely used through all media communication devices.

To manage the information flows, the Lao PDR have adopted legal tools they included the Media Law, the Law on Prevention and Combating Cyber Crime, the Information, Communication and Technology Law, Telecommunications Law, Data Protection Law, Intellectual Property Law, and the Prime Minister's Decree on Information Management through Internet.

Media Institutions

A Media Institute runs training courses for media personnel to raise the level of their professional competence.

The Faculty of Letters at the National University of Laos has a section that began offering a five-year journalism course in 2005. This is the first time in the history of Laos that a full-length journalism course has been available.

Lao Journalists' Association

Established in 1968, the Lao Journalists' Association functions as an umbrella organisation which brings together editors, journalists, producers, camera operators and television and radio technicians with a view to sharing professional experience and organising training and development programmes for both editorial and technical personnel working in print and electronic media.

The association works through various means to attract overseas support for media training. Journalists have received training in both journalism and managerial skills.

Media Law

A Media Law was passed in 2008, with 11 charters and 67 articles. It was updated in 2016, with 9 charters and 99 articles.