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Highlight News / February 01, 2021

- ACLEDA Bank reserves $600 million for SMEs this year
- SSEZ exports increase 26 percent in 2020
- PM praises health officials’ response to Covid-19
- Myanmar approves new investments in energy and other sectors
- Myanmar releases directives for non-bank financial institutions
- Việt Nam's January exports up 50.5 per cent year-on-year
- High consumer demand for Tet drives up January’s CPI





ACLEDA Bank reserves $600 million for SMEs this year

Cambodia News I 30 January, 2021

The president and group managing director of ACLEDA Bank Plc., Dr. In Channy has announced that the bank has reserved nearly $600 million for lending to the small and medium enterprises (SMEs) sector in Cambodia in 2021. Speaking to reporters following ACLEDA's Strategic Implementation Year 2021 meeting in Siem Reap, Dr. In Channy said that credit for SMEs was affordable last year and the bank would continue supporting SMEs this year. He added that besides its direct lending programmes to SMEs, ACLEDA bank also participated with the SME Bank of Cambodia in the SME Co-Financial Scheme (SCFS). The SCFS was capitalised at $100 million upon its launch on April 1, 2020. That capital was jointly funded by the SME Bank of Cambodia and 33 participating institutions (PFIs). The PFI group includes 24 commercial banks, six specialised banks, and three MFIs. He also noted that ACLEDA bank's contribution to the SCFS was $23 million. "I think Ministry of Economy and Finance will continue this scheme in order to inject funds into the SME sector by working with the participation of private financial institutions." "If we look at the global economy in both developed and developing countries, SMEs are the engine that drives growth. When there are more SMEs, there are more jobs. SMEs support themselves and boost national growth by paying taxes. When SMEs are healthy, so is the economy" Dr. Channy added. The SCFS fund was fully subscribed by mid-October 2020, four months earlier than anticipated, according to a senior executive of SME Bank of Cambodia with the average loan granted being $122,514. The loan minimum was set at $16,800 and the maximum at $300,000. Tan Dexter, chief executive officer of SME Bank of Cambodia, said that SME Bank loans are available to all small and medium enterprises (SMEs) excepting those in agriculture. He noted the SCFS fund has benefited 753 SMEs.

Source:https://www.khmertimeskh.com/50808671/acleda-bank-reserves-600-million-for-smes-this-year/

SSEZ exports increase 26 percent in 2020

Cambodia News I 30 January, 2021

The Sihanoukville Special Economic Zone (SSEZ) has reported export growth of 26.52 percent in 2020, a significant achievement in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. The value of goods exported from the SSEZ was $1.556 billion, according to the report obtained by Khmer Times on Friday. The zone's main products are clothes, electronic devices, bags, construction materials and furniture. In a congratulatory message to SSEZ's president Chen Jiangan sent January26, Prime Minister Hun Sen welcomed and supported innovative ideas to mobilize more investment accelerating the development of the Sihanoukville Special Economic Zone. "The Royal Government of Cambodia has always recognized that the private sector is a necessary partner [for government and they] must complement each other in contributing to the growth of the national economy," said the prime minister. Established in 2008, the 1,113-hectare SSEZ is situated about 13 km from the Sihanoukville Autonomous Port in southwestern Cambodia's Preah Sihanouk province.

Source:https://www.khmertimeskh.com/50808658/ssez-exports-increase-26-percent-in-2020/

PM praises health officials' response to Covid-19

Laos News I 01 February, 2021

Prime Minister Thongloun Sisoulith on Friday praised and thanked health officials, whom he described as "white-shirted warriors", for their efforts to stem the spread of Covid-19. The premier made the remarks when addressing the Ministry of Health's annual meeting to review progress in the sector and discuss plans for 2021. He also reiterated the need for medical staff to comply with professional ethics in the course of their work, as part of sector-wide efforts to raise standards. The prime minister's advice comes at a time when health officials are attempting to improve the country's healthcare services and fulfil the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals so that Laos can rise above least developed country status in the near future. Mr Thongloun noted that the Ministry of Health had complied with the measures put in place to prevent the spread of Covid-19 as ordered by the Prime Minister's Office. He called on health authorities nationwide to ensure that everyone followed these measures for the benefit of the whole population. The meeting heard an assessment of the situation regarding Covid-19 prevention and control, as well as plans for the future. The health ministry's goals were integrated into the National Socio-economic Development Plans for 2016-2020 and 2021-2025 and, more specifically, the Health Plan for 2021. Implementation of Phase 2 of the Health Reform Strategy was rolled out in 2016-2020 and Phase 3 will be executed from 2021-2025. Minister of Health Associate Prof. Dr Bounkong Syhavong reported on improvements made in specific health sector indicators and action taken in response to malaria and Covid-19 outbreaks. Much progress had been made, he said, but challenges remained. Meeting participants approved the five-year Health Development Plan for 2021-2025 and the health sector's annual plan for 2021. The meeting also reviewed progress made in terms of fulfilling five criteria laid down by the ministry relating to excellence in health services and another relating to patient satisfaction. Service excellence criteria concern patient admissions, cleanliness and hygiene, diagnosis, equal access to treatment, and overall quality of health services. These are the main targets set for the development of the health sector.

Last year, the ministry ran successful projects aimed at increasing access to better quality health services for mothers and children, improved reporting using District Health Information Software 2, trained more medical staff, improved administration, and expanded the health insurance fund to target communities.

Source:https://www.vientianetimes.org.la/freeContent/FreeConten_PM_21.php

Myanmar approves new investments in energy and other sectors

Myanmar News I 29 January, 2021

The Myanmar Investment Commission (MIC) approved 14 new investments and proposals to increase capital in four existing projects held during its first meeting for the year on January 27. The approved investments covered the energy, fisheries, real estate and services sectors and totaled US$295.3 million and K153.7 billion. The projects are expected to create 4,371 job opportunities. The government appears to be prioritising investments in energy. Among the new projects approved by the MIC were four 40MW solar power projects in Mandalay Region, Sagaing Region and Magway Region. Singapore, China and Thailand currently head the list of 51 countries investing in Myanmar. Investments were made in 12 sectors with 26pc channeled into the electricity sector, 26pc in the oil and gas sector and 14.6pc in the manufacturing sector. The MIC is accelerating investment promotion activities in accordance with the COVID-19 Economic Relief Plan and Myanmar Economic Recovery and Reform Plan. The power generation projects permitted are expected to support the goal of 100% nationwide electricity from the national grid by 2030. The current power supply from the national grid covers 58 percent of Myanmar and the country is on track to be 100pc electrified by 2030, Minister of Electricity and Energy U Win Khaing said recently. The solar power projects approved at the meeting are also in keeping with Myanmar's commitment to tackle climate change. At the virtual Climate Ambition Summit held on December 12, 2020, State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi announced Myanmar's intention to submit its Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) by the end of the year. Under the Paris Agreement, NDCs embody efforts by each country to reduce national emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change. Myanmar's NDC will aim to reduce over 243 million tonnes of carbon dioxide by increasing the share of renewable energy to 39pc of the country's energy mix and reducing net emissions from the forestry sector by 25pc. - Translated

Source: https://www.mmtimes.com/news/myanmar-approves-new-investments-energy-and-other-sectors.html

Myanmar releases directives for non-bank financial institutions

Myanmar News I 01 February, 2021

The Central Bank of Myanmar (CBM) has released new regulations covering the establishment, operations and business conduct of non-bank financial institutions (NBFI) in the country. "The directives are intended to regulate NBFIs and ensure they operate systematically within the scope of the Central Bank, including setting interest rates. They are meant to control their activities," said CBM Vice Governor U Soe Min. Notification 1/2021 will apply to legal entities formed with the intention of establishing an NBFI and any NBFI engaging financing, leasing and factoring activities. These firms must apply for a registration certificate from the CBM in order to operate in Myanmar. The notification listed the documents required to apply, including evidence that the applicant is a company incorporated under the Myanmar Companies Law and information evidencing the source of funds for paid-up capital. The notification also included a list of circumstances under which the CBM may revoke the registration certificate. These include failing to commence activities within twelve months from the date of receipt of the registration certificate and conducting activities other than NBFI business activities. NBFIs should also display clearly on a daily basis at its head office and branches the interest rates, default interest rates, fees and commissions related to loans provided. Interest payments will be computed based on the total principal amount outstanding for each payment period during the term of the loan. An NBFI is now also required to submit periodic reports on its lending rates to the CBM as well as a copy of its financial statements audited by an external auditor to the CBM within three months of the end of the financial year, according to Notification 1/2021. Of the 28 NBFI licenses issued by the CBM since 2016, two have been revoked. First Collaborative Finance Co Ltd had its license revoked in August 2020 for not commencing operations within a year. In December, the CBM revoked the license of Z Corporation Co Ltd due to the lac of transactions, inappropriate business structure, weak accounting processes and failure to address these concerns despite the firm having received numerous warnings from the Central Bank. – Translated

Source: https://www.mmtimes.com/news/myanmar-releases-directives-non-bank-financial-institutions.html

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Việt Nam's January exports up 50.5 per cent year-on-year

Vietnam News I 30 January, 2021

HÀ NỘI — Việt Nam's goods exports were valued at US$27.7 billion in January, up 0.2 per cent from the previous month and 50.5 per cent from the same period last year, according to the General Statistics Office of Vietnam (GSO).The GSO largely attributed the sharp year-on-year increase to multinational electronics producer Samsung of the Republic of Korea (RoK) stepping up production and export of its new Galaxy S21 series.In January, six items enjoyed export revenues exceeding the $1 billion benchmark, accounting for 67.3 per cent of total exports.Best performers included the heavy industry and mining sector which earned $15.6 billion in export revenue, up 71.6 per cent year-on-year and the light industry and handicrafts earning $9.7 billion from export, up 32.3 per cent.Agriculture and forestry exported $1.8 billion worth of products this month, up 21.4 per cent year-on-year, while fisheries earned $600 million, up 19.6 per cent.The US remained the largest importer of Vietnamese products in January, with a total of $7.5 billion worth of shipments, up 57.4 per cent from a year earlier.It was followed by China ($5.8 billion, up 111.6 per cent), the EU ($2.8 billion, 14.8 per cent), ASEAN ($2.3 billion, 31.9 per cent), and Japan ($1.9 billion, 22,7 per cent).Việt Nam's imports, meanwhile, stood at $26.4 billion in January, a fall of 5.4 per cent compared to December but a growth of 41 per cent from the same period last year. Four items reported import turnover of more than $1 billion, making up 50.6 per cent of the total imports.China remained the country's biggest supplier of products, with a turnover of $9.6 billion, 72.7 per cent higher than the figure a year earlier.It was followed by the RoK ($5.1 billion, up 29.3 per cent), ASEAN ($3.4 billion, 63.3 per cent), Japan ($2 billion, 52.9 per cent), and the EU ($1.3 billion, 23.3 per cent).Việt Nam enjoyed a trade surplus of $1.3 billion in the month, with the domestic economic sector recording a trade deficit of $.8 billion while the foreign direct investment sector (including crude oil) boasted a trade surplus of $3.1 billion.The GSO also announced that total retail sales of goods and services in January rose by 3.7 per cent month-on-month and 6.4 per cent year-on-year to $479.9 trillion.The number of foreign tourist arrivals totalled over 17,700, up 9 per cent month-on-month and down 99.1 per cent year-on-year. VNS

Source: https://vietnamnews.vn/economy/865536/viet-nams-january-exports-up-505-per-cent-year-on-year.html

High consumer demand for Tet drives up January's CPI

Vietnam News I 30 January, 2021

HCMC - Vietnam's consumer price index (CPI) this month has inched up by 0.06% month-on-month, chiefly fueled by the high consumer demand for the upcoming Lunar New Year or Tet, the General Statistics Office (GSO) reported today, January 29.As local consumers have boosted shopping during the final lunar month to prepare for the Tet holiday, the prices of food, foodstuffs and dining-out services went up, while domestic fuel prices rose on par with the global trend. These factors contributed to the rise of the overall index, GSO explained.Among the 11 main commodity groups, nine reported price rises, including transportation, which saw the highest rise of 2.29% due to two upward fuel price adjustments on January 11 and 26; food and catering services (0.64%); garments, hats and footwear (0.44%); education (0.33%);

beverages and tobacco (0.32%) and other goods and services (0.24%).Meanwhile, the prices of housing, electricity, water and construction materials have dropped by 2.31% and of post and telecommunications by 0.1%.However, the CPI contracted by 0.97% against last year's figure. Also, this month's core inflation, which excludes the prices of fresh food, energy and State-controlled services, such as healthcare and education, has increased by 0.49% year-on-year, the lowest increase in January over the past five years.

Source:https://english.thesaigontimes.vn/80409/high-consumer-demand-for-tet-drives-up-january%C3%A2%E2%82%AC%E2%84%A2s-cpi.html