

*Highlight News / March 19/2021*



- Exports to South Korea increase for two consecutive months
- MPTC, Microsoft agree to promote digitalisation in Cambodia
- Laos Grants 25-Year Concession to Chinese Company to Manage Power Grid
- Agro-exports remain to rise even private banks shut down
- Phone and component exports on the rise despite COVID-19 threat
- Vietnam authorised to export insect-based food to EU



## Exports to South Korea increase for two consecutive months



*Cambodia News | 18 March, 2021*

Cambodia's exports to South Korea continue to recover in 2021, with a two consecutive months of increases being reported in the still young year. Data from the Korean International Trade Association showed that during January and February Cambodia exported about \$64 million of products to the east Asian country, an increase of over 2.9 percent compared with the same period last year. During that period, the data showed Cambodia importing roughly \$93 million of goods from South Korea, a decline of 3.8 percent year-on-year. Bilateral trade amounted to \$158 million, a decrease of 1.1 percent from that achieved in the same period last year. Cambodian products exported to South Korea are mostly clothes, footwear, travel goods, beverages, components for electronic equipment, rubber, pharmaceuticals and agricultural products. The Kingdom's primary imports from South Korea include vehicles, electronics, kitchen appliances, beverages, pharmaceuticals and plastic products. The Kingdom's bump in exports comes as the bilateral free trade agreement between two countries moves towards its formal signing and ensuing ratification. Its final negotiation round was concluded in February. The trade pact is expected to be signed officially within the first half of this year, with officials of the two countries placing high hopes of its boosting bilateral trade between the two nations

further. Last year, Cambodia exported \$317 million of products to South Korea, a decline of 18 percent compared with 2019. In 2020, the Kingdom imported \$567 million of goods from South Korea, a drop of 5 percent from 2019.

Source: <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/50826608>

[/exports-to-south-korea-increase-for-two-consecutive-months/](#)

## MPTC, Microsoft agree to promote digitalisation in Cambodia



*Cambodia News | 18 March, 2021*

Ministry of Post and Telecommunications (MPTC) and Microsoft in Asia Pacific have agreed to enhance the digital usage in Cambodia, as the Royal Government is transforming itself into an e-government. The two sides signed virtually on Mar. 16 a memorandum of understanding on the cooperation on human development and promotion of digital usage in Cambodia by Cambodian Minister of MPTC Chea Vandeth and Ms. Cairine Haslam, CFO, Singapore and South East Asia New Markets at Microsoft. The MoU aims to promote digital transformation through cooperation on human resource development, research and development, innovation and entrepreneurship in the field of information and communication technology, as well as cooperation in policy making and development planning for digital government, according to the ministry's press release published on Mar. 17. The integration of ICT knowledge into secondary, general and higher education curricula is an important factor

in promoting the capture of digital technology in Cambodia, Vandeth said. “MPTC encourages students to consider choosing to study digital technology, or even if they are studying other skills, to have a basic knowledge of digital and communication and information technology in order to be ready to participate in digital economic and social development and the arrival of the fourth industrial revolution.” The MPTC will work with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports to develop a digital master plan to promote digital literacy in both secondary and tertiary education. C. Nika – AKP

Source: <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/50826497/mptc-microsoft-agree-to-promote-digitalisation-in-cambodia/>

## Laos Grants 25-Year Concession to Chinese Company to Manage Power Grid



*Laos News | 18 March, 2021*

Laos and a majority Chinese-owned company have signed a 25-year concession agreement that allows the company to build and manage its power grid, including electricity exports to neighboring countries, a government official in the country told RFA. The company, Électricité du Laos Transmission Company Ltd. was launched Sept. 1 when Électricité du Laos and China Southern Power Grid Company signed a shareholding agreement, which gave China Southern a majority of shares. RFA reported at that time that the government said the new corporate entity was necessary due to the domestic firm's

massive debt, but critics said it ceded too much control of Laos' power grid to a foreign government. With dozens of hydropower dams either built or under construction on the Mekong River and its tributaries, Laos has gone all in on its controversial economic strategy to become the “Battery of Southeast Asia” in hopes of selling electricity to neighboring countries. But with EDLT controlling everything it adds to the grid, some are worried China will be able to profit off of Laos' gamble. “EDLT will invest U.S. \$2 billion to build, manage and control the Lao power grid for a 25-year concession period. After 25 years, the business will be transferred to the Lao government,” an official of the Lao Ministry of Energy and Mines told RFA's Lao Service on March 12. The official said that EDLT would take control of only the high-voltage power line network, in the range higher than 230 kilovolts, while Électricité du Laos retains control of powerlines under 230 kilovolts. “Given the current economic downturn and the enormous debt, the Lao government does not have the ability to manage and operate a network of powerlines, so they decided to allow the Chinese, who have the finances, technological aptitude and manpower to take over,” said the official. The concession deal is not seen as a win-win by all within the ministry, however. An energy expert from the ministry, who requested anonymity to speak freely, told RFA that it put Laos at a disadvantage. “The deal is bad ... Normally in a cooperative agreement, the foreign company transfers technology or knowledge to the host. But

not the Chinese,” said the expert. “When they installed a powerline system in the Lao National Convention Center in Vientiane, they did not provide us with any instructions. When the electrical system breaks down ... or when we want to make improvements to the building, we have to call in Chinese technicians. Lao residents are also dismayed at what Chinese control of the power grid could mean. “Before, I thought that since we were building many dams, electricity prices would go down. That will not happen because the Chinese company is taking over power distribution in our country,” a resident of the southern province of Savannakhet told RFA. A resident of Vientiane asked why Laos cannot manage its own network. “Why do we need China to do that? If the government doesn’t have money, they can borrow money to buy the power lines and install them. They have money to build dams, so why not to install power lines?” the Vientiane resident said.

Source: <https://www.voanews.com/east-asia-pacific/laos-grants-25-year-concession-chinese-company-manage-power-grid>

## Agro-exports remain to rise even private banks shut down



*Myanmar News / 18 March, 2021*

The agricultural exports unexpectedly surge over the past five months even though traders face transaction problems due to the closure of private banks. The agricultural exports have topped US\$2.49 billion as of 5 March 2021 in the current

financial year since 1 October 2020. The figures reflect a significant rise of \$765.74 million this FY. The agro-exports soared from \$1.72 billion in the corresponding period of the 2019-2020 FY. According to the trade figures released by the Ministry of Commerce. Myanmar’s agricultural exports rose regardless of the coronavirus’s impact on foreign demand for other export groups and political instability. Private banks’ closure forced the traders to turn to the operators running ‘hundi’, an informal money transfer system, to make transactions in the border trade. At present, some ocean liners suspended cargo transport from Myanmar in recent days. The cargo transport will double or triple if we conduct the trade with small ships. It could harm the export sector somehow, according to Myanmar Mercantile Marine Development Association. In the exports sector, the agriculture industry performed the best, accounting for over 22 per cent of overall exports. The agricultural sector’s top export items are rice and broken rice, pulses and beans, and maize. Fruits and vegetables, sesame, dried tea leaves, sugar, and other agro-products are also shipped to other countries. Myanmar agro products are primarily exported to China, Singapore, Malaysia, the Philippines, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka. Sometimes, the export market remains uncertain due to unsteady global demand. The country requires specific export plans for each agro product, as they are currently exported to external markets based upon supply and demand. Contract

farming systems, regional and state agriculture departments, exporters, traders, and some grower groups are required to meet production targets, said an official from the Agriculture Department. The Commerce Ministry is working to help farmers deal with challenges such as high input costs, procurement of pedigree seeds, high cultivation costs, and unpredictable weather conditions. —

HH/GNLM

Source: <https://www.gnln.com.mm/agro-exports-remain-to-rise-even-private-banks-shut-down/#article-title>

## Phone and component exports on the rise despite COVID-19 threat



*Vietnam News | 18 March, 2021*

VOV.VN - Since the beginning of the year, phone and component exports have continued to represent a bright spot among key Vietnamese export items despite the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, according to the Ministry of Industry and Trade (MoIT). The opening two months of the year saw Vietnam report nine commodities with export turnover reaching over US\$1 billion each, making up 73.8% of the country's total export turnover. Most notably, the export value of phones and components hit US\$9.3 billion, accounting for one fifth of the total export turnover, and representing a sharp increase of 22.8% compared to the same period from last year. Some major importers of Vietnamese phones and components include the European Union, the United States, and China, with the two-month export

value to China alone surging 103.9% to approximately US\$2.5 billion. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) also favours the Vietnamese phones and components, importing US\$551 million worth of the products, witnessing an increase of roughly 108% and representing two-thirds of its total imports from Vietnam. The good news comes after several leading tech giants have noted their intentions to shift their production chain to Vietnam from China, or alternatively to expand their operations which are already present in the country, with Apple's manufacturing partner Foxconn, Luxshare, GoerTek, and Compal building their factories locally. Moreover, the launch of the latest version of mobile phones by the Republic of Korea's Samsung Electronics Co. contributed to high growth being recorded in export turnover during the reviewed period. Do Thi Thuy Huong, a member of the executive board of the Vietnam Electronic Industries Association (VEIA), said the shift in production chains by FDI enterprises in the electronics sector is anticipated to create greater opportunities for Vietnamese firms to become satellite enterprises and suppliers for foreign firms.

Source : <https://vov.vn/en/economy/vietnam-maintains-positive-outlook-for-economic-recovery-in-2021-wb-843720.vov>

## Vietnam authorised to export insect-based food to EU



*Vietnam News | 18 March, 2021*

Hanoi (VNA) – Vietnam has become the fifth nation in the world authorised by the European Union (EU) to export insect-based food to the demanding market, according to the Ministry of Industry and Trade’s Agency of Foreign Trade. Under the European Commission (EC)’s Regulation (EU) 2021/171, Vietnam has provided sufficient evidence and guarantees to the EC’s Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety (DG SANTE) to be included in the list of third countries or regions authorised for the entry of consignment of insects into the EU market. The regulation took effect on February 15, 2021. Before Vietnam, Canada, Switzerland, the Republic of Korea and Thailand have also been granted the permission for their insect-based products, touted by nutritionists as the food of the future, to access the EU market. The EU regulation is expected to provide a new engine for Vietnam’s food industry to expand further./.

Source: <https://en.vietnamplus.vn/vietnam-authorized-to-export-insectbased-food-to-eu/197735.vnp>