

Highlight News / July 06, 2023



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Chinese-Cambodian joint venture changes lives for the better



Cambodia News | 05 July, 2023

A joint venture between Chinese and Cambodian enterprises launched 15 years ago has already had a profound impact on the Cambodian economy and local people's lives. To many people in Cambodia, the Sihanoukville Special Economic Zone, or SSEZ, is somewhat surreal, as the area in which it is located used to be nothing more than a vast wilderness. Now, the 11.13 square kilometre SSEZ, located in Sihanoukville's Prey Nob District, is Cambodia's largest industrial park and home to 175 enterprises from around the world. Jointly developed by private companies from Cambodia and China, the zone is considered a landmark Belt and Road Initiative collaboration project between the two nations. Since it was launched, the zone's import and export volume has experienced significant growth, rising from \$139 million in 2013 to nearly \$2.5 billion last year. Xiao Jianxin, assistant brand manager at Hodo Group, a leading Chinese private textile and garment maker based in Wuxi, Jiangsu province, and a key investor in the zone, is among those who have witnessed every step of the SSEZ's development since it was set up in 2008. "This place was literally built from scratch," the 41-year-old said during his latest visit to the zone in mid-May. "Apart from a nearby fishing village where a few hundred locals

lived in straw huts, this area had nothing — no electricity, no running water, no roads," Xiao said. Changes to the landscape took place rapidly after the two countries agreed to develop the area, Xiao added. In just a few years, it was transformed into a modern industrial park, while Bet Trang, the fishing village, was developed into a bustling town complete with a full range of amenities, including gas stations, telecommunication stores, barbershops, wet markets and restaurants. Xiao said that every time he visits the zone, he sees new facilities. A one-stop service centre was set up in 2010, a sewage treatment plant in 2015, a power plant in 2017, and a university in 2019. On his latest trip, Xiao learned that a 189-km highway connecting Phnom Penh, the Cambodian capital, and Sihanoukville was completed last year. The highway, which opened to traffic in October, was built with investment from Chinese companies. It reduces the journey time between the two cities to just two hours. "The SSEZ basically looks no different from any modern industrial park in China. If there is a slight difference, it is simply because the SSEZ is newer, or even bigger," Xiao said. Cao Jianjiang, general manager of SSEZ Co, which oversees development in the zone, said facilities have constantly been upgraded and new amenities added to attract more international businesses. In addition to helping companies situated within it, the zone has paid special attention to catering to workers' needs. Over the years, the industrial park has introduced a health clinic, a law consultancy centre and two educational

institutions — the Preah Sihanouk Cambodia-China Friendship Polytechnic Institute and the Sihanoukville Institute of Business and Technology, Cao said. China daily

Source: <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/501319228/chinese-cambodian-joint-venture-changes-lives-for-the-better/>

CRF, Alibaba to promote Cambodian rice in China



Cambodia News | 05 July, 2023

The Cambodia Rice Federation (CRF) and Chinese tech giant Alibaba Group have been discussing ways to promote Cambodia's milled rice in the Chinese market. The talks focused on how the two sides can collaborate to promote Cambodia's rice and develop marketing strategies, said CRF Secretary General Lun Yeng. "We will work together to promote Cambodia's milled rice and make it attractive in the China market," Yeng said yesterday. Yeng said that some Chinese importers who import Cambodia's milled rice have already sold it online in China and CRF will hold discussions with importing partners on this strategy. Last week, CRF's vice president Yun Hong, and other five members held a meeting with Jiali Pan, Director of Public Affairs, and Chhay Meng, Operation Manager of Alibaba, on export and marketing of Cambodian rice on the Alibaba platform, a well-known e-commerce site in China, and related Alibaba stores. Cambodia exported 118,041 tons of milled rice to China in the first five months of 2023, earning \$77.4 million in

revenue, CRF said last month. "China is the main export market for Cambodian milled rice, which accounted for 42.43 percent of Cambodia's total rice export volume during the January-May period of 2023," its press release said. CRF said it will continue to collaborate with the Ministry of Commerce to ensure that annual milled-rice sales to China reach 400,000 tons each year. Cambodia exported 278,184 tons of milled rice to 50 countries and regions during the first five months of this year, generating \$191.6 million in revenue. Milled rice varieties include premium aromatic rice, fragrant rice, long grain white rice, parboiled rice, and organic rice, it added. Alibaba Group also held talks with relevant stakeholders for exporting other Cambodian products and selling them in the online marketplace in China.

Source: <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/501318853/crf-alibaba-to-promote-cambodian-rice-in-china/>

NA member asks govt to repair Road No. 13 North



Laos News | 05 July, 2023

A National Assembly for Luang Prabang province has asked the government to carry out repairs to Road No. 13 North, especially on the section between Kasy, Phoukhoun and Xieng Ngeun districts and the link to Road No. 7 leading to Xieng Khuang province. Speaking at the debate session recently, Mr Sommay Khamkeng said the road has become badly potholed due to the large number of

trucks passing through. More and more heavily laden trucks are using this arterial road, he said, and if they become stuck and block the road, no other traffic can get through. He asked the Ministry of Public Works and Transport to consider emergency solutions to road repairs so that travel between Vientiane and the northern provinces was not an obstacle course. Minister of Public Works and Transport, Mr Ngampasong Muongmany, said the ministry had asked the contractor to carry out repairs so that the road was passable at all times. However, this work has been delayed because of financial problems and maintenance issues. "We are encouraging the weighing of trucks and are in the process of checking weighing scales with a view to modernising them," Mr Ngampasong said. The ministry is taking steps to tackle the problem of overweight trucks, which have caused severe damage to roads and bridges over past years, he added. Meanwhile, the ministry is looking for a suitable location to build another weighing station. Modernisation of the weighing system would ensure greater transparency, he said. Each truck's weight would be automatically recorded and forwarded to the relevant central and provincial departments. In the past year, truck weights have been recorded manually, triggering suspicions of loopholes for personal gain by officials in charge, which resulted in overweight trucks continuing to use and damage

roads. Overweight trucks are the main cause of damage to roads and bridges, which create problems for other road users.

Source: https://www.vientianetimes.org.la/freeContent/FreeContent_128_NAmember_y23.php

Green gram market calms down on sluggish global demand



Myanmar News | 05 July, 2023

The price of green gram plummeted following the weak foreign demand, according to the Yangon Region Chambers of Commerce and Industry (Bayintnaung). The price of green gram from the central Myanmar region touched a high of K2.092 million per tonne in mid-May. The current price fell to K1.765 million per tonne, showing a sharp drop of K300,000 per tonne within one and half months. In May, China's tariff policies wreaked havoc on green gram trading, causing the price to decline. Myanmar sent green gram to China, India, the Netherlands, Ireland, England and Germany by sea and border routes. It conveyed more than 148,000 tonnes of green grams worth US\$97.426 million to foreign trade partners between 1 April and 23 June in the current financial year 2023-2024, according to the Ministry of Commerce's trade data. The country aims to achieve a green gram export target to 600,000 tonnes, with 150,000 tonnes in each batch, as per

the Ministry of Commerce. Myanmar's green gram is primarily sent to India, China and European countries. Myanmar has grasped strong market share in the vast global markets. Additionally, Myanmar has been preparing to export green gram to European Union countries this year, according to the Ministry of Commerce. The Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation and the Ministry of Commerce agreed to export the green grams for sprouts in 2015. The steering committee has been holding a series of meetings to call for bids, conduct awareness courses for the farmers and inspect farm level processing regarding exports of the green grams for bean sprouts. The Agriculture Department takes charge of farmer and collector inspection and testing, while the Consumers Affairs Department carries out processor inspection and training. Myanmar Inspection and Testing Service (MITS), the authorized organization of the State, was asked to monitor processor level to meet the criteria, food safety and quality standard set by the EU. Those inspectors from MITS are trained by the experts of the Plant Protection Division, Agriculture Department and the German Development Agency GIZ. MITS conducted inspections annually, with nine in 2018, 10 in 2019, six each in 2020 and 2021 and five in 2022 respectively. The MITS undertakes inspection once at a factory that meets the criteria and standard. If the MITS finds the requirements during

inspection, they set a timeframe for the factory manager to fix them. Then, they went on a second inspection tour. They present certificates for those factories that pass the test. — NN/EM

Source: <https://www.gnlm.com.mm/green-gram-market-calms-down-on-sluggish-global-demand/#article-title>

Electronic payment continues to flourish in Việt Nam



Vietnam News | 05 July, 2023

HA NOI — The trend of electronic and non-cash payments in the Vietnamese economy in 2023 continued to record growth of 52.35 per cent in volume over the same period last year. Data released late last week by the State Bank of Vietnam (SBV) showed payment transactions via QR code are increasingly popular in Việt Nam while ATM transactions are decreasing in both quantity and value. Accordingly, transactions via Internet channels in the first five months of 2023 increased by 75.54 per cent in quantity and 1.77 per cent in value and the rise for transactions via mobile channels rose by 64.26 per cent in quantity and 7.65 per cent in quantity. Notably, transactions via QR code surged by 151.14 per cent and 30.41 per cent in volume and value, while transactions via POS also

increased by 30.35 per cent and 27.27 per cent in volume and value, respectively. Meanwhile, transactions made via ATM in the period decreased by 4.62 per cent in quantity and 6.43 per cent in value, reflecting the trend of shifting to electronic and non-cash payments. To promote the trend of electronic and non-cash payment, the SBV has continued to streamline the legal framework for payment activities and bank digital transformation. At commercial banks, investment activities for digital transformation and digital payment have been also increasingly promoted with updated applications of new versions. According to the SBV, some commercial banks have so far provided loans electronically and approved online lending documents. Phạm Anh Tuấn, Director of the SBV's Payment Department, said the SBV had completed the amendment of Circular 39, which supplements lending activities through the use of electronic means, which will be issued in the near future. Though appearing many years ago, payments by QR code have become more popular recently in Việt Nam, penetrating businesses around the country - seemingly all at once. This change is partly the result of the Government's efforts to promote digital transformation and cashless payments over the past few years and partly due to changes in consumers' shopping habits. QR payments are receiving the support of the whole of society. Banks and fintech

organisations are actively participating in market expansion and increasing payment acceptance points. Most customers using the service are modern users who are more adaptable and easily accept new things. Due to low investment costs and quick implementation, QR has quickly occupied a growing position in the global payments sector, and this success can be most clearly seen in China, where it has gradually replaced most traditional payment methods. — VNS

Source: <https://vietnamnews.vn/economy/1550712/electronic-payment-continues-to-flourish-in-viet-nam.html>

Air passenger surges by 30 per cent in first six months



Vietnam News | 05 July, 2023

HA NOI — According to the Airports Corporation of Việt Nam (ACV), the number of passengers in the first half of the year saw a significant increase of nearly 30 per cent. There was a surge in the volume of international visitors travelling to and from Việt Nam, surpassing 14.4 million. This figure represents an astonishing fivefold growth compared to the same period in 2022. ACV's report highlights that the transportation and flight operations, along with passenger numbers, continued to demonstrate a favourable recovery trend during the initial six months of 2023. This recovery was particularly

notable in the international market, primarily attributed to the effective control measures implemented to combat the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, the overall passenger volume reached more than 56 million, accounting for 48.2 per cent of the targeted plan for 2023. This figure indicates a significant increase of 29.2 per cent compared to the corresponding period in 2022. Among these passengers, the number of international travellers reached almost 14.5 million, which accounts for 45.3 per cent of the annual plan and exhibits an extraordinary growth rate of 493.5 per cent compared to the same period in 2022. On the other hand, domestic passengers amounted to 42.3 million representing 49.3 per cent of the annual plan and displaying a modest increase of 2 per cent over the same period in 2022. The aviation market witnessed a strong recovery during the first six months of 2023, primarily driven by the opening of countries and the revitalisation of the Northeast Asian market. To further enhance the quality of service, ACV has prioritised the implementation of IT advancement in the industry. Vietjet Air has completed online check-in on the iCUTE system and successfully tested chip-based citizen ID and biometric technology for passenger check-in. ACV is also collaborating with partners to develop a comprehensive plan for automatic non-stop toll collection at international airports such as Đà Nẵng,

Phú Bài, and Cát Bi. In terms of A-CDM (Airport Collaborative Decision Making), successful trials have been conducted at Nội Bài International Airport and Tân Sơn Nhất International Airport. The service quality at airports, particularly major international ones like Tân Sơn Nhất, has significantly improved in the first half of 2023. Congestion during peak times has notably decreased due to effective coordination among airport authorities and related units. Regarding infrastructure development, ACV's General Director, Vũ Thế Phiệt said the corporation's project management units and the Construction Board were diligently expediting the progress of projects to ensure adherence to safety standards, maintain steady progress, and deliver high-quality results in accordance with the approved plan. Particular attention would be given to the advancement of the Long Thành International Airport project, including the early selection of a contractor and commencing the construction of the passenger terminal project. Additionally, the Terminal T2 project at Cát Bi International Airport is set to begin in the fourth quarter of 2023. The airports will also prioritise implementing airport maintenance procedures to ensure safe and uninterrupted operations. VNS

Source: <https://vietnamnews.vn/economy/1550719/air-passenger-surges-by-30-per-cent-in-first-six-months.html>