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## First banana shipment to China on the way



*Cambodia News | May, 10 /2019*

Cambodia yesterday began the process of sending its first shipment of bananas to the Chinese market, after five local companies were greenlighted by the Chinese government last month. During a ceremony attended by Agriculture Minister Veng Sakhon, 100 tonnes of bananas were stored at a warehouse in Phnom Penh, ready to be shipped to the Chinese market. No official date has been given as to when the shipment will take place. The bananas belong to all five companies that were granted permission to ship the fruit by the Chinese government – Longmate Agriculture, Long Sreng Hua Jian Agriculture Development, Green Island Agriculture Development, Sovann Reachsey, and Grand Land Agriculture Development. Banana will become only one of a handful of products Cambodian companies export to the Chinese market. Other products include milled rice, dried cassava and processed rubber. The movement follows the signing of a protocol on the exportation of bananas in August between China and Cambodia, an agreement that effectively allows Cambodia to ship the fruit to China. Minister Sakhon said at yesterday's ceremony the bananas will be shipped from Sihanoukville Autonomous Port directly to Shanghai. Cambodian yellow bananas will sell very well overseas, helping the country expand its exports, the minister said. "Exporting bananas to China will represent a significant contribution to the

development of the agriculture sector, and to national economic growth." Mr Sakhon said Cambodia is expected to ship 130,000 tonnes of bananas to the Chinese market this year. Phae Hok Chhoun, president of Longmate Agriculture, said his company is planting bananas on 400 hectares of land in Kampot province. He said his company expects to send 22,000 tonnes of fresh bananas to China in 2019, expanding to 33,000 tonnes a year by 2020. He said Longmate now employs more than 800 workers, and that it will hire an additional 1,500 this year and the next. Li An, economic and commercial counselor at the Chinese Embassy in Phnom Penh, said the Chinese market absorbs 4 million tonnes of bananas every year. He said that, given its favourable climate and geography, Cambodia is an attractive destination for Chinese investors eyeing for opportunities in the sector. Minister Sakhon urged Chinese investors to consider the local banana sector and said that other products with great potential include dragon fruit, mango, longan and bird nests. Mr Sakhon noted that Cambodia exported 350,000 tonnes of agricultural products in 2018, adding that this year the figure could rise to 500,000 tonnes. Cambodia exported 38,000 tonnes of bananas during the first four months of the year, he added.

*Source: <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/50602596/first-banana-shipment-to-china-on-the-way/>*

## Kampot pepper production to reach 90 tonnes



*Cambodia News | May, 10/2019*

Production of renowned Kampot pepper, one of Cambodia's only two products to be registered as a Geographical Indication in the European Union, will increase substantially this year, the Kampot Pepper Promotion Association said. The association projects a 69-tonne hike in yields, meaning that about 90 tonnes will be produced. However, the figure is lower than that of 2017, when more than 100 tonnes were produced, said Ngoun Lay, the association's president. "Despite unfavourable weather during the harvest season, we still expect yields to reach around 90 tonnes. So far this year, we have harvested about 70 percent of that amount," Mr Lay told Khmer Times. Harvest season runs from March to late June, he said. Mr Lay said three companies are now applying to join the organisation, which already has 35 companies registered as members. "We hope the new members will help us expand our market." He did not disclose the name of the potential members but revealed that each has placed orders for 2 to 10 tonnes of pepper. Mr Lay pointed out that about 50 percent of all Kampot pepper is shipped to the European Union, while about 20 percent is exported to other countries, primarily the United States, Canada, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Russia. The remaining 30 percent is consumed internally. Kampot pepper comes in three varieties – black, red and white – selling for about

\$15, \$25 and \$28 per kilogram respectively. The association said prices have not changed in the last four years. The Kampot Pepper Promotion Association works with 457 households planting pepper on 200 hectares of land.

*Source: <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/50602578/kampot-pepper-production-to-reach-90-tonnes/>*

## Government, World Bank partnering to improve nutrition



*Laos News | May, 10/2019*

The government and the World Bank have approved two new projects costing more than 451 billion kip (US\$52 million) that will jointly address high levels of stunting in the northern provinces. A project titled Reducing Rural Poverty and Malnutrition will lay the foundations of a national social protection system and support the delivery of a conditional cash transfer programme for improved nutrition. In addition, the Scaling-Up Water Supply, Sanitation, and Hygiene Project will improve access to water, sanitation, and hygiene services. Agreements on more than 234 billion kip (US\$27 million) in funding for the nutrition project and more than 216 billion kip (US\$25 million) for the water project were signed on Thursday by Deputy Minister of Finance Mrs Thipphakone Chanthavongsa and World Bank Country Manager for Laos, Nicola Pontara. The projects will be implemented in the provinces of Xieng Khuang, Huaphan, Phongsaly and Oudomxay, which suffer from stunting levels above

40 percent. According to an official report, childhood stunting is associated with poor health, delayed child development, underperformance in school, and eventually reduced employment opportunities, and thus contributes to keeping communities in poverty. Mr Pontara said “Investing in improved nutrition means building the nation’s human capital, which will help make Laos’ economic growth more inclusive in the future.” “We are pleased to support two projects in sectors that are critical to reducing child malnutrition. Stunting is a multidimensional phenomenon and it is important to tackle simultaneously both demand and supply factors to help the next generation of Lao children grow up stronger and healthier,” he added. The new social protection project will target poor households and provide a safety net through a cash transfer programme. These transfers will be conditional upon the adoption of improved health, nutrition, and hygiene practices, and will support the well-being of children during the critical first 1,000 days of life. The new water project will expand the delivery of water supply and sanitation in the same villages to tackle waterborne diseases that increase the risk of a child becoming malnourished. It will also strengthen the capacity of local authorities to monitor, evaluate, and provide technical support to communities to manage water supply and sustain good sanitation and hygiene practices. Mrs Thipphakone said the

government highly values the support of the World Bank, particularly for human and rural development. These projects will contribute to an improvement in living conditions and to poverty reduction by supporting access to improved water supply, sanitation and hygiene services as well as by providing a nutrition-sensitive social safety net to poor and vulnerable families. These two new projects complement other ongoing and upcoming projects funded by the World Bank in health, education, and diversified food production, which together target the same households in the four northern provinces as part of a multi-sectoral nutrition convergence approach.

*Source: [http://www.vientianetimes.org.la/freeContent/FreeContent\\_Government\\_107.php](http://www.vientianetimes.org.la/freeContent/FreeContent_Government_107.php)*

## Ring road construction to start in 2020: commerce ministry



*Myanmar News | May, 09/2019*

Phase one of the proposed Yangon elevated highway will begin construction in July 2020, according to the Ministry of Construction (MOC). The project is expected to be completed within three years. The ministry together with the Yangon regional government adopted the public-private partnership model for the Yangon Elevated Expressway (YEX) project. The proposal is a priority under the incumbent administration, which seeks to alleviate the severe traffic congestion in the commercial capital and improve connectivity for businesses and

communities. The highway project includes a four-lane elevated road of 47.5km which will link the south of Yangon, which includes Yangon Port and Thilawa Special Economic Zone, to the north side of the city, where the Yangon International Airport, Mingaladon Industrial Park and the Yangon-Mandalay Expressway are located. For phase one of YEX, a 27.5 km four lane ring road will involve connecting east and west of Yangon, as well as the Yangon International Airport. Last Thursday, MOC held a pre-bid conference for investors and announced that they need to submit proposals of the project this June for bidding purposes. The winning consortium will be announced in July or August. The construction ministry started inviting both local and foreign businesses to submit Expression of Interest (EOI) last May. In December 2018, MOC had selected ten local and foreign consortiums as prequalified bidders for the phase one of YEX. The 10 companies shortlisted as prequalified bidders include VINCI Highways from France and China Communications Construction Company as well consortiums comprising firms and joint ventures from Myanmar, Thailand, Japan and China. Notably, four Chinese companies have been included in the shortlist.

*Source: <https://www.mmmtimes.com/news/ring-road-construction-start-2020-commerce-ministry.html>*

## SMEs needs to identify their problems to develop



*Vietnam News | May, 10/2019*

HÀ NỘI — Small and medium – sized enterprises (SMEs) still face several difficulties in the context of rapid international integration and identifying their difficulties is critical for them to develop in a sustainable manner, heard a forum yesterday in Hà Nội. The forum was held by the Centre for Support of SMEs in the North (TAC) under the Ministry of Planning and Investment’s Department of Enterprise Development and Bizen Việt Nam Joint Stock Company. Lê Văn Khương, TAC’s Director, said that in today’s volatile business environment, SMEs encountered various difficulties because of their modest scales. “Each SME has their own problems and difficulties,” Khương said, adding that identifying SMEs’ weakness would be important to create solutions for them towards sustainable development. Khương said focus should be placed on providing training to SMEs to enhance their capacity and optimise resources. Quang Minh, chairman of Bizen Việt Nam, said the forum was a part of BKTalk – a platform where SMEs could discuss with experts to identify their difficulties and find measures for development. BKTalk also provides training and consultancy about corporate governance for SMEs. Experts at the forum said SMEs encountered with problems related to accessing banking credit, tax reporting, transparency in accounting, human resource

management and building brands. According to the Ministry of Finance's statistics, Việt Nam has more than 600,000 firms, nearly 500,000 of them private firms with 96 per cent of being small and micro scales. SMEs play a significant role in the country's socio-economic development, creating 1.2 million jobs and contributing more than 40 per cent of gross domestic product. Recently, the ministry proposed cutting corporate income tax rates on small and micro businesses from the current 20 per cent to 15-17 per cent. This aims to promote the development of SMEs so Việt Nam could have one million firms by 2020, a Government target. — VNS

*Source: <https://vietnamnews.vn/economy/519707/smes-needs-to-identify-their-problems-to-develop.html#KJumIPXBE2FbXd00.97>*

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