

*Highlight News / October 03/2023*



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## Associations welcome minimum wage hike



*Cambodia News | 2 October, 2023*

Associations in the footwear and travel goods sector welcomed the hike in the minimum wage for workers in 2024, saying that this will ensure the sector's competitiveness and enhance the workers' living standards. Negotiations for minimum wage have been conducted technically and scientifically, based on social and economic criteria in line with global standards set by the International Labor Organization, the Cambodia Footwear Association said in a statement on Saturday. "We fully support the increase in the minimum wage to \$204 per month and are committed to implementing the various interventions that the government has made to improve livelihoods and we will continue to maintain and create job opportunities for workers and create a more attractive investment and business environment," said the association said. The wage hike is in line with the economic and social conditions and data from official sources, along with long-term thinking on maintaining employment and investment though no country in the region has dared to raise the minimum wage yet, the Cambodia Travel Goods and Leather Association said in another statement. Cambodia last Thursday set a new monthly minimum wage for workers in the garment, footwear and travel goods sector at \$204 for next year, an increase from the current level of \$200. The National Council for Minimum Wage voted

on a minimum wage of about \$202 per month for next year, which was then added by \$2 by the Royal Government of Cambodia. The monthly minimum wage for the sector is \$200 in 2023 which increased from \$194 in 2022. The new minimum wage will take effect on January 1, 2024, according to the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training. Besides the wage, workers in the garment, footwear and travel goods sector also receive fringe benefits for regular attendance, transportation and rent, besides seniority bonus, the minister said. The garment, footwear and travel goods industry is the largest foreign exchange earner for Cambodia. Currently, Cambodia has a total of 1,332 factories in textile, garment, footwear and travel goods, employing some 840,000 workers. Among them are 802 garment factories, 140 shoe factories and 134 travel goods factories. Official figures showed that Cambodia exported \$5.2 billion worth of garment, footwear, and travel goods in the first semester of this year, coming to 52 percent of total exports worth \$10.09 billion.

Source : <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/501369455/associations-welcome-minimum-wage-hike/>

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## GDCE to embark on new strategy for customs reform in early 2024



*Cambodia News | 2 October, 2023*

The General Department of Customs and Excise (GDCE) of the Ministry of Economy and Finance (MEF) plans to launch the new Strategy for Customs Reform and Modernization 2024-2028 on January 1,

2024, after the current one that has been implemented from 2019-2023 with a set of results that is being assessed, said a GDCE statement. The plan was revealed during the consultation meeting between the GDCE's officials and relevant development partners of Cambodia such as the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Asian Development Bank (ADB) the EU Delegation to Cambodia and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) last Thursday, chaired by GDCE Director General Kun Nhem. Nhem said that the strategy has been drafted with inputs from the development partners JICA, IMF, ADB, EU Delegation to Cambodia and UNDP for its effective implementation in consistency with the Pentagonal Strategy-Phase I that the government has initiated for the next five years. He went on to add that the reformation and modernisation of the customs management system would enable the GDCE—one of the key arms of MEF—to enhance the facilitation of trade, improvement of business and investment environments, strengthening of revenue collection and maintenance of social well-being through fighting against cross-border crimes. “The strategy will focus on six strategic goals that include the effectiveness of the revenue collection, trade facilitation and customs cooperation, law compliance and enforcement, legal affairs and regulations, information technology and lastly institutional capacity,” said Nhem. The GDCE has also contributed to the improvement of related laws

and regulations, promotion of governance, strengthening of legal compliances, contribution to the preparation of the policies of the government for economic diversification, implementation of the public-private mechanisms and capacity building, read the statement. Nhem said recently that the GDCE has earned \$564 million in customs and excise revenue during the first quarter of this year, a year-on-year decrease of more than 5 percent from \$597 million.

Source : <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/501369454/gdce-to-embark-on-new-strategy-for-customs-reform-in-early-2024/>

## Govt orders better management of rare earth mining



Laos News | 2 October, 2023

The Prime Minister has instructed the relevant agencies to expedite the drafting of a strategy on rare earth metals and other minerals, to ensure proper management of mining operations in Laos. Speaking at the monthly cabinet meeting held in Vientiane on September 28-29, Dr Sonexay Siphandone highlighted the importance of rare earth metals for the Lao economy, given their global importance and high market demand. The term rare earth refers to a group of 17 elements used in the manufacture of mobile phones, hard drives, and trains, but they are also important for green technology, including wind turbines and electric vehicles, according to Xinhua. China is the world's leading producer, accounting for 70 percent of the

world's mined rare earth elements in 2022. As rare earth metals are in high demand globally, the government stressed the need to ensure that Laos fully benefits from the mining of rare earth deposits. In recent months, National Assembly members have expressed concern about mining operations in Laos, saying that the mismanaged export of precious metals and other minerals has resulted in serious financial losses. Lawmakers urged the government to set up laboratories to analyse each type of mineral deposit found in Laos, saying that strict oversight and closer collaboration in mining operations would enable the government to collect more revenue from mining companies and ensure that mineral resources were better managed. In other areas of discussion, the government told the Ministry of Industry and Commerce to more closely regulate import and export companies and ensure they open accounts at commercial banks and carry out all financial transactions through the Lao banking system. The ministry was also asked to hold further negotiations with neighbouring countries to boost the volume of agricultural produce exported by Laos, as well as ensure that sufficient supplies of fuel are imported to meet consumers' needs. Meanwhile the Ministry of Public Works and Transport was asked to repair damaged roads across the country, including Road No. 13 and Road No. 8. A section of Road No. 13 South between Km21 and Pakngum district in Vientiane has deteriorated and is riddled with potholes, lengthening journey times and delaying the transport of goods between Vientiane and the

southern provinces. In addition, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry was told to boost crop yields so that more fresh produce is available in Laos and less needs to be imported. The sectors concerned were instructed to do more to curb the high rate of inflation, stabilise currency exchange rates, and deal with the debt owed to other countries. The agencies responsible were advised to intervene and place caps on the market price of household staples such as rice, meat, fish and eggs.

Source : [https://www.vientianetimes.org.la/freefreenews/freecontent\\_191\\_Govt\\_y23.php](https://www.vientianetimes.org.la/freefreenews/freecontent_191_Govt_y23.php)

## Myanmar earns over USD7.3B in export in nearly six months



*Myanmar News | 2 October, 2023*

YANGON (XINHUA) – Myanmar earned over USD7.3 billion in export earnings in nearly six months of the 2023-2024 fiscal year, according to the ministry of commerce yesterday. From April 1 to September 22, the country's total exports earned over USD2.23 billion from the public sector and over USD5.06 billion from the private sector, it said. Official figures showed that the export earnings declined compared to the same period of last year when it recorded over USD8.23 billion from exports. Among export products, manufactured goods are on top, with a revenue of over USD4 billion. Myanmar mainly exports agricultural, animal and marine products, minerals, forest products and manufactured goods to its foreign trade partners, including China,

Thailand, Bangladesh and India, according to the commerce ministry.

Source : <https://borneobulletin.com.bn/myanmar-earns-over-usd7-3b-in-export-in-nearly-six-months/>

## Viet Nam records \$21.68 billion trade surplus in nine months



*Vietnam News | 2 October, 2023*

HA NOI — Viet Nam posted a trade surplus of US\$21.68 billion in the first nine months of this year, compared to \$6.9 billion recorded in the previous year's corresponding period, the General Statistics Office (GSO) has announced. The country's trade surplus reached \$2.29 billion in September alone, it said. During the nine months, the total import-export turnover of goods reached \$449.66 billion, with export turnover at \$259.67 billion, a year-on-year decrease of 8.2 per cent. The GSO stated that 31 items recorded export turnover of over \$1 billion, accounting for 92.2 per cent of the country's total export turnover. This includes fruits and vegetables at \$4.2 billion, up 71.8 per cent; rice at \$3.65 billion, up 40.4 per cent; and cashew nuts at \$2.6 billion, up 14.3 per cent. Specifically, six commodities registered an export turnover of more than \$10 billion, accounting for 62.2 per cent. Among them were electronics, computers and components at \$41.2 billion, and handsets and parts at \$39 billion. The report added that the US was Viet Nam's largest export market during the period, amounting to \$70.9 billion. Meanwhile, the country's imports over the nine months totalled \$237.99 billion, down 13.8 per

cent year on year. China remained its largest import market, with expenditures totalling \$79.1 billion. The Ministry of Industry and Trade attributed the decline in Viet Nam's exports to the sluggish recovery of the global economy, reduced demand, and high interest rates in developed countries such as the US, EU nations, and China. This was compounded by a tightened monetary policy and elevated inventory levels. The ministry mentioned it would continue to monitor the global economic landscape, particularly the policy adjustments of major importers, to provide timely alerts to enterprises and recommend appropriate response policies to the Government. Additionally, the ministry plans to prioritise revitalising and intensifying trade promotion efforts directed at emerging and potential markets. They will also assist businesses in leveraging the benefits of free trade agreements to boost exports. Efforts will also be made to provide early warnings regarding potential trade barriers imposed by major import markets. The ministry anticipates that exports will rebound from the fourth quarter of this year, given favourable conditions such as the recovery of import demand in the US market. Furthermore, the UK's accession to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) is expected to offer additional opportunities for Vietnamese exports. — VNS

Source : <https://vietnamnews.vn/economy/1594585/viet-nam-records-21-68-billion-trade-surplus-in-nine-months.html>

## Vietnam's overseas investment up 4.6% during nine months



*Vietnam News | 2 October, 2023*

Hanoi (VNA) – Vietnam's overseas investment approximated 416.8 million USD during the first nine months of 2023, rising 4.6% year on year, reported the Foreign Investment Agency (FIA) under the Ministry of Planning and Investment. Of the amount, over 244.8 million USD was registered for 84 new projects, equivalent to 70.5% of the value posted in the same period last year, while more than 171.96 million USD was added to 18 existing ones, surging 3.38-fold. Vietnamese investors poured money into 14 sectors abroad during the nine months. The wholesale and retail sector topped the list with nearly 150.64 million USD, accounting for 36.1% of the total, channelled into 26 new projects and six existing ones. The information and communications sector ranked second with over 114.35 million USD, or 27.4%. It was followed by electricity production and distribution, agro-forestry-fisheries, and processing - manufacturing, statistics show. Among the 24 countries and territories recording Vietnamese investments during the period, Canada took the lead with over 150.2 million USD (36%) poured into one new project and one existing project there, followed by Singapore, Laos, and Cuba. As of September 20, Vietnam had 1,667 valid overseas investment projects with combined capital of nearly 22.1 billion USD. They include 141 projects worth almost 11.67 billion USD of State-invested

enterprises, making up 52.8%. The investments concentrated on mining (31.5%) and agro-forestry-fisheries (15.5%). Meanwhile, the biggest destinations of Vietnamese investments were Laos (24.7%), Cambodia (13.3%), and Venezuela (8.3%), according to the FIA./.

Source : <https://en.vietnamplus.vn/vietnams-overseas-investment-up-46-during-nine-months/268894.vnp>

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