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## GMAC reacts to expiration of US trade programme



*Cambodia News | 07 January 2021*

The Garment Manufacturers Association Cambodia (GMAC) has responded to the expiration of the US Generalized System of Preferences (GSP). The GSP programme expired on Dec 31. It failed to be renewed before the recess of the US congressional session, as did any other matters tabled but yet to be voted on and adopted. The expiration affects all 119 beneficiary countries and territories of the GSP. Its direct impact will be on buyers and importers in the US who will be required to pay import duties until the programme is reauthorised. GMAC's statement said it hopes the reauthorisation by the US Congress will happen soon and that it will keep interested parties informed. The GSP is a 46-year-old trade-preference programme under which the United States provides duty-free treatment to many imports from beneficiary developing countries and additional products for Least-Developed Beneficiary Developing Countries (LDBDCs). According to US trade representative Michael Froman, "The US has used these sorts of programmes to give some of the poorest countries in the world a vital leg up to face more advanced competitors." In 2016 the Office of the US Trade Representative announced a major expansion of trade preferences that provided significant benefits to the Cambodian garment industry. Under the changes to the US GSP, Cambodia and other LDBDCs producing travel goods such as luggage,

backpacks, handbags and wallets were given the opportunity to export those products to the US duty-free. The GSP expansion provided preferable access to the \$10 billion US import market in travel goods, which encouraged Cambodia's textile industry to pursue the development of profitable new areas in production.

Source: <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/50801455/gmac-reacts-to-expiration-of-us-trade-programme/>

## Commerce Ministry signs agri-business value-chain development MoU



*Cambodia News | 07 January 2021*

The Ministry of Commerce and Yamato Green, a well-known agricultural development company specialising in safe vegetable production, signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) yesterday to develop a value-chain for agri-business production in Cambodia. Speaking at the signing ceremony, Commerce Minister Pan Sorasak said agribusiness is an important and highly promising sector in the Kingdom that has yet to draw the amount of investment its development potential warrants. Sorasak stated the MoU will establish good cooperation in addressing challenges in the value chain to strengthen productivity and quality in response to market demands. He noted Yamato Green will be an appropriate partner for the development of sustainable agribusiness production and the provision of processing techniques, packaging and procedures needed to increase opportunities in the supply of domestic and export markets. Additionally, the minister said Yamato Green's participation in

developing a state-of-the-art production model will help boost local production today. “Small and medium enterprises and farmers’ communities will be able to establish an environmentally friendly supply chain and gain a competitive advantage in penetrating and diversifying the market” said the minister. Sorasak also advised the parties to have a specific information management system for sharing tasks according to function and provide information to each other in a timely, and consistent manner. He added the working group should develop medium and long-term coordination systems and mechanisms to ensure that technical assistance and benefits are provided to small and medium-sized enterprises. “Yamato Green should bring agri-business products from smallholder farmers to the markets, increase investment and provide development techniques along the production process in agribusiness, from planting to cultivation, processing, packaging and distribution,” the minister said. The signing ceremony was attended by Mikami Masahiro, ambassador of Japan to Cambodia, Nishikaze Toru, president of Japan International Cooperation Agency, Japan External Trade Organization’s President Marisa Haruta and Kanda Yogo, president of the Japanese Business Association of Cambodia. Japan’s Yamato Green has signed MoUs previously with the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries and the Ministry of Tourism.

Source : <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/50801454/commerce-ministry-signs-agri-business-value-chain-development-mou/>

## Visitors to Luang Prabang plummet by 584,380 in 2020



*Laos News | 08 January 2021*

Luang Prabang city recorded only 257,647 visitors in 2020, down 68 percent on 2019 due to the Covid-19 pandemic, according to a report from the province’s Information, Culture and Tourism Department. Of this number, 142,435 were foreign nationals and 133,212 were Lao. The overall figure of 257,647 was a decrease of 584,380 from the 860,035 people who visited the town in 2019. In 2018 Luang Prabang featured in the New York Times “52 places to go” edition of its travel section, sparking further tourist interest in Laos. Luang Prabang also ranked 11th in Architectural Digest’s annual list of the top 20 places to travel in 2020. The town’s old quarter was listed as a World Heritage Site in 1995 by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (Unesco), which determined that its architecture was culturally significant and worthy of protection by the United Nations. Luang Prabang city has 97 hotels and resorts, 394 guesthouses, 421 restaurants and 97 tour companies. There are numerous officially designated tourist attractions including 111 nature-based sites, 78 places of cultural interest, and 39 places of historical significance. Popular tourist attractions include the Phu Si stupa, Xieng Thong temple, Sae waterfall, Kuang Xi waterfall and the night market. Tourist numbers are down not only in Luang Prabang but throughout the country due to

global travel restrictions imposed as a result of the pandemic.

Source: [https://www.vientianetimes.org.la/freeContent/FreeContent\\_Visitors5.php/](https://www.vientianetimes.org.la/freeContent/FreeContent_Visitors5.php/).

## Laos to export 2,000 tonnes of rice to China in January



*Laos News | 07 January 2021*

VIENTIANE (Xinhua): Laos plans to ship 2,000 tonnes of polished rice to China in January, which is part of a trade quota agreement between the Lao and Chinese governments. More rice will be sent to China to fulfil the total target by the end of 2021, local daily Vientiane Times reported on Wednesday (Jan 6) quoting the Lao Ministry of Industry and Commerce. Rice is still reaching China as planned despite the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, said the report. Under the official rice trade quota, the Lao and Chinese governments expect to bolster bilateral trade. China is the largest rice export market for Laos, and the country's second biggest trading partner. Vietnam and Thailand are also important markets for the Lao-grown staple. Laos' revenue from rice exports to China has increased in recent years as a result of the trade preference agreement between the two countries, the report said.

Source : <https://www.thestar.com.my/aseanplus/aseanplus-news/2021/01/07/laos-to-export-2000-tonnes-of-rice-to-china-in-january>.

## India-Myanmar friendship road repairs in the works



*Myanmar News | 07 January 2021*

Plans are in place to repair 69 bridges that are on the Kalay to Tamu border road. Amyotha Hluttaw MP U Ko Ko Naing said, in addition to the bridges, some portions of the Kalay-Kalaywa road will also be upgraded. "One Indian firm had won the tender to repair 69 bridges on the India-Myanmar friendship road previously but the award was revoked as they were not in line with tender terms and conditions," he said. "The Indian government has arranged to call for a new tender. The Myanmar Ministry of Construction will prepare (for this). The Hluttaw is committed to upgrading the Kalay-Kalaywa road. The process has begun," he added. The Kalaywa-Yargyi road on the Myanmar-India border trade route is the shortest portion with 115 miles. Constructed in 2000, the road crosses 175 bridges and 183 culverts. It was open to public use in 2004 but has deteriorated due to the rainy season and trucks no longer run on it. India's IMT Expressway Co. is expected to complete heavy maintenance works on the road by 2021, said an official from the firm. While the Kalaywa-Yargyi road is being upgraded, a 165-mile short cut from Kalaywa to Ye-U (Maha Maing-Kalaywa-Ye-U road) is being renovated for cargo trucks and passenger buses to travel on via the Maha Myaing road, he said. -Translated

Source : <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/india-myanmar-friendship-road-repairs-works.html>.

## Vietnam – economic bright spot in 2020



*Vietnam News | 07 January 2021*

Vietnam has emerged as an economic bright spot with a growth rate of 2.91% in 2020, which is attributable to the country's efforts in containing COVID-19 and timely support policies to people and businesses, international organisations said. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) predicted that Vietnam's economy will strongly recover in 2021, reaching macro stability across spheres, from growth to current account deficit and employment. In July, the IMF said transparency is a very important factor in Vietnam's success, and the multi-media approach has consolidated the people's trust and ensured that the whole society abide by pandemic control measures. In its World Economic League Table 2021, the Centre for Economics and Business Research (CEBR) said Vietnam's economy is expected to move to the 19th position in 2035. The country's annual rate of GDP growth is forecast to pick up to an average of 7% between 2021 and 2025. Over the subsequent ten years, the Vietnamese economy will expand by 6.6% on average each year, the centre said. In an article titled "A new study shows emerging economies are catching up," The Economist of the UK said "the most successful club spans all today's advanced economies as well as 16 emerging markets, such as China, India, Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam." The UK-based BBC News said Vietnam has minimised the economic damage from COVID-19 and is the

only country in South East Asia on track for growth in 2020. "The country has seen slower growth this year and its once-thriving tourism sector has taken a particularly bad hit, but it has avoided the worst economic effects of the pandemic." Professor Vladimir Mazyrin, leader of the Centre for Vietnamese and ASEAN Studies of the Far East Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences, has described the results of economic development of Vietnam in 2020 as an extraordinary success. In an interview with Sputnik, the leading Russian expert on Vietnamese economy said positive results were posted amid recession and general crisis. "For example, within ASEAN, only three countries - Vietnam, Myanmar and Laos - have positive GDP growth. All other countries are red." Vietnam's 2020 growth is estimated at 2.91%. Prof. Mazyrin said this is a great success, which will definitely help Vietnam rise to a higher position in all world rankings in the near future. So Vietnam's success can be called a phenomenon, he added.

Source : : <https://english.vov.vn/en/economy/vietnam-economic-bright-spot-in-2020-829244.vov>.

## Vietnam's rice exports win big despite one-month interruption



*Vietnam News | 07 January 2021*

Although the rice export volume decreased by about 3.5% year-on-year, the price of Vietnam's export rice still bounce. The Ministry of Industry and Trade on January 6 announced that, according to the estimates of the Ministry, in 2020, Vietnam's rice exports reaches 6.15 million tons, equivalent to 3.07

billion USD. Although the amount of rice exported decreased by about 3.5% compared to 2019, mainly for the purpose of ensuring national food security, the export value increased by 9.3%. Also according to Ministry, the average rice export price for the whole year is estimated at 499 USD/ ton, implying a 13.3% increase over 2019. "This is the highest average annual price in recent years, bringing great benefits to Vietnamese farmers", the Ministry of Industry and Trade assessed. Vietnam's rice export structure continues to shift to high-quality rice with higher selling prices and added value. At the same time, farmers and traders recently show great interest in improving quality, traceability so that their product can meet the strict standards from demanding markets such as the EU, Korea, United States. Previously, from March 24, 2020, Vietnam suspended rice exporting activities to ensure food security, due to concerns over food crisis causing by the Covid-19 pandemic. Shortly thereafter, a fierce debate was raised among different ministries regarding the necessity of halting rice exports. Soon after, from May 1, 2020, the Prime Minister agreed with the Ministry of Industry and Trade to normalize rice exporting activities. Vietnam earned over US\$3 billion from exporting rice in 2020, according to the Vietnam Food Association (VFA), a year-on-year increase of more than 10%. The rice sector is expected to again post high growth this year when new-generation free trade agreements (FTAs) Vietnam has signed with foreign partners come into play. Vice-Chairman of the VFA, Do Ha Nam, said

2020 was a successful year for Vietnam's rice exports, which he attributed to increasing demand in many countries and the improved competitiveness of Vietnamese rice around the world. Amid the difficulties posed by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, rice exporters quickly made appropriate adjustments and actively sought new markets while fully tapping into the advantages brought about by FTAs. To fully tap into the advantages available under FTAs, rice export giants such as the Intimex Corporation JSC, the Loc Troi Group, the VRICE Co., and the Trung An Hi-Tech Agriculture JSC are planning to seek additional importers in markets where Vietnam has signed FTAs, especially in the UK. The Ministry of Industry and Trade will continue to support exporters via providing timely information on market demand and strengthening trade promotion efforts. So far, it can be seen that both major goals set by the Government and the Prime Minister for rice production and export have been achieved. Accordingly, Vietnam's food security is guaranteed throughout 2020, even in the most difficult times of pandemic breaks and increasing demand from foreign buyers. Meanwhile, The Government, the Prime Minister, and the Ministry of Industry and Trade have taken the initiative to support export activities, reduce difficulties, create favorable conditions so that farmers and traders can enjoy fruitful exporting prices.

Source : <https://vietnamtimes.org.vn/vietnams-rice-exports-win-big-despite-one-month-interruption-27137.html>