

*Highlight News / January 07/2021*



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ADVISORY INSTITUTE FOR TRADE AND INVESTMENT by TCC (AiT*i*)

## Gov't gives \$23mil to workers who lost jobs over pandemic



*Cambodia News | 06 January, 2021*

A total of \$23 million has been given out to those affected by the closure of businesses in the tourism industry and garment factories due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Ministry of Labor is expected to allocate additional funds to provide financial aid to another 8,000 workers. However, the amount was not disclosed. Ministry spokesman, Heng Sour said the government allocated the money as it was sympathetic and concerned with the plight of people who lost their jobs and were suffering. The COVID-19 outbreak, he added, had affected 129 garment factories that were forced to close down their businesses. "The plight of the jobless workers had led to the Ministry of Labor and Ministry of Economy and Finance to allocate the initial \$23 million to be given out as financial aid to the unemployed workers," he said. On December 24, the government extended its financial support program for the garment and textile industry, tourism sector, and poor people from January to March 2021. Yesterday the ministry announced the opening of the 45th allowance for more than 8,400 workers in the garment and tourism sector. This will benefit 8,484 workers in 66 factories in the garment and tourism sectors who lost their employment contracts. There are 21 garment factories in Phnom Penh, Kandal,

Kampong Speu, Kampong Chhnang, Prey Veng, Preah Sihanouk, Takeo, and Svay Rieng. As for tourism, there are 45 companies in Phnom Penh, Siem Reap, Kampot, and Preah Sihanouk. said the workers can get these benefits through Wing Specialized Bank, which will send a message on the payment of government subsidies to their mobile numbers as it was done earlier. The ministry said the government will continue its \$40 per month allowance for workers in the garment, textile, footwear, and travel product sectors for an additional three months from January to March 2021 while factory owners in these sectors must pay an additional \$30 per worker. The government, through the ministry, has been providing financial assistance to these workers since April last year. So Pheak, a garment worker, said that she lost her job last year due to COVID-19 and it was financial support from the government that helped her meet the family needs. "I am so grateful to the government for the aid given. To make ends meet, I am now helping my mother do farming. The yield from the farm gives us additional income. I hope the COVID-19 ends." she said, adding that if the current situation continues, it will bring a lot of hardship to many people. Cambodia's exports in clothes, footwear, and travel goods were down nine percent for the first 10 months of the year as compared to 2019 figures, according to data from the General Department of Customs and Excise (GDCE). The total value of these export

products between January and October was \$8.215 billion.

Source : <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/50800806/govt-gives-23mil-to-workers-who-lost-jobs-over-pandemic/>

## Cambodia's rubber export reach \$459 million in 2020



*Cambodia News | 06 January, 2021*

Cambodia exported some 340,000 tonnes of rubber in 2020 generating \$459 million for the national income. The update was shared yesterday by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, adding that during the year, the export of rubber trees was worth nearly US\$24 million. Cambodia has in total 401,914 hectares of land surface for rubber plantations, of which 240,811 hectares or 60 percent for industrial rubber, and 161,103 hectares, or 40 percent for household rubber plantations, continued the source. Some 282,071 tonnes of Cambodian rubber were exported in 2019, an increase of 30 percent from 217,501 tonnes in the year before. The Kingdom exports rubber mainly to Malaysia, Vietnam, Singapore and China. Lim Nary – AKP

Source : <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/50800901/cambodias-rubber-export-reach-459-million-in-2020/>

## Laos declares Covid-19 vaccinations safe, more to be inoculated

next week



*Laos News | 06 January, 2021*

VIENTIANE (Vientiane Times/ANN): The next target group of frontline medical staff is scheduled to be vaccinated against Covid-19 next week after more than 100 people vaccinated earlier showed no side effects. The vaccine, which was first administered in late November, produced good results, Deputy Minister of Health, Associate Prof Dr Phouthone Muongpak, told a press conference on Tuesday (Jan 5). People need two doses of the vaccine to develop immunity to Covid-19. The first group of frontline officials including medical staff had their first vaccination in late November and the second on Dec 22. "There were no side effects or problematic symptoms," said Dr Phouthone, who is Deputy Head of the National Taskforce for Covid-19 Prevention and Control. The vaccination programme was launched after China provided 2,000 doses of vaccine developed by Sinopharm (China National Pharmaceutical Group Co., Ltd.). Russia has also provided 500 doses of Sputnik V, a Covid-19 vaccine developed by Russia's Gamaleya Research Institute. The vaccine arrived in Laos on Jan 2. "We are preparing the next target group and will vaccinate them next week," Dr Phouthone said. Laos also expects to receive Covid-19 vaccines from

the Gavi Covax Facility – an initiative working to ensure global equitable access to Covid-19 vaccines, Minister of Health Associate Prof. Dr Bounkong Syhavong said last week. The vaccines funded by the Covax Facility are expected to be administered in April. It is expected that about 20 per cent of the Lao population, or about 1.6 million people, will be vaccinated this year, Dr Phouthone said. Priority groups in line for vaccinations are medical staff, officials working at land border crossings and airports, and elderly people living in at-risk communities such as border areas where there have been reports of illegal migration. Vaccination coverage is expected to rise further to 50 percent of the population by 2022, with more people to be vaccinated in the following years, Dr Phouthone said. It is estimated that it will cost almost US\$18 to immunise just one person, meaning that almost US\$100 million is required to vaccinate everyone in Laos, according to Dr Bounkong. The Chinese and Russian vaccines provided to Laos are among 10 Covid-19 vaccines listed in the Emergency Use Listing procedure of the World Health Organization (WHO), he added. So far, no Covid-19 vaccine has been officially certified for safety or effectiveness by the WHO.

Source : <https://www.thestar.com.my/aseanplus/aseanplus-news/2021/01/06/laos-declares-covid-19-vaccinations-safe-more-to-be-inoculated-next-week>

## Construction begins on fifth bridge linking Laos, Thailand



*Laos News | 06 January, 2021*

VIENTIANE (XINHUA) - Work on a fifth bridge linking Laos and Thailand across the Mekong River has begun after a construction agreement was signed in December. The bridge, which will take 36 months to build, will connect Bolikhamxay province in Laos to Thailand's north-eastern province of Bueng Kan. Local daily Vientiane Times on Wednesday (Jan 6) quoted project director Laythong Phommavong as saying that work is currently centred on the site where the bridge and immigration facilities will be built. "We are clearing land on a 50ha area prior to starting construction and this work is now 80 per cent complete," he said. The total cost of construction is estimated to be US\$130.3 million (S\$171.6 million), of which Laos will be responsible for some US\$46.13 million. Laos' construction costs will be financed by Thailand's Neighbouring Countries Economic Development Cooperation Agency through the provision of loans. When the bridge is completed in 2023, it will enable Bolikhamxay to become another regional trade hub and transit route for Laos, Thailand and Vietnam over a distance of just 150km. It will be the shortest connecting route among the three countries, said the report. The bridge is part of the Greater Mekong Sub-region and Ayeyawady-Chao Phraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy (ACMECS) initiative among Laos, Cambodia, Myanmar, Vietnam and Thailand. Mr

Laythong said Laos stands to benefit from transit services as well as attract more trade and investment. Laos also has the potential to benefit from an increase in tourism after the bridge is built but authorities need to provide more facilities and improve services to meet the needs of visitors, according to the report. There are currently four bridges linking Laos and Thailand across the Mekong River. The first connects Lao capital Vientiane to Thailand's Nong Khai province and the second connects Savannakhet province to Mukdahan province in Thailand. The third bridge connects Khammuan province with Thailand's Nakhon Phanom, and the fourth links Bokeo province in the north of Laos with Chiang Rai province.

Source : <https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/construction-of-fifth-lao-thai-bridge-begins>

## Myanmar marine exporters face roadblocks to China



*Myanmar News | 07 January, 2021*

The Myanmar seafood industry has had to use an alternative route for their exports to China due to transportation difficulties. Myanmar Eel Entrepreneurs Association's secretary U Tine Kyaw said that different provincial administrations in China have resulted in them having to use the Muse route for three months now, instead of the older Chin Shwe Haw route. "Only dry commodity trucks are going through Chin Shwe Haw. Marine products cannot be exported (via the route) so we are using the Muse-

Kyin San Kyawt route instead," he said. The secretary said the emergence of COVID-19 cases did not help the cause. "Having COVID-19 cases in Chin Shaw Haw and Laukkai played a part. There were arrangements to reopen (the routes) after discussions to allow trucks from our Kokang Region in. The route reopened for a short time before closing again," said U Tine Kyaw. He added that some marine products exported via the Muse-Kyin San Kyawt route also incur additional expenses. People are having difficulties hiring two drivers due to the current COVID-19 regulations and there are also higher service fees at the Kyin San Kyawt gate, he said. "The trade will stop if the Kyin San Kyawt gate is completely closed. Some deliveries are accepted while others are not. People are trying to get their businesses going but it is really troublesome," said U Tine Kyaw. - Translated

Source : <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/myanmar-marine-exporters-face-roadblocks-china.html>

## Vietnam exports of leather, footwear down 10% to \$16.5 billion in 2020



*Vietnam News | 06 January, 2021*

The Hanoitimes - Government support is needed for the local leather and footwear sectors to realize the export target of \$20 billion in 2021. Vietnam's exports of leather and footwear products were estimated to decline by 10% year-on-year to US\$16.5 billion in 2020, according to the Vietnam Leather, Footwear

and Handbag Association (Lefaso). “The local leather and footwear sectors are in need of more supporting policies from the Government to realize the export target of US\$20 billion in 2021,” stated the Lefaso in a report. In 2020, Vietnam’s leather industry is under severe impacts from a disruption of input materials supplies from China, while the US and European market, account for 70% of Vietnam’s leather exports, were forced to close due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Under this context, many leather manufacturers in Vietnam were in a dire situation of having no new orders, not to mention unexpected delays for existing orders. Statistics from the Ministry of Industry and Trade (MoIT) revealed over 70% of leather companies in Vietnam were forced to suspend operation, in turn affecting nearly 800,000 workers. As major markets in the US and Europe witnessed a decline of 13-14% in export revenue, a shift to Southeast Asian market such as Indonesia and Malaysia have partly offset the negative impacts and kept the export turnover of the local leather industry at a 5.7% growth in the second quarter of 2020. Another issue that the industry is facing at the moment is the lack of working capital, for which government’s support would be essential to keep businesses running at the moment. “Enterprises are falling short of capital to import input materials for production,” stated General Secretary of the Shoes and Leather Association of Ho Chi Minh

City Nguyen Van Khanh. While many leather companies are turning to domestic market instead of exporting abroad, locally made products are facing fierce competition from Chinese imports, especially cheap smuggled ones. “Local companies expect stronger efforts from the government in stopping fake and low-quality products from penetrating the domestic market, a key step to expand the market share of domestic leather products,” noted Mr. Khanh. Lefaso’s Vice President Phan Thi Thanh Xuan suggested government agencies should continue supporting local firms accessing loans with preferential rates, restructuring schedule payment of existing debts, waiving and reducing interest rates.

Source : <http://hanoitimes.vn/vietnam-exports-of-leather-footwear-down-10-to-us165-billion-in-2020-315749.html>

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## Vietnam to be among top growth performers again in 2021: HSBC



*Vietnam News | 06 January, 2021*

Hanoi (VNA) – Vietnam posted the fastest growth in Asia in 2020 and will once again be among the most outstanding performers in the region this year, according to the Hong Kong Shanghai Banking Corporation (HSBC). In its latest “Asia Economics Quarterly” report, HSBC said despite unprecedented challenges, Vietnam has strongly overcome the pandemic crisis. With a population of over 95 million, the country has managed to flatten the COVID-19 curve much sooner and keep the

infection tally at around 1,400 thanks to swift and effective prevention efforts by State agencies. Though the 2020 GDP growth of 2.91 percent was the lowest in the recent decade, it was still assessed as a big success and among the world's highest considering the complicated development of the COVID-19 pandemic. Inflation decelerated from 3.9 percent in the first three quarters to 1.5 percent in November compared to the same period of 2019 thanks to normalised good prices and declined oil prices. HSBC researchers expressed their belief that Vietnam will benefit from tech-led recovery, sustained FDI inflow, and many free trade agreements signed. However, they still slightly revised the country's 2021 growth forecast down to 7.6 percent, from the previous estimate of 8.1 percent, due to a prolonged recovery in the tourism industry. They held that although the country is now ready to outpace other countries in the region in 2021, there remain risks to its economic recovery. Many obstacles still exist in the tourism sector, HSBC said, noting though the worst may have passed after the second quarter, tourism-related services like accommodation and transportation are still in a bleak situation as a result of cross-border travel restrictions. The second wave of COVID-19 infections in late July was swiftly brought under control, but it could make the Government more prudent in reopening borders and attracting international visitors. A meaningful tourism recovery is unlikely in the time ahead until effective vaccines are available and there is a global integrated

approach to international tourism, according to HSBC./.

Source : <https://en.vietnamplus.vn/vietnam-to-be-among-top-growth-performers-again-in-2021-hsbc/194315.vnp>

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