

**Source :**

**The Nation**

**Date :** 6 JAN 2018

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**No :**

**61005701**

**Lao govt speeds up access to electricity**

The Lao government has spent billions of kip in 2017 to install and expand the power grid in villages across the country to ensure that more households can have access to electricity.

The Ministry of Energy and Mines reported that it received approval for investing 145.82 billion kip in 77 transmission line development projects last year.

In a report on the development of the energy sector in the first nine months of 2017, the ministry said it had spent 106.74 billion kip, or about 73.19 per cent of the total value of the projects.

"The approval of about 145.82 billion kip is mainly for the expansion and installation of low and medium voltage transmission line projects that is the responsibility of the ministry," the ministry's Office Head, Dr Daovong Phonekeo, said.

"Investments in the higher voltage power grid and substation development projects are mainly the responsibility of another sector, especially Electricite du Laos (EDL)," he said.

The ministry's report said Laos had a total power grid system of 57,897.17 km in 2017, compared to 54,690.87 km in 2016.

"This 57,897.17 km includes not only the low and medium voltage transmission lines, it also includes the high voltage power grid," Dr Daovong said. – The Vientiane Times