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Capital draws 4.7 million visitors during festival



Cambodia News | 14 November, 2019

More than 4.7 million tourists visited the capital during the three-day Water Festival holiday, according to a report issued by the Ministry of Tourism yesterday. The figure represents a 5 percent increase compared with last year's holiday. The report says that 4,750,000 Cambodians and 31,446 foreigners visited Phnom Penh during the three days of the holiday. Ministry spokesman Top Sopheak told Khmer Times yesterday that the first day of the Water Festival saw only about half a million visitors, but that this number increased significantly over the next two days. "On Day 2 and 3 the number of visitors increased considerably because people felt safe and wanted to enjoy themselves," Mr Sopheak said. The Water Festival is one of the main holidays in the Cambodian calendar. Traditionally, people from across the country come to Phnom Penh to watch boat races in front of the Royal Palace during the day as well as light displays on boats and fireworks during the night. According to the ministry report, a total of 5.8 million people travelled in Cambodia during the three days of the Water Festival. This represents a 7 percent increase compared with last year. Around 89,500 of these travellers were foreigners. "People now enjoy higher incomes so they choose to travel during this holiday. Also, we now have many more attractive tourism products across the country," Mr Sopheak said. "We see a significant trend in the rise of domestic tourists." Ho Vandy, advisor to the Cambodia Association of

Travel Agents, echoed the same sentiment. "In general, we see that more and more people are choosing to travel during this holiday. "In Phnom Penh, this year traffic was not so bad. The city was not so crowded. Other destinations around the country were really busy, while others were not." Siem Reap province, home of the Angkor Archaeological Park, received 276,577 tourists while Kep, on the coast, saw close to 100,000 tourists, according to the report. The National Committee for the Organisation of National and International Festivals reported that about 4.5 million people visited Phnom Penh during the Water Festival last year.

Source : <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/50659038/capital-draws-4-7-million-visitors-during-festival/>

Exporter, communities agree price for organic paddy rice



Cambodia News | 14 November, 2019

Major rice exporter Signatures of Asia has agreed to buy paddy rice from agriculture communities in Preah Vihear at the same price as the last harvest season despite a drop in the international price of the commodity. Signatures of Asia and Preah Vihear Meanchey Union of Agricultural Cooperative (PMUAC), who represents eight communities in Preah Vihear province, held negotiations last week to decide the price at which rice will be sold, Chan Pich, Signatures of Asia's general manager, told Khmer Times yesterday. "The price agreed for the paddy depends on the quality of each type of rice," Mr Pich said. White (non fragrant) rice will be bought for 1,200 to 1,300 riel (\$0.29 to \$0.32) per kilogram. The price of Jasmine rice, on the other

hand, has been set at 1,450 to 1,650 riel (\$0.36 to \$0.4), depending on the quality of the product. “The market price for organic rice has decreased this year, but farmers have insisted that the price remains the same,” Mr Pich said. Signatures of Asia works with another three communities in Preah Vihear. The company will buy a total of 2,000 tonnes of organic rice from eleven agricultural communities in the province. These deals, part of contract farming schemes, guarantee a certain income for the farmers. The company entered into contract farming schemes with the communities in July, aiming to increase market access for farmers and help them join local value chains. Signatures of Asia exports mostly to Europe, particularly Italy, Sweden, the United Kingdom, Spain, Poland, the Netherlands, and Germany. It also has buyers in the United States and Australia. He said the company is also looking for suppliers of organic rice in Banteay Meanchey and Siem Reap provinces, noting that organic rice fetches 25 to 30 percent more than regular rice in international markets. Mr Pich said his company accounts for 15 to 20 percent of all organic rice exports in the country. Amru Rice, another major rice exporter, recently announced it has entered contract farming schemes with about 5,000 farmers and aims to export 20,000 tonnes of organic rice to foreign markets this year.

Source : <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/50659140/exporter-communities-agree-price-for-organic-paddy-rice/>

Rice prices in Laos likely to rise next year



Laos News | 14 November, 2019

VIENTIANE, Nov. 14 (Xinhua) -- Rice markets in Laos may experience greater fluctuation in 2020 as harvests are unlikely to meet targets in 2019. The total yield is expected to be about 3.5 million tons -- a downward slide from the original target of 4.4 million tons. Rising prices, shortages and storage issues, including difficulties in procuring rice, are worrisome for both the people and the state. Lao Deputy Prime Minister Sonexay Siphandone, who is also Minister of Planning and Investment, listed some of the factors that have impacted rice production in 2019, when addressing the ongoing National Assembly. He said the repair of many irrigation channels that were damaged by floods in 2018 is still incomplete and functioning irrigation systems cannot supply sufficient water to meet farmers' needs. In 2019, the dry season lasted a lot longer than usual, resulting in drought conditions, which are also being experienced at the present time in some areas. This is adversely affecting rice crops. In addition, there have been outbreaks of crop pests and severe flooding, especially in two central provinces and four southern provinces, local daily Vientiane Times reported on Thursday. This year, the area of wet season rice affected by natural disasters was almost 172,000 hectares. About 105,200 hectares of rice

was completely wiped out, constituting 13.63 percent of the wet rice crop throughout the country, according to information provided by the Lao Deputy prime minister last week. Poor yields in 2019 might drive up the price of rice in markets in 2020. Rice prices usually fluctuate during the rainy season from June to September depending on the amount harvested and available in markets. Answering enquiries by National Assembly members on Wednesday, Lao Minister of Agriculture and Forestry Lien Thikeyo defended its decision to lower the rice production target for 2019, from 4.4 million tons to 3.5 million tons, saying it was unavoidable because of the severe flooding that had occurred this year and last. And at the same time, water shortages are affecting the north of Laos.

Source : http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-11/14/c_138554434.htm

Govt needs stronger mechanisms to minimise financial misconduct: NA



Laos News / 15 November, 2019

National Assembly (NA) members on Thursday urged the government to impose proper measures to address violations involving state finances after learning that this kind of crime is common. During the debate session, which enabled Assembly members to comment on a report by the State Audit Organisation, lawmakers said it did not make much sense if the government did not act upon the findings

of the audit body. They also said the government should consider the possibility of allowing local authorities to spend public money not included in the state budget in cases of emergency, so they can deliver a timely response when natural disasters strike. This would help to eliminate violations of financial discipline, they explained. The State Audit Organisation last week presented its 2018 financial audit to the National Assembly. The report found that many central and local state agencies had not handed over the money they had collected for submission to the national treasury as required by law. This amount was estimated to be about 433 billion kip. Assembly members said the government should use this finding as a reference in its efforts to stamp out financial misconduct. Mr Saythong Keoduangdy, an Assembly member for Vientiane, said he had observed that the more audits the State Audit Organisation carried out, the more cases of financial violation it uncovered. In some cases these violations were unavoidable because local authorities needed money to deal with natural disasters. But, he said, there should be a proper mechanism to allow local authorities to disburse funds in times of crisis. He said one of the best options would be to establish central agencies which would collect information about the amount of infrastructure damage and the money needed to address these problems. Such a system would help

to reduce financial wrongdoing. Mr Saythong said this mechanism could prevent local authorities using natural disasters as an opportunity to spend state funds without getting approval as well as preventing them from spending money irresponsibly. Ms Souvanpheng Bouphanouvong, Assembly member for Savannakhet province, said she had learnt that local authorities had to spend public money without first getting approval from the NA because the government ordered them to address problems in emergency situations. The problem is that the orders given by the government are very general, which creates opportunities for officials to misuse funds, she said. To tackle the problem, she urged the central authorities to provide timely and close supervision about precisely which roads should be repaired, so that financial violations would not occur. Ms Souvanpheng said one way to minimise financial violations was to invite state agencies that failed to comply with the rules to explain their misdeeds. This would provide a reference for the authorities when they wanted to amend laws to prevent financial misconduct. Another member said that violations of financial regulations should be investigated, as he believed that in some cases no harm was done but urgent action was needed to prevent a crisis. "In practice, when we strictly comply with the law we cannot always resolve problems, especially when it comes to natural disasters," he

said, adding that the law should be amended so that emergencies could be dealt with promptly. Other members said local authorities who did not comply with financial regulations should be given the opportunity to explain why they had not spent state funds in line with the law. Ms Sengkham Somsana, Assembly member for Xieng Khuang province, said the government should reduce the budget allocated to state agencies which continued to violate the regulations so they would be deterred from future violations. However, Ms Valy Vetsaphong, Assembly member for Vientiane, said it should be offending state officials who were penalised rather than the organisation they represented. According to the law, the State Audit Organisation cannot file charges against wrongdoers as the imposition of penalties is the responsibility of the State Inspection Organisation.

Source : http://www.vientianetimes.org.la/freeContent/FreeConten_Govt_needs_250.php

Tourist numbers to Myanmar rise



Myanmar News | 14 November, 2019

The Ministry of Hotels and Tourism recently released data showing that from January to September this year, more than 1.3 million foreign tourists visited Myanmar. This represents 390,000 more visitors or a 41 percent rise compared to the same period last year. The ministry said the increase can be

attributed to more visitors coming from Asian countries, such as Japan, South Korea and China, which have been the targets of the government's "Look-East policy" for tourism. Tourists from China, Japan and South Korea have increased significantly since the government relaxed visa requirements for travellers from those countries in October last year, say tourism stakeholders. Currently, visas on arrival are available for more than 50 countries at Myanmar's international airports in Yangon, Mandalay, and Nay Pyi Taw. The visas allow stays in Myanmar of up to 28 days. On October 1, the government also extended visas on arrival to visitors from Germany, Russia, Spain, Italy, Switzerland and Australia, as part of efforts to attract more travellers from western countries. However, some travel and tour agencies say they have not seen western arrivals to match those in the past. Industry stakeholders and experts say the government has to do much more to woo western tourists and boost the country's sluggish tourism industry. U Than Naing, a Mandalay-based tour operator, lamented that tour season had already started when the easing of visa requirements for the six western countries took effect. "Travel operators didn't have much time to make preparation for this year's tourism

season as they learned about the visa relaxation for western countries just three months in advance," he said, adding that only backpackers would be able to enjoy the new policy at this time. From January to September this year, some 120,000 European travellers entered the country, a 1 percent decline compared to the same period a year ago, people in the hotels and tourism industry say. Asked for comment Deputy Director General of the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism Daw Khin Than Win declined to comment, saying that the ministry had not yet compiled the tourist arrival figures for October. According to the ministry's data, visitors to Myanmar from Germany, Italy, Russia, Spain, and Poland stay an average of 14 days and are among the highest spenders during their stay.

Source : <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/tourist-numbers-myanmar-rise.html>

Suzuki launches instalment plan for purchases of four models



Myanmar News | 14 November, 2019

Automobile company Suzuki Myanmar Motor Co Ltd has announced a new instalment-payment scheme for four models in its local line-up of vehicles. The new scheme is being offered in collaboration with Co-operative Bank Public Co Ltd (CB Bank). CB Bank and Suzuki Myanmar

signed an agreement for the scheme at CB Bank's headquarters in Yangon on November 7. Under the new scheme, people can opt to buy Suzuki's Ciaz, Ertiga, Swift GL, and Swift GLX models beginning this month. "Suzuki cars can now be bought with financing from CB Bank from November. Customers can now opt to buy the vehicles by paying a 20 percent down payment and then paying the balance monthly. Besides this, the new financing scheme also includes insurance coverage for the vehicle provided by GGI Insurance. Our bank's objective is to promote new financial services for consumers and this is a part of it," said CB Bank Managing Director U Thein Zaw Tun. The Suzuki models available under the scheme are the Ciaz sedan priced at K27 million, Ertiga mpv at K27.2million, Suzuki Swift GL and GLX hatchbacks at K20.9million and K24.1million, respectively. The initial down payment can be 20pc or 25pc of the car's price, said U Thein Zaw Tun. "For the convenience of buyers, we are offering up to seven years for the repayment period. I believe this cooperation will be beneficial for bank's customers and Suzuki buyers," said Suzuki Myanmar Managing Director Mr Keiichi Asano. People who want to purchase a car under the scheme will need to apply through CB Bank with a passport photo, national identity cards, a copy of their Household List, and original ward and police station recommendations. Applicants who are

employed are also required to provide recommendations from their company's human resource department, , three months of salary slips, and bank account book with least six months history. Self-employed applicants are required to show their business licence or company registration documents, two years of financial statements, tax receipts for two years, a bank account history of six months, and photo of their business. The new scheme is among the latest offerings from local banks to improve their range of financial products such as installment plans for cars, homes, and consumer goods. – Translated

Source : <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/suzuki-launches-instalment-plan-purchases-four-models.html>

Vietnamese firms invest over US\$430 million abroad in nine months



Vietnam News | 14 November, 2019

VOV.VN - Domestic businesses have invested approximately US\$431.7 million abroad during the first nine months of the year, according to the Foreign Investment Agency under the Ministry of Planning and Investment. Luring the largest proportion of investment from local enterprises has been the wholesale and retail sector which has enjoyed investment of US\$110.6 million, accounting for 25.6 per cent of the total figure. Following this, the

science and technology sector ranked second with US\$83.4 million, with the agro-forestry-aquatic sector with US\$64.1 million of investment in third, followed by the real estate with US\$56.9 million. Among the 30 countries and territories globally that Vietnamese financiers were active in during the reviewed period, Australia proved to be the largest recipient with US\$140.6 million, accounting for 32.6 per cent of the total figure, trailed by the United States with US\$59.9 million, Spain with US\$59.8 million, Cambodia with US\$50.6 million, and Singapore with US\$35.6 million. These figures indicate that local firms have made great strides in injecting their money into new markets. Examples of this can be seen with US\$4.8 billion of Vietnamese investment being put into Laos, followed by US\$2.8 billion going into Russia. Regionally, the country ranked fifth, after China, Thailand, the Republic of Korea, and Japan, in terms of financiers in Cambodia with US\$3.2 billion of capital invested across 214 projects. The nation's investment in the regional partner mostly went into such sectors as agro-forestry, finance, banking, insurance, and telecoms. At present, over 200 Vietnamese businesses, including popular brands such as Hoang Anh Gia Lai, the Joint Stock Commercial Bank for Investment and Development of Vietnam, Vietnam Airlines, and Fastgo, are investing in Myanmar. During a recent visit to Myanmar on June

18, Deputy Prime Minister Vuong Dinh Hue emphasized that Myanmar is fast becoming a strategic market for local firms, noting that the Myanmar government will create optimal conditions for Vietnamese enterprises to operate in the country.

Source : <https://english.vov.vn/economy/vietnamese-firms-invest-over-us430-million-abroad-in-nine-months-406166.vov>

Government approves northern highlands airport in Sa Pa



Vietnam News | 14 November, 2019

The Ministry of Transport has approved a plan to construct Sa Pa Airport with a capacity of 3 million passengers a year. Located 80 kilometers away from the mountain resort town of Sa Pa, the domestic airport will have nine aircraft parking slots, and will be used for both civilian and military purposes. Its single runway will be able to receive aircraft similar to the narrow-body Airbus A320 and Boeing 737-700. A six-lane road will be built to connect the 371 hectare airport with the existing Hanoi - Lao Cai Expressway. Authorities in the northern highlands province of Lao Cai, where Sa Pa Town is located, had said that they would need VND3.09 trillion (\$133 million) from the state to build the airport. The central government's proposed contribution would amount to 52 percent of the airport's total investment, which is estimated at VND5.9 trillion (\$254 million). The province had proposed that construction of the

airport begins this year and be completed in 2021. The airport is expected to mainly serve tourists from southern Vietnam and southwestern China. However, some aviation experts have cautioned that this inflow would be unstable, when compared to the Van Don airport in northern Quang Ninh Province, where Ha Long Bay and other attractions are located. When built, Sa Pa Airport will become the 23rd airport in Vietnam, 10 of which operate international flights. Lao Cai welcomed 4.2 million visitors last year, up 20 percent from 2017. 720,000 of them were international tourists. In the past a large number of tourists traveled to Sa Pa by train from Hanoi to Lao Cai. This has reduced since the \$1.5-billion Noi Bai-Lao Cai Expressway was opened in September 2014, with many visitors preferring the five-hour bus ride to an eight-hour overnight trip on the train.

Source : <https://english.vov.vn/economy/government-approves-northern-highlands-airport-in-sa-pa-406165.vov>
