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Billion-dollar highway to Sihanoukville 20pct ready



Cambodia News | 4 March, 2020

The first-ever expressway project in the Kingdom, linking its capital Phnom Penh to Sihanoukville, has reached 20 percent completion since construction officially commenced last year, according to the Ministry of Public Works and Transportation (MPWT). Speaking during a recent visit to the construction site, Yit Bunna, undersecretary of State at the MPWT, said all relevant ministries have worked closely together in order to iron out several issues and accelerate construction speeds. “We have sorted out 70 percent of the problems and are planning to overcome the rest by May this year,” he said. One of these issues is that more than 130 families from Kamboul commune, in Phnom Penh’s Kamboul district, who have been displaced to make way for the expressway, are seeking “fair” compensation from the government. “Step by step, we are working to compensate those affected. We have a clear plan,” said Vasim Sorya, a spokesman for the Ministry of Public Works and Transport, in response to the situation. Built by state-owned China Road and Bridge Corp (CRBC) through its subsidiary Cambodia PPSHV Expressway Co Ltd, it’s estimated that the final project cost will run to roughly \$1.9billion. The finished expressway stretches 190 kilometres with a width of 24.5 metres. Last December, Prime Minister Hun Sen said as well as offering a better transportation service, the

expressway will be more time-efficient and faster than ordinary routes. These are fundamental in serving the modern industrialisation of the country and facilitating international heavy transport activities. “Construction of the expressway is in line with regional integration in both Asean and the Greater Mekong Subregion – it will link regional transport networks from one country to another,” he said. Mr Hun Sen said that the new highway will enhance Cambodia’s transport capacity in tandem with the development of its globalisation. The expressway development is part of the Chinese government’s Belt and Road initiative, which encompasses an artificial island in Sri Lanka, a bridge in Bangladesh and hydropower projects in both Nepal and Indonesia.

Source: <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/50697727/billion-dollar-highway-to-sihanoukville-20pct-ready>

Cambodia optimistic of exponential tourism growth and foreign arrivals after end of COVID-19



Cambodia News | 4 March, 2020

The number of foreign tourists visiting Cambodia is expected to double after the end of the deadly COVID-19, Ministry of Tourism said. Cambodia’s tourism industry has been hit by the COVID-19 outbreak since late last year and the country has introduced measures and work plan to restore the sector, especially in Siem Reap province, a major tourism destination. “After COVID-19 ends within the next four or five months, the number of foreign

visitors to Cambodia would increase twofold or threefold,” Tith Chantha, Secretary of State at the Ministry of Tourism, said at a press conference. In the first two months of this year, foreign arrivals in Cambodia dropped by 15 percent. Last year, Cambodia’s tourism sector grew 6.6 percent to 6.6 million foreign tourists, generating an income of \$5 billion. However, it’s feared COVID-19 will reduce that figure this year by about 10 percent. Both Prime Minister Hun Sen and Tith Chantha, secretary of state at the Ministry of Tourism, have called for more people living locally to travel domestically on holiday.

Chea Vannak/AKP/KT

Source : <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/50698040/cambodia-optimistic-of-exponential-tourism-growth-and-foreign-arrivals-after-end-of-covid-19>

Lao tourism industry seeks help in wake of Covid-19 slump



Laos News | 5 March, 2020

VIENTIANE (Vientiane Times/ANN) - Tourism-related businesses are calling for special assistance from the government and close cooperation with the private sector to collectively deal with the dramatic downturn in trade amid Covid-19 concerns. Local proprietors and representatives from the tourism sector, including hotels, restaurants, airlines, transport operators and visitor attractions, gathered in Vientiane yesterday to share their concerns and seek ways to boost business during the international coronavirus outbreak. The meeting was chaired by the Vice President of the Lao National Chamber of

Commerce and Industry, Ms Valy Vetsaphong. Participants suggested various issues for the Chamber to raise with the government to help the tourism industry in its current plight. These included reducing or postponing tax payments by tour operators as well as calling on banks to suspend loan repayments. Calls were made for the government to allow employers to temporarily change staff working conditions during the downturn, such as cutting back hours while retaining their longer-term staff. Authorities were asked to extend social welfare assistance to workers, as well as discount electricity and water rates to lessen the financial strain on cash flow. The meeting also called for tourism businesses to work in close cooperation to attract customers through promotions targeting the domestic market under the theme ‘Lao help Lao’. Participants also discussed various related issues, stressing the core issues of fairness, unity and transparency for sustainable development. “The outcomes of the meeting will be reported and proposed to the government promptly to seek solutions,” Ms Valy said. But she stressed that the business sector should take action first, especially assisting each other to deal with the crisis. The continuing Covid-19 outbreak in China and other countries is affecting the region’s service sector, including in Laos. According to tourist arrival figures last year, just over 1 million Chinese visited Laos, but the government in China has now banned Chinese tour companies from travelling outside the country. Local estimates put tourist trade revenue losses in

the first two months of this year at US\$20-25 million. This figure is likely to increase if tourists from other countries stop visiting Laos because of concerns about the regional health situation.

Source : <http://annx.asianews.network/content/lao-tourism-industry-seeks-help-wake-covid-19-slump-115095>

Laos gov't taps US\$22.5 million World Bank finance to tackle rural poverty



Laos News | 5 March, 2020

The government has borrowed US\$22.5 million through a low-interest World Bank loan to fund a programme to address nutrition improvement and poverty in four northern provinces from 2020-2024. The project will target communities in the provinces of Huaphan, Xieng Khuang, Phongsaly and Oudomxay. The government is also investing 13 billion kip in agricultural infrastructure in Luang Namtha, Luang Prabang, Savannakhet, Saravan, Xekong and Attapeu provinces. These initiatives form part of the government's five-year socio-economic strategic development plan with a focus on remote areas and broader national poverty reduction from 2020-2030. The sustainable management of forests has also been identified as a key part of local community development efforts and the Poverty Reduction Fund under the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry is running a forestry training course in Pakxe, Champassak province, from March

3-6. Executive Director of the Poverty Reduction Fund, Mr Chit Thavisay, representatives of agricultural sectors from Vientiane and six provinces, and ministry officials are attending the course which has a focus on forestry studies, the management of natural disasters, and capacity building for teams in remote areas. The government is aiming to build resilience in agriculture so communities can better cope with natural disasters such as droughts and floods. Other initiatives seek to mitigate the impact of pestilence affecting rural communities such as African swine fever and locust plagues which have recently wreaked havoc on farmers' incomes

Source : <http://annx.asianews.network/content/laos-gov't-taps-us225-million-world-bank-finance-tackle-rural-poverty-115094>

Companies to invest \$24 m in CMP garment, bag making in Yangon



Myanmar News | 4 March, 2020

Companies will engage in CMP garment and bag making businesses in industrial zones in the Yangon Region including Thilawa Special Economic Zone by investing nearly US\$24 million, according to the Yangon Region Investment Committee. Finline Company Limited (Hong Kong) will invest US\$2.087 million in CMP bag making in Thilawa SEZ; Genesis Myanmar Garment Co Ltd US\$4.285 million in CMP bag making in East Dagon Industrial Zone; South Frame Myanmar Limited, Estonia US\$0.852 million in making photo frames; Myanmar Journey Bags Co

Ltd (Hong Kong) US\$1.622 million in CMP bag making in Wataya Industrial Zone; Kai Sheng (Myanmar) Industrial of Taiwan US\$0.911 million in CMP bag making in Shwepyitha Township; Jiangsu Soho (Myanmar) Garment Company Ltd (China) US\$1.2 million in CMP garment business; Si Yuan (Myanmar) Co Ltd (Hong Kong) US\$0.906 million in CMP garment business in Hlinethaya Township; Sunrise (Myanmar) Fashion Co Ltd (China) US\$4.5 million in CMP garment business in Thadukan Industrial Zone; Ziran Non-Woven (Myanmar) Company Limited (Hong Kong) US\$2.9 million in producing and exporting polyester fibres in Industrial Zone (4) in Shwepyitha township; Allland Fashion Limited (China) US\$1.002 million in CMP garment business in Hlinethaya Industrial Zone; and some other Chinese and Taiwanese companies in CMP garment businesses in some industrial zones. The latest investments approved by the committee will create 8,920 local jobs.

Source: <https://elevenmyanmar.com/news/companies-to-invest-24-m-in-cmp-garment-bag-making-in-yangon>

Myanmar govt moves to regulate raft-fishing businesses



Myanmar News | 4 March, 2020

The Department of Fisheries will register raft-fishing businesses that employ 30 or more workers to address allegations of forced labour and other human rights violations, a senior agriculture official

said. U Hla Kyaw, deputy minister of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation, said the operators of fishing rafts have to get permits from the government. “If the raft owners employ at least 30 people, they have to register their information, including their addresses, with the department to get a permit,” he said. He blamed past violations on the labour shortage and weak law enforcement. Under the new regulations, he said, fishing raft operators may employ only workers who hold national registration cards and ensure that there is no forced labour. “There’s a code of conduct to address weaknesses in these areas,” U Hla Kyaw said. During a meeting with legislators, the operators agreed to a 16-point checklist to monitor the conduct of their businesses. The department said that businesses that fail to follow the rules face a fine of up to K3 million (US\$2000) and a three-month fishing ban. Last year, more than 100 people were reported killed, injured or missing on fishing rafts in Ayeyarwady Region. The business was thrust into the limelight late last year when a student at Dagon University was reported to have been trafficked and forced to work on a fishing raft before being rescued by his family.

Source: <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/government-moves-regulate-raft-fishing-businesses.html>

Rice export prices surge amid high demand



Vietnam News | 4 March, 2020

Hanoi (VNA) – Prices of rice exports have been surging in recent time due to high demand from some markets such as Malaysia, the Republic of Korea (RoK), the Philippines, and Indonesia, according to the Vietnam Food Association. Malaysia has agreed to purchase 90,000 tonnes of the grain from Vietnam and will import more in the coming time and the RoK has given a quota of 55,112 tonnes of the food for Vietnam this year. Meanwhile, the Philippines has been importing a large amount of rice from Vietnam since December 2019. It was the world's biggest importer of the goods in 2019 and is forecast to maintain this top position in 2020 with the purchase of 2.6 million tonne. A working delegation from the Philippines' Ministry of Agriculture is scheduled to visit Vietnamese rice processing facilities in preparation for further import from Vietnam. Indonesia aims to import about 1 million tonnes of rice this year, up 700,000 tonnes compared to 2019. Mainland China used to be Vietnam's biggest rice market for many years, but in 2019, exports to the country declined sharply by 64.2 percent, due to the impact of the acute respiratory disease caused by SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19).

Source : <https://en.vietnamplus.vn/rice-export-prices-surge-amid-high-demand/169579.vnp>

IIP rises 6.2% in first two months



Vietnam News | 4 March, 2020

The index of industrial production (IIP) in the first two months of this year increased by 6.2 per cent over

the same period last year. The Covid-19 epidemic had a strong negative impact on industrial production activities, said the General Statistics Office (GSO). Due to the effects of the Covid-19 epidemic, the source of input materials imported from China for some industries was reduced compared to the time before the outbreak. At the same time, Vietnamese exported goods, which have large consumption turnover in China, are obstructed at border gates with China. The processing and manufacturing sector increased by 7.4 per cent, contributing 6 percentage points to the general increase. Power production and distribution increased by 8.4 per cent, contributing 0.7 percentage points. Water supply, waste management and treatment increased by 4.9 per cent, contributing 0.1 percentage points. Mining and quarrying dropped by 3.7 per cent, down 0.6 percentage points in the general increase. However, some key products of foreign direct investment (FDI) enterprises saw growth in production. Telephone components increased by nearly 30 per cent. Mobile phones increased by 25.5 per cent, of those, smartphones increased by 3.2 per cent. Clean coal increased by 10.3 per cent and electricity production increased by 8.6 per cent. GSO economic experts said that the number of employees working in industrial enterprises had risen since the beginning of last month compared to January, mainly in the

non-state sector with an increase of 0.6 per cent and 3.6 per cent in FDI enterprises. This implied that enterprises were ready to recover production after the Covid-19 epidemic eased.

Source : <https://english.vov.vn/economy/iip-rises-62-in-first-two-months-410915.vov>