



Shanghai Institute of Technology's Laotian students take professional courses.



Laotian students look at a train model when visiting the institute laboratory.

to take measurements in all kinds of conditions.

"It was very hectic and sometimes we had to work until midnight," he said. "But I felt happy because I could practice what I had learned at the university and learned what I could not learn from books. I know that in the future, Laos will need all kinds of talent related to railways. So we need to learn as much as possible."

Though they have traveled along the railway by engineering vehicles, they were unable to take the first train as they had to receive orientation and due to pandemic restrictions.

Sou Xiong, another Laotian graduate who had studied in Shanghai, said they went to Luang Prabang Station on Friday to record how the train passed.

The graduates have also launched a WeChat account "China-Laos Railway Hands" or "China-Laos Railway Link" to promote the high-speed railway in Chinese and Lao.

"There were no modern railways in Laos and many people

don't know the importance of railways and the convenience they can bring, so we want to enlighten them with the truth," said Thor.

Thor said he had to spend more than 10 hours traveling from his hometown in Luang Prabang to Vientiane.

"But thanks to the China-Laos Railway, it takes only about two hours," he said. "What a big change!"

"In the future, people from Laos can take a trip to see the wonderful views in China, and also people in China can travel to my beautiful hometown," said Vongthor Chonglao, another one of the nine graduates.

To express their gratitude for China's help and excitement by the launch of the railway, the nine students wrote a letter to Chinese President Xi Jinping, expressing their wish to serve the development of the railway and the friendship between China and Laos.

The letter was mentioned by Xi at the launch ceremony of the railway on Friday.

Xi said that the future of China-Laos friendship lies in the youth, and the foundation of connectivity lies in mutual understanding. He said China is willing to cultivate more talent for the China-Laos friendship road.

Xi's speech was sincere and inspiring, the students said, adding that it gave them great encouragement.

The speech also triggered heated discussion among local authorities and scholars.

All the nine graduates said they will study harder and work diligently to maintain the China-Laos Railway as well as bilateral friendship.

"The China-Laos Railway is the flagship of the BRI, and also one of its most successful models," Huang Renwei, deputy dean of the Fudan Institute of Belt and Road & Global Governance said, underlining the significance of the railway's opening during a discussion about the R&D, hosted by the college on Saturday.

Huang said the railway will not only improve the infrastructure in Laos, but also "shorten its distance" from other countries.

"From Vientiane to Kunming, it took about 30 hours, now it takes only 10 hours and in the future, it will further be shortened to six to seven hours," he said. "It will help enhance economic exchanges and industrial connection between Laos and China. China's huge tourist flow will also help improve tourism in Laos significantly."

"The railway will convert Laos from a land-locked country to a land-linked country, as it will stretch to Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore in the future, boosting its development further."

Li Wenju, Party Secretary of the School of Railway Transportation

of the Shanghai Institute of Technology, said the school will continue cooperating with Laos in cultivating railway talent, and extend the service to other BRI countries, via not only education for students, but also training for staff and cooperation on research, such as preventing and reducing natural disaster damage on the railways.

Meanwhile, the college announced the setting up of an international research lab for the China-Laos Railway in cooperation with other bodies such as

the Shanghai People's Association for friendship with foreign countries.

"We must make good use of the resources of the many universities, bases, platforms, and open windows in Shanghai to further contribute to the construction of the BRI," said Chen Jing, head of the Shanghai People's Association for friendship with foreign countries.

Early this year, a BRI Lancang-Mekong Railway connectivity center was established to serve the railway construction, according to Chen.



Students exchange engineering survey technology.



**Xi happy to receive graduates' letter**

Chinese President Xi Jinping said at the launch ceremony of the China-Laos Railway last Friday that he was glad to receive a letter from some Laotians who had studied in Shanghai and wished to make a contribution to the operation and development of the railway.

The nine Laotians are graduates from the Shanghai Institute of Technology, and the letter was written on November 18 to

express their gratitude to China for preparing them as the first group of engineers and technicians to serve the first modern railway in Laos.

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