

Highlight News / February 19, 2023



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Cambodia's insurance industry grows by 3 pct in 2023



Cambodia News | 16 February 2024

Cambodia's insurance industry recorded a total premium of 342 million U.S. dollars in 2023, up 3 percent from \$331.8 million in a year earlier, a report of the Insurance Regulator of Cambodia (IRC) showed on Thursday. The growth was generated from 18 general insurers, 15 life insurers, seven micro-insurance companies and one reinsurance firm, the report said. It added that the total amount of claims paid out by the insurers was \$60.8 million last year, an increase of 30 percent from \$46.6 million in the year before. According to the report, Cambodia's insurance industry currently has around 1 billion dollars in total assets. Speaking at an insurance seminar here in Phnom Penh on Thursday, IRC's director general Bou Chanphirou said the insurance industry plays an important role in supporting the country's social security and economy. "Based on the insurance penetration rate of about 1.14 percent and insurance density of \$20.72 per person in 2023, the insurance sector in Cambodia still has vast potential for growth in the future," he said. Xinhua.

Source: <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/501441065/cambodias-insurance-industry-grows-by-3-pct-in-2023/>

Chevron to expand service station network in Cambodia



Cambodia News | 16 February 2024

US-based Chevron through its subsidiary Chevron (Cambodia) Limited has unveiled a business plan to launch more service stations in Cambodia in view of the country's efforts at joint exploration of the oil reserves with Thailand in the Overlapping Claims Area (OCA). This was revealed by the Ministry of Mines and Energy after a meeting between its minister Keo Ratanak and Frank Cassulo, Vice President of Chevron in Phnom Penh. "The US oil company plans to expand the gas station network in Cambodia and support Prime Minister Hun Manet's policy to solve the oil and gas exploration issue with Thailand based on a win-win policy," the ministry said in a statement posted on its official Facebook page yesterday. Khmer Times could not reach the ministry's spokesman for comments on Thursday. The firm said in 2021 that its business plan was to expand its service stations in Cambodia by up to 100 stations, citing that it imported petroleum from Thailand and Singapore to supply domestic demand in Cambodia. Chevron has three million barrels of net oil-equivalent daily production, Frank said in the meeting. Through its subsidiary, Chevron markets automotive fuels and products under the Caltex brand at 53 service stations at present, 30 of which are in the capital city, Phnom Penh, according to Chevron (Cambodia) Limited's

website. Of the total number, 17 are company-owned and 36 are owned by retailers. Chevron's support for exploring the oil reserves came a week after Prime Minister Hun Manet and his Thai counterpart Srettha Thavisin agreed that the two countries would discuss joint exploitation of energy resources in the Gulf of Thailand. The OCA covers about 26,000 square kilometres and is estimated to hold up to 500 million barrels of oil and gas deposits under the seafloor. In 2014, Chevron abandoned its right for oil exploration in Cambodia's oil Block A, after it found the potential of the offshore oil in 2004, to Singapore-based oil and gas firm KrisEnergy. Reasons for the firm's decision were reportedly due to the failure of an agreement with the government. KrisEnergy started pumping crude oil from one of Cambodia's offshore oilfields, Block A, in late 2020, which was the first crude oil production in the country before the company went bankrupt in 2021, stopping the oil extraction activities. A report from the General Department of Customs and Excise showed that Cambodia imported \$849 million of petroleum oils and \$1.32 billion of diesel fuel last year.

Source:

<https://www.khmertimeskh.com/501440827/chevron-to-expand-service-station-network-in-cambodia/>

Energy ministry announces changes in leadership positions



Laos News | 16 February 2024

The Ministry of Energy and Mines has announced a high-level reshuffle of its leadership, to strengthen the operations of its various departments.

The handover of positions took place in Vientiane on Wednesday at an event chaired by the Minister of Energy and Mines, Mr Phosay Sayasone, and attended by ministry officials. The changes in position see Mr Sinava Souphanouvong, who was previously Deputy Minister of Energy and Mines, become Minister to the Prime Minister's Office. Mr Chanthaboun Soukaloun, who was previously the Director of Electricite du Laos (EDL), and Mr Chansaveng Bounngong, who was previously Director General of the ministry's Department of Energy Policy and Planning, have been appointed Deputy Ministers of Energy and Mines. It was also announced that Mr Vongsakoun Yingyong who was formerly the Director of the EDL-Generation Public Company, will become the new Director of EDL. Speaking at the event, Mr Phosay said the improvement of the ministry's organisational system, including the appropriate allocation of top level personnel, was strongly influenced by the Party's guidance. "The changes in position have been made

in keeping with decisions made during the 9th National Congress of the Lao People's Revolution Party," he said.

Source: https://www.vientianetimes.org.la/freefreeneews/freecontent_34_Energy_y24.php

India can provide a huge market for Lao goods, forum hears



Laos News | 16 February 2024

There are strong possibilities for development and investment in trade between Laos and India, given that India has a robust economy and can provide a sizeable market for Lao goods, the Laos-India Business Forum in Vientiane heard. The forum was attended by more than 170 business leaders representing more than 100 companies. Speaking at the event, Executive Vice President of the Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Mr Thanongsinh Kanlaya, said there is considerable potential for the export of goods from Laos to India as well as for industrial investment in Laos. This meeting is an opportunity to discuss forms of investment that can effectively promote trade between Laos and India, he added. "I hope that Indian business operators and the Asean-India Business Council will help promote investment and development in Laos, especially by partnering with Lao companies in various sectors for mutual

development and profit," Mr Thanongsinh said. Minister of Industry and Commerce, Mr Malaythong Kommasith, noted that the government and people of India support Laos in many fields, including technical assistance, education, socio-cultural matters, and the environment. The value of trade between Laos and India exceeded US\$108 million in 2023, a decrease of 15.57 percent compared to 2022. Laos imported goods from India worth US\$25.5 million and sold US\$82 million worth of goods to India, which is not a huge amount but has the potential to increase, the Minister added. From 2008-2022 Indian companies registered investment capital of about US\$314 million and have set up 311 businesses in Laos, which are all very productive, he said.

Source: https://www.vientianetimes.org.la/freefreeneews/freecontent_34_India_y24.php

Myanmar's foreign trade exceeds US\$25 bln in ten months



Myanmar News | 18 February 2024

Myanmar's international trade with foreign trade partners amounted to US\$25.5 billion in the past ten months of the current financial year 2023-2024, beginning 1 April, comprising exports worth \$12.135 billion and imports worth \$13.378 billion. The total trade balance plunged from \$28.66 billion recorded

in the year-ago period. The figures reflected a sharp drop of \$3.15 billion compared with that of the corresponding period last FY, the Ministry of Commerce's statistics showed. Myanmar's seaborne trade value was estimated at \$18.787 billion, while \$6.7 billion of trade was conducted at borders in the past ten months. Myanmar exports agricultural produce, animal products, minerals, forest products, and finished industrial goods, while it imports capital goods, intermediate goods, raw materials imported by the CMP enterprises and consumer goods. Myanmar has been implementing the National Export Strategy (NES) 2020-2025 in order to bolster exports. The priority sectors of the NES comprise agricultural production, garment and apparel, industrial and electronic device, fishery business, forest product, digital manufacturing and service, logistic service, quality management, trade information service, innovation and entrepreneurship sectors.

Source: <https://www.gnlm.com.mm/myanmars-foreign-trade-exceeds-us25-bln-in-ten-months/>

MoC UM inspects Myanmar-Korea Friendship Bridge construction



Myanmar News | 18 February 2024

Union Minister for Construction U Myo Thant, Yangon Region Chief Minister U Soe Thein and officials

inspected the construction site of the Myanmar-Korea Friendship Bridge (Dala), which will connect downtown Yangon with Dala Township, yesterday. Firstly, Consultant Engineer Mr Bae explained the project with a PowerPoint presentation to the Union minister and officials at the Yangon end of the bridge. U Kyaw Kaung Cho, deputy director-general of the Department of Bridges and leader of the project, discussed safety requirements, traffic management strategies, the construction of a 0.5-metre-wide drinking water pipeline, and negotiation plans with the Yangon City Development Committee for a toll plaza on the Dala side. The Union minister provided the necessary support and observed the completion of the approaching bridge on the Yangon side, ramp bridge, and pier columns. Additionally, the Union minister visited the Dala bank via boat to inspect the designated area for the toll plaza, approaching bridges, and ongoing projects. Emphasizing the significance of signage and signal lights, he underscored their role in ensuring the safety of boats during the construction phase. The Friendship Bridge is under construction as per international standards and norms. Given its height of 49 metres clearance to accommodate 15,000-tonne ocean vessels, ramp bridges and approaching bridges are being built to ensure a smooth gradient and safe passage. Being the tallest bridge in Myanmar, it imposes a maximum speed

limit of 50 kilometres per hour on the main and approaching bridges and 30 kph on the ramp bridges for safety.

Source: <https://www.gnlm.com.mm/moc-um-inspects-myanmar-korea-friendship-bridge-construction/#article-title>

Vietnam dangles chip incentives to draw foreign companies: Nikkei Asia



Vietnam News | 17 February 2024

Vietnam has pledged tax breaks and other perks to semiconductor companies that help to develop the sector in a Southeast Asian country, according to Japan's Nikkei Asia. The site's article quoted Vietnamese Minister of Science and Technology Huynh Thanh Dat as saying in an interview that the national plan for chips will include industry grants through a science fund and joint state research with private companies like FPT. Companies from Nvidia to Samsung are looking to expand their chip businesses in Vietnam, which is slated to receive millions from the US CHIPS and Science Act and already hosts Intel's biggest global test and assembly factory. Meanwhile, Jose Fernandez, US undersecretary of state for economic growth, energy and the environment, told Nikkei Asia that Vietnam has attracted dozens of companies in the semiconductor field, and several more US players

would jump in if the country had enough renewable energy to meet their green goals. The country needs to strike technology transfer deals with nations dominating the chip sector, Dat said, adding Vietnam will sweeten policies to bring foreign experts into the workforce, which has faced a recent slowdown in foreign work permits. Toward that end, colleges are unveiling semiconductor classes in partnership with employers like Samsung. Vietnam aims to train 50,000 engineers for the industry by 2030. The country has a strong foundation for science and tech education, but a dearth of advanced skills has limited a broader march up the electronics supply chain. Fernandez said in an interview while visiting Vietnam that the country is a top target for US CHIPS Act subsidies, which will be a "badge" of confidence. The dollar amount will be based on an assessment expected sometime this month.

Source: <https://english.vov.vn/en/economy/vietnam-dangles-chip-incentives-to-draw-foreign-companies-nikkei-asia-post1077352.vov>

VN's automobile market stands fifth place in the region



Vietnam News | 17 February 2024

HÀ NỘI — The decline in domestic automobile consumption and its drop to fifth place in Southeast

Asia can be attributed to both external and internal factors, according to industry insiders. The Association of Southeast Asian Automobile Manufacturers Association (AAF) reports that Indonesia took the lead in car sales with more than one million units in 2023, down 4 per cent over the same period last year. Malaysia was in second with 799,731 units, an increase of 10.9 per cent compared to 2022, meanwhile Thailand came in third with 775,780 units, a decrease of 8.7 per cent compared to 2022. Philippines stood fourth with 429,807 cars, an increase of 21.9 per cent compared to 2022. Việt Nam dropped to fifth with 301,989 cars, down 25.4 per cent compared to the figure of 2022. They were followed by Singapore and Myanmar with 38,670 vehicles and 3,357 vehicles respectively in 2023. According to the Vietnam Automobile Manufacturers Association (VAMA), in 2023, all three vehicle segments decreased sharply. Passenger cars decreased by 27 per cent, commercial vehicles decreased by 16 per cent and specialised vehicles decreased by 56 per cent year-on-year. In specifics, 181,380 locally assembled cars and 120,600 CBU vehicles were sold, down by 20 per cent and 32 per cent compared to 2022, respectively. These figures did not include sales from non-member brands such as VinFast, Audi, Jaguar, Land Rover, Nissan, Subaru and Volkswagen, as they have yet to publicise their sales

data. VinFast currently does not provide monthly sales data in Việt Nam. According to experts, the auto industry has been experiencing a decline due to various factors such as unpredictable developments in the economy and unstable bank interest rates. These factors have affected the purchasing power of people, leading to a slowdown in car sales. To address this situation and stimulate the market, the Government has implemented certain measures. One of these measures is a 50 per cent reduction in registration fees for domestically produced and assembled cars from July 1, 2023, to December 31, 2023. In addition, businesses have been encouraged to support the remaining 50 per cent of the fees or provide 100 per cent fee incentives for imported cars. However, despite these efforts, the auto market has not achieved a significant breakthrough in sales. It is anticipated that car purchasing power may improve in early 2024 due to increased shopping needs associated with the celebration of the Lunar New Year. However, the future purchasing power in the following months remains uncertain, as car manufacturers may adjust their incentives and business policies, potentially impacting sales. — VNS

Source: <https://vietnamnews.vn/economy/1650549/vn-s-automobile-market-stands-fifth-place-in-the-region.html>