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## Assistance from Japan sought as Kingdom mulls new big-ticket projects



*Cambodia News | 21 November, 2019*

The Cambodian government has asked Japan for help to develop more big-ticket projects in the public works and transport sectors. Cambodia's request for assistance was conveyed by Transport Minister Sun Chanthol, who was in Vietnam last week to attend the 25th Asean Transport Ministers Meeting (ATM) and associated dialogue partners meetings. During that gathering, Mr Chanthol met the Japanese delegation led by Nobuhide Minorikawa, State Minister for Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism. According to a post on the official Facebook page of the Ministry of Public Works and Transport, Mr Chanthol told Mr Nobuhide and his group that Cambodia is seeking Japanese investment for the construction of Phnom Penh's automated guideway transport system, also known as AGT. The construction of an AGT system for Cambodia's capital city has moved slowly, partly because of a lack of investors to finance the monumental costs. An AGT system will help ease traffic problems in the increasingly gridlocked city. Its cost is estimated at around \$800 million, a sum that the cash-strapped Cambodian government can ill-afford. In addition to AGT, the government is also mulling setting up a metro and a monorail to ease traffic congestion in the centre of the city. The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) has completed a feasibility study on the AGT project, while two companies from

China are working on the monorail and metro projects in Phnom Penh. In the same meeting, Mr Chanthol thanked Japan for its assistance to build a wastewater plant for Phnom Penh. The project, whose construction will start sometime next year, will be funded by a \$27 million grant from Japan. The transport minister also mentioned Japan's assistance to develop a traffic management system in Phnom Penh. The project, which includes a monitoring system at City Hall and 100 new traffic lights, is funded by a \$16 million grant from Japan. Mr Chanthol requested that the same assistance be extended to other major provincial cities, especially Kampot and Koh Kong. Japan is among the biggest providers of assistance to Cambodia. Last year, the Kingdom was the recipient of \$135 million in Japanese aid packages, which came in the form of grants and soft loans.

Source : <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/50662323/assistance-from-japan-sought-as-kingdom-mulls-new-big-ticket-projects/>

## Plan to boost ecotourism launched



*Cambodia News | 21 November, 2019*

The government this week launched a strategy to boost eco-tourism in the Kingdom, aiming to increase revenue from the sector while improving the livelihoods of rural communities and helping protect the country's natural resources. The 2019-2030 Ecotourism Policy, launched Tuesday during the first National Ecotourism Forum, aims to increase the number of eco-tourism communities in the country to enhance Cambodia's offer of tourism products. Speaking at the launch, Tourism Minister Thong Khon noted that Cambodia has about 2,300 rural communities,

most of them dedicated to agriculture, fisheries, and forest protection, but only 123 function as tourism service providers. These communities are the purview of three ministries – Tourism, Environment, and Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries. These ministries are working together to develop the communities into tourism sites, which create new sources of income for locals and expands Cambodia's offering to tourists, Mr Khon said. "The development of community-based tourism and eco-tourism is important for the general development of the communities. Particularly, it empowers locals and helps them improve their own communities," Mr Khon said. The ministry is working to identify each community and understand its potential so that they can be molded into providers of tourism services, he said. The communities, in turn, benefit from the construction of much-needed infrastructure and training programmes for tour guides, Mr Khon added. President of the Cambodia Association of Travel Agent Chhay Sivlin applauded the ministry's strategy and said it will contribute to the development of the country's tourism sector. She said it will help diversify the sector and expand the offer available to tourists. "It is good that the ministry is focusing on developing these communities into tourism service providers. To create more community-based tourism products, the government will need to work with tour operators, development partners, and the local people," Ms Sivlin said. Clais Chenda, president of the Hotel Association of Cambodia, said, "Creating new tourism products like eco-tourism sites helps us attracts tourists. These tourists are more likely to come back to Cambodia because they have new tourism products to experience." To boost eco-tourism, the ministry

last year organised a contest to find the best community-based tourism site in the Kingdom. The competition was part of a campaign to promote cleaner cities and better quality of service in the tourism industry. Cambodia received 4.8 million foreign tourists in the first nine months of the year, a 10 percent increase compared with the same period last year. During the same period, eco-tourism areas were visited by 62,195 foreign tourists, an increase of 9 percent.

Source : <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/50662325/plan-to-boost-ecotourism-launched/>

## Rice losses causing harvest shortfall, minister tells NA



Laos News | 21 November, 2019

Some 105,206 hectares of ricefields were destroyed by floods during this year's rainy season, meaning the country will not reach the 2019 production target of 4.4 million tonnes. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry Dr Lien Thikeyo reported the information to lawmakers at the 8th session of the National Assembly (NA)'s 8th legislature last week. He said widespread flooding combined with water supply problems had forced the ministry to downgrade the rice production forecast from 4.4 million to 3.5 million tonnes. Dr Lien pointed out that the 105,206 hectares of rice lost to flooding equated to 13 percent of the total 770,279 hectares under cultivation across the country. The ministry expects to lose 456,500 tonnes of the anticipated rice harvest. Savannakhet was the worst affected province, suffering damage to 40,534

hectares of rice. Some areas also suffered from water shortages or were devastated by insect infestations which damaged 1,200 hectares of crops. Some 497 of the country's irrigation systems have been severely affected this year with Saravan province hardest hit as 118 projects suffered flood damage. However, the ministry will accelerate efforts to renovate irrigation schemes and encourage farmers to grow more rice in the dry season from November to April. The goal is to have 900,000 hectares under cultivation and to increase next rainy season's yield. Authorities will assist farmers to increase yields and the country is aiming for exports worth US\$1.2 billion next year. The ministry will utilise 352.9 billion kip of the government budget to contribute to 288 projects, especially the provision of rice seed and seeds for other crops, along with equipment, vaccines, and insecticides. Environmental experts predict that climate change will bring increasingly severe drought and flood conditions to Laos, with crop yields possibly falling 10 percent by 2020 and 30 percent by 2050. This could further affect food security improvement measures, which the government is working on with its agencies and non-governmental organisations.

Source : <http://annx.asianews.network/content/na-questions-trade-minister-over-border-delays-crop-exports-108700>

## NA questions trade minister over border delays for crop exports



Laos News / 21 November, 2019

Members of the National Assembly (NA) have asked the Ministry of Industry and Commerce to explain why it takes so long for exported farm produce to be given clearance at border crossings. Assembly President Mrs Pany Yathotou referred a question by a member for Champassak province to the Minister of Industry and Commerce, Mrs Khemmani Pholsena, during the ongoing NA session. Mrs Pany raised the case of an incident at the Vangtao-Chongmek international checkpoint between Champassak province and Ubon Ratchathani province in Thailand, when authorities took about nine hours to give a licence to a business operator. The case was brought to the attention of higher authorities because the business operator pointed out that such a lengthy delay could affect the quality of the crops being transported. The minister said the agriculture and forestry sector was responsible for authorising the import and export of farm products and that her division was not involved. She also told the meeting that checkpoints are operated by customs officers. The trade sector, on behalf of the secretariat for trade facilities under the chairmanship of Deputy Prime Minister Dr Sonexay Siphandone, has looked into the situation and resolved the problems that arose in each case. A specific goods

check zone has now been arranged at the checkpoint where goods will be examined by customs officers before being given export permission. But the NA president told the minister that the delay in giving permission was the responsibility of the trade sector because the customs department was involved. In reply, the minister said that if the Industry and Commerce Department in Champassak province was still involved in the export permission process the ministry would continue to investigate the matter. In addition to this issue, members called on the minister to provide other details related to her administration and management, such as trade facilities at borders, price controls, farm projects for commercial purposes in five provinces, improvements and measures related to the ease of doing business, luxury vehicle imports, rice imports from Vietnam, and the registration of new businesses. The minister explained in detail the circumstances surrounding each of the topics raised. With regard to trade facilitation, the minister said that on behalf of the trade facility committee, she could assure Assembly members that there was a clear plan to resolve problems. If it was found that a particular sector was still creating obstacles, the matter would be discussed to seek solutions. Regarding the import of luxury vehicles, the government has instructed the Ministry of Finance and other sectors to fine or

otherwise penalise people who illegally import vehicles. But the minister could not say with certainty whether any penalties or fines had been meted out. However, she promised to send a report to the NA at a later date. Concerning the slow development of crop plantations in five provinces, the minister welcomed comments from a member for Vientiane province and promised that this issue would be discussed further in order to move the projects forward.

Source : <http://annx.asianews.network/content/rice-losses-causing-harvest-shortfall-minister-tells-na-108699>

## Farmers have shirked loan repayments since 2012



Myanmar News | 21 November, 2019

Farmers who owe some K200 billion to state-owned Myanmar Agriculture Development Bank (MADB) have not repaid their debts since 2012, according to bank records. Most of the farmers are from Ayeyarwaddy, Bago and Yangon. "These farmers need to pay what they owe to the bank. Currently, our situation is such that savings levels have fallen to a low whereas our loan book is at a high," said Daw Nilar Shwe, a director from MADB. MADB holds K77 billion in deposits. In comparison, it lent a total of K1.7 trillion in fiscal 2018-19. Among the reasons given for the lack of repayments is farmers are

prioritising other lenders with higher interest rates compared to MADB's lending rate of 8 percent. Meanwhile, volatile weather conditions have made it difficult for farmers to maintain stable levels of quality and yield, which has resulted in income fluctuations over the years. There is also a lack of manpower to work the fields as younger generations of workers opt for opportunities to work abroad instead, said Daw Nilar Shwe. U Thein Aung, chair of the Farmers Development Association added that costs have been rising even though crop prices have been volatile. "Our incomes are low and insufficient to cover the costs of feeding our families and ensuring our children get an education. Many farmers simply do not have the funds to pay back," he said. MADB had already extended the deadline for farmers to repay loans taken in October in December last year to September from June previously. Meanwhile, borrowers are taking out larger sums from the bank. Loans for individual rice growers was risen to K150,000 from K100,000 per loan in 2016, while for farmers of other crops, the loan amount was doubled to K100,000 last year. Loans are available for a total of 22 kinds of crops. In the past, farmers could only take out winter loans after the monsoon loan was fully paid, but since last year, MADB changed the

scheme to allow winter loans although the monsoon loans have not yet been repaid. MADB provides loans for farmers based on the three main planting seasons in the country – monsoon, pre-monsoon, and winter.

Source : <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/farmers-have-shirked-loan-repayments-2012.html>

## Approval of investment limits can be raised, official says



*Myanmar News | 21 November, 2019*

The investment commissions of regions and states can apply to raise the maximum investments they can approve if required, says a senior official. Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Investment and Foreign Economic Relations U Aung Naing Oo said, if the investments are for development, the regional and state investment commissions can ask to have the limit raised. At present, regional and state investment commissions have the authority to approve investments of up to US\$5 million and K6 billion. Larger sums will require the approval of the Myanmar Investment Commission (MIC). "Limitations on the approval of investment funds are not inflexible. Business investments of up to US\$5 million or K6 billion can be approved locally at the region and state level. If the investments are higher, it needs MIC approval. However, MIC is willing to raise those amounts if the investments are intended for



development,” U Aung Naing Oo said at the Kachin Investment Forum last week. Infrastructure development such as roads and telecoms projects are costly and require large sums of funding, he added. “When we invite project for things such as roads, bridges and telecoms, the amount of money is very large. Communication, roads and bridges are crucial for the development. On the other hand, approval for the sums needed have to be submitted to MIC if it exceeds more than \$5million. So, there are difficulties including the expenses and time. If it can be carried out at the state level, it saves a lot for a business and streamlined the development sector,” said U Maung Ring La, executive chair of Myanmar Telecom Gateway Co Ltd. According to the policy of the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration, states and regions are authorised to form investment commissions to oversee and streamline investment processes while also submitting the relevant information about the investments to the MIC.

Source : <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/approval-investment-limits-can-be-raised-official-says.html>

## E-commerce firm Sendo nets \$61 mln in latest funding round



*Vietnam News | 21 November, 2019*

Sendo, Vietnam’s second-most visited online market place, has secured \$61 million in the latest Series C funding round. The investment will come from

existing shareholders as well as new international investors including Indonesia’s EV Growth and Thai banking group Kasikornbank, Sendo said in a press release Wednesday. Existing investors including financial services company SBI Group, retailer BEENOS, private equity firm Daiwa PI Partners, and web services consultancy Digital Garage from Japan, as well as venture fund SoftBank Ventures Asia of South Korea, all of which had previously backed Sendo’s \$51 million Series B round in 2018, returned for its Series C round. Hai Linh Tran, CEO and co-founder of Sendo, said that the funds will be used to expand the breadth of its existing integrated platform offering to both sellers and consumers, as well as to further deepen its technology moat. Founded in 2012 as a spin-off of Vietnam’s largest IT service company FPT Corporation, Sendo focuses on tier 2 cities largely untapped by other e-commerce firms, home to 70 million Vietnamese people. The company claims it caters to 500,000 sellers, with an estimated 17 million distinct items listed on its platform, as well as 12 million customers. In the third quarter of 2019, Sendo surpassed domestic rival Tiki to rank second among top 10 e-commerce sites in Vietnam with the highest monthly traffic numbers, according to Malaysia-based market research firm iPrice’s latest data released recently. Sendo’s web visits reached 30.9 million per month in Q3, up 10.1 percent against Q2, second

after Singapore-based Shopee, which remained in top position with 34.5 million, down 10.6 percent from Q2.

Source : <https://english.vov.vn/economy/ecommerce-firm-sendo-nets-61-mln-in-latest-funding-round-406468.vov>

## Pork price hikes drive up related food costs



*Vietnam News | 21 November, 2019*

Pork prices have surged following the African swine flu outbreak in Vietnam, driving up prices of related food in supermarkets and restaurants. Over the last two months, the prices of pork products at many supermarkets and food stores in Ho Chi Minh City rose 5-25 percent, a VnExpress survey has found. For instance, the price of pork sausages has risen from around VND120,000 (\$5.2) to VND150,000 (\$6.5) per kilogram, and that of higher-end sausages from VND150,000 (\$6.5) to VND210,000 (\$9.1). Hoa, the owner of a food store in HCMC, said that over the past week, all suppliers have announced price increases of VND3,000-20,000 (13-86 cents) on each kilogram of pork, forcing her to adjust prices accordingly. "Many merchants have advised me to buy in bulk now and store the pork because prices will rise even further as demand rises and supply dries up," Hoa said. Similarly, restaurant owners in HCMC have raised the prices of rice and noodles dishes with pork as an ingredient, which on average

cost around VND30,000 (\$1.3), by VND2,000-5,000 (9-22 cents) each. "I can't raise prices too much or it will shock my guests, so I have to do a balancing act of cutting smaller portions of pork, finding cheaper suppliers," said Hue, a restaurant owner in Go Vap District, HCMC. Vietnam has had to cull 5.9 million pigs infected with African swine fever since the beginning of the year, equivalent to 337,000 tons of pork, according to Phung Duc Tien, Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development. This has resulted in pork prices rising by 19 percent since last November, and could rise by a further 10-15 percent by the end of this year with an expected shortage of 200,000 tons, according to the General Statistics Office (GSO). While the consumer price index in November is forecast to reach 0.8-1 percent, pork alone is expected to contribute 0.75 percentage points to this increase, GSO officials said at a government meeting urgently called Monday to find ways to limit the surge in pork prices. At the meeting, the government assigned the Ministry of Industry and Trade to monitor and forecast upcoming pork shortages every month, so that the government could import enough quantities to ensure balance in demand and supply and control prices.

Source : <https://english.vov.vn/economy/pork-price-hikes-drive-up-related-food-costs-406471.vov>