

Highlight News / March 01/2023



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'Cambodia to be main cashew exporter'



Cambodia News | 28 February, 2023

Prime Minister Hun Sen said Cambodia could become one of the main cashew nut producers and exporters in the world, and added the commodity has the potential but limitations of processing. Cambodia exports about one million tons of unprocessed cashew nuts, the Prime Minister said at a graduation ceremony of the National Technical Training Institute of Cambodia on Monday. With the limitation of processing activities locally, the Premier called upon the private sector and investors to invest in the processing facilities to produce finished cashew products. "Cambodia will become one of the main cashew nut contributors in the future because now it exports about 1 million tons of unprocessed cashew nuts," the Prime Minister said. The government has enacted the National Policy on Cashew Nuts for 2022-27 which aims to increase production and value-added, giving hope to cashew farmers. It is aimed to increase output with competitive quality, promote industrialisation and increase processing to at least 25 percent by 2027 and 50 percent by 2032. The government also aims to promote exports through market diversification, cross-sectoral linkages, trade facilitation, cost reduction and market superiority. The government also called upon the private sector and investors to consider investing in the processing industry in Cambodia as the country is rich in the raw materials

of agriculture, he said. "Cambodia has raw materials, but processing is not enough. So Cambodia wants to attract investors to process locally available raw materials, and that in turn will create jobs and create added value for products," he said. Vietnam is the biggest market for Cambodia's raw cashew and a small share is exported to India and the rest goes to domestic use. The main markets for processed cashew products are Europe and Japan. In Lay Huot, chairwoman at Chey Sambo Cashew Nut Processing Handicraft in Kampong Thom province, said the commodity has potential that is in need of investment in facilities for processing, packaging, and production of finished products. "The investment on processing locally will contribute to providing value-added to cashew nut products but also create jobs and markets for farmers via contract farming," Lay Hout. A Cambodian Cashew Association report showed that in 2022, Cambodia exported \$1 billion worth of fresh cashew nuts. The largest importer of fresh cashew from Cambodia is Vietnam. In 2019, Cambodia exported 600,000 tons of fresh cashew nuts, 950,000 tons in 2020, and 1.1 million tons in 2021. Currently, more than 500,000 hectares of land are under cashew cultivation in 10 provinces. According to a Cashew nut Association of Cambodia report, Kampong Thom province has the largest cashew plantation of 90,959 hectares, followed by Kratie province with 47,858 hectares.

Source : <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/501246447>

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Cambodia sees internet, mobile phone subscriptions surpass population



Cambodia News | 28 February, 2023

The mobile broadband internet subscribers in Cambodia surpassed the country's 16 million population mark, as the government highlights the development of the digital economy. The mobile phone subscribers in Cambodia rose to 19.5 million as of November last year, decreased from 21.7 million in 2019, the pre-pandemic times, which shed away foreign tourists from the country, the Telecommunication Regulator of Cambodia's report said. The internet subscriptions were registered at 17.2 million as of November, increasing from 16.1 million recorded in 2019. Cambodia Digital Tech Association president Chhin Ken said that almost all Cambodian people have smartphones, which led to a rise in the use of the internet, and it is mostly used for surfing social networks. "The high number of internet users showed how fast the Cambodians were embracing technology, as the trend of using smartphones for studies, shopping and social networks is increasing," Ken said. The government has a strategy to strengthen and expand mobile infrastructure and high-speed internet through 4th generation mobile services (4G) and to lay the foundation for the 5th generation mobile services (5G). Noting the significant surge in the use of digital technology in Cambodia, Prime Minister Hun Sen has asked local telecommunication companies to

strengthen mobile phone signal and internet services in both urban and rural areas. The usage of digital devices, e-commerce transactions during the pandemic period, and financial technology have boosted the use of the internet and mobile services, he said. "Everything has moved online, even a taxi service. The pandemic crisis has created opportunities for Cambodia to maximise the benefits of digitalisation," the Premier said. The internet and mobile usage have provided remarkable growth for mobile payment in Cambodia during the Covid-19 pandemic, said the National Bank of Cambodia governor Chea Chanto said in January. "Since the Covid-19 crisis, online trading has grown rapidly and electronic payment methods have become increasingly popular across the country," he said.

Source : <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/501246252/cambodia-sees-internet-mobile-phone-subscriptions-surpass-population/>

PM urges rail operator to improve services



Laos News | 1 March, 2023

Prime Minister Sonexay Siphandone has asked the Laos-China Railway Company Limited to improve facilities at stations and other services offered by the railway, to make travel easier for tourists. The Prime Minister and his officials on Monday visited Vientiane station, located in Xaythany district, to observe ticket sales, passenger waiting areas, restaurant facilities, toilets, VIP waiting rooms, baggage check points, payment of fees for pick-up and drop-off of

passengers, and car park charges. On the same day, the Prime Minister and his delegation attended a meeting at the headquarters of the Laos-China Railway Company Limited, where company staff outlined plans for the future operation of the railway. The rail operator also described plans to improve services in relation to both passenger travel and freight transport, including resolving ongoing problems, so that the expected influx of tourists, especially from China, can be handled by the railway. The opening of the Laos-China Railway in December 2021 has transformed travel in northern Laos, bolstered international trade, and is seen as an important force in driving economic development. As of February 25, 2023, a total of 2,776 train journeys had been made, carrying 1,829,400 passengers, with an average of 4,065 people travelling on the railway each day. In addition, 3,517 freight shipments carrying 2.8 million tons of goods had been made, with the types of products transported rising to more than 2,000, shipped from several different countries. The rail operator has provided jobs for more than 800 Lao nationals, accounting for 60 percent of the total number of employees working on the railway.

Source : https://www.vientianetimes.org.la/freeContent/FreeContent42_PMurges_y23.php

Russia approves 6-month tourist visa for citizens of 19 countries including Myanmar



Myanmar News | 28 February, 2023

The Russian Federation approves a six-month tourist visa for citizens of 19 countries including Myanmar, according to the statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Myanmar. It said the Russian government portal published on 20 February that Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin signed on 16 February a Decree of the Government of the Russian Federation No 372-r saying the citizens of the specified countries may get a tourist visa for up to six months. Under Article 25 of the Federal Law On the Procedure for Departure from the Russian Federation and Entry to the Russian Federation, the facilitated countries are Bahrain, Brunei, India, Indonesia, Iran, Cambodia, China, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Kuwait, Laos, Malaysia, Mexico, Myanmar, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, Thailand, Türkiye and the Philippines, it read. These citizens are issued an ordinary tourist visa for up to six months based on confirmation of booking a place in hotels or other accommodation facilities, information about which is contained in a single of the classified hotels, ski slopes and beaches, it said.

— TWA/KTZH

Source : <https://www.gnlm.com.mm/russia-approves-6-month-tourist-visa-for-citizens-of-19-countries-including-myanmar/>

Q1 economic growth drivers



Vietnam News | 28 February, 2023

(VEN) - Investment, domestic consumption and foreign trade were the three drivers of Vietnam's economic growth in February and the first quarter of 2023. The Government, ministries, sectors and

localities are taking action to promote these forces. Opportunities and challenges. According to the Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI), by the end of January 2023, the Vietnamese economy continued to show positive signs with the macroeconomic situation remaining stable. Specifically, the consumer price index (CPI) grew 0.52 percent compared with December 2022 and 4.89 percent year-on-year; in the monetary market, credit grew 0.65 percent by January 17 compared with the end of 2022; the banking system's liquidity was ensured. In January, State budget revenue reached 11.3 percent of yearly projection, foreign direct investment reached US\$1.2 billion, triple the result of January 2022, and trade surplus was estimated at US\$3.6 billion. Production and trade continued recovering thanks to high consumer demand during the Lunar New Year holiday (late January). Agricultural production remains stable. Total retail sales of consumer goods and services grew 20 percent year-on-year. The supply of goods is abundant with almost no major price changes. However, due to the week-long Lunar New Year holiday and the impact of the global economic uncertainty, industrial production and import-export activities faced numerous difficulties. The January index of industrial production (IIP) equaled 92 percent of that in January 2022, while total foreign trade value was lower compared with December and January 2022. Three growth drivers. According to the MPI, given the increasing difficulties challenging Vietnam's efforts to control inflation and maintain

macroeconomic stability, Vietnam should focus on promoting investment, domestic consumption and foreign trade. To promote investment, the prime minister has ordered the acceleration of major national projects and the improvement of the investment and business environment to create a new space for socioeconomic development. At the same time, the Government has applied fiscal policies to provide businesses with support, helping them reduce input costs and output prices in order to control inflation. Appropriate monetary policies are helping manage credit and keeping interest at a reasonable level to facilitate investment in production and trade. The disbursement of public investment capital will also be accelerated. To promote domestic consumption and foreign trade, the industry and trade sector will facilitate business access to capital and credit, and strengthen domestic purchasing power through effective implementation of trade promotion programs. The distribution of goods on digital platforms and e-commerce will be expanded to boost domestic sales. At the same time, the Ministry of Industry and Trade will accelerate negotiations on bilateral and multilateral cooperation mechanisms, bring into play the role of overseas Vietnamese trade offices, and support localities, associations and businesses in taking advantage of free trade agreements to increase exports. Technical barriers will be removed to facilitate business access to new markets. Digital transformation in the field of trade promotion will be accelerated to connect supply and demand, as well

as to build and develop Vietnamese brands in foreign markets. Attention will also be paid to logistics services, e-commerce, and especially cross-border trade.

Source : <https://ven.vn/q1-economic-growth-drivers-46867.html>

Vietnam's CPI edges up in February



Vietnam News | 28 February, 2023

HCMC – Vietnam's consumer price index (CPI) in February rose by 0.45% month-on-month and 4.31% year-on-year, according to data released by the General Statistics Office today, February 28. The rise was attributed to higher local prices of fuels due to soaring global ones and increased renting costs after the Lunar New Year holiday, the local media reported. The index in urban areas picked up 0.47% month-on-month, while CPI in rural areas went up 0.42%. Five of the 11 main groups of goods and services in the basket of items used to calculate the CPI reported a month-on-month price rise. The transport group recorded the highest increase at 2.11% as the prices of gasoline and oil products surged by 5.66% following fuel price adjustments on February 13 and 21. Besides, the prices of public transport services went up 2.58% month-on-month, with the passenger train service price soaring by 32.92% month-on-month. In February, the prices of housing and construction materials went up 1.81% month-on-month, due mostly to the rise in rent, and cooking gas, electricity and housing maintenance material prices. Household equipment and

appliances edged up 0.09%, while medicine and healthcare services saw a mild rise of 0.02%. The group of other goods and services saw an increase of 0.12% due to an increase in the prices of jewelry, handbags, wallets and gold. The six groups registering a fall comprised education services, food and catering services, beverages and tobacco, post and telecommunications, apparel and entertainment and tourism services. Core inflation in February inched up 0.25% month-on-month and 4.96% year-on-year.

Source : <https://english.thesaigontimes.vn/vietnams-cpi-edges-up-in-february/>