

Highlight News / April 28/2021



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Internet providers ‘need more staff to maintain networks’



Cambodia News | 27 April, 2021

Internet service providers (ISPs) are warning that Cambodia’s fibre optic infrastructure will deteriorate unless firms can deploy more than the mandated 2 percent workforce limit being enforced to help curb the spread of the pandemic. ISPs and telecommunications firms are already considered to be an essential service by authorities. However, with the majority of citizens in the capital relying on the internet to work from home, internet firms are unable to properly maintain critical fibre optic lines to ensure that service is consistent and fast. The number of internet users in the Kingdom grew by 14.4 percent (approximately 1.1 million people) in 2020 with more than 52 percent of Cambodians having access to the web, according to World Bank figures. Heath Shen, chairman of ISP NTC, told Khmer Times he has been working from home, as are most people in the capital. Speaking on behalf of the industry, he commented ISPs are growing increasingly concerned because they are having difficulty maintaining networks with reduced staff. His firm was granted three work travel permits – exactly 2 percent of its workforce on Sunday – but NTC needs at least 12 staff working to ensure that services are not interrupted. “The inability of our industry to monitor and maintain the network infrastructure will leave internet service in Cambodia highly susceptible to any possible faults caused by downed service,” said

Shen. Most outages are caused by fibre optic cuts along roads, which affect certain areas but not the entire network. On average, there are three to five “urgent maintenance” calls per week but, under normal circumstances, these are repaired without any noticeable effect on internet users. These urgent calls require that personnel go on-site, isolate the fibre break and communicate with network operating centres to ensure that bandwidth is restored. Shen fears that without adequate resources to fix these cuts, areas of the capital could experience internet outages for extended periods of time until maintenance crews are able to be deployed to the area. He said: “Without proper network maintenance, internet services throughout the capital and country will most certainly have... outages, area-by-area.” “This is, of course, not a malicious decision by authorities, but it is an honest oversight. The only thing standing in the way is officials recognising that the fibre optic cables are critical infrastructure alongside electricity and water services.” Mike Gaertner, Sabay Digital co-founder and chief operating officer, said while individual ISPs are able to monitor their own network, there are no public tools available to outside parties to detect outages or network disruptions to critical infrastructure within Cambodia. It therefore is difficult for the authorities to ascertain the state of the internet infrastructure in areas affected by the lockdown. Because essentially all work from home is done via the internet, the loss of connectivity would deny companies access to its staff and prevent businesses from operating. “The

government has acted very proactively in preventing the spread of the pandemic. However, I think it may have underestimated the workforce required to maintain the fibre optical network, which is the backbone for internet services in the country,” he said. “We hope that the regulations will be amended to allow an increase for infrastructure maintenance.”

Source : <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/50845942/internet-providers-need-more-staff-to-maintain-networks/>

HLH, CMEC to co-develop 200-MW solar project in Cambodia



Cambodia News | 27 April, 2021

Real estate developer Hong Lai Huat Group Ltd (SGX: CTO) and China Machinery Engineering Corp (HKG:1829), or CMEC, have teamed up to realise a 200- MW solar project at the Aoral Eco- City in Cambodia. Hong Lai Huat and CMEC have signed a non-binding Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to create a special purpose vehicle (SPV) and collaborate for at least 20 years, with a 20-year renewal option. Their project will result in the construction of Cambodia’s largest solar power plant, according to Ong Jia Jing, Hong Lai Huat Group’s general manager and executive director. Aoral Eco-City is a “mega integrated agriculture eco-city” project being developed by Hong Lai Huat in the Kingdom of Cambodia. Building a solar park of that size in the eco-city will require a total investment of about \$200 million (EUR 165.6m), the pair estimates. CMEC will deliver one-stop, complete

solar plant solutions for the project, including preliminary planning, engineering, procurement and construction (EPC), financing, operation and maintenance. Upon completion, the solar park will sell power to state-owned Electricite du Cambodge (EDC), while Hong Lai Huat will have first right to purchase electricity at the same rate as EDC. Subject to the signing of a binding deal, the two project partners will share the revenue generated under the power purchase agreement (PPA). Renewable Now

Source : <http://khmertimeskh.com/50846094/hlh-cmec-to-co-develop-200-mw-solar-project-in-cambodia/>

Lao power generation firm seeking partners to boost capacity



Laos News | 28 April, 2021

Majority Lao state-owned power generation firm, EDL-Generation Plc (EDL-Gen), is seeking strategic private partnerships in neighbouring countries to boost its total capacity by 25% to fulfil growing regional energy demand. It plans to increase its capacity to 2,435 megawatts by 2029 from 1,949MW currently. The additional capacity will come from hydroelectric power plants currently in the pipeline, including seven wholly-owned power plants and eight more under the independent power producer (IPP) scheme. The projects will be either reservoir or run-off river hydroelectric plants. IPPs that have joint ventures with EDL-Gen include Nam Theun 1, Nam Dik 1, Nam Phoun, Nam Bi unit 1-3 and Pak Beng, which are currently under construction. EDL-Gen is

one of the main power generation firms in Laos with a market share of 17% in terms of generation capacity. Duangsy Pharanhok, managing director of EDL-Gen, said on Tuesday that the company is striving to achieve the Lao government's goal of being the "Battery of Asia" through its hydroelectric power plants which can produce as much as 30,000MW nationwide based on an estimate by the World Bank. The company is currently exporting power to neighbouring countries, including Cambodia, Thailand and Vietnam and in the long term, it wishes to export to Myanmar, Malaysia and Singapore as a part of the Asean Power Grid scheme. He said that by the end of last year, Laos had exported 5,961MW to neighbouring countries with the remaining 4,011MW feeding domestic demand. In a couple of decades, the country will have the potential to develop capacity up to 30,000MW, mostly from hydroelectric plants. Most of this extra capacity will be exported to other Asean nations. "Our target will not only strengthen energy security in Asean but also follow the global trend of green energy development," he said

Source : <https://www.bangkokpost.com/business/2106631/lao-power-generation-firm-seeking-partners-to-boost-capacity>

Overseas Employment Supervisory Committee discusses migrant workers issues



Myanmar News | 28 April, 2021

The Overseas Employment Supervisory Committee held its (1/2021) coordination meeting at the Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population yesterday. During the meeting, Committee Chairman Union Minister U Myint Kyaing discussed the establishment of a committee to ensure the safe sending of Myanmar migrant workers to foreign countries and protection for the rights of those working in foreign countries. The committee was reorganized with 18 members with Notification No (87/2021) of the State Administration Council on 1-4-2021. The ministry grants permit to the overseas employment agencies according to the 1999 Overseas Employment Law. The agencies mainly send the Myanmar workers to Thailand, Malaysia, Korea, Japan, Singapore, the UAE, Qatar, Macau and Jordan. The government sent 1,320,914 Myanmar migrant workers to foreign countries from 1990 to March 2021. Although the processes of overseas employment were suspended on 18 March 2020 due to the outbreak of COVID-19, the government sent 4,169 workers to Japan and 225 workers to Korea, depending on their demand. Moreover, Singapore sent Demand Letters. The officials permitted 25 workers to work abroad on 11 April 2021 in line with the health rules. The overseas employment training courses were conducted at Skills Training Centre (Yangon) and (Mandalay) starting 9 January 2017 for those who want to work in foreign countries to be able to know about the countries where they go to, labour law and occupational safety. But these pieces of training were temporarily closed on 1 September 2020. The

Union Minister said the ministry increased the agencies fees to K25 million from K5 million to be licenced overseas employment agencies full of responsibilities and accountabilities starting 4 February 2020 and eliminating the substandard agencies. He also highlighted the repatriation of 1,086 Myanmar nationals from Malaysia in three military vessels on 23 February 2021 and 70 citizens from India in the military vessel on 10 March. The government currently negotiates with the Thai government to establish five stations for Myanmar migrant workers working in Thailand under MoU to renew their visa for the next five years if their stay past the earlier four-year permit, to grant Certificate of Identity (CI) and OWIC. The Myanmar-Thailand labour experts meeting will be held virtually by the end of April. Then, he urged the attendees to discuss openly during the meeting. The Secretary of Committee Deputy Minister U Win Shein reported on the committee's formation, and other departmental heads clarified the performance, budget status and inventory of the committee. Vice-Chairman of Committee Union Minister Lt-Gen Tun Tun Naung also discussed effective work plans of the committee, cooperation with relevant ministries for job opportunities of Myanmar workers and then Committee Chairman Union Minister U Myint Kyaing remarked the necessary things. —MNA

Source : <https://www.gnlm.com.mm/overseas-employment-supervisory-committee-discusses-migrant-workers-issues/>

Vietnam's ST25 - the world's best rice - at risk of losing its brand name



Vietnam News | 27 April, 2021

Five US firms are in the process of registering the trademark of ST25 rice in overseas markets. The trademark of “ST25 rice”, a type of Vietnam’s fragrant rice that won the title of best rice in the world in 2019, will likely fall into the hands of American businesspersons in overseas markets as Vietnamese firms have lagged in trademark registration. The fact that five US firms are in the process of registering the trademark of “ST25 rice” has sent a warning sign to local enterprises to better protecting Vietnamese agricultural brands in overseas markets. The incident related to ST25, unfortunately, is not a new one as similar story had happened in the past with trademark of Phu Quoc fish sauce, Trung Nguyen coffee or Ben Tre coconut candy all fell into the hands of foreigners. In reality, many brands originated and registered in Vietnam but for many reasons, owners have not applied for trademark registration in foreign markets. However, it all came down to one being local firms’ slow move in registering for trademark protection abroad, as well as their lack of awareness about the fact that their brands could be appropriated in international markets. In 2003, Vietnam’s national brand program was launched to support local firms in the process of brand building. Nevertheless, it was only aimed at the promotion of sectors and fields, not for specific brands or products. Meanwhile, the government

under current regulations has no power for intellectual property or trademark protection overseas. For their parts, local enterprises have not invested properly in protecting their brands, as such, Vietnamese agricultural products in spite of their high quality could not achieve a prominent role in both domestic and international markets. In this regard, economist Nguyen Tri Hieu told Hanoitimes Vietnam while a major agricultural exporter in the world, many of its products are still behind other countries in terms of brand prestige. "This shows registration for brands and intellectual property rights continue to be a weakness of Vietnam's agricultural exporters," said Hieu. From the experience of ST25 and other products, Head of the Trade Promotion Agency under the Ministry of Industry and Trade Vu Ba Phu called for local enterprises to have specialized strategy in protecting trademarks for their products, especially at Vietnam's major markets. In case of small and medium enterprises, or individual researchers and scientists, "they should seek cooperation from large firms with financial capabilities in the process of products distribution and protecting trademarks in different markets," he added. Hieu noted violation of intellectual property rights is a rampant issue in the region, requiring a change of mindset from both local traders and authorities. "While some understand the importance of having a strategy to protect their brands in line with efforts to penetrate foreign markets, it is a complicated process that requires substantial time and money," Hieu added. Along with

efforts from enterprises, the government should continue providing legal support for firms in brand building abroad, he noted.

Source : <http://hanoitimes.vn/local-enterprises-urged-to-learn-from-potential-loss-of-st25-rice-brand-in-us-317118.html>

CPTPP opens up prospects for Vietnam's exports to the Americas



Vietnam News | 27 April, 2021

Hanoi (VNA) - Two years after it came into effect, the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) has helped Vietnam significantly boost its exports to other member nations and open the door to members in the Americas, which are bursting with potential, Deputy Minister of Industry and Trade Do Thang Hai told a seminar in Hanoi on April 27. With the theme "CPTPP - Opportunities for Vietnam's Exports to American Markets", the deputy minister told the gathering that economic and trade ties between Vietnam and the Americas have grown robustly over recent years. Ratified on December 30, 2018, the CPTPP took effect in Vietnam on January 14, 2019. In 2020, when COVID-19 first struck, trade between Vietnam and the Americas stood at 111.5 billion USD, up 16 percent against 2019. Of this, Vietnam's exports were worth 89.7 billion USD, accounting for 31.7 percent of its total and representing an annual growth rate of 21.7 percent. In the first quarter of this

year, Vietnam posted improved exports to many CPTPP member countries in the region. Notably, its value of shipments to Canada, Chile, Mexico, and Peru stood at 1.13 billion USD, 321 million USD, 931 million USD, and 134 million USD, respectively, for increases of 15 percent, 12 percent, 17 percent, and 35 percent. Hai suggested Vietnamese firms study the possibility of exploiting existing incentives, economic links, and infrastructure in member countries to seek business opportunities and diversify export markets and products. Vietnamese Trade Counsellor in Canada Do Thi Thu Huong recommended that Vietnamese companies be active in studying the agreement, particularly regarding preferential tariffs and rules of origin, and to take advantage of e-commerce platforms to connect with their Canadian counterparts amid COVID-19. Participants also pointed to challenges facing cooperation between Vietnam's business community and other CPTPP members, including those from the Americas. They include geographical distance, different languages, and a lack of up-to-date market information. Some Vietnamese enterprises also find it difficult to meet quality standards and rules of origin in target markets./.

Source : <https://en.vietnamplus.vn/cptpp-opens-up-prospects-for-vietnams-exports-to-the-americas/200708.vnp>
