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Cambodia has been put on a global money-laundering list over worries that the country is susceptible to hiding ill-gotten gains. The country has never prosecuted a money laundering case and has been inscribed on a “grey list” put together by the Paris-based Financial Action Task Force (FATF). Inclusion on the list could hit international investment and trades flows to Phnom Penh. The FATF is an inter-governmental watchdog with the aim of “combating money laundering, terrorist financing”, according to its website. Cambodian authorities said they did not want to comment on its inclusion on the list with a spokesperson referring the Reuters news agency to the National Bank of Cambodia. The bank did not respond to a request for comment from Reuters. The country “really runs the gamut”, according to FATF president Marshall Billingslea, describing “significant deficiencies”, Reuters reported. He added that the government had made commitments to address the problem. Addition to the “grey list” comes as Cambodia also faces the loss of special trade treatment from the European Union in relation to the country’s human rights record. The country had in 2017 been assessed as part of a FATF “mutual evaluation report” taking into account Cambodia’s efforts to tackle terrorism financing and money laundering. Several criticisms were raised by the report including the fact that Cambodia had never ever prosecuted a money-laundering case.

Corruption

The FATF report described “high levels of corruption” within the country’s judicial system, saying the authorities had “made minimal use of financial intelligence”. Cambodia’s thriving casino and real estate sectors had not been overseen by the Cambodian Financial Intelligence Unit, despite the UN Office on Drugs and Crime having long since identified the sectors as highly exposed to money laundering by organised crime. Inclusion on the “grey list” also marks a regression as Cambodia had previously been removed from the global money-laundering list in 2015.

The toughened stance on Cambodian financial flows comes as more challenging trade conditions hit the Southeast Asia nation. Tariff-free trade with EU in doubt. The EU this month started a 16-month process which could potentially result in Cambodia being cut off from the EU’s “everything but arms” trade programme. The special trade regime enables the world’s poorer countries to sell goods tariff-free into the EU bloc. The EU took action after Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen’s ruling party won a landslide general election, taking every seat in parliament. Ahead of the vote, Cambodia’s main opposition party was made illegal and its leader was arrested.

Hun Sen’s government has also been criticised for silencing the media and clamping down on free speech. The EU is the country’s biggest trading partner representing 45 percent of exports in 2018. Cambodia’s textile factories employ some 700,000 workers and clothes are a large part of exports to the bloc accounting for almost 5 billion euros. Twelve countries are on the FATF list and Cambodia joins North Korea and Iran, who are categorised under a tougher regime

Source: <http://en.rfi.fr/asia-pacific/20190224-cambodia-slapped-global-money-laundering-list-paris-based-watchdog>

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The Ministry of Education and Sports, ChildFund Korea and ChildFund Laos are extending their support to scale up access to basic education in 62 schools in Huameuang district, Huaphan province. The Scaling-up Access to Basic Education in Laos project Phase 2 is supported by ChildFund Korea with a budget of more than 9.4 billion kip (US\$1.1 million) and will run from 2019-2021. A Memorandum of Understanding on the project was signed last week by the Deputy Director of the Education and Sports Department in Huaphan province, Mr Linanong Thongkhammy, and Country Director of ChildFund Laos, Ms Keoamphone Souvannaphoum. The goal of the project is to improve the basic education of girls and boys who experience disadvantages in completing their education by addressing the quality of teaching of early reading and Lao language in schools.

This will enable community engagement in children's learning, and providing reading materials, community-based reading festivals and book banks. Ms Keoamphone said "ChildFund looks forward to continuing to work in partnership with the Ministry of Education and Sports to improving quality access to education, with a focus on early grade reading in remote areas of Huaphan province." "Together with education partners at all levels, we hope to build on our experiences to further extend our innovative approach to increasing access, stimulating learning outcomes and improving future prospects for quality learning and transition in education among disadvantaged children, particularly girls in their later years of education." Improving access to and the quality of education are key goals of the National Socio-Economic Development Plan for 2016-2020 and of the Education Sector Development Plan 2016-2020, which puts an emphasis on the expansion of early childhood education and primary education whilst reiterating the need to improve the standard of education. ChildFund Laos has been working in Huameuang district since 2016 with the roll out of the Basic Education Quality and Access in Laos (BEQUAL) project, as well as partnering with ChildFund Korea to implement the ready for school and improving early childhood education project in the district. Reading skills, for example, are critical for a child's personal development. They are a key life skill that has direct bearing on children's schooling, as well as their future. ChildFund Laos, with funding support from ChildFund Korea, has determined that a 'scale-up' of activities is needed in order to reach the most educationally vulnerable and ensure that the gains under the BEQUAL project are fully realised.

By Times Reporters.

(Latest Update February 25, 2019)

Source : http://www.vientianetimes.org.la/freeContent/FreeContent_Child_fund_47.php

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New round of oil and gas exploration bids to be called soon



The Ministry of Electricity and Energy (MOEE) has announced that it will be calling for bids on onshore and offshore oil and gas blocks for this year. The announcement was made for 18 onshore and 15 offshore blocks in Rakhine State during the Rakhine State Investment Fair 2019 on February 22. MOEE Minister U Win Khine said the government is hoping to conclude the process by the end of next month. U Nyan Tun, deputy managing director of Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise, said the bidding this year will be more flexible in terms of conditions placed on production sharing and offer a clearer tender process. U Thaung Tun, the chair of the Myanmar Investment

Commission, had said during the Invest Myanmar Summit held in January, that the government is drafting new production-sharing contracts to attract more foreign investors. Currently, foreign companies are exploring 27 onshore block and 38 offshore blocks, according to MOEE. Discoveries have been made the A-6 block operated by MPRL E&P, Woodside Energy and Total E&P, AD-7 block operated by Posco Daewoo Corporation and Woodside Energy, and AD-1 block operated by CNPC International and Woodside Energy. The blocks are off Rakhine State. Myanmar has oil and gas resources and oil and gas bearing areas in Rakhine, Hukawng, Chindwin, Shwebo-Monywa, Central Myanmar, Pyay Embayment, Ayeyarwady Delta, Bago Yoma, Sittaung Valley, Mepale, Mawlamyine, Namyau, Hsipaw-Larshio, Kalaw, Rakhine Offshores, Mottama Offshore and Tanintharyi. Offshore areas of Rakhine, Mottama, and Tanintharyi are actively being explored. Onshore, central Myanmar, Pyay Embayment and Ayeyarwady Delta are being explored. Hukaung, Shwebo-Monywa, and Bago Yoma are little explored.

Source : <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/new-round-oil-and-gas-exploration-bids-be-called-soon.html>

24/02/62

China Focus: Economic Corridor to benefit people of China, Myanmar



At a fruit market in Wanding, Ruili, a county on the China-Myanmar border, workers are transferring watermelons and muskmelons from Myanmar to heavy trucks which will soon leave for Beijing, Shanghai and other cities in China. "Burmese fruit tastes good and enjoys great popularity among Chinese people," Said Liu Hongfang, a manager of the market. "About 400 Burmese trucks (3,000 tons) of fruit come and go in the market every day." Thanks to closer cooperation between China and Myanmar, the company has expanded its scale and business, built refrigeration houses in Wanding and worked with locals of Mandalay to grow watermelon. There are only about 400 km from Mandalay to Myanmar's border town of Muse, next to Ruili in southwest China's Yunnan province, but it would take the truck drivers two days because of the narrow and zigzag roads, according to Liu. "What's worse, if a traffic accident occurs, the fruit will rot on the road," she added. Fortunately, Liu's worries will be a thing of the past with the construction of a railway project linking Yunnan with Mandalay, which was proposed in 2017 as part of the plan of building the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor. Since 2018, progress has been seen in the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor program under the China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative, and the railway project was initiated last year, according to the second China-Myanmar Economic Corridor Forum held on Friday in Kunming, the capital of Yunnan. Addressing the opening ceremony of the forum, Su Wei, deputy secretary general of the National Development and Reform Commission of China, said that important projects including the New Yangon City project, Kyauk Phyu Special Economic Zone (SEZ) Deep-Sea Port project and China-Myanmar railway project have made significant progress. "Myanmar considers the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor be crucial to our broader efforts to promote economic and social well-being of our peoples," said U Tun Tun Naing, permanent secretary of the Ministry of Planning and Finance of Myanmar. The signing of the framework agreement on the Kyauk Phyu SEZ Deep-Sea Port project in November 2018 is a glorious chapter in the history of our collaboration, he said, adding that "this project is critical in enhancing regional connectivity, boosting the growth of local economies and strengthening the ties between China and Myanmar."

Zhang Yi, a Burmese student from Pu'er city in Yunnan, was employed by a Chinese company in Yangon, Myanmar when she graduated in 2015. A year later, she resigned and started her own business in the tourism industry because she believed that the Belt and Road Initiative would be crowned with success in Myanmar. Hearing about the progress of the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor, Zhang invested all the money she has made to expand her business and launched customized tour products and high-end business group reception in 2018. "More tourists will travel by train between the two countries after the railway project is complete," she said.

Source : http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/asiapacific/2019-02/23/c_137845134.htm

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Singapore company's advanced cut-bend-fabricate facility for steel rebar in Myanmar now fully operational



Singapore-listed HG Metal Manufacturing Ltd. (HG Metal) is expanding its steel business into Myanmar. The company is a premier steel stockist and manufacturer in Southeast Asia with close to 800,000 sq ft of warehousing and processing facilities in Singapore. It carries more than 3,000 types of steel products, of various dimensions and for a wide range of industries and applications. It also offers customised steel solutions for diversified industries including energy, transportation, marine, electronics and other sectors. In August 2018, HG Metal acquired 51.04pc of First Fortune International Co Ltd and subsequently entered into a joint venture with Fortune Peak Investments Pte. Ltd. and YNJ Engineering Co., Ltd. to establish and operate Myanmar's first advanced steel rebar Cut & Bend and Fabrication facility in Yangon.

Based in the East Dagon Industrial Zone of Yangon, the US\$12 million facility is now fully operational and is ready to serve the steel fabrication needs of large civil engineering and infrastructure projects around Yangon region. The facility undertakes the business of processing, fabricating and trading of steel rebars and other steel products with an annual processing capacity of 50,000 tonnes. "This facility represents the cutting edge of steel technology and adopts state of the art features gained through constant innovation for the past 30 years. Our close collaboration with our valued customers has enabled us to proactively respond to changing market needs and stay ahead of competition." said Mr. Shin Taeyang, CEO of HG Metal.

"Our competitively priced and extensive product portfolio for all industries are very popular in Myanmar. Scaling HG Metal in this region is our highest priority," he added. There has been an increase in construction work due to both the economic liberalisation that is happening in the country as well as the growth in infrastructure development. The government has initiated several mega-projects such as the Yangon Central Railway Redevelopment Project and the Yangon-Dala Bridge while also increasing the supply of housing units, and is now proposing an elevated railway project in Yangon. All of this activity is increasing the demand for high quality and competitively priced steel products. According to The South East Asia Iron & Steel Institute (Seaisi), Myanmar's annual steel consumption is expected to exceed 3 million tonnes in 2020 on an average growth rate of 8pc before reaching 5 million tonnes in 2025. Officiating the Grand Opening Ceremony of First Fortune International Co. Ltd. on 19th February 2019, Mr

Anthony Foo, Executive Director of HG Metal commented: “Once this JV facility is fully operational, HG Metal will be able to strengthen its presence in Myanmar and forge a stronger market position in providing best in class quality and reliability in all its products and service offerings in Myanmar.” HG Metal is committed to expand further in Myanmar, and will participate in the growth and development of Myanmar for the coming years.

Source : <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/singapore-companys-advanced-cut-bend-fabricate-facility-steel-rebar-myanmar-now-fully>

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Re-entry permits waived for migrants in Thailand for Thingyan



Myanmar migrant workers in Thailand who will be going home for the annual Thingyan water festival will be allowed free re-entry to Thailand, the Myanmar Embassy in Bangkok said on Thursday. As a result of talks between the Myanmar and Thai governments, the kingdom will allow migrant workers to go home for the holidays without having to secure re-entry permits from Immigration, the embassy said in a statement. All migrant workers can go home from April 5 to April 30 without having to pay to re-enter. But the embassy warned that workers who go home before April 5 and return to work after April 30 will still need re-entry permits from Thai Immigration. The Thingyan festival this year takes place from April 13-16. The embassy warned workers to make sure they have the proper documents, including passports, for travel. “I advise our workers to take care when travelling, as many car accidents happen during the holidays,” said Ko Saw Lin Aung, a volunteer for migrant rights affairs in Thailand. “They should avoid reckless drivers.” He also said that workers should make copies of their documents in case they get lost or damaged. The embassy asked the workers to pass through legal border crossings and not to carry prohibited items or materials..

Source: <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/re-entry-permits-waived-migrants-thailand-thingyan.html>

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Tuna exports likely to reach \$1b this year



HCM CITY — Tuna exports are expected to top US\$1 billion this year, up \$350 million from last year, according to the Việt Nam Association of Seafood Exporters and Producers. VASEP General Secretary TrƱờng Đình Hòe said exports grew by 10 per cent last year to \$653 million. Despite being affected by the EC yellow card warning for failing to make progress in fighting illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, the country managed to increase exports though the growth rate was lower than in the previous year, he said. Việt Nam exported to 105 markets last year, with the US, the EU, Israel, ASEAN, Japan, Canada, China, and Mexico being the major ones. The US topped with nearly \$230 million worth of purchases. Frozen tuna fillet was a key export item to the US last year as shipments of processed tuna increased significantly while those of canned tuna products fell, VASEP said. Việt Nam was the fourth largest supplier of canned and processed tuna products to the US behind Thailand, Ecuador and China, and the second largest supplier of frozen fillet after Indonesia. Tuna exports to the EU fell by 10.7 per cent in the fourth

quarter of last year, but thanks to good growth in the first three quarters, exports were still up 11.5 per cent from 2017 to \$158 million. Similarly, exports to Japan fell by 25.6 per cent in the fourth quarter, but overall exports were up by 1.7 per cent to nearly \$25 million. Frozen fillets was Việ̂t Nam's key export item to Japan. With their strong fishing capacity, the competitiveness and supply capacity of countries with "thousands of islands" were much higher than that of Việ̂t Nam, the association said. In the canned tuna segment, Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines, China, and Việ̂t Nam were the biggest global suppliers. Việ̂t Nam's market share fell sharply to just 2 per cent while that of Thailand was nearly 61 per cent and Indonesia and the Philippines's was 17 per cent each. Enterprises also imported tuna worth \$349 million last year, an increase of 31 per cent, to process for export. They imported from 49 countries and territories, with Taiwan, South Korea, China, the US, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, and Japan being the largest suppliers. — VNS

Source : <https://vietnamnews.vn/economy/505920/tuna-exports-likely-to-reach-1b-this-year.html#py73zgAwePil0613.97>

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