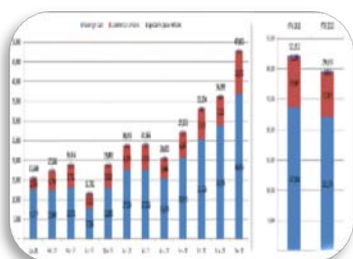


Highlight News / January 20/2021



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- 2020 international airport arrivals down dramatically
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Ministry studies how best to boost exports under China deal



Cambodia News | 19 January, 2021

At its Friday meeting on the study and formulation on the good use of trade agreements in promoting exports, the Ministry of Commerce announced research is currently under way on products to be imported and exported under the Cambodia China Free Trade Agreement (CC-FTA). One of the potential sub-sectors deemed promising for export to China is woolen garments. Secretary of State of the Ministry of Commerce (MoC) Seang Thay said that in-depth analysis on how that particular export market can best be fully realised is underway. The government set up a special working group last year to conduct research using SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis as to which commodities would have export potential under the free trade agreement. Seang Thay said the ministry has conducted its research on the potential of enhancing the export opportunities in nine areas. These are clothing, footwear, special economic zones, light industry, food processing, fisheries, rice, cassava and natural rubber. The research focused on promoting exports to China, how to enter the Chinese market and conditions including the global trade volume of related products and Cambodia's main export markets. The ministry also studied import tariffs that are beneficial to Cambodia and non-tariff barriers imposed by major trading partners on Cambodia in accordance with the multilateral

trade agreement (MFN) mechanism under the China-ASEAN Free Trade Agreement (ACFTA). Cambodia and China signed the CC-FTA on Oct 12 last year. It was the first bilateral free trade agreement signed by Cambodia and the first free trade agreement signed between China and an ASEAN member state. Since the CCFTA came into effect, Cambodia has listed 340 additional commodities for export to China. These are in addition to the 10,000 tariff-free products already listed via the ACFTA. Those 340 products include peppers, chilis, vegetables, fruit, fish, meat (including processed), grains, seafood and a variety of canned products, said the MoC. According to the MoC, 95 percent of the 340 commodities added by the CCFTA, ninety-five will be untaxed. Taxes will be lowered on the remaining 5 percent for a period of at least 10 years.

Source : <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/50804912/ministry-studies-how-best-to-boost-exports-under-china-deal/>

2020 international airport arrivals down dramatically



Cambodia News | 19 January, 2021

Cambodia's three international airports welcomed 2.13 million passengers (international, domestic and transit) in 2020, a 79 percent drop compared with 2019 figures, according to data from the State Secretariat of Civil Aviation (SSCA). Phnom Penh International Airport received around 1.30 million passengers, a decrease of 76 percent, compared

with the 5.49 million arrivals in 2019. Siem Reap International Airport had 618,663 passengers, down 83 percent from the 3.57 million landing in 2019. Sihanouk International Airport saw arrivals of 214,969 passengers, a drop of 86.3 percent from the 1.57million passengers received in 2019. SSCA data showed Cambodia handling 49,983 tonnes of cargo at the nation's three international airports. This represented a 31 percent drop from 2019's figures. Most cargo traffic occurred at the Phnom Penh International Airport. Norinda Khek, the communications and public relations director of Cambodia Airports, said that despite Siem Reap International Airportbeing so seriously hit by the pandemic, it has managed to remain open since last year's outbreak and the ensuing plummet in arrivals. "Around the second quarter of 2020, all inbound and outbound international stopped and since then, the airport has accommodated only one to two domestic flights per week. As a provider of a critical public service, we decided to maintain our operations and to adapt to the situation," Norinda noted. State Secretariat of Civil Aviation spokesman Sin Chanserey Vutha said there are no flights to Siem Reap International Airport because there is no demand. "Currently, if there are regional flights to [the airport], we will facilitate [them]," he added.

Source : <https://techwireasia.com/2021/01/laos-first-smart-expressway-to-integrate-5g-ai-and-it/>

Low numbers but Laos health ministry urges continued vigilance against Covid-1



Laos News | 19 January, 2021

Laos Ministry of Health urged officials and people across the country to continue to fully comply with the government guidelines against Covid-19 in order to curb the spread of the coronavirus epidemic. Continued compliance with preventive measures is essential for effective control of Covid-19, according to a statement by Centre of Information and Education for Health under the Lao Ministry of Health on Monday. The National Taskforce Committee for Covid-19 Prevention and Control advised people not to become complacent, after the last Covid-19 patient was discharged from hospital last Friday. Everyone should continue to follow all government measures concerning control of the virus, it said. Local authorities in all Laos provinces bordering Thailand, Vietnam, Myanmar, and China were asked to record information about every individual entering Laos, and check the body temperature of each person entering Laos at the border crossings. It is essential that border provinces continue to strictly implement the measures imposed by authorities to prevent the coronavirus from spreading into Laos. The taskforce committee urges every Lao citizen to continue to regularly wash their hands with soap, and to wear a face mask when going outdoor and being in crowded places. People must also continue to practice social distancing, it said. The total

number of confirmed cases of Covid-19 recorded in Laos remains currently at 41, and all of them have recovered. Laos confirmed its first two Covid-19 cases on March 24 last year.

Source : <https://www.thestar.com.my/aseanplus/aseanplus-news/2021/01/19/low-numbers-but-laos-health-ministry-urges-continued-vigilance-against-covid-19>

Controls stepped up on trucks entering Laos from Thailand



Laos News | 20 January, 2021

Savannakhet province's Taskforce Committee on Covid-19 Prevention and Control has strengthened virus prevention measures in relation to truck drivers entering Laos from Thailand. More stringent measures are being carried out to prevent the spread of the coronavirus following the recent fresh outbreak of Covid-19 in Thailand. Deputy Director of Savannakhet province's health department, Dr Tiengkham Pongvongsa, told Vientiane Times the move was in response to an order from the National Taskforce Committee for Covid-19 Prevention and Control relating to all provinces bordering Thailand. "We are not banning Thai trucks from delivering goods into Laos but all truck drivers must comply with government guidelines concerning the control of Covid-19," he said. Health authorities have strengthened screening and quarantine measures at all ports of entry across the country. Officials at all entry points are using thermal scanners to check visitors' temperature, including in Savannakhet. The

Savannakhet Taskforce for Covid-19 Prevention and Control announced on January 11 that prevention and control measures would be strengthened at the second Lao-Thai Friendship Bridge, which links Savannakhet with Mukdahan province in Thailand. Truck drivers entering Laos from Thailand have the option to self-monitor for the virus or to arrange a change of driver. Officials are working hard to make Thai and Lao hauliers aware of the dynamics of the global pandemic and the importance of complying with the rules to prevent the spread of the virus. Savannakhet province is a popular border crossing for international travel and trade. There has recently been a noticeable drop in trade at Lao-Thai border in Savannakhet and about 400 trucks are currently entering the province from Thailand each day. Savannakhet's health department said the province had 11 quarantine centres up and running last August but only three are functioning now, housing almost 240 returning Lao workers. Almost 2,000 Lao workers have returned to Savannakhet and nearby provinces across the Lao-Thai Friendship Bridge after they were laid off from jobs in Thailand due to the pandemic. According to the province's virus taskforce, officials are strengthening preparedness for and response to Covid-19 by identifying any unusual clusters of disease or illnesses. The taskforce has told neighbouring countries that trucks ferrying goods to Laos may not travel through the China-Boten border crossing in Luang Namtha province. The National Taskforce Committee for Covid-19 Prevention and Control has instructed local

authorities in all provinces bordering Thailand to record information about people entering Laos. These provinces are considered at high risk for the spread of the virus as they border populous Thailand, and the border between Laos and Thailand is porous.

Source : https://www.vientianetimes.org.la/freeContent/FreeContent_Controls_13.php

Mandalay wholesale centre to reopen



Myanmar News | 19 January, 2021

The Mandalay wholesale center of Brokers Traders & Millers Ma Har Ka Htain Taw Association is set to reopen its doors on January 21. Secretary of the centre, U Set Maung Swe, said the resumption of operations will be done in line with current COVID-19 rules and regulations. The centre was closed at the end of September due to the rise of COVID-19 cases in the region. “The centre will reopen on the January 21 with approval from the COVID-19 committee. Planned opening hours are from 8am to 12am like before but the Mandalay chief minister has suggested to extend operating hours to spread out crowds at the centre,” said U Set Maung Swe. “A meeting will be held with executive members after the reopening and we will discuss the extension of operating hours and its daily schedule,” he said. Those entering the wholesale centre will have to comply with COVID-19 regulations such as thermal scanning, hand washing, the wearing of gloves, masks and facemasks. Trading will be done from tables with barriers between them. “There will be punishments for rule violators. We will provide a

warning for first time offenders. If they are caught violating the rules for a second time then we will prohibit them from entering the centre for seven days. A prohibition of 15 days will be enforced if they fail to obey the guidelines for a third time. Offenders will have to accept whatever punishment the discipline committee deals out if they violate the rules for a fourth time,” said the secretary. He said that the reopening of the centre will allow buyers to better gauge the prices of the products being sold. “It was difficult to know the prices of the fruits when trading online following the closure of the centre. Farmers will be happy with the reopening of the centre as it coincides with the winter harvesting time,” he said. – Translate

Source : <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/mandalay-wholesale-centre-reopen.html>

Europe raises funding for Myanmar’s garment workers



Myanmar News | 20 January, 2021

The European Union will provide an additional €5 million from its Myan Ku Fund to help Myanmar’s garment workers, who continue to struggle from factory closures and lay-offs amid COVID-19. The EU has now channeled a total of €10 million in support of the mostly unemployed women migrant workers in the sector. Some 60,000 workers have already received financial assistance since the funds were first distributed last year. In May 2020, the EU disbursed a total of 108,320 cash assistance payments to over 60,000 garment factory workers

from every State and Region of Myanmar. 84 percent of the beneficiaries were women, and the greatest support went to those who were pregnant and to those workers who received little or no severance pay. Almost all of the cash payments were successfully distributed using the mobile money platform of Wave Money. The extension phase of the EU Myan Ku Fund will be active from January 2021 until February 2022. Financial support for laid off factory workers is still a key feature, but is pivoting even further in the direction of assistance to unemployed pregnant workers and unemployed workers with young children under age 10, the EU said. Migrant workers and workers willing to complete skills training programmes will also be supported. The scope of expert nutritional support services is also expanding, with 2,000 women targeted to receive maternal counseling and direct nutritional support from the project's doctors. The average payment size per beneficiary per month was K75,000 in 2020. Recipients indicated this was the only income they received during the pandemic. Myan Ku was set up in April 2020 by the EU as a rapid response measure to alleviate the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on predominantly female garment workers in Myanmar who lost their jobs due to the crisis.

Source : <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/europe-raises-funding-myanmars-garment-workers.html>

Car sales in Vietnam surge 45% in 2020 final month



Vietnam News | 19 January, 2021

The Hanoitimes - Car sales in Vietnam in 2020 dropped 8% year-on-year to 296,634 units across all segments. The number of cars sold in Vietnam in December 2020 surged by 31.6% month-on-month and 45% year-on-year to 47,865 units, according to data released monthly by the Vietnam Automobile Manufacturers' Association (VAMA). Big sales promotion in the final month of the year and customers rushing to buy cars before the government's policy of reducing 50% of the registration fee for domestically-produced cars expired by the year-end were seen as key factor that led to a high number of cars sold in December. The volume included 36,856 passenger cars, up 28% inter-monthly; 10,673 commercial cars, up 50%; and 336 special-purpose vehicles, down 30%. As many as 29,382 locally assembled cars were sold in December, up 25% against the previous month, and the figure for imported cars rose by 44% to 18,483 units. However, car sales in Vietnam in 2020 dropped 8% year-on-year to 296,634 units across all segments. Meanwhile, the sales of domestically assembled cars reached 187,688 units during the period, down 1% compared to the same period of last year, while imported completely-built units (CBUs) totaled 108,485 units (-17%). Such decline in the number of car sales was significantly lower than VAMA's forecast of 15% decrease in the sale number for the year. Truong Hai Auto Corporation (Thaco) led the market in 2020 with 100,727 units sold, up 10% year-on-year and accounting for 35.5%

of the total sales, followed by TC Motor with 81,368 and Toyota with 70,692. Experts said while the local economy in 2020 was ravaged by the Covid-19 pandemic, the fact that the country has effectively contained the pandemic and government's supporting policies for the automobile sector, including a 50% reduction in registration fee for domestic car, have been the key factors keeping the sector to a strong finish by the year-end. Such policy would help customers save up from VND15million-300 million (US\$650-13,000), depending on the car model and up to 10-12% of the car prices in different provinces/cities with the cut in registration fee, not to mention imported cars were forced to lower their prices to stay competitive. Head of the Policy Department under Vietnam Automobile Manufacturers Association (VAMA) Nguyen Trung Hieu said the year of 2021 is set to be another difficult one for Vietnam's car market, especially when the Covid-19 pandemic continues to remain complicated globally and businesses tighten their spending. Sharing Mr. Hieu's view, Director of auto dealership Thien Phuc An company Nguyen Tuan said in case the market continues to stay quiet, car dealers may have to provide their own sales promotion programs for customers to keep up revenue. Car manufacturer Vinfast, owned by conglomerate Vingroup, has recently announced its policy of supporting the registration fees for customers buying their two models of Lux A2.0 and Lux SA2.0 from now until February 28, 2021. Meanwhile, Mitsubishi Vietnam is also offering

a 50% reduction of registration fee for those who want to buy Outlander 2.0 CVT Premium, Outlander 2.0 CVT, or Xpander, with the corresponding saving amount of VND28-48 million (US\$1,200 – 2,100).

Source : <http://hanoitimes.vn/car-sales-in-vietnam-surge-45-in-2020-final-month-315948.html>

Vietnam – one of fastest growing economies: WB



Vietnam News | 19 January, 2021

Hanoi (VNA) - Vietnam's growth accelerated to 4.5 percent in the last quarter of 2020, resulting in an annual growth rate of 2.9 percent - making it one of the fastest growing economies in the world, according to the World Bank (WB). In the January edition of its monthly Vietnam Macro Monitoring, the bank said the country's industrial production and retail sales continued to expand solidly, with growth rates close to pre-pandemic levels. December 2020 marked another strong performance of merchandise trade, with double digit growth rate in imports (23.1 percent) and exports (17.8 percent), while FDI inflows slowed. Consumer price index remained flat in December 2020, as food prices stabilised, while consumer demand has yet to fully recover from the crisis. Credit growth picked up slightly after the State Bank of Vietnam cut policy interest rates in October, ending 2020 at 10.1 percent. Auctions and granting of land use and rental improved revenue collection in the last quarter of 2020, while ample liquidity

continued to lower the Government's borrowing cost in the domestic market. The approval and rollout of several COVID-19 vaccines at the end of 2020 raised the outlook of domestic and global economies in 2021, particularly for tourism and airlines. The government will need to assess carefully when to unwind macroeconomic policies launched in response to the crisis to minimise negative impact on the economy, the bank suggested./.

Source : <https://en.vietnamplus.vn/vietnam-one-of-fastest-growing-economies-wb/194979.vnp>
