

Highlight News / February 23/2022



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Thailand's PTT Oil and Retail Business (PTTOR) looks for Cambodian partners for operations here



Cambodia News | 22 February, 2022

Thailand's PTT Oil and Retail Business (PTTOR) is looking for local partners in other markets where it already operates like Cambodia, Laos and the Philippines for potential joint ventures. PTTOR plans to invest 93.5 billion baht (\$2.9 billion) over the next five years to expand its food and beverage business, utilising its big gas stations network, its chief executive said on Monday. About 42% of capital expenditure will be used to expand its non-oil business including adding more coffee shops and restaurants, Jiraphon Kawswat told a virtual news conference. Part of the investment will also go to technology to help analyse customer data and identify new opportunities, she added. The investment plan seeks to increase the proportion of income from its non-oil and overseas businesses and reduce the contribution from its gas stations. The firm has a network of over 2,000 gas stations and owns Thailand's largest coffee franchise, Cafe Amazon, with about 3,000 stores, along with bubble tea brands, fried chicken and sushi bars. Ms Jiraphon plans to reduce oil business contribution to EBITA (earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation) from 76% to 45% while growing its food and beverage and other non-oil earnings. This year, the company also plans to triple the number of electric

vehicle (EV) charging stations in its gas stations to reach 300 and add another 150 with commercial partners, she said, aligning with the government's policy to promote EV use. PTTOR is the consumer arm of the state-owned energy giant, PTT Public Company Limited, which has a joint venture with Taiwan's Foxconn to build EVs in Thailand.

Source : <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/501029495/thailands-ptt-oil-and-retail-business-pttor-looks-for-cambodian-partners-for-operations-here/>

Cambodia to support SMEs and the agriculture sector



Cambodia News | 22 February, 2022

Cambodian government's special emergency loan scheme worth \$100mn to aid SMEs and the agriculture sector in an aim to resuscitate the economy. The loan is said to be issued to the private sector via the state-owned Small and Medium Enterprise Bank of Cambodia and the Agricultural and Rural Development Bank. The \$100mn fund packet will be intended to support the nation's economy in the near future said Aun Pornmoniroth, deputy prime minister and minister of economy and finance. "The \$100mn budget will be used to boost agriculture and small and medium enterprises, two of the most important sectors in the national economy, both in terms of job creation and in improving people's livelihoods and promoting national economic growth," he added. The funds are to be distributed equally between the two financial bodies and put towards exercises supporting the

nation's rice industry, animal husbandry, crop production and risk-sharing co-financing schemes.

Source : <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/501029437/cambodia-to-support-smes-and-the-agriculture-sector/>

Inflation hits highest point in two years



Laos News | 23 February, 2022

The year-on-year inflation rate jumped to 6.25 percent in January, the highest figure recorded since January 2020, inflicting another blow on Lao people's wallets. The cost of goods and services has continued to climb since March last year and jumped to 5.04 percent in November before rising to 5.27 percent in December, according to the latest report from the Lao Statistics Bureau. The rising cost of fuel is one of the main drivers of inflation in Laos. The Covid-19 pandemic, especially the emergence of the Omicron variant, and the volatile fuel market has had huge consequences on the inflation rate in countries around the world, including Laos. The pandemic continues to interrupt global supply chains, leading to shortages and driving up the price of goods due to a mismatch in demand and supply. In addition, the rising price of gold and steady depreciation of the kip are making it even harder to curb inflation in Laos. In January, the cost of goods and services was mainly driven by the communications and transport category, medical care and medicine, restaurant and hotel, and the goods and services categories. Costs in the communications and transport category rose by 1.26

percent month-on-month, and 13.72 percent year-on-year. The surge in this category is linked to the price of oil and gas which rose by 29.53 percent year-on-year in January, affecting the cost of transport and the price of goods on sale in local markets. Since the start of this year, fuel prices have risen four times, hammering Lao consumers and their efforts to improve their living standards. Meanwhile, the price of medical care and medicines rose by 0.9 percent month-on-month and 9.05 percent year-on-year. Prices in the restaurant and hotel category surged by 0.55 percent month-on-month and 8.59 percent year-on-year. According to the Lao Statistics Bureau, the internal factors driving the cost of goods and services was linked to rising demand in the food and non-alcoholic beverages category during the Chinese and Vietnamese New Year. The cost of food and non-alcoholic beverages in January increased by 0.66 percent month-on-month and 4.17 percent year-on-year, with the price of pork and poultry rising significantly. Some countries have raised interest rates to increase the cost of borrowing as a means of curbing inflation. In Laos, the government is taking steps to boost productivity in order to reduce imports, and to control the rising price of fuel to ease the impact on the economy and the general public. The government has decided to cut Value Added Tax from 10 to 7 percent this year and cut all fuel reserves, meaning that the current oil reserve price is now 0 kip/litre.

Source : https://www.vientianetimes.org.la/freeContent/FreeContent_Inflation_37_22.php

Manageable tomato production earns regular income for farmers in Natmauk



Myanmar News | 22 February, 2022

The local farmers from West Lekkokpin village, Natmauk township, Magway region are growing the tomato using underground water on a manageable scale and earning regular income for their families. Tomatoes, a staple food in their fields, are grown by groundwater after the rain. "There are two types of tomato species such as Myanmar and Taiwan tomato species. Now, we are growing Myanmar tomato species. The tomatoes are planted on patches spaced about three feet apart. It needs to be watered every three days. The fruit is highly yielded right now. Earlier, the price of onion was sold for K1,000 per viss. Now, the price fetched only K350 per viss. We want to get a good price when the fruit is abundantly harvested. The tomato is conveyed retail and wholesale to Myoma market daily, said a tomato grower from West Lekkokpin village. — Thin Thin Myat/GNLM

Source : <https://www.gnln.com.mm/manageable-tomato-production-earns-regular-income-for-farmers-in-natmauk/#article-title>

Some tourism activities in Myeik archipelago may be suspended due to very low tourist arrivals



Myanmar News | 22 February, 2022

Due to the sharp decline in tourist arrivals in the Myeik Archipelago, some tourism activities have come to a standstill. Tourism, which has been in decline for more than a month due to the Kovid epidemic and the political crisis, has seen a resurgence of the disease due to a resurgence of the disease and road safety conditions, tour operators say. "For the past month or so, we have been able to run island tours one day a week. On some weekends, you can even run overnight trips. Once a week, travelers are gathered to the islands. Now there are almost no passengers. Roads are closed to families due to security concerns. The flight was only for those who had important issues due to illness. There are no more tourists," said a tourism service provider in the Myeik Archipelago. In the past, there were more than 30 tour companies in Myeik District, but now there are less than 10. More than 20 companies have been shut down. "To be precise, there are only eight companies left," he said. This is not just about sending tourists, but renting boards if there is an urgent need for religious / funeral services in the villages. These are companies that are resilient because they rent a boat if they need to ship seafood urgently. Tourism is no longer easy to sustain. The political and epidemic situation has led to the cessation of tourism, "said a tour

operator. Tourism in Myeik District has declined and Kawthaung has seen a sharp drop in tourist arrivals, according to tour operators. "There are a few more than in Myeik. However, Kawthaung has also seen a significant decline," said a tour operator. The Myeik archipelago, which has become famous for its island tourism for the past two years, is slowly declining, with more and more tour companies shutting down in February 2022, and tour guides are out of work.

Source : <https://news-eleven.com/article/226211>

Export-import turnover hits 21.41 bln USD in first half of February



Vietnam News | 22 February, 2021

Hanoi (VNA) - Export-import turnover hit 21.41 billion USD in the first half of February, according to the General Department of Vietnam Customs. The country raked in 8.75 billion USD from exports in the period. Three groups of commodities recording the highest export turnover were phones and components; computers, electronic products and components; and machinery and equipment. Meanwhile, Vietnam spent 12.66 billion USD on imports during this period, with the two groups valued at over 1 billion USD being computers, electronic products and components; and machinery, equipment, tools, and spare parts. As of February 15, the country's total import-export turnover reached 81.68 billion USD, the department said. As a result, Vietnam posted a trade deficit of nearly 4 billion USD in the first half of

February, and 2.5 billion USD in the period from the beginning of the year to February 15./

Source : <https://en.vietnamplus.vn/exportimport-turnover-hits-2141-bln-usd-in-first-half-of-february/222417.vnp>

Farming pearls from mussels a potential industry for Vietnam



Vietnam News | 22 February, 2022

Hanoi (VNS/VNA) - Raising mussels for pearls could be a promising industry in Vietnam, thanks to favourable weather conditions, long coastlines and warm seas, said the Standing Vice Chairman of Vietnam Fishery Association Nguyen Chu Hoi. Vietnam has more than 3,200km of coastline and 3,000 islands, of which over 150 islands are inhabited. The total water surface area that can be developed for aquaculture in the country is about 2.62 million hectares, including a saltwater surface area of 568,424ha and a freshwater surface area of 923,234ha. Vietnam's main aquacultural products are fish, shrimp, crabs, sentinel crabs, scallops, clams, and mussels. More than 1.5 million hectares, or nearly 60 percent, of water surfaces are unused. Of that, nearly 453,500ha of saltwater surfaces are suitable for raising mussels for pearls. As Vietnam is located in the tropical monsoon climate zone, it is warm all year round. The average annual air temperature in the North (Quang Ninh province) is 22.7 degrees Celsius, in the Central region (Da Nang

city) is 25.7 degree Celsius, in the South Central (Binh Dinh province) is 27.1 degree Celsius, in the South (Phu Quoc Islands in Kien Giang province) is 27.2 degree Celsius. Speaking about the current situation, challenges and opportunities for Vietnam's pearls last week, Hoi said that with sufficient orientation by the Government and the forming of pearl production supply chains, mussels farming could soon be thriving in Vietnam. Under Resolution No 36-NQ/TW dated October 22, 2018, on the Strategy for Sustainable Development of Vietnam's marine economy to 2030, with a vision to 2045, pearl farming is a part of the marine farming sector. "Pearl farming is not identified as an economic industry but I think if we move in the right direction, we can help develop it into a real industry," Hoi said. The mussel farming in Vietnam has developed a brand name in the world market, targeting specific groups of customers. Vietnam also has domestic demand for pearls. "Further development of mussel farming will not only satisfy the domestic consumption demand but also the international market," Hoi said. "When we think of it as an industry, it's necessary to develop value chains and engage the participation and management of the Government," he said, adding that State management with mechanisms and policies could help exploit the potential. The farming techniques of mussel farmers play an important role in the pearl industry. Another requirement for further

development of mussel farming is the preservation of mussel farming areas, Hoi said. Former Deputy Director of the Department of Science, Technology and Training under the Ministry of Health Tran Thi Oanh said that pearls grown in different ecological regions, particularly salt water and fresh water ones, would be different in terms of the proportion of ingredients. To help consumers distinguish between seawater pearls and freshwater pearls, it was necessary to boost communication and promote Government's policies to bring authentic products to consumers, she said. Nguyen Thi Minh Thu, Director of An Phu Pearl and Jewelry Company said there were differences between sea pearls and freshwater pearls. Sea pearls are cultured in mussels living in the southern Pacific Ocean, in countries such as Japan, Australia, the Philippines, Myanmar, and Vietnam and French Polynesia. Freshwater pearls are grown in mussels living in ponds, lakes, rivers and streams. China is currently leading the world in freshwater pearl production due to its large river network with favourable conditions for pearl culture development. In terms of lustre, the sea is an ideal environment to provide many nutrients as well as a variety of food sources. As seawater contains many minerals, the pearl has a high lustre and can sparkle. Thu said that when placed in the sun, sea pearls can give off an iridescent sheen while freshwater pearls are dull and unable to shine. In

terms of shape, sea pearls that undergo strict care, cultivation, and high technical requirements are shaped by round pellets, so sea pearls are either round, almost round, oval, teardrop, pear-shaped or baroque. Freshwater mussels are usually flat and distorted. This said that a pearl can only receive one nucleus per transplant and undergo a maximum of three transplantations. With a success rate of 30- 40 percent and long culturing time, sea pearls were rare and costly, just behind natural pearls. A freshwater mussel can produce 30 to 80 pellets and can be harvested after only one or two years of culture. Freshwater pearls will cost much less than saltwater pearls./.

Source : <https://en.vietnamplus.vn/farming-pearls-from-mussels-a-potential-industry-for-vietnam/222423.vnp>
