

CAMBODIA OUTLOOK

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Royal Embassy of Cambodia accredited to the Republic of Turkey, the Republic of Azerbaijan, Georgia, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, and the Republic of Tajikistan

CAMBODIAN FM ENCOURAGES ASEAN-UK FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

Cambodian Deputy Prime Minister H.E. Prak Sokhonn, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation participated in the 2nd ASEAN-UK Open-ended Troika Dialogue via videoconference on April 8.

The Troika consists of Brunei Darussalam as the current Chair of ASEAN, Cambodia as the incoming Chair and the ASEAN Secretary General. Other ASEAN Foreign Ministers and their representatives also attended the videoconference.

According to a press release of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, the Meeting discussed the enhancement of ASEAN-UK relations and cooperation in a broad

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IMF FORECASTS 4.2% GROWTH FOR CAMBODIA THIS YEAR, 6.0% NEXT YEAR

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has forecast Cambodia's GDP growth to accelerate from 4.2 percent this year to 6.0 percent in 2022, which would put the country among the fastest growing ASEAN economies next year.

In its World Economic Outlook released in Washington on 06 April 2021, the IMF also projected that Cambodia would have the region's most rapidly growing economy by 2026.

Under the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the IMF said Cambodia's GDP shrank 3.5 percent last year. That was not as steep as the

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CAMBODIAN, VIETNAMESE PMS HOLD TELEPHONE CONVERSATION



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During the telephone conversation, Samdech Techo Prime minister had expressed his warmest congratulations to H.E. Pham Minh Chinh on his recent election as Prime Minister of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam at the 11th Session of the 14th National Assembly of Viet Nam, pointed out a press release of the Cambodian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation.

This election clearly reflected the wise leadership, competency, and popularity of H.E. Pham Minh Chinh, and showed his significant contribution to building and defending his motherland, underlined the Cambodian Premier.

According to the same source, Samdech Techo highly appreciated all the great achievements gained by the people of Viet Nam, and expresses his confidence that under the wise leadership of H.E. Pham Minh Chinh, the

government and people of Viet Nam will be able to successfully implement the Five-Year Socio-economic Development Plan (2021-2025) and the Ten-Year Socio-economic Development Strategy (2021-2030) according to the decisions of the Communist Party and the National Assembly of Viet Nam.

Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh expressed his deepest gratitude towards Samdech Techo Prime Minister, as well as his willingness to establish good cooperation and rapport with Samdech Techo in further strengthening the relation of good neighbourliness, traditional friendship, and comprehensive cooperation between Cambodia and Viet Nam for the mutual benefits of the peoples of both countries.

H.E. Pham Minh Chinh was confident that under the wise leadership of Samdech Techo Prime Minister Hun Sen, the people of Cambodia will surely overcome the adversary caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, and

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quickly achieve an even stronger economic recovery in the near future.

The two Prime Ministers highly appreciated the fruitful cooperation between the two countries. Despite the negative impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak, Cambodia and Viet Nam continue to maintain close relations and consultation exchanges via telephone calls and video conferences at all levels. Furthermore, the two countries have improved the efficiency of the bilateral cooperation mechanisms. The two-way trade volume between the two countries continues to grow remarkably, while cooperation in the fields of public health and education has been paid great attention. The two countries have agreed to efficiently implement the cooperation on borders management, combating transnational crimes, controlling the spread of COVID-19,

promoting trade exchange, and resolving all differences that may arise in a timely manner.

The two leaders have also agreed to continue close cooperation in the multilateral framework. H.E. Pham Minh Chinh expressed his gratitude towards Cambodia for supporting Viet Nam in successfully chairing the ASEAN in 2020, and he reaffirmed Viet Nam's support toward Cambodia as the host of ASEM13 Summit this year and the upcoming Chair of ASEAN in 2022.

Finally, Samdech Techo Hun Sen extended his invitation to H.E. Pham Minh Chinh to pay an official visit to the Kingdom of Cambodia. H.E. Pham Minh Chinh also invited Samdech Techo Prime Minister to visit Viet Nam, at an appropriate time when the circumstances permit. ■

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range of areas of common interests and mutual benefits. The Meeting exchanged views on cooperation in public health emergencies cooperation to combat the COVID-19 pandemic, economic recovery and climate change as well as other regional and international issues of common concern and interest. The Meeting reaffirmed the importance of multilateralism for effective and collective response to overcome the challenges posed by COVID-19 and committed to work in concert towards the post-pandemic sustainable economic recovery.

The Rt. Honourable Dominic Raab, UK Foreign Secretary, briefed the Meeting on the UK's initiatives to combat the pandemic and contribution to the global efforts to control the pandemic and curb its severe impacts. He also stressed on the need to ensure that the path to socio-economic recovery does not compromise on the health of the planet. He took the opportunity to brief on UK's priority as host of the COP26.

ASEAN encouraged the UK to further strengthen cooperation with ASEAN and its Member States and expressed appreciation the UK's contribution of £1 million to the COVID-19 ASEAN Response Fund. ASEAN also sought for more supports from the UK for other ASEAN initiatives to address the pandemic, including the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework (ACRF) and the ASEAN Centre for Public Health Emergencies and Emerging Diseases (ACPHEED) once they have been established.

The Meeting noted the UK's application to establish Dialogue Partnership with ASEAN.

During the Virtual Meeting, H.E. Deputy Prime Minister expressed appreciation to the UK for her generous contribution to COVAX Facility, from which Cambodia is one of the first nations in the region to receive 324,000 doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine.

On trade, he encouraged ASEAN and the UK to explore the possibility of having an ASEAN-UK FTA (Free Trade Agreement) as well as to expand digital cooperation to support the growth of MSMEs (Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises).

With respect to climate change issue, H.E. Deputy Prime Minister expressed confidence that the COP26, under the UK's Presidency, would provide excellent opportunity for ASEAN Members States to further engage with the UK to achieve the long-term and low-emission development strategies. ■

ROADMAP AND SIEM REAP'S MASTER PLAN FOR TOURISM APPROVED

The 2021-2025 roadmap to restore Cambodia's tourism during and after COVID-19 crisis and Siem Reap tourism development master plan 2021-2035 have been approved, the Ministry of Tourism announced in its recent press release.

The approved 2021-2025 roadmap and master plan 2021-2035 will play a crucial role not only to promote the quality, safety and sustainable development of the tourism sector, but also to bolster Cambodia's social and economic development.

The 2021-2025 roadmap is divided into three stages, including crisis management in the New Normal and recovery preparation plan (Resilience & Restart) in 2021, recovery of

Cambodia's tourism after COVID-19 crisis (Recovery) in 2022-2023, and preparation for rebound of tourism (Relaunch) in 2024-2025.

The 2021-2035 Siem Reap tourism development master plan aims to enable the province to reclaim its pride as the medium-and long-term major tourist destination in Cambodia and the Southeast Asian region.

Through this master plan, Siem Reap province is expected to welcome 10.9 million national tourists and 7.5 million international tourists, and generate 940,000 jobs bringing in US\$6 billion for national income. ■



CAMBODIA'S REACTION TO THE US ON HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT

On 2 April 2021, the Spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Cambodia released a Statement rejecting the annual report of the US State Department on human rights situation in Cambodia as below:

"1. The Spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation notes with serious concerns the annual report of the US Department of State on the human rights situation in various countries, including Cambodia.

2. Without any manifest mandate given by the UN, the US always assumes a domineering role in unilaterally and arbitrarily criticizing the human rights situation of other countries.

3. The report lacks objectivity and suffers from serious shortcomings in terms of accuracy of its data and update information. The Spokesman wishes to highlight the followings:

- First, any institution of the US wishing to assess Cambodia shall not lose sight of the enormous moral debt that the former owed to the Kingdom and its innocent people enduring the indiscriminate aerial bombings during 1970s.

- Second, the US does not live up to the principle that leadership in human rights must begin at home. Ironically, the Annual Report

does not cover its own human rights records, which is an obvious self-denial of its human rights abuses.

- Third, the Report did not take an even-handed approach to its assessment, by inflating certain rights over the others, rejecting national particularities and across-the-board gains of the Kingdom in wide-ranging domains of human rights.

- Finally, the content and tone of the Report also vary depending upon how close or strategic a country is to the US. The practice of selectivity and the weaponization of human rights have been an unfortunate trend that needs to be guarded against and curtailed if we are to promote and protect human rights as a global public good. As quoted by the UN Secretary-General António Guterres, 'Human rights must never be a vehicle for double standards or a means to pursue hidden agendas.'

4. The Spokesperson of the Ministry reaffirms nonetheless Cambodia's unwavering commitment to pursuing a liberal multi-party democracy and upholding the rule of law and respect for fundamental freedoms in conformity with the Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia." ■

MORE TRADE CENTERS TO BE ESTABLISHED IN CHINA

Ministry of Commerce is working to create more trade centers in potential provinces of China in order to promote Cambodian products and boost the exports to China.

The ministry pointed out that at least five trade liaisons will be established in China, increasing Cambodia's trade centers to 11 from the current 6 centers in operation.

"The ministry is studying the establishment of trade centers in five locations in China for promoting and boosting sales of Cambodian products in China's market," H.E. Pan Sorasak, Minister of Commerce, said at the ministry's recent annual meeting to review achievements in 2020 and set forth new objectives for 2021.

This is the integration and diversification of markets for Cambodia's products, H.E. Minister underlined.

Cambodia and China signed their bilateral free trade agreement late last year in what officials of the two countries place high hopes of boosting trade activities. The two-way trade in 2020 was valued at US\$8,118 million, sliding down 5.2 percent compared to a year earlier, of which Cambodia's exports to China saw a year-on-year increase by 8.1 percent to US\$1,086 million. ■

THE KINGDOM'S RUBBER EXPORT UP 11 PERCENT IN Q1

Cambodia exported some 45,965 tonnes of rubber in the first quarter of this year – a rise of 4,472 tonnes or 11 percent if compared with the same period last year.

The update was shared recently by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, adding that during the first quarter of this year, a tonne of rubber cost US\$1,584 on average, a year-on-year increase of 11 percent.

Cambodia has in total 404,118 hectares of land surface for rubber plantations, producing 47,412 tonnes of rubber latex, up 12 percent, continued the source. Some 340,000 tonnes of Cambodian rubber were exported in 2020, generating US\$459 million as income. The Kingdom exports rubber mainly to Malaysia, Vietnam, Singapore and China. ■

IMF FORECASTS 4.2% GROWTH FOR ...



International Monetary Fund (IMF)

contractions suffered in the Philippines (9.5 percent), Thailand (6.1 percent), Malaysia (5.6 percent) and Singapore (5.4 percent). Compared with Cambodia, Indonesia's economy shrank less (2.1 percent), as did the Lao economy (0.4 percent).

For 2021, Cambodia's GDP growth is forecasted at 4.2 percent. By 2022, however, Cambodia is forecast to be among the region's fastest growing economies — in equal third

place with Malaysia with 6.0 percent growth after Vietnam (7.2 percent) and the Philippines (6.5 percent).

In its medium-term forecast, the IMF projected that Cambodia would have the region's fastest growth with the economy expanding by 6.8 percent in 2026. The IMF also projected robust medium-term growth in Vietnam (6.6 percent), the Philippines (6.5 percent) and Laos (6.0 percent). ■

សួស្តីឆ្នាំថ្មី - HAPPY KHMER NEW YEAR



The Cambodian people will celebrate this year from April 14 to 16 their traditional New Year, one of the biggest festivals in the country, under the slogan “**New Year at Home**” in order to contain and prevent the spread of COVID-19 pandemic.

On April 14 at 04:00 am, it marks the end of Buddhist year 2564 BE (Buddhist Era – based on the Lunar Calendar) and the start of New Year 2565 (to be officially changed on Visak Bochea Day), the year of Ox. The New Year’s angel of this year is Mondea Devy, the fourth daughter of Kabel Moha Prum.

Cambodia’s traditional New Year, “Chaul Chhnam Thmei” generally falls in around mid-April or the Chet, the fifth month of the Cambodian lunar calendar during which peasants are relieved of their farm work after the dry-season rice harvest.



Generally, people return to their homeland, go to pagoda, travel to different tourism destinations, and join various cultural entertainment activities. But due to COVID-19 threat, people are advised to welcome the new Tevoda (angel) at their respective homes.