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Plans to export longan to Thailand well under way



Cambodia News | May, 21 /2019

Cambodia hopes to start exporting longan to Thailand in the near future, with the two countries planning to sign an agreement on phytosanitary requirements. Longan is poised to become the second agricultural product officially exported to Thailand following mango. Ly Sereivuth, chief of the plant quarantine office at the General Directorate of Agriculture, said Friday that work on phytosanitary technical documents is being conducted. “We are now preparing the technical documents to meet phytosanitary requirements in the Thai market, and we expect to complete this work soon,” Mr Sereivuth said during a workshop on phytosanitary procedures for export, import, and the transit of agriculture goods. “At the present stage, we are conducting laboratory tests to identify pests that affect the crop. “Once this work is completed, we will send our results to Thai authorities to be reviewed,” he said, adding that after the review, Thai experts will visit Cambodian farms to conduct inspections. Once inspections conclude, the two parties will sign a protocol on phytosanitary requirements, paving the way for the first shipment of Cambodian longan to Thailand, according to Mr Sereivuth. According to the General Department of Agriculture, longan plantations are found all across the country, covering 8,816 hectares. In 2018, yields amounted to 19,218 tonnes. Battambang, Pailin, and Kampot are the

biggest producers with yearly yields of 7,776, 7,735, and 1,496 tonnes, respectively. Un Theng, representative of an agricultural community in Pailin province, said the fruit is grown across the province, with annual yields of 7,000 tonnes. He said the fruit now fetches from 4,000 riel (\$1) to 5,000 riel (\$1.25) per kilogram, adding that it is mostly bought on-site by visiting Thai merchants. “We asked the General Department of Agriculture to conduct work on phytosanitary requirements so that the fruit can be exported legally to Thailand.” However, even after the countries sign the protocol, Mr Theng said exporting the fruit will be troublesome. “The General Department of Agriculture would likely require that we have a certificate for every shipment. However, we export the fruit on a daily basis and cannot wait to obtain the certificate because then the fruit could spoil,” he said. “We want to be able to ship as much as we want with just one certificate,” he said. He noted that a Chinese company is now building a longan processing and treatment factory in the province. “As far as I know, the company will purchase our longan. We will be able to choose: we can sell to the Thais or to the Chinese,” he said, adding that the factory is now 80 percent complete. According to the General Department of Agriculture, last year Cambodia exported 4.5 million tonnes of agriculture goods – mostly rice, rubber, and cassava – to 80 countries.

Source: <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/50606065/plans-to-export-longan-to-thailand-well-under-way/>

Internet users up by almost half a million in Q1



Cambodia News | May, 21/2019

More than 330,700 SIM cards were registered during the first three months of the year, while the number of mobile internet users went up by nearly 490,000, according to the latest report from the Telecommunications Regulator of Cambodia (TRC). The number of landline phone users decreased by 4,791, while fixed internet subscribers grew by 27,688, TRC said. According to the report, the number of mobile phone connections is now equivalent to 121.2 percent of the country's population while mobile internet users represent 85.6 percent of all Cambodians. TRC spokesman Im Vutha said the number of internet users keeps increasing every year but growth in the number of mobile phone connections is decelerating. "We see that the number of mobile phone SIM card users increased only slightly because now there are more SIM cards than people in the country, so the market is saturated," Mr Vutha said. According to the report, there are now 19.7 million mobile phone connections in the country, while the country's population is 16.2 million. "The opposite happens for internet users. We see yearly increases of 15 to 20 percent, which means that the market still has room to grow." Mr Vutha noted that internet service is generally only available in urban centres. "Because the Internet is growing fast, we see a lot of investment in the sector, even in 5G," Mr Vutha said. "But we are still lacking

basic infrastructure, particularly in rural areas, so we need investment in these locations." Figures from TRC showed that internet users (fixed and mobile) reached 13.6 million by the end of 2018, up from 20,402 subscribers in 2008. There are now six mobile service providers in Cambodia – Cellcard, Smart Axiata, Metfone, Seatel, Cootel, and qb – and 34 internet service providers. Asked if there are too many mobile service providers, Mr Vutha said that competition is good for customers as it puts downward pressure on fares and forces companies to come up with offers.

Source: <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/50606028/internet-users-up-by-almost-half-a-million-in-q1/>

Don't use cryptocurrencies, central bank warns



Laos News | May, 21/2019

The Bank of the Lao PDR has warned commercial banks, businesses and members of the public not to buy, sell or use cryptocurrency for money transactions as this practice is illegal. The central bank's Transaction System Management Department recently issued the warning after learning that cryptocurrencies such as Bitcoin, Ethereum and Litecoin have been advertised for use on social media despite the fact that the central bank has banned the use of these currencies. The department told banks and other financial institutions under the management of the central bank to strictly observe the announcement, which was issued in

October last year, according to a source at the central bank. The source said there was no security system in place to protect the users or customers of cryptocurrency transactions so there was no safety guarantee. It is also difficult for authorities in charge to manage the use of these currencies because transactions can be done in such a way that the sender and receiver of the currencies are unidentified. This increases the risk of the use of cryptocurrencies in money laundering. Financial institutions are advised not to transact or facilitate the purchase or sale of cryptocurrencies. According to the source, some groups are advertising the purchase, sale and use of cryptocurrencies for money transactions through commercial banks, enticed by claims that this will generate income in some way - a claim that the authorities say is untrue. A cryptocurrency is a digital asset designed to work as a medium of exchange that uses strong cryptography to secure financial transactions, control the creation of additional units, and verify the transfer of assets. In its October announcement, the central bank prohibits financial institutions from possessing, engaging in, or encouraging cryptocurrency transactions. These institutions have been banned from investment in and the purchase and sale of cryptocurrencies for their own benefit or the benefit of their customers. They are also prohibited from offering cryptocurrency exchange

services and creating a platform for cryptocurrency sale and purchase. Financial institutions are also prohibited from acting as brokers for their customers in cryptocurrency transactions among their customers. Financial institutions are also forbidden from encouraging or giving consultation to customers concerning investment in or the exchange of cryptocurrencies. Banks were told to be vigilant to ensure customers do not use their accounts for cryptocurrency transactions. The central bank also warned financial institutions to be aware that ill-intentioned groups might use their names and logos to advertise cryptocurrencies. Bank customers are not permitted to use any type of bank card, including credit cards, for the purchase of cryptocurrencies.

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

Foreign bank subsidiaries allowed to provide retail services



Myanmar News | May, 20/2019

The Central Bank of Myanmar (CBM) will allow foreign banks to open branches in the country to help local businesses gain access to financing, deputy governor U Soe Thein said during a press conference on May 17. This includes subsidiaries of foreign banks. "We will allow more foreign bank branches to open up to a suitable extent. Foreign bank subsidiaries will also be allowed in accordance with the law," he said. The development comes after

the CBM in recent months permitted the 13 foreign banks currently operating in Myanmar to open new branches and later removed restrictions prohibiting them from lending to local businesses. The restrictions were lifted to enable local businesses to gain better access to loans for expansion and to improve their financial conditions, U Soe Thein said. Foreign subsidiaries will be awarded more opportunities than branches. “Retail banking will also be permitted for subsidiaries. Foreign subsidiaries will have full permission to function as local banks,” said U Soe Thein. Existing branches of foreign banks will also be permitted to operate as subsidiaries. “The difference is a branch can be shut down easily if needed whereas for subsidiaries, which are set up separately, it can sell, transfer or divide the shares,” U Soe Thein said. Foreign banks have also been permitted to invest up to 35 percent of the total amount of capital if the local private banks want to establish joint ventures with them.

Source: <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/foreign-bank-subsidiaries-allowed-provide-retail-services.html>

New 145 MW power plant opens in Kyaukse



Myanmar News | May, 20/2019

A power plant capable of producing 145 Megawatts of power opened in Belin, Kyaukse Township in Mandalay on May 17. The power plant will use 30 million cubic feet per day of domestically produced natural gas from the Shwe offshore gas field. The plant opens a year after Power Kyaukse Company won the tender for the project under a build, operate

and transfer arrangement in May 2018, said U Win Khaing, Union Minister of Electricity and Energy (MOEE). Around 90 percent of the electricity produced by the plant will be distributed to the Mandalay region through the Mandalay industrial zone substation and Aung Pin Lae power substation. The region is the second biggest consumer of electricity in Myanmar. Mandalay is currently producing a total of 1396MW of electricity through hydro and other gas-powered projects. This is enough to supply power to the region and the surplus is being distributed to other regions and states, U Win Khaing said. Around 60 percent of Mandalay region - 30 cities, 3,632 villages and more than 780,000 households – currently have access to electricity. This will increase to 65pc in 2020, according to the MOEE. “Power consumption in the region has increased in tandem with higher living standards. Around 1000 more villages at the fringes still require access to electricity. We are trying to provide electricity to them as well,” said regional chief minister U Zaw Myint Maung. At the opening ceremony of the plant, State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi said access to electricity is one of the basic requirements for the nation’s development. Currently, less than half the country enjoys that access. “We expect to be able to supply 50pc of the requirements by the end of this year. We have been trying from 30pc in 2016 to 50pc by the end of this year. We expect Myanmar to be fully electrified by 2025,” she said. U Win Khaing said he expects full electrification in 2030 and despite an increase of

350MW in power production this year, the shortage was 400MW. Thus, the country needs to produce 1500 MW more power in the coming year.

Source: <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/new-145-mw-power-plant-opens-kyaukse.html>

Vietnamese coffee exports plummet on global headwinds



Vietnam News | May, 21/2019

HCM CITY - Việt Nam's coffee exports have fallen in both volume and value terms this year, according to the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development.

It exported 629,000 tonnes worth US\$1.1 billion in the first four months, a year-on-year decrease of 13.4 per cent in volume and 22.5 per cent in value. The trend is forecast to continue this month, the ministry said. Nguyễn Quốc Toàn, director of the ministry's Agro Processing and Market Development Authority, said global prices fell further this month to around US\$1,295 per tonne on average from \$1,679 in April. Abundant supply and low demand, as well as the effect of the escalation of the US-China trade war on many markets have pulled prices down. In the domestic market, prices have fallen to below VNĐ30,000 (\$1.29) per kilogramme last week, the lowest level in the last 10 years. According to the Việt Nam Coffee and Cocoa Association, exporters have been facing fierce competition from other major exporting countries. Exports to traditional markets such as the US and Germany dropped respectively by 19.8 per cent and 13 per cent in the first four months of the year, Nguyễn Việt Vinh, the

association's general secretary, said. Vietnamese exports faced great competition from Brazil and Colombia in these two markets, he said. Exports to other markets such as Japan, Algeria, South Korea, France and India had also fallen significantly, he said. Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development Nguyễn Xuân Cường said Việt Nam is the world's second largest coffee producer, but since its prices greatly depended on global prices the domestic industry was unstable. Around 90 per cent of exports were raw coffee, making it difficult for local exporters to build brands for their products, he said. In addition, the sector's weakness in all areas from the production to trading was one of the main reasons the country was unable to influence global coffee prices, he said. To overcome this, the coffee industry needed to change its production methods with increased use of technology to ensure quality, he added. According to the association, with importing countries increasing technical barriers for coffee products, ensuring quality has become imperative. In addition to planting new high-quality strains to replace old and stunted coffee, the main coffee growing localities should enhance the use of technology in all stages from planting and harvesting to drying, preserving and processing, it said. Cường said: "New free trade agreements such as the EU-Việt Nam FTA and the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) will open opportunities for Vietnamese firms to boost exports thanks to lower

import tariffs, especially on processed coffee products. “Therefore, Vietnamese enterprises need to seize this opportunity.” He also urged them to focus on improving quality, diversifying and increasing exports of high-value processed products. The coffee industry has carried out a restructuring programme to improve its competitiveness by improving productivity, quality and value. **Cuờ**ng said the sector would not expand the area under coffee until 2030, but focus on improving value addition, productivity and linkages in the value chain. The programme envisages having more than 80 per cent of raw coffee processed industrially and 30- 40 per cent processed intensively and branded by 2030. — VNS

Source: <https://vietnamnews.vn/economy/520208/vietnam-coffee-exports-plummet-on-global-headwinds.html#duPlgmh0w7scP16s.97>
