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PTT keen to export Cambodian crude in future



Cambodia News | 14 October, 2019

PTT Public Company Limited, a Thai state-owned and SET-listed oil and gas company, last week expressed interest in exporting crude oil from Cambodia. Cheap Sour, director-general of the general department of petroleum, on Friday said that the firm was keen to export the Kingdom's crude oil during preliminary talks with the Mines and Energy Ministry. "We welcome their interest, but they haven't laid out any concrete plan on the move yet because this is just the first discussion and there will be more talks," he noted. When asked whether the Thai firm will work with KrisEnergy to export crude oil from Cambodia, Mr Sour said the matter will be discussed once KrisEnergy begins to extract its first drop of crude oil from the Apsara oil field. "There is a long way to go, but KrisEnergy and PTT will discuss what type of cooperation can be arranged," he said. "It could be through a bidding process or something else." The Singapore-based KrisEnergy, which explores for oil and gas in Southeast Asia, is now developing Block A in the Khmer Basin's Apsara oilfield and its first drop of crude oil is expected to be extracted late this year or early 2020. Last week, Mines and Energy Minister Suy Sem and a representative of the PTT Group held a meeting in Phnom Penh and discussed some key areas in the Kingdom's energy industry and oil development. Crude oil purchasing was among key issues that

were discussed. KrisEnergy recently reported that the firm has been granted "breathing space and room" to pursue debt restructuring with key stakeholders. The firm said last month that it will receive three months of court protection from legal action to allow it to restructure its \$476.8-million debt. "The Company is currently in moratorium in order to reorganise its capital structure and improve its financial condition, a spokesperson told Khmer Times last month. The official noted that the board and management of KrisEnergy, together with its advisors, are focused on progressing the restructuring as far as possible before the next court hearing in mid-November. "KrisEnergy is still committed to Cambodia Block A and the Apsara oil development, which is considered to be a jewel in the company's portfolio, he emphasised. Mr Cheap Sour confirmed to Khmer Times last week that he has been told that the company's efforts to extract its first drop of crude oil from the field will go on as planned. "The company recently updated its plan to us and if everything goes as planned, the first drop of crude oil will be extracted late this year or in early 2020," he noted. However, the crude oil will not be refined in Cambodia and will have to be sold because the Kingdom lacks processing facilities. Last year, Cambodia imported 2.5 million tonnes of petroleum products, a 10 percent year-on-year increase. The Kingdom imports petroleum products from Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam, with 15 local and international companies buying oil from abroad, according to the Mines and Energy Ministry.

Source: <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/50650625/ptt-keen-to-export-cambodian-crude-in-future/>

Investment skyrockets this year



Cambodia News | 14 October, 2019

The Council for the Development of Cambodia (CDC) yesterday announced that it approved 831 investment projects, with a total investment capital of \$22.5 billion, from 2016 to August 2019, according to its latest report. The report added that in the first eight months of the year, 222 investment projects were approved, worth a combined \$6 billion. This is 81 more projects than in the same period last year, when capital investment reached just \$1.88 billion. In 2016, CDC approved 171 investment projects worth a total of \$3.6 billion, while 183 projects (\$6.3 billion) were approved in 2017. Last year, 225 projects, worth \$6.6 billion, were greenlighted. The number of investment projects and the value of investment continues to increase every year, said Chea Vuthy, CDC deputy secretary-general. Mr Vuthy spoke at a news conference held at the Council of Ministers. Mr Vuthy noted that, from 2016 to August 2019, 47 percent of investment corresponded to the tourism sector, 24 percent to infrastructure, 23 percent to industry and manufacturing and 6 percent to agriculture and agribusinesses. He said that in the first eight months of the year, investment in industry, manufacturing and tourism increased by about 94 percent compared with the same period in 2018. By contrast, investment in agriculture and infrastructure slowed down. Mr Vuthy noted that investment

projects in special economic zones (SEZs) are also increasing. He said that in 2016 there were 42 investment projects, with a capital of \$283 million. In 2017, the figure increased to 47 projects, with an investment of \$484 million. Last year, there were 79 projects worth a combined \$442 million. China is the biggest investor in Cambodia, accounting for 56 percent of all foreign direct investment. In the first eight months of the year, it invested \$7.8 billion (35 percent of all investment), followed by Japan (7.8 percent), Vietnam (2.9 percent), Singapore (1.8 percent), South Korea (1.7 percent), Malaysia (1.36 percent) and Thailand (0.9) percent. “The government of Cambodia welcomes all investors including local ones. First come first serve, big and small. We welcome all investors,” said Mr Vuthy. He said that Chinese investment leads the way and it is not focused on garments, footwear or travelling bags, but added that all the sectors they are involved in are in line with the government’s industrial policy 2015-2025. Chinese investment went into infrastructure, hydropower dams, coal and solar power plants. It also included the airports in Siem Reap and Koh Kong and the expressway from Phnom Penh to Sihanoukville. The government is now negotiating with China to build an expressway from Phnom Penh to Bavet in Svay Rieng province, Mr Vuthy added. “We thank all the foreign and local investors for contributing investment in Cambodia, to help Cambodia’s economic growth reach 7 percent and generating about 150,000 jobs annually,” he added.

Source : <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/>

Vietnam to Launch 5G Technology in Laos



Laos News | 14 October, 2019

Vietnam will begin a 5G trial service in Laos, aiming to offer the full service in four Southeast Asian nations. The Vietnamese military-run telecom group Viettel plans to roll out 5G technology in Laos by year-end. This is Vietnam's third overseas launch of the service. The country aims to expand this list to four Southeast Asian nations. Viettel, which is the Vietnam's largest mobile carrier, has been testing 5G in Myanmar and Cambodia through local arms since summer, and in its domestic market since last month, seeking to offer affordable service. According to news reports, the Viettel group member, Unitel will become the first operator to offer the 5G technology in Laos. Unitel boasts 6,000 3G and 4G base stations, covering 95% of the country. It commands more than half the local market with about 3 million subscribers. In February this year, Unitel helped introduce SIMs to Laos, which led the country to rank 7th out of 10 ASEAN member states in terms of advanced telecommunications services. Founded in October 2009, the Viettel subsidiary operates across all 17 provinces and cities in Laos and has led the market for eight consecutive years. It is also the Lao government's partner in implementing the country's key e-government systems. 5G will change many vertical industries including the transportation, healthcare, and agricultural sectors. It will develop a

new industry that produces billions of devices and will also activate innovation in almost every industry, creating unlimited connectivity for all. Results from the implementation of the first official connection on Viettel's 5G network (set up earlier this year) showed that the actual data transfer rate reached 1.5-1.7 gigabytes per second (Gb/s). This far exceeded the theoretical speed limit of the 4G LTE network, and equivalent to the speed of the commercial cable network at present. Vietnam has built a relatively synchronous telecommunication infrastructure with mobile coverage currently reaching 99.7% of the population. Out of which, 3G and 4G coverage areas at a low-cost reach 98%, OpenGov reported earlier. 5G networks have been granted licenses to experiment and are expected to be commercially deployed in the market by 2020. Last month, Viettel broadcast its first end-to-end 5G network in HCM City, offering the public a chance to experience 5G services for the first time. In a press release, the organisation said it had set up 5G base stations in Ward 12 in the city's District 10. The official broadcast of 5G in HCM City is an important milestone in Viettel's strategy to make Vietnam one of the first countries in the world to commercialise 5G services. Additionally, around 1,000 Narrow Band-IoT (NB-IoT) broadcasting stations have been activated, covering the whole city. NB-IoT technology feature is capable of disconnecting a device when it is inactive. Thus, the contact time of the terminal is extended to five years without needing to change the battery. Viettel is also accelerating the process of

developing a platform using NB-IoT technology-related services for its customers. It will perform services like smart parking, air quality monitoring, location tracking, and metering devices. 5G, unlike 4G, will first prioritise the areas with high usage or the locations in need of replacing the cable network.

Source : <https://www.opengovasia.com/vietnam-to-launch-5g-technology-in-laos/>

Separate plots planned to establish specialized textile and garment zones in Yangon, Mandalay

 Myanmar News | 12 October, 2019

Separate land areas are being planned to establish special zones related to textile and garment in Yangon and Mandalay regions, according to the ministry of industry. The ministry is cooperating with the private sector to implement pilot projects for industry complexes and clusters, a high-ranking official from the ministry. Union Minister for Industry Khin Maung Cho said plans were underway to adopt a national level textile policy with the help of Germany's GIZ with the aim of developing Myanmar's textile industry, boosting investment by inviting foreign trade partners, getting necessary infrastructure, boosting export market and reducing import. He said national textile policy is part of National Export Strategy-NES. The minister made such remarks during the activities of his ministry in the third year of the government term. The commerce ministry is taking charge of implementing

the NES with 11 sectors. Among those sectors, textile and clothing sector is being implemented by the No (3) Heavy Industries under the ministry of industry by forming a committee. Therefore, plans are underway to establish specialized textile and garment zones.

Source: <https://elevenmyanmar.com/news/separate-plots-planned-to-establish-specialized-textile-and-garment-zones-in-yangon-mandalay>

Average inflation rate increases for 17 consecutive months

 Myanmar News | 12 October, 2019

The average inflation rate hit 8.53 per cent in late August, a slight increase compared with 8.35 per cent in late July, according to the Central Statistical Organization (CSO). Till August 2019 since April 2018, the average inflation increased for 17 consecutive months. The year-on-year inflation rate is 10.37 per cent. In late August, Magway Region saw the highest inflation rate of 12.57 per cent, followed by Sagaing Region with 10.66 per cent and Chin with 10.07 per cent. Sagaing Region saw the biggest change in the average inflation rate with 15.70 per cent while Kachin State saw the least change with 2.59 per cent, according to the CSO.

In November, 2012, the CSO conducted a household and consumption survey on 32,669 households in 82 townships nationwide to calculate the Consumer Price Index (CPI) and the inflation

rate. In the past, the inflation rate was calculated using 2006 as a base year. Now 2012 is used as a base year to calculate inflation rate. Under the second five-year National Development Plan (from 2016-2017 to 2020-2021 FY), the government has planned to reduce the inflation rates through finance, monetary, trade and foreign currency policies.

Source: <https://elevenmyanmar.com/news/average-inflation-rate-increases-for-17-consecutive-months>

WEF: East Asia, Pacific the world's most competitive regional economy



Vietnam News | 14 October, 2019

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia — Economies of East Asia and the Pacific as a region together outperformed other regions of the world with the highest media score – topped off by Singapore which elevated as the world's most competitive economy, according to the World Economic Forum (WEF)'s 2019 Report. The annual 2019 competitiveness index, calibrates as drivers of productivity and long-term growth in its 40th annual assessment, saw eight of the 19 listed economies in the Indo Pacific region improved their rankings with the world's second largest economy – China – holding on to the 28th position. Meanwhile, a peek below the surface of the rankings shows a wide gap between the highest-performing East Asia and Pacific countries, and the lowest. The gap is larger than comparable data for Europe and North America. Thanks to an improvement in its overall

score – combined with a diminished performance by the United States – Singapore has overtaken the US as the world's most competitive economy. The WEF particularly highlighted Singapore's scores regarding its financial system, market efficiency and macroeconomic stability. The country scored less well, however, when it comes to markers like freedom of the press – it ranks 124th – and sustainability. Rising 4 places since last year's report, Hong Kong SAR ranks third overall, behind Singapore and the United States. Hong Kong features in the top 10 of eight pillars – a new record. In addition, Hong Kong ranks first on four pillars – the most of any economy. But the ongoing protests – now in its fourth month – is likely to dampen this impressive gain. Japan ranked sixth in the overall rankings this year, down one notch from 2018. Despite the small drop in overall score, the economy's performance across the 12 pillars the WEF grades on remained almost unchanged. The WEF lists Japan's technological capacity as one of its major boons, calling it “one of the most technology-savvy nations in the world”. In terms of areas in which Japan could improve, the Forum suggests that Japan should look to tackling rigidities that exist within its labour market that are currently holding it back. Taiwan rose one spot to finish this year's ranking at the 12th position. Taiwan also has the distinction of being one of one four economies to score above 80 on the Innovation capability rankings – the other economies at this same level were Germany, the United States, and Switzerland. The

Republic of Korea rose two spots to finish 13th globally. Korea features in the top 10 of five of the competitiveness pillars, and leads the world in ICT adoption. The report particularly highlights Korea's achievements in fibre optics and internet penetration. "The country boasts the most optical fibre connections per capita in the world (31.9 subscription per 100 people) and 96 per cent of the population uses the internet on a regular basis." Areas where Korea showed less promise included market inefficiency, partly due to a lack of domestic competition and high trade barriers. Another factor holding Korea back is its labour market, a category in which the country ranks toward the bottom. The WEF writes of Korea's job system as one that "is characterised by a rigid, de facto two-tier system of 'insiders', who enjoy permanent contracts and generous benefits, and precarious 'outsiders'." Viet Nam stands out globally as the most improved economy according to the report. The country rose 10 spots to land at 67th on this year's rankings. Two countries, however, which in comparison to Viet Nam's success illustrate the sheer drop-off between Asia's most competitive economies and its least, are Cambodia (up four spots to 106th) and Lao PDR (down one spot 113th), both of which the WEF describes as having "significant competitiveness deficits." As far as the region goes, another country with a good improvement is Sri Lanka, which WEF highlighted as South Asia's most improved economy, coming in at 84th this year. There was no mention of the impacts of the Easter bombing on the

country, however. Nepal rose in this year's rankings, up one spot to come in at 108, but that isn't much reason to celebrate. The country has the unfortunate distinction of having one of the least competitive economies in South Asia, only coming out ahead of Pakistan. Overall, the WEF took issue with the economy in terms of innovation capability, information, communication and technology adoption, product market development, judicial independence and government's long-term vision. China ranks 28th overall this year, a position that is unchanged from 2018's report. China is by far the best performer among the BRICS economies: 15 places ahead of the Russian Federation, 32 places ahead of South Africa and some 40 places ahead of both India and Brazil. China benefits from the sheer size of its market and macroeconomic stability. But, the report warns that as the shadow of the Great Recession approaches, with a possible slowdown of the global economy looming, emerging economies like China's are at risk of their own slowdown or stagnation. One particular bright spot, however, that the WEF chose to highlight when it comes to China's economic strength are the promising overtures the country is taking toward greater environmental sustainability, including greater investment in renewable energy. The country has invested US\$132 billion in clean energy technologies so far, with potentially more on the horizon. For ASEAN, Malaysia, which once again took the second spot in ASEAN for the third year in a row, sank 2 spots to rank 27th this year. Thailand, which takes the third

rank in ASEAN (down 2 places to 40th) in part because it simply didn't keep up with the speed at which other economies were improving. Coming in fourth out of ASEAN countries is Indonesia, which ranked 50th this year, down five places from 2018. The WEF, however was quick to point out that Indonesia's economy's performance remained essentially unchanged from the previous year's report. A large part of Indonesia's strength comes from the sheer size of its economy, as the largest in Southeast Asia, but the country also scored high when it came to macroeconomic stability and business dynamism. Also seeing a dip in its ranking this year was the Philippines, the fifth ranked country in ASEAN. The Philippines saw a drop in 8 positions compared to last year's report, now coming in at 64th. This year, India came in at 68th, a drop of 10 places in 2019. This drop, WEF points out however, is only partly the consequence of a relatively small decline in score. More significant was the progress made by several countries ranked close to India. India ranks beyond 100th on five of the pillars and features in the top 50 of just four pillars. However, it did relatively well in terms of its scores on macroeconomic stability and market size. India also performs well when it comes to innovation, well ahead of most emerging economies and on par with several advanced economies. Another weak point for India is in the labour market, which WEF points out is characterised by a lack of worker rights' protections, insufficiently developed active labour market policies and critically low participation of

women. One bright spot for India, as with China, has to do the country's efforts to boost the environmental sustainability of its economy. As with China, India making big investments in the field of renewable energy. Bangladesh fell two places this year to 102nd. Bangladesh's competitiveness relative lack of competitiveness is owed partly to weakening macroeconomic stability, deterioration of labour market conditions, lack of ICT adoption and inadequate progress in infrastructure, according to the report. The country's lack of preparedness when it came to the fourth Industrial Revolution technologies was a particularly weak point. And finally, Pakistan slipped by three spots this year to come out at 110th out of 140 countries. The county's economy scored toward the bottom when it comes to infrastructure, macroeconomic stability, market product, and labour system, but had some relative bright spots when it comes to market size and business dynamism. — ANN

Source : <https://vietnamnews.vn/economy/536849/wef-east-asia-pacific-the-worlds-most-competitive-regional-economy.html#voVbdo0if7cB2tIC.97>

Textile and apparel export turnover up 10.4 per cent in nine months



Vietnam News | 14 October, 2019

Vietnam raked in an estimated US\$24.77 billion in turnover from the export of garment and textile products during the first nine months of the year, up 10.4 per cent on year, according to statistics released by the Ministry of Industry and Trade. Amid

constant fluctuations in the global economy, domestic textile enterprises have faced numerous challenges to their production and business activities. The escalating trade tensions between the United States and China have negatively impacted exchange rates between currencies, leading to a higher price of outsourced goods in Vietnam in comparison with regional peers such as the Republic of Korea and China. The move has also affected the number of export orders received by local businesses. Most notably, the consumption of fibers and raw materials have encountered difficulties as China, the country's main export market has scaled back imports. Meanwhile, garment products have also suffered from a fall in orders. By the middle of 2018, many of the sector's large enterprises had export orders for the entire year. In contrast, in 2019, several businesses have only been able to sign monthly export contracts with a small quantity of orders. This decline is attributable to concerns among buyers regarding the escalating US-China trade war. Therefore, orders are being divided into small bulks as opposed to the large quantities seen in previous years. Generally, in the reviewed period, export activities along with textile and apparel production have maintained growth in comparison to the same period last year. However, due to changing orders, businesses have been advised to change their production and business

methods in order to become better prepared to adapt to the new situation.

Source : <https://english.vov.vn/economy/textile-and-apparel-export-turnover-up-104-per-cent-in-nine-months-404623.vov>
