



- Durian yields to decrease World Bank to implement a \$25 million WASH project in Lao
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## Durian yields to decrease



*Cambodia News | May, 15 /2019*

Durian production in Kampot and Kampong Cham provinces will decrease this year due to unfavourable weather conditions, according to the provincial agriculture departments. Hean Ngon, deputy director of Kampot's agriculture department, said production will not be as high as last year. "The weather is too hot this year, which is not good for growing durian," he said. "Durian needs colder weather to grow properly." However, he said demand for the fruit remains strong. "After the harvest, many merchants placed the orders and we quickly sold out," he said. Mr Ngon said the fruit now sells for between 22,000 riel (\$5.5) to 25,000 riel (\$6.25) per kilogram. This is higher than last year, when it sold from 18,000 riel (\$4.5) to 20,000 riel (\$5), he noted. Sun Thavareak, director of Kampong Cham's agriculture department, also said yields are likely to decrease as a result of the weather. He said Kampong Cham's durian now fetches up to 25,000 riel per kilogram. The fruit is planted on 400 hectares of land in the province's Chamkar Leu and Stueng Trang districts, he added. Mr Ngon and Mr Thavareak said they wish to see the fruit attain geographic indication (GI) status in the near future, which will help protect its reputation. Op Rady, director of the department of intellectual property, told Khmer Times that Kampot durian is considered a potential GI product, but that the process of applying for the label has not begun yet. Besides

Kampot and Kampong Cham, durian is also grown in Kep and Battambang provinces. Cambodian durian is only consumed internally. The durian harvest season in Kampot runs from mid-April to June, while in Kampong Cham it begins in May and ends in July.

Source: <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/50604154/durian-yields-to-decrease/>

## Laos lowers target for trade value with South Korea



*Laos News | May, 14/2019*

Laos has reduced its trade value target including for both imports and exports with South Korea this year compared to the figure for last year after a drop in the annual trade value by both countries. Last year, the trade target for both sides was US\$94.1 million, of which US\$11.2 million was exports and US\$82.9 million was imports. But the total achieved was only US\$69.6 million, including US\$4.5 million worth of exports and US\$65.1 million in imports, according to the Ministry of Industry and Commerce. This year, Laos has set a target of US\$85.9 million, of which US\$4.9 million is exports and US\$81 million is imports. However, compared to the trade value between the two countries in 2017, this figure is higher. According to statistics from the Korean Embassy, following the re-establishment of diplomatic relations in 1995, the two countries have continued to deepen their cooperation in a range of areas. In the field of economics, Korea and Laos have witnessed a significant increase in bilateral

trade. Starting from just US\$10 million in 1996, trade volume surged in subsequent years. In terms of foreign direct investment, Korea invested as much as US\$751 million in total from 1989 to 2015. Regarding people-to-people exchanges, in 2007 only 13,000 Korean nationals visited Laos. But thanks to the Lao government's 15-day visa exemption introduced in 2008 and the launch of a direct flight in 2011, more and more Koreans have been visiting Laos, setting a new record each year (over 170,000 people in 2017). However, the number of Koreans visiting Laos plummeted by 32 percent in the first three months of this year compared to the same period in 2018 according to the Tourism Development Department of the Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism. With regard to political cooperation, immediately after the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1995, the two countries opened embassies in Vientiane and Seoul, respectively, in 1996 and 2001. Since 2004, all three of the previous South Korean presidents have visited Laos, which is a demonstration of the deep interest in further strengthening bilateral ties.

Source: <http://annx.asianews.network/content/laos-lowers-target-trade-value-south-korea-96591>

## Petrol prices anchored by strengthening kyat: officials

 Myanmar News | May, 14/2019

The strength of the Myanmar kyat has been a key factor in helping go stabilise local petrol prices at a time when global oil prices have become increasingly volatile. Since the start of the year, oil prices have risen on the back of US sanctions on Iran, a major oil-producing nation. As fuel is mostly imported in Myanmar, that has led to a K200 and K100 increase in the price per litre of gasoline and diesel respectively, between January 1 and May 9, officials at local gas stations said. Global oil prices hit US\$62 per barrel yesterday on supply disruptions in the Middle East and as trade tensions escalated between the US and China. This is up by around 35 percent since the start of the year, according to Bloomberg data. During the period, the exchange rate was relatively stable at K1537 per dollar yesterday compared to K1546 per dollar on January 2. That has helped to ease the logistics and import costs of fuel, said U Tin Aung Kyaw, manager at Kyaw San Company, a fuel importer and trader. "As world prices are increasing, local prices have been rising too. It is a relief that the foreign exchange rate is stable. Otherwise, one litre of gasoline may well have risen to over K 1000," he said. Petrol prices are currently K895 per liter of 92 Ron Octane, K970 per liter of 95 Ron Octane, K1005 per litre of diesel and K1015 per liter of premium diesel. At the start of the year, prices were K710, K800, K900 and K910 per

litre, respectively. “The current fuel supplies were imported before April. If oil prices decline from now and the exchange rate remains stable, local petrol prices may decrease in the months ahead,” said U Tin Aung Kyaw. Last November, the prices of 92 ron was K1045, 95 ron was K1095, diesel was K1,090 and premium diesel was K1100 per litre. During that time, crude oil was US\$76.41 per barrel and the exchange rate was K1565 per US dollar.

Source: <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/petrol-prices-anchored-strengthening-kyat-officials.html>

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## New financing to enhance support for women-led SMEs



*Vietnam News | May, 14/2019*

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has received US\$20.2 million from the Women Entrepreneurs Finance Initiative (We-Fi) to support women-led small and medium-sized enterprises (WSMEs) to access critical financing and training in Viêt Nam and the Pacific. The grant – the second that ADB has received from We-Fi – will finance the Women Accelerating Vibrant Enterprises in Southeast Asia and the Pacific (WAVES) programme, which aims to promote inclusive and sustainable growth and development through women’s businesses and entrepreneurship. Approximately 5,000 women-led SMEs from Viêt Nam and the Pacific will benefit from the 5-year programme. “Women’s businesses have a crucial role to play in the Asia Pacific region’s efforts to achieve inclusive and sustainable

development, but social and economic barriers will have to be addressed for women to realise this potential,” said ADB Social Development Specialist (Gender and Development) Keiko Nowacka.

“For ADB, We-Fi is an opportunity to help accelerate progress on gender equality and challenge the entrenched status quo that prevents WSMEs from flourishing.” Women-led businesses comprise about 60 per cent of all micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises in Asia and the Pacific. However, these enterprises face capital constraints, which hamper their growth and development, while the women heading these businesses have limited access to business training and to targeted government support. The WAVES programme will address these constraints by focusing on the three areas of WSMEs’ development – access to finance, capacity development, and enabling environment. The programme will improve WSMEs’ access to finance through innovative financial approaches including performance-based pricing in Viêt Nam and the first gender bond in the Pacific. This is important given that Asia and the Pacific has one of the largest global SME financing gaps, with 59 per cent of the gap attributed to credit constraints faced by WSMEs. In Viêt Nam, the gender financing gap is estimated by the International Finance Corporation to be at \$1.19 billion. National partners including Government agencies, civil society organisations, and women’s business associations, meanwhile, will be mobilised to support the design and implementation of gender-responsive regulations, policies, and action plans to

foster a more conducive environment for women-led businesses to thrive and expand. The WAVES programme will focus on capacity development of women through financial literacy and business acceleration programmes, mentorship, and networking opportunities, with a view to equip them with the necessary skills to run and expand their enterprises. Last, WAVES will contribute to strengthening evidence and data on WSMEs in order to better inform policies and interventions moving forward. In April 2018, ADB received a \$12.6 million grant from We-Fi to promote women entrepreneurs in Sri Lanka. ADB has been investing in women's entrepreneurship in the Asia and Pacific region, as part of its commitment to advancing women's economic empowerment, which is one of the operational priorities of its newly adopted Strategy 2030. By 2030, it is expected that 75 per cent of all ADB projects will promote gender equality. We-Fi is governed by 14 founding contributing countries and is managed by the World Bank. It aims to mobilise more than \$1 billion in commercial and international financial institution finance to afford women entrepreneurs access to debt, equity, venture capital, insurance products, and other opportunities to link with domestic and global markets. The aim is to improve the business environment for women-owned or led SMEs. ADB is committed to achieving a prosperous, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable Asia and the Pacific, while sustaining its efforts to eradicate extreme poverty. In 2018, it made commitments of new loans and grants amounting to

\$21.6 billion. Established in 1966, it is owned by 68 members - 49 from the region. — VNS

Source:<https://vietnamnews.vn/economy/519905/new-financing-to-enhance-support-for-women-led-smes.html#zbMc6Hrh1r5g4cVZ.97>

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