

Highlight News / September 01/2021

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Cambodia, Vietnam boost expressway connection hopes



Cambodia News | 31 August, 2021

Cambodia and Vietnam have boosted the possibility of building an expressway linking the two countries at the border after the two countries discussed the issue yesterday. The news was revealed by Sun Chanthol, minister of Public Works and Transport in a Facebook live session updating the ministry's achievements and answering questions from the public. The ministry had asked a Chinese company, which received a green light to conduct a feasibility study on the expressway, to submit final reports to the ministry to check, he said. "By end of this year, the firm will submit reports to the Ministry of Public Works and Transport, Ministry of Economy and Finance, as well as inter-ministries to examine and check the possibility of the construction of the expressway from Phnom Penh to Bavet," Chanthol said. "Vietnam will soon start building an expressway from Ho Chi Minh City to Moc Bai international border gate to connect the expressway from Phnom Penh to Bavet," Chanthol said. "I hope the study will be completed in December and we will examine the signing of the concession loan on the Phnom Penh-Bavet expressway," he said. Once the government approves the project, the Phnom Penh-Bavet expressway would be the second expressway in Cambodia after one more than 109 kilometres in length and more than 60 percent complete between Phnom Penh and Sihanoukville is fully finished. A

Japanese study estimated an excessive \$2 billion cost. The project would have had a total length of 135 kilometres (km), crossing through Kandal, Prey Veng, and Svay Rieng provinces before reaching the Bavet checkpoint at the border with Vietnam. The ministry also allowed a feasibility study on a railway project from Phnom Penh to Vietnam.

Source : <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/50926403/cambodia-vietnam-boost-expressway-connection-hopes/>

Aquaculture sector helped to use sustainable clean energy



Cambodia News | 31 August, 2021

Cambodian company EnergyLab is cooperating with a series of other domestic firms to facilitate a change to green energy for the aquaculture sector. ATEC Biodigesters, Sevea Consulting, CHAMROEUN Microfinance Plc and People in Need Cambodia, a humanitarian group, are encouraging businesses in those areas to use what is called a SWITCH to Solar programme. The project aims to help micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in the Tonle sap region by providing them with the correct equipment to improve their crop quality and quantity and use clean, sustainable energy. By the end of the project in May 2024, they plan to have helped up to 9,000 agri-fishery MSMEs. During the programme, they intend to work with 20 local solar technology suppliers, 15 financial intermediaries and create 70 market channels. The project is funded by the European Union through the switch-Asia grants

programme and co-financed by the Czech Republic Development Cooperation. Savea and People in Need assist solar technology suppliers in improving their business channels and business modelling. Their products will be marketed to agri-fisheries and be provided with information from the extensive market research conducted by the project partners. Solar Green Energy is one of the solar technology suppliers partnered in the SWITCH to Solar project. According to Kheav Thida, co-founder and chief executive officer (CEO) of Solar Green Energy (Cambodia) Co Ltd, partnering up with the SWITCH project has been beneficial to the company. Thida said: "They help us on brand awareness and marketing development. They will help us to increase... 30 percent on our sales goal. They train us on digital marketing design content on Facebook and help to boost a page, make a video advertisement." She added: "They also link us to other investor or bank support and provide some strategy on business development." Cecile Dahome, co-founder and CEO of Sevea, a Cambodia-based development consultancy, said: "Since 2015 we've been working with solar companies and renewable energy companies in trying to help them raise funds both to grow their business but also to provide end-user financing. According to Dahome, there are several significant benefits and challenges when switching over to solar. They include limited grid dependency, reduced power outages, offsetting the high energy costs and lower climate change impact. The challenges are the high initial cost for the

investment, availability, competitively with non-solar options and a continuous stream of energy, such as when clouds obscure the sun. This project will help to overcome these challenges by assisting MSMEs with access to loans, supplying and facilitating the switch to solar and using batteries to overcome the lack of continuous stream. The potential technology solutions they are currently exploring are solar water pumps, solar power grinders, solar power cold storage, evaporative cooling, solar egg incubators, solar power hydroponics, solar dryers, solar smart farm assistance, solar cricket incubators and solar aquaculture air blowers. The project also includes an ATEC-provided biodigester tank. These tanks have two main options: to create a liquid fertiliser and to supply flammable gas for cooking equipment. Nikolai Schwarz, country director of ATEC Cambodia, a supporter of the agriculture sector, said the fertiliser improves yield for rice and vegetable farmers by 10-30 percent. The biodigester tank runs on a pay as you go system. ATEC does a complete installation and charges the users \$30 per month without any collateral. The monthly instalment will continue until the total amount of \$810 is paid. The user then starts to save money using this self-sustaining equipment with no penalties if they desire to return it.

Source : <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/50926340/aquaculture-sector-helped-to-use-sustainable-clean-energy/>

Concerns escalate following spike in locally-transmitted Covid cases



Laos News | 1 September, 2021

New clusters of Covid-19 infections recorded in recent days have triggered rising fears of fresh community outbreaks of the highly contagious Delta variant of the virus. The number of locally-transmitted cases is rising among communities in Vientiane and the provinces, forcing authorities to reinforce control measures to keep the virus from spreading. Authorities in several provinces have ordered lockdowns and postponement of the new school year in a bid to flatten the infection-rate curve. Laos has now recorded 15,015 cases of Covid-19 after 199 new cases were confirmed on Tuesday, Deputy Director General of the Communicable Diseases Control Department, Dr Sisavath Southaniraxay, told a press briefing. Of the total, 64 cases were locally-transmitted, with 24 recorded in Vientiane, Savannakhet province (14), Bokeo (11), Luang Namtha (8), Saravan (3), Khammuan (2), Oudomxay (1) and Champassak (1). Meanwhile the 135 imported cases include Vientiane (4), Borikhamxay province (2), Khammuan (5), Saravan (19), Champassak (51) and Savannakhet (54). In Vientiane, locally-transmitted cases have been linked to workplaces with government officials and company staff contracting the virus. The 24 new community-acquired cases reported in the capital were identified among people who had contact with infected people working for

Beerlao, Pepsi and a transport company in Thaphalanxay village. In the meantime, the Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism has been classified as an at-risk area after an official tested positive for Covid-19. Authorities are attempting to trace people who had contact with the official and asking them to quarantine. Other at-risk places include Nongbuathong School of Political Studies, the CKL factory in Xaysettha district's Xiengda village, and other businesses. Dr Sisavath urged members of the public to strictly follow all measures imposed by the government to contain the spread of the virus. Local residents are asked not to hold parties or travel to at-risk areas while also following the guidelines on wearing a face mask, social distancing, and using hand sanitiser. Meanwhile the government is expediting the vaccination programme to ensure that all target groups are inoculated. "Many people misunderstand the facts around vaccination," Dr Sisavath said. "Inoculation boosts the body's immune response and helps prevent hospitalisation and fatalities. However, a vaccinated person can contract and spread the virus, especially the Delta variant. So far, more than 2.4 million people have received a first dose of a Covid vaccine, representing 33.3 percent of the population, while almost 1.8 million people have received two doses, accounting for 24.4 percent. According to the Covid-19 taskforce, 13 red zone (infected villages) have been reported in four districts of Vientiane. These are Xaythany district (Chaleunxay, Dongdok and Khamhoung villages), Sangthong district (Kua

village), Sisattanak district (Thaphalanxay and Chomphet Neua villages) and Hadxaifong district (Dondou, Simmanou Neua, Simmanou Tai, Nong-heo, Nongvaeng, Dongkhamxang and Thapha villages).

Source : https://www.vientianetimes.org.la/freeContent/FreeConten_Concerns_171.php

Singapore placed Myanmar's second-largest importer



Myanmar News | 31 August, 2021

Singapore is the second-largest importer of Myanmar with an estimated value of \$2.14 billion, the Ministry of Commerce data showed. Between 1 October and 30 June of the current financial year, the value of Myanmar's bilateral trade with Singapore in maritime trade and border trade topped \$2.3 billion. The Ministry of Commerce reported that imports surpassed exports in trade with Singapore, with exports reaching \$166.9 million and imports valued at over \$2.14 billion. Myanmar trade deficit in goods with Singapore was estimated at US\$1.97 billion in the past nine months (October-June) of the current financial year 2020-2021, the statistics issued by the Central Statistical Organization under the Ministry of Planning and Finance indicated. Singapore is Myanmar's second-largest trading partner in the region, after Thailand. Myanmar exports agricultural products, footwear, textiles and clothing, minerals, and animal products to Singapore. It imports plastics, fuel oil, capital goods, intermediate goods, consumer products, metals,

and chemicals. Myanmar's bilateral trade with Singapore has registered \$3.5 billion in the last financial year 2018-2019, \$1.99 billion in the 2018 mini-budget period, \$3.83 billion in the 2017-2018FY, \$2.96 billion in the 2016-2017FY, and \$3.69 billion in the 2015-2016FY. — KK/GNLM

Source : <https://www.gnlnm.com.mm/singapore-placed-myanmars-second-largest-importer/#article-title>

Yangon ranks lowest out of 60 cities in Economist Magazine's 2021 Safe Cities Index



Myanmar News | 31 August, 2021

Yangon ranks among the lowest of 60 cities in the 2021 Safe Cities Index, published by The Economist Intelligence Unit in London-based The Economist. Digital security; Health Infrastructure; This is the fourth edition of a survey of 60 cities around the world, based on five categories: human and environmental security. The index is based on the findings of extensive research and in-depth interviews with experts in the field. According to the index, Yangon ranks 60th out of 60 cities in terms of digital security. Sydney is one of the most digitally secure cities in the world. Singapore Copenhagen Los Angeles and San Francisco top the list. In terms of health security, Yangon ranks 58th out of 60 cities, while Lagos and Caracas rank 59th and 60th, respectively. In this sector, Tokyo; Singapore Hong Kong Mae Hong Son and Osaka topped the list of safest cities. In terms of infrastructure security, Yangon ranks 58th, followed by Caracas and Lagos.

Singapore Copenhagen Toronto and Tokyo top the list. In terms of personal security, Rangoon ranks 58th, below Lagos and Karachi. Copenhagen is one of the safest cities in the world. Amsterdam Frankfurt Stockholm and Brussels top the list. Yangon ranks 54th in terms of environmental security, followed by Caracas, Dubai Karachi Casablanca Cairo and Kuwait City are next in line. Wellington is one of the safest cities in the world. Toronto Washington, DC Bogota and Milan, respectively. Overall, Rangoon ranks 60th out of 60 cities with a total score of 39.5, according to Economist Magazine.

Source : <https://news-eleven.com/article/214875>

Tourism revenue endures steep plunge over eight months



Vietnam News | 31 August, 2021

Vietnam's tourism revenue during the initial eight months of the year fell sharply by 61.8% to VND4.5 trillion compared to the same period from last year, according to the figures released by the General Statistics Office (GSO). A number of localities have experienced a downward trajectory in tourism revenue, including Khanh Hoa, Quang Nam, Thua Thien Hue, Nghe An, Ho Chi Minh City, Hanoi, Hai Phong, Da Nang, Can Tho, and Quang Ninh, recording decreases of 89.1%, 82.4%, 63.9%, 66.1%, 52.2%, 50.3%, 47.1%, 41.9%, 29.8%, and 28.4%, respectively. Since April last year the country has kept its borders closed to international tourists to combat COVID-19, with the majority of foreign arrivals made up of experts and technical workers

performing duties and projects locally. August alone saw the number of international visitors to the country increase by 24.4% to 9,300 compared to July, thereby representing a fall of 43% compared to the same period from last year. During the reviewed period, foreign arrivals reached 105,000, an annual decline of 97.2%. The number of arrivals coming into the country by air, road, and sea routes also dropped significantly by 97.7%, 93.8%, and 99.8% to 68,800, 36,000, and 275, respectively. This period also saw the number of Asian visitors fall by 96.7% to 90,600, although they still made up 86.2% of the total number of international visitors to the country. Most notably, arrivals from Europe plummeted by 98.6%, visitors from the Americas dropped by 98.5%, and guests from Africa declined by 92.9%, while visitors from China, the Republic of Korea, and Taiwan (China) also experienced a downward trend. Due to social distancing measures implemented during the fourth wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, domestic tourists have declined by 5.5% to 31.2 million, with total tourism revenue during the reviewed period dropping 36.5% to VND136,520 billion. In the remaining months of the year, the Vietnam National Administration of Tourism (VNAT) is now working alongside Kien Giang province to welcome back international visitors who are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 to Phu Quoc island on a pilot scheme. The VNAT will propose solutions aimed at supporting local businesses to recover in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic and carry out a digital transformation project in the

tourism industry with a focus on developing smart tourism services.

Source : <https://tienphongnews.com/tourism-revenue-endures-steep-plunge-over-eight-months-199899.html>

Business closures hit 85,000 over eight months



Vietnam News | 31 August, 2021

Approximately 85,500 enterprises have withdrawn from the market during the opening eight months of the year due to the impact of the COVID- 19 pandemic, according to figures released by the General Statistics Office (GSO). Among them, a total of 43,200 firms have temporarily suspended operations, marking an increase of 25.9% , while 30,100 businesses halted operations and are pending dissolution procedures, up 24.5%. Roughly 12,200 enterprises have also completed dissolution procedures, representing an increase of 17.8% compared to the same period from last year with roughly 10,700 businesses leaving the market each month. Most notably, the past eight months saw 24,000 businesses leave the market in Ho Chi Minh City, the nation' s largest COVID- 19 hotspot, accounting for 28.1% of the overall figure and increasing by 6.6% compared to last year' s corresponding period. The fourth national COVID-19 outbreak, along with consecutive social distancing periods, has severely disrupted production of local firms. Meanwhile, only 81,600 new businesses were

established during the reviewed period, with total registered capital reaching approximately VND1.133 trillion, a drop of 8% in relation to the number of enterprises and a fall of 7.5% in registered capital. The number of businesses resuming operation since the beginning of the year has also decreased by 0.6% to 32,400 enterprises. On average, some 14,300 businesses are newly established and resume operations every month.

Source : <https://tienphongnews.com/business-closures-hit-85000-over-eight-months-199878.html>