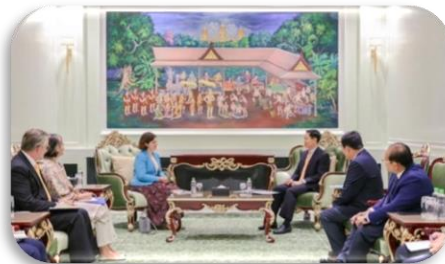


Highlight News / February 09/2024



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CDC consents to UK proposal for establishing Green SEZ



Cambodia News | 8 February, 2024

The Council for the Development of Cambodia (CDC) on Monday agreed to the request from the British Ambassador to establish the 'Green Special Economic Zone' and help the country boost the related infrastructure, as part of the initiative to attract international investors worldwide. The request was made during a courtesy call by a delegation, led by Dominic Williams, British Ambassador to Cambodia, on Sun Chanthol, Deputy Prime Minister and First Vice-Chairman of CDC. Chanthol and Dominic discussed several key topics to improve the Kingdom's economic sustainability including the plan to invest in boosting national infrastructure development, establishment of a Green SEZ and the organisation of development programmes in various fields to promote bilateral relations between the two countries. According to a CDC press release, the ambassador also expressed optimism in supporting various development projects in the field of education focusing on young women, economy, health, security and safety of citizens across the whole country. Further, he asked Deputy Prime Minister Chanthol to collaborate in establishing a Green SEZ aimed at supporting environmental protection to achieve sustainable development for mutual interests, the statement added. Responding to the ambassador's concerns, Chanthol welcomed the UK's intention to cooperate with the Kingdom in

the establishment of this huge business project which will contribute strongly to boosting the nation's economy while maintaining environmentally friendly to the world. He appreciated the ambassador for his support in the development of national infrastructure and took the chance to brief on the most important projects that the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) are putting more attention on including the expansion of major national roads that connect to neighbouring countries. The RGC priorities are to update the National Road 5, construct of Phnom Penh-Bavet Expressway, examine on Phnom Penh-Siem Reap-Poipet Expressway, improve of Phnom Penh-Sihanoukville Expressway (PPSV) and most importantly is the Funan Techo project, which will be the historic waterway project in the country, he said. Taking this opportunity, Chanthol informed the ambassador about the CDC mission to attract investors from all potential countries during these past months in Europe. The Deputy Prime Minister intends to visit more countries around the world including the UK to knock on the door of international companies, notifying them that Cambodia is open for investment opportunities in priority sectors while providing the best incentive.

Source : <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/501436295/cdc-consents-to-uk-proposal-for-establishing-green-sez/>

Cambodia's regional power grid bid gets ADB support



Cambodia News | 8 February, 2024

The Asian Development Bank (ADB), yesterday, supported Cambodia's push for the establishment of the ASEAN Power Grid (APG), sharing a vision to enhance the region's green energy security. The topic came up for discussion when an ADB team, led by its Executive Director Rachel Thompson, paid a courtesy visit to Keo Rattanak, Minister of Mines and Energy. During the meeting, Rachel expressed appreciation for the policies and leadership of Prime Minister Hun Manet at a time when the world economy is mired in serious problems. She was also optimistic about the partnership between the ADB and the Royal Government and promised to continue to support Cambodia's mining and energy development plan. APG, meanwhile, is expected to play a key role in Cambodia's energy transition for which it needs to cut down on coal-powered energy and boost its renewable sources. The APG initiative, one of the key projects in the Master Plan of the ASEAN Connectivity, aims to construct a regional power interconnection mechanism, first on cross-border bilateral terms, and then gradually expanding to sub-regional basis and subsequently leading to a total integrated ASEAN power grid system. Several bilateral interconnections have already been in operation such as the Singapore to Malaysia link and Thailand to Malaysia link. In 2022, Singapore also started importing renewable energy from Laos via Thailand and Malaysia under the Lao PDR-Thailand-Malaysia-Singapore Power Integration Project (LTMS-PIP), marking the first multilateral cross-border electricity trading involving four ASEAN

nations. The APG project also provides opportunities for private sector involvement in terms of investment, including financing and technology transfer. While talking to Khmer Times yesterday, Natharoun Ngo Son, Country Director of EnergyLab, commended the efforts made by Cambodia's government to establish the APG. "Connecting national grids provides countries like Cambodia having immense solar resources with the opportunity to export clean power across the region, which will create jobs and bring new investment in the Kingdom, and possibly shift Cambodia's position to a net energy exporter in the future," Natharoun said. Dean Rizzetti, EnergyLab policy director, said that Cambodia has over 44GW of solar power potential, which is 100 times more solar than is currently installed, and 6GW of excellent wind power potential. "Improving interconnection between power grids can play an important role in helping us move towards higher levels of renewable energy," Rizzetti said. Meanwhile, according to the World Economic Forum (WEF), ASEAN states face various challenges in transitioning their energy systems amid escalating energy demand and limited funds given the scale of decarbonization needed. ASEAN is the world's fourth-largest energy consumer, with a fast-growing population reaching close to 700 million. The region saw a three percent annual growth rate in energy consumption over the last 20 years, a trend expected to persist for the rest of this decade. Consequently, the region's carbon emissions have been steadily rising, surpassing the global average

of one percent in 2022, with an annual increase of approximately three percent. This warrants the energy sector, being the primary polluter, to revamp urgently. The current socio-economic situation in ASEAN poses challenges to this essential energy transition. Most ASEAN countries are developing economies with young populations, striving to expand their economies and improve living standards. “The energy trilemma is the core of ASEAN’s energy transition conundrum, whereby governments need to ensure energy security, affordability, and sustainability while ensuring economic development during the transition,” the WEF note pointed out. According to WEF, an estimated \$150 billion annual clean energy investment will be needed by 2030 for ASEAN to achieve the emission goals. However, ASEAN countries attracted no more than \$30 billion annually in 2021, indicating a significant investment gap. It may also be noted that Cambodia’s ‘Power Development Plan (PDP) 2022-2040’ proposed to substantially raise the share of renewable energy in the total power mix. The policy was formulated in tune with Cambodia’s commitment to be carbon neutral by 2050. Accordingly, the share of solar power in the total energy mix of Cambodia can reach 3,155 MW by 2040, bigger than the contribution from locally generated hydroelectricity which contributes most of renewable energy in the country now with a share of 45 percent to the total energy mix. According to the PDP, Cambodia in 2022 has an installed solar power generation capacity of 432MW

and by 2030 it will go up to 1,000MW and from there to 3,155 by 2040, indicating a proposed increase of nearly 800 percent over the period. As per the plan, local hydropower will go up from 1,330MW to 1,560MW by 2030 and 3,000MW by 2040. Power from renewable biomass, another source of clean energy, will go up from 27MW in 2022 to 98MW in 2030 and 198MW in 2040.

Source : <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/501436267/cambodias-regional-power-grid-bid-gets-adb-support/>

PM gives advice to the head of Bokeo provincial to especially avoid importing luxury goods



Laos News | 8 February, 2024

Prime Minister Sonexay Siphandone also advised authorities to comply with the Party’s resolution to promote new ways of development to enable a robust and comprehensive transition to modern methods of administration. The province should also follow the decree on determining responsibility for the implementation of the National Socio-economic Development Plan, the state budget plan and the currency plan for 2024, and the plan for correcting audit results. Authorities were recommended to ensure that more of the funds coming into Bokeo, and payments in general, passed through bank accounts, so that more money enters the banking system. Currency management needs to be stricter, including controls on money brought in for investment purposes, in line with the law. In addition,

authorities should cut down on imports and especially avoid importing luxury goods.

Source : https://www.vientianetimes.org.la/freenews/freecontent_28_PM_y24.php

Rising Interest in Chinese Language Reflects Future Job Prospects for Lao Youth



Laos News | 8 February, 2024

The younger generation in Laos is showing a growing interest in learning the Chinese language, recognizing the potential for future job opportunities amidst a significant influx of Chinese investors into the country. In the academic year of 2023-2024, enrollment at the Confucius Institute, a prominent Chinese language institute at the National University of Laos, has surged dramatically. Figures reveal that the number of students nearly tripled in just two years, soaring from 193 students in 2021 to 562 in 2023. Also, as Lao students began registering for the national university's exam, the Chinese language department emerged as the most sought-after subject, with over 2,000 student registrations. This is the highest number among all subjects for the 2023–2024 academic year, signaling a shift in academic interests among Lao youth.

Source : <https://laotiantimes.com/2024/02/08/rising-interest-in-chinese-language-reflects-future-job-prospects-for-lao-youth/>

MRF launches online platform for rice warehouse registration, bolstering market stability



Myanmar News | 8 February, 2024

The Myanmar Rice Federation has reported that nearly 300 warehouses have registered on the MyRO (Myanmar Rice Online) platform, which aids in calculating the remaining rice supply in the country. The federation stated that the platform would contribute to stabilizing local rice prices by providing information on the status of rice reserves. Additionally, it is anticipated to address issues of price speculation. Merchants are required to register on the MyRO if they store up to 50 tonnes of rice or 5,000 baskets of paddy for commercial purposes, following the official announcement made on 4 November 2023. On 3 January, the Consumer Affairs Department also issued notifications to merchants, instructing them to register their warehouses if they sell rice at shopping centres. Furthermore, the federation announced the requirement to register on 12 January.

Source : <https://www.gnfm.com.mm/mrf-launches-online-platform-for-rice-warehouse-registration-bolstering-market-stability/>

Kyat-dollar exchange rate dips to K3,500 in market



Myanmar News | 8 February, 2024

Kyat depreciation against the greenback slows down at approximately K3,500 on 7 February at the over-the-counter market after hitting K3,560 at the

end of January. The Central Bank of Myanmar (CBM) intervened in the currency market by injecting the dollars into the financial market to steer the dollar gains in the forex market. The CBM sold \$13 million on 1 February in the forex market and five million dollars and 50 million Thai Baht on 2 February for the exporters/importers and \$11 million and 200 million Thai Baht on 5 February, totalling \$29 million and 250 million Thai Baht on an online trading platform within five days. The CBM sold \$68.33 million, 313.5 million Thai baht and 4.2 million Chinese yuan in January 2024. Meanwhile, the reference exchange rate of the Central Bank of Myanmar is K2,100. On 5 December, the Central Bank of Myanmar allowed authorized dealers (private banks) to operate forex exchanges freely as per the market rate determined by the supply and demand market forces. Additionally, the CBM notified that outward remittance must comply with the rules and regulations of the Foreign Exchange Management Committee. The dollar gained to around K4,000 on 19 August 2023. Under Section 9 of the Foreign Exchange Management Law, only those entities holding foreign exchange dealer licences can deal in foreign currency and traveller's cheques. Those holding foreign currencies without valid licences and permits will face legal actions under the law, according to the CBM's notification released on 21 August 2023. According to Notification 7/2014 dated 30 September 2014 issued by the Central Bank of Myanmar, affirmingly stating that under Stanza 15 of the Foreign Exchange Management Law, domestic

residents are allowed to keep US\$10,000 at maximum or equivalent amount of foreign currencies for six months. If those foreign currencies that have been unused for over six months have to be exchanged in local currency at the market price through authorized dealers or deposited into bank accounts. Those illegally holding foreign currencies are to face legal actions under the Foreign Exchange Management Law, the CBM warned again.

Source : <https://www.gnlm.com.mm/kyat-dollar-exchange-rate-dips-to-k3500-in-market/#article-title>

Domestic motorcycle market sees poor demand before Tet



Vietnam News | 8 February, 2024

Domestic motorcycle market near Tết (Lunar New Year) holiday has experienced an unusual phenomenon where instead of increasing prices, dealers are simultaneously reducing prices to stimulate demand. However, despite these price reductions, uptake in the market remains weak. Industry insiders have forecasted that in 2024, due to the overall difficulties in the economy, motorcycle sales may either remain equal to the previous year or continue to decline compared to 2023. In response to the declining sales, both motorbike manufacturers and dealers are employing strategies to lower prices and attract buyers. Manufacturers are engaging in price competition, and dealers are proactively reducing prices on various motorcycle models, ranging from a few million to tens of millions of Vietnamese đồng, depending on the model. This is

done to reduce the inventory and storage of vehicles. For example, a Honda dealer in Hà Nội has significantly reduced prices on the popular Vision scooter model. The standard Honda Vision is being offered for around VNĐ31 million, the special edition for VNĐ35 million, and the sports version for VNĐ37 million. These prices represent a decrease of VNĐ2.5-3.5 million compared to the previous month. Despite these efforts to stimulate demand through promotional programmes and price adjustments, Honda dealers and other agents have reported that the number of customers has not increased compared to previous years before the pandemic. The data shows that total sales in 2023 reached 2,516,212 vehicles, representing a 16.21 per cent decrease compared to the previous year. Honda Vietnam's sales alone accounted for 2,088,557 vehicles, reflecting a 13.3 per cent decline compared to 2022. Despite the decrease in sales, Honda Vietnam still holds a significant market share of 83 per cent within VAMM and has even increased its market share by 2.8 per cent compared to the previous year.

Source : <https://vietnamnet.vn/en/domestic-motorcycle-market-sees-poor-demand-before-tet-2248076.html>

Tech giant VNG cancels plan to enter global market, but keeps ambitious goals

Vietnamese tech giant VNG has had a rough year. The company has canceled its plans to list its shares

on a foreign stock exchange. VNG's financial report showed a loss of VNĐ291 billion in the fourth quarter of 2023. This was the third quarter in a row that the company reported a loss. For the year, VNG took a total loss of VNĐ756 billion. Last year was the third consecutive yearly loss. This included a loss of VNĐ510 billion incurred by Tiki Global, which takes orders for products from overseas. Despite losses, VNG saw a 10 percent increase in turnover. The company's core business is online games, which make up about 75% of its total revenue. VNG is a Vietnamese technology unicorn, with capitalization value reaching several billions of dollars at times. It also operates Zalo, the best known social network in Vietnam, and the mobile payment platform ZaloPay. By the end of 2023, VNG had increased its ownership ratio in Zion (the owner of ZaloPay) to 72.65 percent. The company has completed a project on building a VNG Data Center. VNG had planned to mobilize \$150 million in 2023 through the IPO (initial public offering) in the US. It planned to issue IPO A-class common shares on the Nasdaq Global Select Market under the ticker symbol VNG. However, it later withdrew the IPO. Earlier, VinFast, the auto manufacturer of Vingroup, owned by dollar billionaire Pham Nhat Vuong, had to cancel its IPO plan, and shifted to listing shares on Nasdaq via a SPAC, a merger with a special purpose acquisition company. Analysts say that VNG's decision to cancel its IPO plans was likely due to the current state of the global stock market. Cash flow, however, has headed toward AI technology development.



Vietnam News | 8 February, 2024

Source : <https://vietnamnet.vn/en/tech-giant-vng-cancels-plan-to-enter-global-market-but-keeps-ambitious-goals-2247956.html>
