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Highlight News / *May 5, 2020*

- Cambodia's bilateral trade drops with Vietnam, yet Thailand steady
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Cambodia's bilateral trade drops with Vietnam, yet Thailand steady

Cambodia News I 4 May, 2020

The two-way trade of Cambodia with Vietnam experienced a decrease during the first quarter of the year caused by the global pandemic. However, the trade volume with Thailand remained steady. From January to March, the bilateral trade between the two countries stood at $1.3 billion, down 8.2 percent over the corresponding period last year, according to a figure from the Embassy of Vietnam to Cambodia released last week. It noted that during the period, Vietnam imported to Cambodia was valued at roughly $1 billion, up 4.4 percent. In contrast, the amount Cambodia exported to the country reached $272 million, a 37 percent decrease. As of 2019, trade volume between the countries recorded more than $5.2 billion, an increase of 12 percent compared with 2018. The trade figure already hit the target, which the two governments committed to increasing trade volume by reaching $5 billion by 2020. Another report released by the Foreign Investment Agency under the Ministry of Planning and Investment in Vietnam, however, stated that Cambodia was recorded as the third largest recipient of Vietnamese investment during the first quarter of this year, with investment totalling $9.5 million – 19.3 percent. The $2-million Vietnam-funded border market in Tboung Khmum province called Da Market launched late 2019. The market is believed to help facilitate trade between Cambodia and Vietnam. With Thailand, despite having the border restriction still in placeby COVID-19, Cambodia's exports to the country continued to increase during the first quarter of the year. According to data from Thailand's Ministry of Commerce the bilateral trade between the Kingdoms in the first three months was valued at $2.5 billion, a 31 percent hike over same period last year. During the period, Cambodia's total exports to Thailand reached $612 million, a 115 percent increase, while Cambodia imported from Thailand $1,891 million of goods, a 17 percent increase over the corresponding period last year.

Source:https://www.khmertimeskh.com/50719618/cambodias-bilateral-trade-drops-with-vietnam-yet-thailand-steady/

Rice exports grew by about 40.5 percent compared with last year

Cambodia News I 4 May, 2020

Cambodia's rice exports to China were 122,094 tonnes (41 percent), to the European Union 97,337 tonnes (32.4 percent), to Asean members 37,428 tonnes (12.5 percent) and to other destinations 43,393 tonnes (14.45 percent). Veng Sakhon, minister of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, said that the exports of formal agricultural products totalled more than 2 million tonnes and informal ones 1 million tonnes. He said from January to April, Cambodia exported 938,120 tonnes of dried cassava, 330,850 tonnes of fresh cassava, 9,301 tonnes of cassava powder, 186,205 tonnes of cashew nuts, 33,298 tonnes of corn, 98,969 tonnes of bananas, 42,035 tonnes of mangoes, 2,252 tonnes of pepper, 44 tonnes of vegetable and 420 tonnes of tobacco. Last week, the Cambodian Rice Federation (CRF) asked the government to cancel the ban of white rice exports as soon as possible, so rice mills can clear old stock and pay back debt owed to consumers. The request, which will help millers be ready to buy paddy in early July, was made during a meeting about the "current business situation and necessary measures during the outbreak of the COVID-19" situation between the private sector, the Ministry of Economy and Finance and led by Deputy Prime Minister Aun Pornmonirath. The federation also requested the government allocate an additional $30 million to the existing $50 million and included the capital from the financial institution, now totalling about $200 million, to assist millers in buying around 800,000 tonnes of paddy. CRF President Song Saran said the current storage capacity of rice mills in Cambodia is running at 1.9 million tonnes per season, with silo capacity at approximately 45,000 tonnes per day. The CRF president said, "With the current COVID-19 situation, some of the by-products of rice have been blocked. Rice bran cannot be exported, for example. CRF is also requesting the government exempt the withholding of tax for transport of paddy and milled rice, especially withholding tax on warehoused rents and private truck transport because this has been a burden for the mill-stunted corn." He asked the government to provide a feasibility study for rice millers to supply renewable energy, such as solar, which would make production costs for milled rice more competitive because current electricity policies do not. Encou- raging each mill to invest this type of energy requires significant leverage and costs. He proposed promoting in the agriculture community through the contract farming mechanism, known as the Public, Private and Producer Partnership.

Source: https://www.khmertimeskh.com/50719616/rice-exports-grew-by-about-40-5-percent-compared-with-last-year/

Govt discusses aid package for unemployed

Laos News I 5 May, 2020

The Lao government is discussing practical measures to aid the many Lao workers who are jobless and facing a loss of income due to the COVID-19 pandemic. According to a government report tabled at a Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister Meeting recently, a task force has been asked to improve its proposed measures to aid workers, in particular for those registered with the social welfare system. Details of the revised aid measures for the Lao labourers would be finalised and approved shortly, according to the report. Earlier, the Lao National Economic Research Institute urged the government to speed up efforts to provide aid for the workers. This state intervention is necessary as the COVID-19 pandemic has forced businesses to suspend their operations, resulting in rising unemployment and income losses. According to the institute, members of the national social welfare scheme should be the first group of workers given state aid as they have made some contribution to the scheme's fund. However, the institute urged the government to step in and allocate state money into the fund, so it was sufficiently resourced to aid labourers under the scheme, adding that the current social welfare fund was still small. The institute also recommended the government assist labourers who are not registered under the social welfare scheme, including the approximately 100,000 who have returned from Thailand during the pandemic. On top of that, the government should encourage unemployed workers to engage in agricultural activities so that they can have access to basic food security. Laos has well-established traditions in agriculture with the majority of the population being farmers. In addition to state aid, the National Economic Research Institute urged the business sector, in particular landlords and apartment owners, to reduce rental fees for tenants as part of measures to minimise the impact of COVID-19 on those out of work. The institute said the government should strengthen the capacity of the social welfare system over the long run, so it was in a better position to protect members in case of future crises. Additionally, the government should train the Lao workforce with essential skills to apply in modern industry. At present, the majority of local employees were low skilled, according to the institute. According to data from the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, Laos has to import foreign personnel for mega investment projects as the country is unable to provide workers with essential skills. The government is now improving vocational skills so enough skilled workers can meet the demand of growing investment and economic growth.

Source:http://www.vientianetimes.org.la/freeContent/FreeConten_Govtd84.php

Govt announces list of essential businesses in Myanmar

Myanmar News I 5 May, 2020

The Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population on May 3 announced a list of 21 businesses which need to continue operations during the COVID-19 outbreak as they provide either essential, public or necessary services. The businesses include: State-owned factories and enterprises; Businesses that supply water; Businesses involved in electricity, fuel energy production and transmission; Providers of fire services; Private hospitals, clinics and healthcare service providers, Telecommunication service providers; and Information providers and technology businesses. Transportation; Warehousing and wholesale; Port services; Logistics and freight; Export and import; Municipal services; Banking and finance; Insurance; Toll-collections; Printing and publishing businesses; Mining and resources; Chemical-related firms; Construction businesses; Fisheries As these businesses will have to continue operating, they will need to ensure that they have complied with the health ministry's guidelines for prevention of COVID-19 including having their premises inspected by the relevant authorities, the announcement said. Some factories in Hlaing Tharyar Industrial Zone have now restarted after passing inspections but there are still others under inspection, said CEO U Aung Kyaw Oo. There are 29 industrial zones in Yangon Region and some 6,000 factories.

Source: https://www.mmtimes.com/news/govt-announces-list-essential-businesses-myanmar.html

Vietnam's exports surge 4.7 percent in four months

Vietnam News I 4 May, 2020

Hanoi (VNA) - Vietnam's export value saw a year-on-year increase of 4.7 percent to an estimated 82.9 billion USD in the first four months of this year, according to the General Statistics Office (GSO).Domestic companies generated 26.4 billion USD from exports during the period, rising 12.1 percent year-on-year and making up 32 percent of the country's total export earnings. Meanwhile, exports of foreign-invested firms hit 56.49 billion USD, up 1.5 percent and making up 68 percent of the total.Fifteen groups of products recorded an export value of over 1 billion USD or equivalent to 80.1 percent of the nation's four-month total earnings. Of them, phones and parts earned the largest export turnover with 16.2 billion USD, up 1.1 percent year-on-year. Electronics, computers and components came next with 12.4 billion USD, up 28.6 percent year-on-year, followed by textiles and garment (8.9 billion USD, down 5.8 percent); machinery equipment and parts (6.9 billion USD, up 29.6 percent); and footwear (5.5 billion USD, up 1.3 percent).From January to April, the US remained Vietnam's biggest export market, spending 20.3 billion USD on Vietnamese goods, a yearly hike of 13.4 percent. It was followed by China with 13.1 billion USD, up 26.7 percent; the EU with 10.7 billion USD, down 8.1 percent and ASEAN nations with 8.2 billion USD, down 3.4 percent, the GSO said in a monthly report.Per the report, the country's imports expanded 2.1 percent year-on-year to an estimated 79.89 billion USD in the period. Domestic firms spent 33.58 billion USD on imports, up 1.1 percent year-on-year while foreign-invested companies saw a yearly turnover rise of 2.9 percent to 46.31 billion USD.Electronics, computers and components accounted for 22 percent of the nation's four-month imports at 17.8 billion USD, up 12.5 percent over the same period last year. Among others were machinery, equipment and parts at 11.5 billion USD, down 0.1 percent; telephones and parts (4.3 billion USD, up 12 percent); cloth (3.6 billion USD, down 10.9 percent); steel and iron (2.9 billion USD, down 6.4 percent); plastics (2.8 billion USD, down 1.4 percent) and plastic products (2.3 billion USD, up 14.6 percent).China was Vietnam's largest supplier, selling 22.7 billion USD worth of goods to Vietnam, down 0.1 percent year-on-year. The Republic of Korea ranked second by shipping 15.5 billion USD worth of goods to Vietnam, up 2.5 percent year-on-year, followed by ASEAN countries with 9.9 billion USD, down 7.8 percent.According to the GSO's report, Vietnam's trade surplus narrowed to 3 billion USD in January-April./.

Source: https://en.vietnamplus.vn/vietnams-exports-surge-47-percent-in-four-months/172707.vnp

Number of new firms in Hanoi in January-April down 13.1 percent

Vietnam News I 4 May, 2019

Hanoi (VNA) – The number of new firms set up in Hanoi in the period from January-April dropped 13.1 percent from the same period in 2019 to 7,468, but the combined registered capital of new enterprises shot up 46.5 percent to over 118 trillion VND (nearly 5.1 billion USD).According to Bui Anh Tuan, director of the Business Registration Management Agency under the Ministry of Planning and Investment, the decline in new firms reflected the impact of the COVID-19 epidemic on production and business. On the other hand, it also implied that businesses are waiting for clearer opportunities after society shifts to a "new normal" situation after the epidemic is put under control.Sharing his view, Chairman of the Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry Vu Tien Loc noted that despite the decrease in number similarly to the general trend in the country, the registered capital of new firms in Hanoi surged by 46.5 percent while the national figure dropped by 17.9 percent.He said the positive statistics showed the improved environment for investment and business in Hanoi.The capital city has taken concerted measures to support businesses in the context of the COVID-19 epidemic. The municipal People's Committee has issued a plan to implement the Government's Resolution 02/NQ-CP on continuing to implement key tasks and solutions to improve business environment and enhance national competitiveness in 2020.Under the plan, Hanoi aims to maintain its place among the top 10 localities in the PCI (Provincial Competitive Index), and continue to meet or surpass indications on business environment. The city is pushing its departments and agencies to update and publish 100 percent of decisions, policies and administrative procedures on their websites.Director of the city's Department of Planning and Investment Nguyen Manh Quyen said besides maintaining support for business establishment, the city is making preparations to seize opportunities brought about by free trade deals that Vietnam has signed.He said Hanoi will try to keep the rate of on-line business registration at 100 percent, and the rate of business filing and paying tax online at over 98 percent./.

Source: https://aecnewstoday.com/2020/vietnam-morning-news-for-may-5-2/