

Lao People's Democratic Republic
Peace Independence Democracy Unity Prosperity

Lao People's Revolutionary Party
Politbureau

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Instruction
on the Development and Application
of Information and Communications Technology
in the Lao PDR

Currently, various types of telecommunications technology, namely landline telephones, mobile phones, microwave transmission systems, satellite and fiber optic communications systems, computer technology, hardware, software, and databases have been incorporated into a single information and communications technology capable of transmitting and receiving information, sound, and images. Information and communications technology has become a really important factor for public administration, national defense and public security, socio-cultural and economic development, trade, services, and international relations.

In the Lao PDR, the development and application of information and communications technology is at an early stage compared to other ASEAN states as well as developed countries. The ratio between telephones and population is as low as approximately 0.7 devices per 100 people. The numbers of those who know how to use computers is also low and concentrated only within major cities. The modern telecommunications network is not able to cover all districts and villages within the country. The numbers of television channels in the provinces do not sufficiently meet viewers' demands. There are insufficient telephone lines resulted in limited capability to transmit signals, especially signals used for accessing the Internet. The local area network (LAN), metropolitan area network (MAN), wide area network (WAN), and the Internet, which are parts of telecommunications technology, have not yet been constructed and utilized as a centralized and thorough system. The country has not used top-level Internet domains to exchange and upload information on different websites. Moreover, Laos lacks personnel possessing expertise in the area of information and communications technology.

In order to promote the development and application of information technology in the Lao PDR, the Politburo issues the Instruction on the Development and Application of Information and Communications Technology with the following contents:

*** Goals aiming for:**

- Having information technology used widely in all areas to become another main factor contributing to socio-economic, national defense, and public security development.

- Expanding the national telecommunications network to ensure increasing signals, high speeds, and good-quality transmission capacity at cheaper prices across the country; encouraging higher numbers of Internet users in our country.
- Freeing and strengthening hidden material and spiritual capacities of the entire nation; encouraging changes in supporting economic rapid growth and modernity; increasing competitiveness among our enterprises and supporting their openness for external cooperation as well as enhancing people's quality of life; contributing to the establishment of important primary factors preparing the country for transforming itself into a modern industrialized state.
- Ensuring that the national defense and public security forces protect and expand our nation's good cultural traditions.

*** Policies ensuring that:**

1. The application and expansion of information technology is a priority within the socio-economic strategy which serves as a driving force in accelerating industrial development and expansion, as well as narrowing the gap between our country and those already developed.
2. All areas ranging across the economic, cultural, social, and national defense and public security sectors shall use information technology in their work.
3. Favorable conditions for the application and expansion of information technology are created to support national telecommunications development which serves as an important socio-economic infrastructure ensuring the networks are capable of high speeds, good quality, and cheaper transmission of information.
4. Human resources in the area of information technology are built and expanded as the main decisive factor for the application and expansion of information technology.

*** Duties regarding the application and expansion of information technology in the Lao PDR:**

- 1. Use information technology widely and effectively throughout society.**

Party–Government and political–social organizations must pay attention to incorporating the application of economical and appropriate information technology into their activities for actual benefits, both within the short and long terms.

Consider the application and expansion of information technology as an important element in improving the administrative systems of Party–Government organizations aiming to enhance the effectiveness and quality of their work.

Party committees at each level must guide the establishment of necessary communications networks to ensure their responsiveness for public benefits, and to support the Party's guidelines and public administration. The Party should pay attention to establishing information networks for its central committee and for the Government, and enhance and guarantee the effective application of such networks.

Establish an electronic service development center to serve the sectors of finance (taxes–customs, treasury, auditing, etc.), banking, aviation, trade and public services (education, health care, libraries, etc.), and create necessary and proper conditions for an open participation in economic relations and cooperation with foreign countries.

Urgently implement the application and expansion of information technology projects in the areas of national defense and public security to regulate and modernize the armed forces; create a modern and responsive command system as well as equipping the armed forces with the ability to use advanced weaponry and military tactics to prepare them for potential conflicts; develop a modern communications technology to be used in wars for the purpose of defending the nation.

Mass media, newspaper, printing presses, and information service organizations must pay attention to ways of expanding electronic communication, and regularly and widely disseminate and educate society with knowledge related to electronic communication.

Enterprises must be highly attentive in investing in the application and expansion of information and electronic technology. They should consider these technologies as another fundamental method in improving public administration and replacing old technologies which will contribute to the production, restructuring, market openness, and improvement of competitiveness among enterprises.

2. Create favorable conditions for the application and expansion of information technology, and improve inspection measures to ensure the effective application of the technology.

Consider the telecommunications infrastructure as an important and priority socio-economic infrastructure to be invested in; give priority to the usage of ODA in utilizing and expanding information technology. Create necessary conditions for approved projects utilizing and expanding information technology to be operated based on the right pace and set work plans.

Pay attention to and support the use of domestic services and products related to information technology.

Define standards for news and information systems in each area. Create necessary conditions for exchange and application of integrated databases as well as exchange and application of both domestic and international information systems.

Set detailed systems and measures to guarantee safety in communications, primarily in the areas of public administration, national defense, and public security.

Promote and support the learning and upgrading of foreign languages for some people, especially the young. Develop measures and methods to help the Lao people in using information technology conveniently in the Lao language.

Create detailed standards for tasks related to information technology and implement salary and other policies for officials who work in this field. Emphasize the establishment and amendment of regulations and laws related to intellectual property.

3. Pay attention to properly building and using appropriate human resources

Increase the number and enhance the quality of officials in the area of information technology. Pay attention to promoting officials who specialize in information technology.

As of now, training courses for university and college graduates shall be organized in a proper way to ensure they have the necessary knowledge of information technology.

Strongly promote the application of information technology in the education sector. Actively study and organize long-distance learning to provide educational services to society. Ensure appropriate investment to expand computer networks within the major educational institutes of the country. Create favorable conditions to promote Internet connections among educational institutes.

Strongly encourage society to build human resources in the area of information technology. Promote both domestic and international organizations and individuals to contribute to the building and usage of human resources in the area of information technology.

Implement projects sending teachers/trainers to foreign institutions to enhance their knowledge in teaching; create opportunities for students, learners, and researchers in the area of information technology to study in foreign countries; implement proper policies towards talented and good students, including poor and disadvantaged learners, so that they can improve their knowledge and contribute to national development through the application of such technology in their home country.

4. Support the establishment of the modern national telecommunications network.

Continue to invest in constructing infrastructure for the national communications system comprising telecommunications and Internet systems to meet short-term and long-term demands.

Expansion and management of telecommunications and Internet systems must support the application and expansion of information technology within all areas of Government and society. At the same time, there must be comprehensive measures to prevent any act that exploits this technology for the purpose of destroying peace and safety, or damaging the nation's good cultural traditions.

Implement proper policies in promoting all economic sectors to actively take part in any competition in providing telecommunications and Internet services. Create favorable conditions for people to use quality telecommunications and Internet services more cheaply; implement proper policies in reducing service charges for organizations of the Party, Government, and those sectors related to education and scientific research.

5. Improve public administration in the area of information technology.

The Government should urgently improve administrative organizations related to telecommunications and information technology to ensure that this field is administered uniformly and appropriately.

As of now, organizations of the Party and Government at the central, provincial, Vientiane Capital, and special zone levels shall appoint officials within their leading committee to take charge of information technology work.

Create and promulgate necessary legal documents regarding the application, expansion, and management of information technology in order to keep up with the development pace of the technology; ensure efficient and productive investment avoiding any extravagance, leakage, or exploitation of the investment fund.

*** Implementation**

The Government shall guide the translation of contents of this Instruction into detailed 5-year, 10-year, and 20-year master plans on the application of information technology in our country; implement monitoring and inspection systems, and support the correct and regular implementation of set plans; continue to enhance the public administration system of the application and expansion of information technology, especially the management of the application and expansion of the Internet.

The National Assembly should reexamine necessary legal documents in order to amend, renovate, and plan to issue new laws to support the application and expansion of information technology in our country.

Party committees and authorities at each level shall pay close attention to guiding the translation of the contents of this Instruction into their scope of responsibilities. They should come up with measures for actively using and expanding information technology in their own work. This should be considered as an important regular function within the socio-economic development plan of their own organization.

Mass organizations shall contribute to encouraging the public and people at all levels to study and enhance their knowledge on information technology so as to collectively, actively, and widely use and expand such technology in our country.

Representative of Politbureau

Standing Member

[Signature and seal]

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