

- **China to increase Myanmar's rice export quota to 400,000 tonnes: MOC**
- **Foreign demand for Myanmar's drumstick tree on the rise**
- **National economy to slow to 7 pct: WB**
- **China to sign MoU on expanding Cambodian rice import quota**
- **Food prices the cause of mounting inflation in Laos**
- **Cabinet agrees to lower electricity price, orders action to strengthen economy**
- **FDI reaches record level in four months**

China to increase Myanmar's rice export quota to 400,000 tonnes: MOC

 Myanmar News | April, 25/2019

China has agreed to import 400,000 tonnes of rice from Myanmar via sea, increasing its import quota for Myanmar rice from 100,000 tonnes currently, U Khin Maung Lwin, assistant secretary from the Ministry of Commerce (MOC), told The Myanmar Times. "Rice can be shipped to China soon," he said. The development comes after the two countries discussed increasing the rice export quota for Myanmar to 400,000 tonnes at the 2nd China-Myanmar Economic Corridor Forum held in February in Yunnan Province, according to the Myanmar Rice Federation (MRF). During the forum, officials from Myanmar urged the Chinese to ink a formal trade agreement between the two countries for the export of rice and broken rice to China. "Broken rice is not included in this quota of 400,000 tonnes. The Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation is working on an MOU for General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine of the People's Republic of China (AQSIQ) registration for agricultural, livestock, marine and industrial products exported to China, after which broken rice can be exported to China via sea very soon," said U Khin Maung Lwin. In 2016, Myanmar was allowed export a quota of 100,000 tonnes of rice to China. The Chinese also said that while it encourages official exports of rice and broken rice at the border, it would take strict action against illegal exports, the MRF said. China is the main rice export market for Myanmar and most exports are conducted at the border. Other export markets are Europe, Africa and Asia. According to statistics

released by the MRF, Myanmar exported about 2 million tonnes of rice worth about US\$650 million from the start of April 2018 to the end of March 2019. The country earned up to US\$130 million from exporting over 450,000 tonnes of broken rice over the same period. More than 52pc of the exports was conducted by sea, while the remaining was traded at the border.

Source: <https://www.mmmtimes.com/news/china-increase-myanmars-rice-export-quota-400000-tonnes-moc.html>

Foreign demand for Myanmar's drumstick tree on the rise

 Myanmar News | April, 25/2019

Myanmar will export Moringa oleifera, or drumstick trees, to Japan for the first time from June onwards, said U Myint Ko, chair of Myanmar Drumstick and Moringa Producer and Exporters Association. Japan, China, Malaysia and Singapore have offered to purchase the drumsticks from Myanmar but Myanmar can produce only limited quantities of the tree, he said. The pods from the moringa tree resemble drumsticks. "We received offers to purchase the drumsticks. We cannot produce well to meet demand. There are only just over 200 acres of cultivated drumstick trees across the nation," he said. Moringa oleifera is a fast-growing, drought-resistant tree, native to tropical and subtropical regions of South Asia.[3] It is widely cultivated for its young seed pods and leaves used as vegetables and for traditional herbal medicine. It is also used for water purification. According to WebMD, Moringa is used to treat a host of ailments such as anemia, arthritis and other joint pains, asthma; cancer; constipation; diabetes; diarrhea; epilepsy; stomach pain; stomach and intestinal ulcers; intestinal spasms; headache;

heart problems; high blood pressure; kidney stones; fluid retention; thyroid disorders; and bacterial, fungal, viral, and parasitic infections. Moringa is also used to reduce swelling, as an aphrodisiac and to boost the immune system. Some people use it as a nutritional supplement or tonic. It can also be applied directly to the skin to cure skin ailments. Oil from moringa seeds is used in foods, perfume, and hair care products, and as a machine lubricant. The foreign countries have offered to purchase drumstick fruits and dried Moringa leaves from Myanmar because they use them as diet supplements. There are good prospects for drumstick trees, U Myint Ko said. Drumstick trees can be grown in any part of the country and they are most common in tropical regions like Magwe and Sagaing. The current price in the local market is over K70,000 per kilogram of dried drumstick leaves, and over K30,000 per viss of dried drumstick fruits. These can fetch higher prices if they are exported to other countries, according to U Myint Ko.

Source: <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/foreign-demand-myanmars-drumstick-tree-rise.html>

National economy to slow to 7 pct: WB



Cambodia News I April, 25/2019

Cambodia's economy will continue to experience robust growth, but will expand at a slower pace than last year due to weaker external demand, the World Bank concluded in a report released yesterday. In 2019, the Kingdom's economy will grow at 7 percent, easing from 7.5 percent last year, the World Bank said in its East Asia Pacific Economic Update. The slowdown is the result of concerns regarding high energy tariffs and logistics costs in the country coupled with concerns surrounding the unskilled

workforce, the World Bank suggested in the report. Cambodia's long-term outlook depends on the country's ability to absorb rising foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows while promoting domestic investment, it said. Cheaper energy and logistics costs, availability of skilled workforce, and improved supply chain linkage will be essential to remain competitive. "We expect global trade to slow down this year. Moreover, unlike last year when the country experienced fiscal expansion, in 2019 the government underwent fiscal consolidation. All in all, we expect growth this year to be slower than the last," said Ly Sodeth, senior economist at the World Bank in Cambodia, during a press conference held yesterday in Phnom Penh to present the report. The European Union in February started the process that could lead to the potential suspension of Cambodia's preferential access under the Everything-but-arms (EBA) scheme. The EU market currently accounts for more than a third of Cambodia's key exports including garments, footwear, and bicycles. "Losing EBA preferences, which currently provide Cambodia duty-free and quota-free access to the EU, would likely result in slower export growth," the report said. The report also addressed the relation with China. "Given Cambodia's heavy reliance on capital inflows from China, a sharp slowdown in the Chinese economy could dampen growth prospects." Speaking at the same conference, Andrew D. Mason, acting chief economist for East Asia and the Pacific at the World Bank, said Cambodia has to overcome this challenges to continue experiencing high growth in years to come. "Looking ahead, it would be important for Cambodia to continue to strengthen its competitiveness in the global market in order to maintain a high growth rate in the future," Mr Mason said. "This means it must strive to reduce the cost of doing business, improve the business environment, and,

most importantly, strengthen its human capital and the skills of its labour force. “In the short term, I would say, it is not worrying that we see a slight decline in national growth. Cambodia is facing important challenges when it comes to strengthening the business environment and strengthening the skills of its population so that it can move up the value chain and transition to an upper-middle income economy,” Mr Mason added.

Source:

<https://www.khmertimeskh.com/50597841/national-economy-to-slow-to-7-pct-wb/>

China to sign MoU on expanding Cambodian rice import quota

 Cambodia News **1 April, 26/2019**

China will agree to buy 400,000 tonnes of Cambodian rice in a memorandum of understanding that will be signed tomorrow in Beijing, according to the Cambodian Ministry of Commerce. The agreement will be signed by local company Green Trade, who will be representing the Cambodian Ministry of Commerce, and COFCO, China’s largest food processor, during a forum on the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). “Led by Prime Minister Hun Sen, the two sides will sign a MoU at the second forum of the Belt and Road Initiative to be held in Beijing on April 27,” the statement reads. According to the ministry’s statement, China agreed to buy 400,000 tonnes of jasmine, fragrant, and white rice from Cambodia from August 2019 to December 2020. It adds that the memorandum will become effective after the two parties implement a previous agreement, signed on Jan 2018, to sell 300,000 tonnes of rice. Hun Lak, vice president of the Cambodia Rice Federation, said the agreement is great news for the

sector. “It will allow us to expand trade with China,” he said. “In 2018, we signed a similar MoU with China to export 300,000 tonnes of rice,” he said, noting that Cambodia was not able to fulfill that quota. “Because we exported to other countries, we did not have enough rice to supply China to meet the quota,” he said. “This time, we will try to save more rice to send to China so that we can meet that quota.” The expansion of the import quota for Cambodian rice was announced by Chinese president Xi Jinping during a meeting with Mr Hun Sen in January. The announcement came a few days after the European Union imposed tariffs on Cambodian Indica rice. Mr Xi also said China will strive to boost trade with Cambodia to \$10 billion by 2023. Bilateral trade is currently at \$5.6 billion. Cambodia exported 75,214 metric tonnes of milled rice to China during the first quarter of 2019, a 59 percent rise compared to the same period last year, according to the Secretariat of One Window Service for Rice Export Formality. From January to March, China was the biggest buyer of Cambodian rice. It accounted for 44 percent of Cambodia’s total rice exports.

Source:

<https://www.khmertimeskh.com/50598158/china-to-sign-mou-on-expanding-cambodian-rice-import-quota/>

Food prices the cause of mounting inflation in Laos

 Laos News **1 April, 25/2019**

THE inflation rate continued to rise in March, with the Lao National Statistics Bureau attributing the growth of the annual Consumer Price Index (CPI) due to rising food prices, and not the depreciation of the kip as many people believed. The statistics bureau, which serves as a

department of the Ministry of Planning and Investment, on Tuesday posted the latest inflation report on its website, highlighting the causes of inflation. According to the report, which Vientiane Times obtained this week, the Consumer Price Index (CPI) rose to 105.19 points in March – a growth rate of 1.66 per cent compared to the corresponding period last year. This growth rate was higher than in February, when it was calculated at 1.57 per cent. The report also indicates that the driving force of inflation in March was the rising annual index in the food and non-alcoholic drinks category. In March, this index reached 104.41 points or a 1.27 per cent change compared to the same period last year. This increase in the CPI index made a significant contribution to the growth of inflation in March. This influence was due to the fact that the inflation weight domination was high, the bureau said in an executive summary of the report. The second driving force of the March inflation rate was the communication and transport category. In March, the goods and services category saw a 2.83 per cent change compared to the same period last year. Although this change was greater compared to the change in the food category, its influence on the inflation rate was low. The annual growth rate in the clothing and shoe category was cited as the third driving force of March inflation. This category index saw a 3.77 per cent change compared to the same period last year. ‘Inflation remains low’ The bureau’s report concluded that despite inflation continuing to increase in March, it remained at a relatively low level. According to the report, policy factors which may influence the inflation rate were orders by the commerce ministry and relevant sectors to suspend imports of pork from China and Vietnam following the outbreak of animal diseases there.

The price of pork saw a minor drop in March compared to February but was still seen as growing compared to the same period last year. One of the significant issues highlighted by the bureau was that the depreciation of the kip had little impact on rising inflation. This finding goes against public perception, which holds that because more than 50 per cent of the goods on sale in Laos are imported from Thailand the value of the kip has depreciated against the Thai baht, resulting in some degree of inflation. The bureau explained that most of the items imported from Thailand were electronic equipment, clothing and vehicles. It said the rise in price of these goods had no significant impact on the overall inflation rate in Laos.

Source:

<https://www.phnompenhpost.com/business/report-food-prices-cause-mounting-inflation-laos>

Cabinet agrees to lower electricity price, orders action to strengthen economy



Laos News | April, 26/2019

The government cabinet has agreed to revise the electricity unit price structure to lower the cost of electricity, as an incentive to boost investment and productivity. Cabinet members agreed on the move at their ordinary monthly meeting for April, which took place on Tuesday and Wednesday. The revised structure, which will be effective until 2025, will introduce lower power prices, the Prime Minister’s Office said in a press release. “The improvement in the electricity price [structure] will mean the cost of energy is cheaper and more reasonable than before,” it said. The revision will also ensure that investors in electricity generation are profitable so that investment in the sector is sustainable. Chaired by Prime

Minister Thongloun Sisoulith, the two-day sitting also ordered thorough action to review progress made in realising the eight measures adopted by the government to boost growth amid economic hardship. The measures include improving the currency policy and preventing inflation, improving the business environment, promoting small and medium enterprises, and efficient revenue collection. Ministries were told to identify shortcomings and recommend ways to overcome them. The meeting called for the relevant departments to indicate whether any existing regulations needed to be amended to better facilitate business operations, as well as review the progress made in reforming enterprises. The meeting approved a proposal that requested the excavation or felling of trees to clear space for development projects, including infrastructure such as electricity transmission lines and hydropower dams. In this regard, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry was entrusted to work with other ministries to inspect and draw up a felling plan in order to plug loopholes that enabled irregularities or personal gain. The cabinet meeting approved in principle a draft Prime Ministerial decree on a code of ethics for civil servants. The relevant sectors were told to revise the draft in accordance with recommendations made by cabinet members. The meeting also endorsed a Prime Ministerial decree on energy saving, which will provide a reference for energy saving to ensure efficient consumption, and minimise spending on energy and environmental impacts. Prime Minister Thongloun reviewed the work undertaken by the government throughout April. He said the government placed great importance on giving advice to address problems currently afflicting society, including road accidents, drug abuse and misconduct by state officials. The cabinet has also paid great attention to full and proper revenue collection and state expenditure.

Authorities in charge have pushed for the effective implementation of the business registration system in line with Prime Ministerial Order No. 2 to better facilitate registration and improve the business climate. Mr Thongloun and his deputies approved the design of railway stations to be built as part of the Laos-China railway in Vientiane, Luang Prabang and Vangvieng. The design of the 6th Laos-Thailand Mekong Friendship Bridge connecting Saravan province to Thailand's Ubon Ratchathani province was also approved. More than 17 investment projects have been approved via the central Investment Management and Promotion Committee. The government issued 188 pieces of legislation including prime ministerial decrees, decisions and announcements to facilitate socio-economic management.

Source:

http://www.vientianetimes.org.la/freeContent/FreeContent_Cabinet_96.php

FDI reaches record level in four months

 Viet Nam News **I April, 26/2019**

Foreign direct investment (FDI) in Việ Nam witnessed a significant yearly increase of 81 per cent to US\$14.59 billion in the first four months of the year, the Foreign Investment Agency (FIA) under Ministry of Planning and Investment announced on Wednesday. The result is the highest in the past four years. FDI disbursement also rose by 7.5 per cent from the same period last year to reach \$5.7 billion. Up to 1,082 new projects were granted licences with total registered capital of \$5.34 billion, up 50.4 per cent from the same period last year, while 395 existing projects receiving an additional \$2.11 billion, 94 per cent of the level from the corresponding period last year.

Meanwhile, capital pledged for stake acquisitions reached \$5.68 billion, triple the same period last year, the FIA said. Foreign investors poured their cash into 19 sectors. Manufacturing and processing remained the most appealing sector by attracting \$10.5 billion, accounting for 72 per cent of total investment inflow. It was followed by real estate with \$1.1 billion (7.5 per cent) and wholesale and retail with \$742.7 million (5 per cent). Hong Kong was the leading source of foreign investment with \$4.7 billion among 80 countries and territories investing in Việt Nam, nearly 32.5 per cent of the country's total FDI. South Korea ranked second with \$1.98 billion (13.6 per cent), and Singapore came next with \$1.87 billion (12.8 per cent). In the first four months of the year, Hà Nội lured the largest share of registered capital with \$4.47 billion, or 30.6 per cent of total investment. The capital was followed by HCM City with \$2.37 billion (16.3 per cent) and the southern province of Bình Dương with \$1 billion (7 per cent). Exports (including crude oil) of the foreign sector reached \$55.4 billion, a 4 per cent year-on-year increase and accounting for 70 per cent of the country's total export turnover. The sector's import turnover in the January-April period rose by 9 per cent compared to the same period last year to \$42.3 billion, accounting for 58 per cent of the country's total import turnover. The foreign sector enjoyed a trade surplus of \$13.1 billion in the four months. Vietnamese overseas investment hits \$150 million The FIA said in the first four months of the year, Vietnamese firms invested nearly \$150 million in foreign markets. Of which, 44 projects were granted new investment licences, totalling \$96 million while nine ones increased their investment by a total \$53.5 million. Việt Nam's overseas investment projects mainly focused on science and technology at \$81.7 million, accounting for 54.7 per cent of the total.

The banking sector took second place with total investment of \$36 million, making up 24.1 per cent. It was followed by the wholesale and retail sector with \$16.4 million, accounting for 11 per cent of total investment. Vietnamese firms invested into 23 countries and territories in the period. Spain lured the biggest amount of investment from them with a large scale project of \$59.8 million, accounting for 40 per cent of the total. Cambodia and Malaysia followed with \$37.9 million and \$14 million respectively

Source: <https://vietnamnews.vn/economy/519175/fdi-reaches-record-level-in-four-months.html#bt8HJtTH6VUZY8iy.97>