

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

CAMBODIA'S TOP DIPLOMAT ON OFFICIAL VISIT TO ROK

At the invitation of H.E. CHUNG Eui-yong, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea, H.E. Deputy Prime Minister PRAK Sokhonn, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Kingdom of Cambodia paid an official visit to the Republic of Korea from 6-8 September 2021. During the visit, the two Ministers held a bilateral meeting and co-chaired the 11th Mekong-ROK Foreign Ministers' Meeting. The following is the excerpt of the outcome of the official visit:

I. Bilateral Meeting

During the bilateral meeting, H.E. Deputy Prime Minister and H.E. CHUNG Eui-yong

Continued on page (2)

DRAFT LAW ON APPROVAL OF RCEP AGREEMENT APPROVED BY NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

Cambodian lawmakers approved the draft law on approval of Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) Agreement.

Ninety-four (94) lawmakers present at the parliamentary session chaired by Samdech Akka Moha Ponhea Chakrei Heng Samrin, President of the National Assembly (NA), voted for the draft law on 9 September 2021.

The RCEP Agreement was signed on Nov. 15 via videoconference, following the 4th RCEP Summit. It is the historic achievement of the region, which will contribute to the protection and the promotion of globalisation, and the

Continued on page (3)

CAMBODIA STRESSES THE NEED TO DEEPEN SOLIDARITY FOR ROBUST SOCIOECONOMIC RECOVERY



Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia, Chair of the 7th Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) Summit on 9 September 2021 via videoconference.

Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia and Chair of the 7th Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) Summit urged for the deepening of solidarity so as to ensure robust socioeconomic recovery after the COVID-19 crisis.

On the occasion, Samdech Techo Hun Sen highlighted five important points:

“First, I am pleased to see positive development of the GMS cooperation most notably the achievements we have made in all areas that contribute to strengthening regional connectivity, promoting competitiveness, and building communities through full implementation of the Greater Mekong Subregion Strategic Framework 2022, the Hanoi Action Plan, and the Regional Investment Framework since our 6th Summit in 2018. Moving forward, our cooperation is strategically necessary as we continue

working closely together to transform challenges into opportunities for the development of our region.

In this regard, I believe that the adoption of the Greater Mekong Subregion Strategic Framework 2030 and our new Mission Statement for the GMS-Focusing on the fundamental strengths of communities, connectivity, and competitiveness, while embracing the core principles of environmental sustainability and resilience with integration and inclusiveness, to build the GMS Community towards a shared future will be the strong pillars for the Greater Mekong Subregion to provide adequate responses to current challenges especially to develop economic and social resilience amidst the rapidly changing regional and global context.

Second, at the regional level, we have witnessed the utmost efforts by the Mekong

Continued on page (2)

CAMBODIA STRESSES THE NEED TO DEEPEN ...

countries in the fight against Covid-19 through the implementation of appropriate prevention and containment measures as well as mitigation responses that support our economic activities and the livelihood of our peoples. As for Cambodia, the Royal Government has made her best efforts in controlling the Covid-19 crisis with the rollout of the nationwide vaccination campaign and enforcement of public health and administrative measures that are aimed at reducing community transmission.

Third, as we currently combat the spread of Covid-19, I would like to take this opportunity to commend the People's Republic of China for her role in providing vaccines to fight against the Covid-19 outbreaks for countries in the region. I would also like to express my profound thank again to the People's Republic of China for her donation of Covid-19 vaccines to the Cambodian people. Likewise, I would like to express our gratitude to the international community through the World Health Organisation's COVAX programme, as well as to other bilateral partners for sharing and providing vaccines to Cambodia. These reflect our friendship and solidarity in time of crisis, as I used to say 'Love each other in times of need, know good friends in times of trouble'. It is this friendship and solidarity that contribute to every effort made by the Royal Government

to return Cambodia to normalcy and recover her economy after the COVID-19 crisis.

Fourth, indeed in this hard time, our path forward lies not only in our strategic directions and action plans to rehabilitate our shared prosperity but also in our efforts to mobilise funding especially tapping synergies and complementing with other financing programmes in the Mekong region, as we aim to deliver tangible outcomes for our development projects. In the meantime, public-private partnership remains a key indispensable financing mechanism that helps to resolve our financing challenges.

Fifth, with regard to regional connectivity-an area that is at the heart of our cooperation - I would like to highlight the importance of digital connectivity as it serves to compensate the loss of productivity caused by the Covid-19 crisis and also to ensure effective and sustainable socio-economic development. Therefore, in the midst of our economic recovery, Cambodia urges that GMS cooperation focuses on the development of digital infrastructure, integration of the digital economy, and upskilling of our workforce in the era of Fourth Industrial Revolution so as to maintain high competitiveness for our economies. In the meantime, development of smart cities, clean energy and logistics systems should be further strengthened." ■

CAMBODIA TO PROVIDE TEMPORARY REFUGE TO 300 AFGHAN REFUGEES

Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia, said recently that the nation will provide temporary refuge to 300 Afghan refugees, before they are granted asylum by a third country.

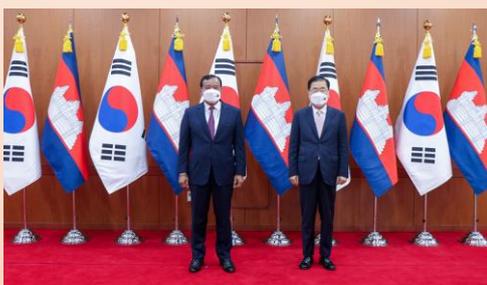
He added that the decision was made based on humanitarian principles, following a request from The Asia Foundation.

The prime minister agreed to accept a maximum of 300 Afghan refugees, providing them a visa on arrival and allowing them to use their identification cards for travel document.

However, they must strictly comply with anti-COVID-19 health measures, including testing and quarantine, when they arrive in Cambodia.

The length of stay has not been determined yet, as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation is in talks with the Asia Foundation on it. ■

CAMBODIA'S TOP DIPLOMAT PAYS OFFICAL ...



noted with satisfaction the dynamically growing bilateral relations and multifaceted cooperation between the two countries in both bilateral and multilateral frameworks as reflected through the frequent exchanges of high-level visits between the two countries.

As the Kingdom of Cambodia and the Republic of Korea will commemorate their 25th Anniversary of the re-establishment of Diplomatic Relations next year, the two Foreign Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to further enhance the good existing bilateral relations for the mutual interests of the two nations, as well as for peace, security, stability and prosperity in the region and beyond. To this end, the two

ministers discussed on ways and means to deepen the cooperation in the fields of defense, trade, investment, agriculture, labour, health, information and communication technology, science and innovation, tourism, education and environment.

II. The 11th Mekong-ROK Foreign Ministers' Meeting

On 8 September, H.E. PRAK Sokhonn co-chaired the 11th Mekong-ROK Foreign Ministers' Meeting with H.E. CHUNG Eui-yong in Seoul. The meeting was also attended by the other Mekong countries, namely Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam, via video conference.

The Mekong-ROK Foreign Ministers reviewed the progress made thus far under the Mekong-ROK cooperation based on the three pillars of People, Prosperity and Peace and the seven priority areas in the Mekong-Han River Declaration—(i) Culture and Tourism, (ii) Human Resources Development, (iii) Agriculture and Rural Development, (iv) Infrastructure, (v) Information and Communication Technology

(ICT), (vi) Environment, and (vii) Non-traditional Security Challenges. The Ministers renewed their commitment to further facilitating the wider application of ICT in governance, strengthening cooperation, engagement of private sector and promoting further investment in future industries and digital transformation in the Mekong sub-region, especially in the field of digital economy, national single window, e-commerce, cybersecurity, secured 5G network, artificial intelligence and big data, in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and emerging challenges.

The Meeting agreed to extend "the Mekong-ROK Exchange Year" to 2022 to foster cultural exchanges and deepen mutual understanding by holding various events among the six countries pending the endorsement at the 3rd Mekong-ROK Summit. In addition, the Mekong-ROK Foreign Ministers welcomed with high hopes the 9th Mekong-ROK Business Forum, which will be held in Cambodia later this year.

Continued on page (3)

DRAFT LAW ON APPROVAL OF RCEP ...

support of rules-based multilateral trading system. It is an indispensable prerequisite for the principles of free and fair trade, and an important driving force for sustainable socio-economic development.

The RCEP Agreement will be also an important catalyst in contributing to economic growth, improving the livelihoods of people in the region, and helping to restore regional economic development after the Covid-19 Pandemic.

The Signing of this Agreement will form the world's largest free trade agreement, covering (1) 2.2 billion people, or 30 percent of the world population, (2) with combined

gross domestic product (GDP) of about US\$26.2 trillion or about 30 percent of global GDP and (3) approximately 28 percent of the world trade (based on data in 2019).

Based on the result of the negotiations and the study by the Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA), it is shown that after the conclusion of the RCEP Agreement, per annum, Cambodia is expected to increase 2 percent on top of the current GDP, 7.3 percent and 23.4 percent in exports and investment, respectively. ■

Big C OPENS FIRST STORE IN PHNOM PENH



The Thai grocery and general merchandising retailer "Big C", has opened its first store in Phnom Penh.

The official opening of the Mini Big C Depo Branch was held on 5 September with top government officials and business leaders in attendance. Company officials were joined by the Thai Ambassador to Cambodia Panyarak Poolthup, WorldBridge International Group Chairman Sear Rithy, Big C (Cambodia) Vice-President Suwin Somsri and Chhoun Dara, Secretary of State at the Ministry of Commerce.

Big C stores usually sell cosmetics, toiletries, fresh produce, and other grocery items with the company targeting mid to low-income customers.

The opening of its first store in Phnom Penh is part of Big C's expansion drive in Southeast Asia, and they have announced they plan to spend close to \$250 million on business expansion this year.

Big C has grown to become the second largest hypermarket operator in Thailand with \$4.4 billion total in revenue last year. It is owned by Berli Jucker Plc (BJC), one of the largest business conglomerates in the country.

Big C owns and operates 1,572 retail stores in Thailand, including 1,215 Mini Big C, 152 Big C hypermarket and 61 Big C market, according to international media reports. It also has a presence in Cambodia, Malaysia, Vietnam and Laos.

Big C entered the Cambodian market in 2019 with the opening of the Big C Supercenter in the border town of Poipet. The Poipet store was established within a two-hectare shopping mall featuring cinemas and retail outlets. ■

FRESH MANGO, CASHEW NUTS & PEPPER SALES SURGE OVERSEAS

Figures from the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries show that from January to August 2021, Cambodian fresh mango, cashew nuts and pepper sales surge overseas, compared to the same period the previous year.

Cambodia exported about 163,828 tonnes of fresh mangoes to foreign markets, a remarkable increase of 251 percent. The Kingdom exported 14,087 tonnes of mango jam and over 4,000 tonnes of mango syrup, up 195 and 79 percent, respectively.

Main markets for Cambodian mango products include Viet Nam, Thailand, China, Korea, Hong Kong, Singapore, Kuwait, the Philippines, Japan, United Kingdom, the U.S., Kazakhstan, and Russia.

At the same time, Cambodia exported about 876,521 tonnes of cashew products to foreign markets, a significant increase of 340 percent. Major markets for Cambodia's cashew nuts are Vietnam, China, Thailand, Japan, India, South Korea, the Netherlands, Bangladesh, Laos, Togo, United Arab Emirates, and so on.

In addition, the Kingdom also exported 24,847 tonnes of pepper to foreign markets, a sharply increase of 551 percent. Vietnam alone bought 24,476 tonnes, making the country the biggest market for Cambodian pepper. The other markets were Germany, India, France, Belgium, Taiwan of China, Poland, Czech Republic, Japan, South Korea, Russia, Singapore, the U.S., Sweden, the UK, Australia, Switzerland, Canada, Kazakhstan, and United Arab Emirates.

Pepper is grown in many areas in Cambodia, including Kampong Cham, Thbong Khmum, Kampot and Kep provinces. Kampot pepper is the most well-known with high price. It was granted with the geographical indication (GI) from the EU in 2016 and from the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in 2010.

Cambodia's Kampot pepper has been also registered for international protection in 32 countries under the Geneva Act of the Lisbon Agreement on Appellations of Origin and Geographical Indications. ■

CAMBODIA'S TOP DIPLOMAT...

Taking this opportunity, H.E. Deputy Prime Minister accentuated the pivotal role of the Mekong-ROK Cooperation Frameworks and New Southern Policy Plus (NSPP) in maintaining peace and stability in the Mekong sub-region. On collective determination to fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, he underscored the need to speed up the vaccination process in an inclusive and non-discriminatory manner. As for initial economic recovery amidst the pandemic, he further highlighted that member countries must plan

for a safe travel through a regional recognition of vaccine certificate, an efficient PCR Check-point at all airports and borders, and an interconnected COVID-19 contact-tracing and monitoring system.

At the end of the Meeting, the Ministers adopted the Co-chaired Statement of the 11th Mekong-ROK Foreign Ministers' Meeting and endorsed seven supported projects for 2021 under 5th batch of the Mekong-ROK Cooperation Fund (MKCF) for the six Mekong-ROK countries and the Mekong Institute (MI). ■

Cambodia to Host the Asia-Europe Cultural Festival 2021 before ASEM13

Cambodia will host the Asia-Europe Cultural Festival (ASEMfest) 2021, one of the 13th Asia-Europe Summit's side events, on Nov. 22-26, 2021, said a senior official of the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts.

Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Viet Nam, India, Japan, Russia, Czech Republic, Italy, Poland, Spain, and so on have confirmed.

This international cultural event will be organized mainly with the use of online platforms with the main activities such as performing arts, and the screening of feature films and documentaries, except the exhibition which would be held in hybrid format at the National Museum of Cambodia. ASEMfest is organized to promote basic understanding of the views and values of the member countries to enhance cooperation and development between the two continents.



Morodok Techo National Stadium Ready to Bid for AFF Suzuki Cup 2020 Host

Morodok Techo National Stadium is ready to join the bidding for the host of AFF Suzuki Cup 2020.

The update was shared following the inspection of Ms. Puth Thida, President of the Ad-hoc Commission on the Football Federation of Cambodia (FFC) at the site recently.

Due to the crisis of COVID-19, the AFF Suzuki Cup 2020 was postponed twice, and now the event is expected to take place from Dec. 5, 2021 to Jan. 1, 2022. Four countries including Cambodia, Singapore, Thailand and Indonesia are candidates willing to bid for the host of the international competition.

Joining the bidding will allow Cambodia to present the new sports infrastructures for the international competitions, and build up the experiences for the SEA Games 2023 it will host.

