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New trademarks considered



Cambodia News | 23 December, 2019

The Ministry of Commerce is exploring the possibility of issuing new trademarks to cover more agricultural goods. Op Rady, director of the Department of Intellectual Property of the Ministry of Commerce, told Khmer Times that four products are currently candidates for geographical indication (GI) status or collective trademarks. The products are Pursat Orange, Preah Vihear Organic Rice, Golden Silk, and Kampot's Salt and Salt Flower. The process is at an early stage, with the ministry now collecting information on each product. "The budget to study and register these products is limited, so we largely rely on donations. Protecting these products with trademarks will cost at least \$2 million," Mr Rady said. Thyda Thaug, founder of Thaug Enterprise, a salt supplier in Kampot, told Khmer Times she was glad the government was considering protecting these products with trademarks. She noted that Cambodia already has several products with GI status, and noted that this means these products are protected locally, regionally and internationally. "We want Kampot salt to be recognised internationally as well. It is crucial to give GI status to Kampot's salt. "When a product is awarded GI status, its reputation in the international market is boosted. The certification increases its value and price and helps promote the product internationally," Ms Thaug said. Mr Rady lamented that there was little involvement from the local private sector in the

process of protecting Cambodian goods with trademarks. He said the ministry's work in this regard is mostly dependant on funds from the government or donations from development partners. "Local companies and producers are not really participating in this process. Sometimes they are even reluctant to join workshops in which we discuss the benefits of intellectual property protection," he said. Mr Rady said it will take at least two years to give trademarks to these products. He said they are receiving support from the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) and the French Development Agency. Mr Rady said Pursat Orange and Kampot's Salt and Salt flower are candidates for GI status, while Preah Vihear Organic Rice and Golden Silk could become collective marks. In October, the government launched a new collective trademark covering one of the capital's most famous breakfast dishes, Phnom Penh Noodles. It is the fifth trademark recognised by the Cambodian government. There is also a certification mark for the rice brand Malys Angkor as well as GI marks for Koh Trung Pomelo, Kampot Pepper and Kampong Speu Palm Sugar. According to the Ministry of Commerce, 1,445 local marks and 2,396 international marks were registered with the Ministry of Commerce in the first 11 months of the year.

Source: <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/50672762/new-trademarks-considered>

New study on Phnom Penh-Bavet expressway



Cambodia News | 23 December, 2019

The China Railway Corporation is conducting a feasibility study on the construction of an expressway linking the capital with Bavet, in the border with Vietnam, according to the Ministry of Public Works and Transport. The study will take eight months to complete, Minister of Public Works Sun Chanthol said last week. He said the ministry and the company have signed an agreement on the study recently. This will be the second study on an expressway between Phnom Penh and Svay Rieng province's Bavet. The first one was conducted by Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). The recently-announced study will look further into whether the project is feasible and cost-effective. It will be submitted to the government who will use it to decide whether or not to allow the investment, Mr Chanthol said on Friday during a visit to the Bavet International Border Gate. "Under the recently signed framework agreement, the company will take 8 months to conduct the study and submit a report to the government. "If the investment is deemed feasible, the next step will be to negotiate a concession with the company," Mr Chanthol said. JICA's study showed the project would cost more than \$2 billion. According to that report, the expressway would be 135 kilometres long, running through Phnom Penh, Kandal, Prey Veng, and Svay Rieng until the border gate in Bavet. The China

Railway Corporation announced its interest to invest in the project earlier this year. On Thursday, Minister Chanthol said Cambodia and Vietnam had agreed to work together to connect both countries through an expressway linking Phnom Penh and Ho Chi Minh City. Sin Chanthy, president of the Cambodia Freight Forwarders Association, told Khmer Times the expressway would significantly improve transportation in the Kingdom. "It would enhance efficiency in the transportation of goods," he said. The country's first expressway, linking Phnom Penh and Sihanoukville, is currently under construction.

Source: <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/50672615/new-study-on-phnom-penh-bavet-expressway>

Japan provides grant for disaster relief



Laos News | 24 December, 2019

The Japanese government has agreed to provide a grant of more than 80.7 billion kip (US\$9.1 million) to carry out a project titled "Economic and Social Development Programme". A signing ceremony on the exchange of notes for the grant aid project took place at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Monday. The notes were signed and exchanged by the Ambassador of Japan to Laos, Mr Takewaka Keizo, and Laos' Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr Thongsavanh Phomvihane, witnessed by representatives from Lao line ministries. The project will provide the Lao government with equipment worth US\$9.1 million for the rescue of disaster victims and the recovery of disaster affected areas.

The programme is expected to reduce the damage caused by natural disasters, especially floods, and enable a prompt response by being well-equipped in advance. There have been growing concerns over the frequency and intensity of natural disasters caused by climate change in Laos. Reducing the vulnerability of society to natural disasters as well as reducing damage is one of the government's top priorities on the way to achieving sustainable economic and social development. The equipment will be stationed at disaster prevention sites throughout the country. Through the programme, the government is planning to procure water treatment units, vehicles, community tents, rescue tools, early warning equipment, and other items.

Source: http://www.vientianetimes.org.la/freeContent/FreeContenten_Japan276.php

Champassak farmers replant flood-hit rice crop



Laos News | 24 December, 2019

Champassak province: Provincial authorities are supporting farmers to plant over 5,000 hectares of rice and over 30,000 hectares of other crops after they lost a large amount of rice when floods inundated their fields in the rainy season. Director of the province's Agriculture and Forestry Department, Mr Padith Vannalatsamy, told Vientiane Times "We have received 135 tonnes of rice seed from the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and will deliver them to eight districts that were affected by floods."

Farmers will plant 5,069 hectares of rice and 31,825 hectares of other crops to replenish rice supplies and make up for losses incurred when widespread flooding occurred in the rainy season. Farmers are continuing to receive rice seeds in an all-out effort to ensure a good yield this dry season. "We expect to have enough seeds to plant rice and other crops because we've been given a large amount and many people have also stored seeds which they will plant," Mr Padith said. "When the floods hit, over 43,000 hectares of rice fields and more than 2,000 hectares of other crops were affected. In total, 20,000 hectares of rice and other crops were damaged."

"We are continuing to repair irrigation channels to ensure that enough water can be supplied during the dry season, in cooperation with local authorities and communities," he added. Farmers in Khammuan, Savannakhet, Attapeu, Saravan, Champassak and Xekong provinces all need rice seeds for dry season cultivation from November to March after floods devastated the central and southern provinces at the end of August and beginning of September. More than 130,500 hectares of rice fields, 251 hectares of vegetable plots and 953 fishponds were damaged.

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

Draft bill on alcohol imports nears completion



Myanmar News | 23 December, 2019

Legislation intended to relax Myanmar's existing ban on alcohol imports has moved to the attorney general for approval, according to the commerce ministry. Trade Department Director-General U Minn Minn told *The Myanmar Times* that the ministry had finished drawing up the regulations and once the draft legislation was approved by the attorney general it would be presented to the cabinet before going to parliament. The latest version of the draft bill has not been made public. Imports of spirits have been tightly restricted in Myanmar since 1962. The current ban was introduced by the military government in 1995. U Thein Sein's government permitted the import of wines in late 2015, but only hotels and duty-free outlets have been allowed to import spirits and beer. Last June commerce ministry assistant secretary U Khin Maung Lwin told this newspaper that the ministry would come up with draft legislation within this year to allow a partial liberalisation of the market, giving reasonable room for foreign liquors to enter under some restrictions. According to the draft Excise Law received by business in May and seen by *The Myanmar Times*, businesses that want to import, distribute and sell any kinds of liquor would need approval from the military-controlled home affairs ministry, the General

Administration Department (GAD) and a new Excise Policy Committee. The GAD will have the authority to issue licences in relation to production, storage, transport and distribution. It is unclear which authority would be responsible for import licences. The newly established Excise Policy Committee would be led by the military-appointed home affairs minister U Kyaw Swe and staffed by officials, including the chief of the Myanmar Police Force. The draft law has since been updated but this newspaper has not seen the submitted version. It is not clear whether the revised and unpublished draft legislation includes these provisions. Companies would like the bill to be revised to provide more clarity over import procedures and restrictions, said EuroCham Executive Director Marc de la Fouchardiere. For instance, the draft law as made public last May says the GAD "may determine the type, quantity and measurement of liquor entitled to possess of any person [business]" but does not mention on what basis decisions would be made. Mr Fouchardiere added that the draft provision regarding import licencing is confusing. The draft law says those who want to import liquor "shall be the person who obtained wholesale distribution licence of foreign liquor and shall apply and obtain the right of import to the relevant department in accord with the policy of the Excise Policy Committee and with the recommendation of the

department by mentioning the type of liquor and quantity desired to import.” The alcohol market liberalisation, the first under Daw Aung San Suu Kyi’s government, is set to pave the way for more direct foreign investment in the beverage industry. The restriction on alcohol imports has resulted in massive quantities of foreign alcohol being smuggled into Myanmar, fuelling illicit trade and hurting the government’s tax revenue. The commerce ministry previously denied the move to review the restrictions is linked to the establishment of the Myanmar Competition Commission. Business executives say restrictions on the import of alcohol is among the key issues the watchdog should investigate.

Source: <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/draft-bill-alcohol-imports-nears-completion.html>

Myanmar plans to attract tourists to Zalon Taung Pagoda



Myanmar News | 23 December, 2019

Myanmar is planning to attract foreign tourists to Zalon Taung Pagoda where the number of local pilgrims is increasing, according to Hotel and Tourism Department of Sagaing Region. More than 200,000 local pilgrims visited the Zalon Taung Pagoda in 2017 and over 400,000 in 2018. The number of local pilgrim’s arrival in Zalon Taung Pagoda is significantly increased since 2017 and the regional government is negotiating with respective government departments to allow foreign tourists to

visit the pagoda since 2018, according to Aung Thu Oo, head of the Hotel and Tourism Department of Sagaing Region. “We are still discussing to allow the foreign tourists to visit the mountain and it will take time due to security concern,” said Aung Thu Oo. Ministry of Hotel and Tourism announced on December 5 that foreign tourists need to ask permission to visit Innpauk, Khaungtone, Laytharkone, Butaung, Nantar, Nantkhin, Nantmar, Moetay and Narnanttun villages in Banmauk Township for security season. The Zalon Taung Pagoda is located on a mountain about 3,090 feet above the sea level about 12 miles north of Banmauk in Sagaing Region. The history of the Zalon Taung Pagoda said the mountain is the place where the fifth Buddha named “Ariya Metteyya” preached.

Source: <https://elevenmyanmar.com/news/myanmar-plans-to-attract-tourists-to-zalon-taung-pagoda>

Vietnam targets 4 billion USD from cashew exports in 2020



Vietnam News | 23 December, 2019

According to the Vietnam Cashew Association (Vinacas), the sector will focus on deep processing, improving quality and diversifying products towards realizing the goal. In 2019, the sector imported over 1.5 million tonnes of raw materials, mostly from Africa, to meet its processing and production demand. Mergers and acquisitions have also taken place this year with more and more large-scale enterprises operating in the industry, the association

said. By the end of November, Vietnamese businesses had shipped more than 418,000 tonnes of cashew abroad for almost 3 billion USD, while this year's targets are 450,000 tonnes and 3.5 billion USD. The US is still the biggest importer of Vietnamese cashew nuts, followed by China and the Netherlands. Data from the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development shows that the agriculture sector enjoyed a trade surplus of 8.8 billion USD in the first 11 months. The country earned 37.3 billion USD from the export of farm produce and forestry and aquatic products during the period, a year-on-year increase of 3.6 percent. Meanwhile, 28.5 billion USD was spent on agro-forestry-fishery imports, down 0.7 percent. China remained the largest buyer of agricultural products from Vietnam, accounting for 26.9 percent of total exports, followed by the US, the EU, ASEAN and Japan.

Source: <https://english.vov.vn/economy/vietnam-targets-4-billion-usd-from-cashew-exports-in-2020-407924.vov>

Pepper exports face hurdles in global market



Vietnam News | 23 December, 2019

VOV.VN - Vietnam's pepper exports are poised to continue to encounter a number of difficulties as a result of low prices due to high levels of supply and increasing competition within the global market, according to the Import-Export Department under the Ministry of Industry and Trade. At present, Vietnam is home to approximately 100,000 hectares

of pepper, equivalent to an annual output of roughly 247,000 tonnes. While pepper prices remain low and pepper production costs have soared in recent years with a 10 per cent rise in comparison to 2017. In 2018, the falling pepper prices negatively affected the pepper industry with the downward trend set to continue into the future, according to the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. The global demand for pepper currently stands at approximately 510,000 tonnes per year with an average annual increase of between 2 per cent to 3 per cent, while global pepper output is currently far higher at between 8 per cent and 10 per cent. The world's pepper output reached 557,000 tonnes in 2018 and is predicted to reach 602,000 tonnes by the end of the year. Moreover, global pepper output is projected to rise to 1 million tonnes by 2050 due to growing demand throughout the world, resulting in fluctuations occurring in pepper prices in the coming time. According to experts in the sector, despite pepper exports facing challenges, free trade agreements such as the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) and the EU-Vietnam Free Trade Agreement (EVFTA) are considered to present a wealth of opportunities for the nation's pepper industry. The Import-Export Department stated that in order to take full advantage of the benefits brought about by both the CPTPP and the EVFTA, local businesses must stay active in seeking information regarding the FTAs in order to firmly grasp the commitments that exist between Vietnam and partner markets. This is

particularly true when it comes to information related to tariff preferences, quality requirements, and rules of origin. In order to initiate the raise of pepper prices, the sector has been advised to innovate its growth model and focus on quality from the raw material stage as a way of creating high-quality products which can make inroads into various demanding markets throughout the world.

Source: <https://english.vov.vn/economy/pepper-exports-face-hurdles-in-global-market-407916.vov>
