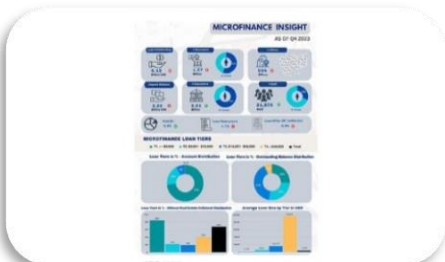


Highlight News / February 16/2024



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## Microfinance sector provided \$5.12B loans to 1.57M clients in 2023



*Cambodia News | 15 February, 2024*

The microfinance sector has provided a credit sum of \$5.12 billion to 1.57 million clients, an average of \$3,260 per account last year, creating direct employment for 21,567 people nationwide with a business network of 904 offices. The loan financial report was revealed on Tuesday along with the explanation to the media by Kaing Tongngy, Spokesperson of Cambodia Microfinance Association (CMA) said, “The financial sector is still maintaining excellent stability.” During the interview, Tongngy said that the microfinance industry in the country continued to maintain good stability amid no significant growth. In fact, the overall data in 2023 has not proven any remarkable development and in the third and fourth quarters, there has been a slight decrease in the credit size as well as reduced customer demand, he said. He stressed that above all, the microfinance sector is still among the major factors that play an important role and remain stable and will be able to continue providing various financial services – loans, deposits, and other payment platforms – to the citizens across the whole nation, whether they have high, middle or low income. CMA year-end report stated, “The microfinance sector – excluding data from banking institutions – provided a total credit of \$5.12 billion to 1.57 million customers which provided direct jobs to 21,567 Cambodians of which female workers

account for 30 percent of the total employment, having 904 offices networking across the whole Kingdom.” Speaking to Khmer Times yesterday, Tongngy explained that credits or loans are like a double-edged sword that could help borrowers increase their income speed up their business operations or increase their financial burden. He said, “Borrowers should use their loan for the right purpose which is to improve their business productivity otherwise the loan interest will become an additional burden in the future.” “Debts might sound negative but there are good and bad debts depending on their usage. With good strategies and plans, debt will become an additional way to boost income and promote business activities. However, loan repayment should not exceed one-third of income in order to reserve some buffer in case of future uncertainties such as shocks, accidents, or health crises,” he added. The spokesperson suggested that borrowers should not use informal loans, loan sharks or online loans which charge very high interest rates and do not have client protection mechanisms. Although access to these unlawful loans may sound easy but so much trouble will come to clients after obtaining loans. Based on the same report, the four Microfinance Deposit-Taking Institutions (MDI) received a total amount of \$2.2 billion, depositing approximately 2.01 million clients by the end of the fourth quarter. According to the National Bank of Cambodia (NBC), all the four MDIs currently operating in the country built their headquarters in Phnom Penh Capital such as Amret

Plc located in Toul Kork District, AMK Plc based in Boeng Keng Kang District, LOLC (Cambodia) Plc can be found in Mean Chey District and lastly is Mohanokor Plc saw their central office in Sen Sok District.

Source : <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/501440074/microfinance-sector-provided-5-12b-loans-to-1-57m-clients-in-2023/>

## Siem Reap sees rush of tourists, over 5,000 visit daily



*Cambodia News | 15 February, 2024*

Siem Reap tourist arrivals have witnessed a considerable increase for the start of 2024 with the province welcoming between 4,000 to 5,000 tourists daily throughout the month of January, according to a recent Siem Reap Provincial Tourism Department report. Arrivals to the province in January have totalled around 124,000-155,000 domestic and international guests. The starting month of the year also saw 115,532 visitors purchase tickets to the world-renowned Angkor Wat Archaeological Park, as reported by Angkor Enterprise (AE), the state-run enterprise tasked with managing ticket sales at the Angkor Park and Chong Khneas floating village in Siem Reap province, and the Koh Ker temple complex, a UNESCO World Heritage Site in neighbouring Preah Vihear province. Income from the sales to templegoers approached \$5.5 million, marking a 49.2 percent increase from sales the year prior in January 2023, according to the authority. On top of income generated from tickets to the park, the

province also generated \$43,410 from sales to the Koh Ker and \$101,854 from boat tickets at Chong Kneas. The momentum of January arrivals to Siem Reap also appears to have continued in the current month, where during the three-day Chinese Lunar New Year from February 9 to 11 alone, the province received over 110,000 tourists, including 18,077 international visitors, according to official reports. However, there remains more room for regrowth given that in January 2019, prior to the travel restrictions imposed during the global Covid-19 pandemic, AE recorded \$12.38 million in receipts from 271,050 tickets into the temples. Nonetheless, the increasing numbers of local and international travellers entering Siem Reap this year have been welcomed by tourism vendors across the province. Untac Nem, Siem Reap resident business person and tourism graduate, told Khmer Times that the recent influx of guests throughout January and February has been “a welcome breath of fresh air for tourism businesses and the city as a whole after a slow 2023 in terms of arrivals.” Untac said that predominantly Siem Reap city has hosted a combination of Western and domestic tourists in the previous month and a half, including some large international tour groups and regional Asian travellers as well. During the recent Lunar New Year celebrations, Untac said he also witnessed thousands of Cambodian families who had travelled from different parts of the country to enjoy the holiday break in the city or at the temples. He also noted a noticeable increase in Chinese tourists across the

city during the Lunar New Year period. In terms of encouraging more regional travellers to the city over the coming months, Untac noted that while the new Siem Reap-Angkor International Airport (SAI) was an attractive improvement for international tourists entering the province, more affordable, direct flights linking Siem Reap to other travel destinations across Asia is likely the best bet to attract more tourists to Cambodia in the short term. He also said that increased international marketing is crucial to encourage more awareness of the city globally and restore arrival numbers to their 2019 heights. "The marketing strategy of the Government, along with stakeholders such as the private sector tourism industry and Siem Reap locals, is crucial to bringing more and more visitors to the city," he said. "As long as they know how special this city is, its unique attractions and culture, and have the means to fly here, there is no stopping the Siem Reap international tourism economy in the future," he concluded.

Source : <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/501440076/siem-reap-sees-rush-of-tourists-over-5000-visit-daily/>

## Govt vows to fulfil planned development goals



*Laos News | 15 February, 2024*

The government will strive to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, and rise above Least Developed Country status as planned in 2026, a top government official stated at a press conference held on Tuesday to reveal the outcomes of the 2023

Round Table Implementation Meeting. The meeting took the theme "Accelerating the Implementation of the Results of the 9th National Socio-economic Development Plan Mid-Term Review for achieving SDGs and LDC Graduation". The meeting was chaired by Minister of Planning and Investment Mr Khamjane Vongphosy and the UN Resident Coordinator Mr Bakhodir Burkhanov and attended by more than 300 participants from provinces, ministries, international organisations, and other entities.

Source : [https://www.vientianetimes.org.la/freefreenews/freecontent\\_33\\_Govt\\_y24.php](https://www.vientianetimes.org.la/freefreenews/freecontent_33_Govt_y24.php)

## Laos' Teen Pregnancy Rates Highest in Southeast Asia



*Laos News | 15 February, 2024*

Recent findings have once again confirmed that Laos has the highest rates of adolescent pregnancy in Southeast Asia. A study conducted by Marie Habito, a senior research officer at Burnet Institute, an Australian-based medical research institute, titled "Understanding diverse pathways to adolescent pregnancy in Lao People's Democratic Republic," revealed a range of contributing factors to this alarming data. It is evident that Laos continues to grapple with the highest rates of adolescent pregnancy in the region. From limited sexual health knowledge to societal pressures, the challenges faced by young Lao girls are complex to navigate. However, amidst these difficulties, local centers and organizations are actively engaged in collaborative

efforts to educate Lao youth on reproductive health and push for comprehensive policies to address the root causes as well as support the well-being of young girls across the country.

Source : <https://laotiantimes.com/2024/02/15/laos-teen-pregnancy-rates-highest-in-southeast-asia-study-reveals-key-factors/>

## Myanmar's mineral exports generate over US\$230 mln in 10 months

 Myanmar News | 15 February, 2024

Myanmar earned over US\$233.197 million from exporting mineral products during the ten months from April 2023 to 2 February 2024, as reported by the Ministry of Commerce. In the previous year, mineral product exports had generated \$289.257 million during a similar timeframe. Consequently, the current figure represents a decline of \$56 million compared to the previous year. Within this financial year, approximately \$200 million was generated from the private sector, while the State-owned industry contributed around \$32 million. According to the Department of Trade under the Ministry of Commerce, most of the \$233.197 million earned in the ten months of this financial year resulted from the export of minerals and ores, followed closely by the export of jade. The exported minerals include jade, diamond, gold, pearl, lead, tin, tungsten, copper, silver, coal, and zinc.

Source : <https://www.gnlm.com.mm/sino-myanmar-border-trade-surges-in-past-ten-months/#article-title>

## Sino-Myanmar border trade surges in past ten months

 Myanmar News | 15 February, 2024

The border trade value between Myanmar and China surpassed US\$2.839 billion in the past ten months (April-January) of the current financial year 2023-2024, rising from \$2.42 billion recorded in the year-ago period, the Ministry of Commerce's statistics showed. The figures reflected a remarkable increase of \$412.146 million this FY compared to last FY. Myanmar conducts cross-border trade with neighbouring China via Muse, Lweje, Chinshwehaw, Kampaiti, and Kengtung. The Muse border saw the highest trade figure of \$1.836 billion. The trade values stood at \$703.066 million via Chinshwehaw, \$36.266 million via Kampaiti, \$98.566 million via Lweje, and \$64.435 million via Kengtung. Myanmar has been conducting border trade with the four neighbouring countries: China, Thailand, Bangladesh and India. Export items are agricultural produce, livestock products, fisheries products, minerals, forest products, manufacturing goods and other goods. In contrast, capital goods, intermediate goods, manufacturing goods and raw materials by CMP enterprises are imported.

Source : <https://www.gnlm.com.mm/myanmars-mineral-exports-generate-over-us230-mln-in-10-months/>

## S&P Global: Vietnam's PMI rebounds after five months

 Vietnam News | 15 February, 2024

Hanoi (VNA) – Vietnam's Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) recorded a return to growth in early 2024, driven by an improved economic outlook that led to an increase in new orders, S&P Global has reported. S&P Global's report said that in January, the country's PMI reached 50.3 points from 48.9 points in December last year. The result indicated an improvement in the health of the manufacturing sector for the first time in the last five months. Vietnamese manufacturers also experienced a return to growth early this year as the improvement in demand helped increase both output and the number of new orders. Gabor Fluit, Chairman of the European Chamber of Commerce in Vietnam (EuroCham), said Vietnam's economic recovery is heading in the right direction. To sustain this growth momentum, Vietnam needs to focus on innovation, building stronger trade relations with key export markets, and improving the value of exports through processing, he said. Le Duy Binh, CEO of Economica Vietnam, was optimistic about Vietnam's economic growth, noting that the global economy is showing signs of recovery, particularly in major economies that are important export markets for Vietnam's goods and services. Except for the European Union (EU), other economies such as the US, Japan, China, Australia, and ASEAN countries are experiencing strong recovery, indicating stable growth in demand, he said. Binh said the sustained macroeconomic stability and other stable achievements in 2023 laid a foundation for continuing to maintain and boost the confidence of

both domestic and foreign businesses, as well as consumers, thus increasing prospects for investment, and boosting the retail market and domestic consumption. Recent figures showed that many foreign investors are interested in the Vietnamese market, especially in activities related to shifting supply chains, Binh stressed, adding that this promises that foreign investment will continue to increase, and domestic private investment will also improve compared to last year, directly contributing to the overall economic demand./.

Source : <https://en.vietnamplus.vn/sp-global-vietnams-pmi-rebounds-after-five-months/279506.vnp>

## Vietnam's export turnover in January highest in almost two years



*Vietnam News | 15 February, 2024*

Hanoi (VNA) – Vietnam's export earnings in January posted a year-on-year rise of 42% to about 33.6 billion USD – the highest monthly turnover since April 2022 when the figure stood at 33.26 billion USD, reported the Ministry of Industry and Trade (MoIT). That contributed to last month's total export and import value of more than 64 billion USD, rising by almost 38% year on year. The strong export growth was driven mainly by the agro-forestry-fishery sector and the processing industry, which saw respective increases of nearly 97% and 38% in overseas shipments. In particular, the export of telephones of all kinds and components brought home nearly 6 billion USD, surging over 56% month on month, partly thanks to Samsung's launch of its new mobile

phone series Samsung Galaxy S24 in mid-January. Agricultural products remained a bright spot of the export panorama as a result of good prices. MoIT data showed that coffee and rice prices grew 35% and 33.5% to 2,955 USD and 693 USD per tonne, respectively. The US was still the biggest importer of Vietnamese goods last month, with 9.6 billion USD in value – up almost 56% from a year earlier. Exports to other traditional markets like China, the EU, and ASEAN respectively increased 58%, 18%, and 38%. Meanwhile, Vietnam imported over 30.6 billion USD worth of goods, nearly 95% of which was materials for production for the Lunar New Year festival. China remained the largest exporter of goods to Vietnam, with an approximated value of 11 billion USD in January, soaring 50% year on year. Nguyen Cam Trang, Deputy Director of the MoIT's Agency of Foreign Trade, said that the world situation is forecast to continue witnessing big and unpredictable changes, along with intertwined opportunities and challenges in 2024. However, there are still many opportunities for exports to bounce back and grow this year when the unsold inventory in the US is gradually being resolved. The agency forecast this year's foreign trade turnover may rise by over 6% from 2023, and Vietnam can continue recording a trade surplus, she noted./.

Source : <https://en.vietnamplus.vn/vietnams-export-turnover-in-january-highest-in-almost-two-years/279508.vnp>

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