

CAMBODIA OUTLOOK

ISSUE 17: 11 - 20 JANUARY 2021



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

CHINESE GOVERNMENT PROVIDES 1 MILLION DOSES OF COVID-19 VACCINES TO CAMBODIA

The Government of the People's Republic of China has provided 1 million doses of vaccines against COVID-19 for the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) to be administered to about 500,000 people.

The humanitarian donation was made through the Chinese and Cambodian Ministries of National Defence, announced on 15 January 2020, Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia.

Continued on page (2)

U.S. SUPPORTS RENOVATION OF PREAH VIHEAR AND PHNOM BAKHENG TEMPLES

The U.S. has announced an assistance to preserve two of Cambodia's ancient temples – Preah Vihear in Preah Vihear province, and Phnom Bakheng in Siem Reap province.

The move started with a recent official signing of a cooperative agreement between the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts and the U.S. Embassy in Cambodia.

According to a joint press release between the two counterparts, the grants are from the U.S. Department of State's Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation.

Continued on page (3)

CAMBODIA LAUNCHES 3-YEAR ECONOMIC DIPLOMACY STRATEGY



The Economic Diplomacy Strategy 2021-2023 and The Taste of Angkor

Cambodia launched the Economic Diplomacy Strategy 2021-2023, on 18 January 2020, which will contribute to diversifying the sources of economic growth and trade partners.

Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation H.E. Prak Sokhonn presided over the launching ceremony.

"This Economic Diplomacy Strategy is designed to be a compass to strengthen the efficiency of economic diplomacy and to contribute to strengthening the economic growth, reducing dependence on foreign aid and promoting Cambodia's interests in the region and the world, **focusing on four main goals: promoting international trade, attracting foreign direct investment, enhancing tourism, and fostering cultural exchanges** (including the promotion of Khmer cuisine)," said H.E. Prak Sokhonn on the occasion.

The Cambodian top diplomat also laid stress on the necessity to change the way of working,

from traditional diplomacy to diplomacy that focuses on economic, cultural and tourism promotion, i.e. the implementation of a foreign policy that puts economic prosperity at its core. "No country has succeeded without making economic issue its main agenda," he added.

Recognizing the important contribution of foreign affairs sector to the economic development, he continued, in the past more than two years, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation has been working to promote the economic diplomacy by strengthening human resources; training diplomats; organizing, collecting and compiling information on economics, trade, investment and tourism for diplomats to use when they meet with guests, businesspersons, citizens and leaders of the host countries; participating in

Continued on page (2)

CHINESE GOVERNMENT PROVIDES 1 MILLION...

In his voice message, Samdech Techo Hun Sen explained that he previously affirmed to receive only the vaccine certified by the World Health Organisation (WHO), but in the current coronavirus widespread context, it is no longer possible for Cambodia to wait, that is why the RGC decided to use the COVID-19 vaccine.

Moreover, he added, the China-made vaccine has already been administered to Chinese government leaders, Indonesian president and people, and million of others around the world.

According to Samdech Techo Hun Sen, we have not known the validity or effectiveness of the China-made vaccine or that of other countries yet, but Chinese leaders have been vaccinated since October 2020.

"Up to now, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi is very healthy and travel to almost everywhere. Now he is visiting our Southeast Asian region, after the visit to Africa. Therefore, the experience of Foreign Minister Wang Yi, one of China's key leaders, gives us confidence that there is no risk to human life for China-made vaccine," he said.

Samdech Techo Prime Minister stressed that Cambodia will use China's Sinopharm vaccine because it is easier to store, i.e. at 2 to 8 degrees

Celsius above zero, compared with the vaccine of some other countries which is required to be kept at a temperature of minus 70 degrees Celsius. In addition, it is easy to transport the vaccine from China to Cambodia.

Samdech Techo Hun Sen expressed his gratitude to China for the humanitarian donation, adding that through the support for the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces, Cambodia will use the vaccine for all frontline units.

The first priority groups to be vaccinated are those around the King, the Prime Minister, the Senate and National Assembly Presidents, as well as medical staff, teachers, armed forces, judicial police, sanitation personnel, motorcycle, tricycle taxi and taxi drivers, according to the Premier.

"The vaccination will be free of charge and on a voluntary basis," confirmed Samdech Techo Hun Sen, calling on people to continue to adhere to the Ministry of Health's health preventive measures against COVID-19 despite the vaccination. ■

MEMORANDUM ON UNDERSTANDINGS ON TRADE PROMOTION SIGNED

Ministry of Commerce has signed two separate MoUs with two private companies to strengthen cooperation on trade promotion.

The signing ceremony took place early this week under the witness of H.E. Reach Ra, Secretary of State for the Ministry of Commerce and representatives of the two companies.

The first MoU on cooperation in the Field of Trade Promotion of Handicraft Products between the General Directorate Trade Promotion and Beyond Retail Business Cambodia (B.R.B) is aimed to boost handicraft products, mainly pottery products in Kampong Chhnang province by arranging production structure, strengthening production community, training human resources, promoting production and market development, and boosting the use of the pottery products.

The other MoU which is on cooperation on Trade Promotion Programme between the General Directorate Trade Promotion and

Cambodia Beverage Company Limited (Coca-Cola) was designed to foster the consumption of local products and capacity building of Cambodian entrepreneurs, provide women with business management opportunities for trade sector development and inclusive national socio-economic development.

The MoUs will contribute to developing the trade sector and enhancing market and economic development, particularly to promoting a wider use of local products. ■



CAMBODIA LAUNCHES...

trade fairs, cultural exhibitions, investment attraction events; and facilitating the travel and requests of foreign businesspersons and companies.

According to the Economic Diplomacy Strategy 2021-2023, one of its key tasks is to transform international challenges into opportunities, which would strengthen national growth and resilience. Thus, the shift to a modern diplomacy underscoring economic, tourism, culture, and innovative technology is a proactive response to the changing international environment.

At the same event, Deputy Prime Minister H.E. Prak Sokhonn also announced to launch the Khmer cookbook entitled "The Taste of Angkor". ■

MOE ON THE LOOKOUT FOR BIODIVERSE ECOTOURISM SPOTS

The Ministry of Environment and Tour Guides Association are working together to identify potential ecotourism spots in protected areas.

Minister Say Samal held a meeting with tour guides on 15 January 2021, asking them to look for areas highly valued for biodiversity conservation which could be safely turned into ecotourism spots through well-managed tours which do not harm the environment.

He said that ecotourism is a new trend in Cambodian society and helps build the local economy, adding that the ministry will pay more attention toward ensuring the health and safety of tourists, deal with emergencies, sanitation management and cleaning up the environment at protected areas for the long-term benefit of future generations.

"Currently, Cambodians have changed their mindset to love the environment more and are visiting more protected areas," Samal said.

He also said that trips to these natural areas have encouraged park officials and communities to pay more attention to the protection and conservation of natural resources which could contribute to the economic well-being of the people in the community. ■

NEW CASSAVA POLICY TO TRANSFORM PRODUCTION OF CRUCIAL CROP

A new national cassava policy is set to boost production and export of Cambodian cassava. Launched by the Ministry of Commerce, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on 14 January 2020, the landmark national policy runs until 2025.

According to a UNDP's press release, the planting, harvesting, processing and export of cassava is key to securing jobs and livelihoods for thousands of Cambodians and is a vital cash crop for farmers. Cambodia is the fourth largest cassava producer in Asia and the tenth largest globally. Over 12 million tonnes of fresh cassava root was harvested this year and the new policy will boost and diversify growth and exports in the coming years.

Cassava is a tough, hardy crop that can withstand the growing impact of climate change. Scientists are working to transform cassava into a climate smart plant that can absorb more carbon from the atmosphere, produce higher yields of starch and help improve soil quality. Recent studies in Africa show how cassava can help rejuvenate depleted soils. These early breakthroughs bode well for future food security and sustainable development across Asia, Africa and Latin America.

"Cassava is key to Cambodia's socioeconomic development and to reap the full rewards in future, we aim to upgrade the value chain by strengthening capacities and moving quickly to secure emerging market opportunities.

The policy will position cassava at the centre of our efforts to develop Cambodia's agro-industrial sector and aims to enlarge the economic base to help meet the Royal Government of Cambodia's development goals to 2030 and 2050," said H.E. Pan Sorasak, Minister of Commerce.

"With the production of 12 million tonnes per year, cassava is an industrial crop which carries a full potential for farmer livelihood improvement and export. Based on the vision set in the cassava policy, MAFF will work with related stakeholders to address challenges facing this sector in line with the framework of the MAFF's Agriculture Sector Strategic Development Plan 2019-2023," said H.E. Mam Amnot, Secretary of State of MAFF.

"Cassava offers good opportunities for Cambodia – especially if it can move up value chains to export processed products such as starch. That requires good contract farming relationship between processors and farmers growing cassava to create consistent and high-quality supply," said Mr. Nick Beresford, UNDP Resident Representative in Cambodia.

The new national policy was developed by the government's cassava working group and approved by the Royal Government of Cambodia on Aug. 14, 2020. The launch of the policy marks the beginning of a new journey in Cambodia's agribusiness development for inclusive growth, poverty reduction and the realisation of the Royal Government of Cambodia's Industrial Development Policy 2015-2025. ■

U.S. SUPPORTS...

Of the assistance, US\$120,000 is for the National Authority of Preah Vihear to renovate the northern staircase of the 11th century Temple of Preah Vihear, and to restore the ancient drainage system along both sides of the staircase.

Some US\$300,000 will go to the World Monuments Fund (WMF) for continuation of conservation work phase 5 of the project at Phnom Bakheng in Siem Reap for a period of 24 months, until 2022.

The project will be carried out within the long-term partnership between WMF and the APSARA National Authority.

"These historic sites are enduring parts of Cambodia's unique cultural heritage, heralded and appreciated by the entire world," said the U.S. Ambassador H.E. W. Patrick Murphy in the joint press release, adding that the assistance will help preserve the temples for future generations.

Minister of Culture and Fine Arts Dr. Phoeurng Sackona underlined that the assistance substantiates the long-standing support and firm commitment of the U.S. government, along with the international community, for protecting, conserving and restoring cultural heritage in Cambodia.

"I believe that relationship – and cooperation based on the shared values between Cambodia and the U.S. government and their citizens – will continue to develop even stronger," she added.

The Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation was established to help preserve significant cultural heritage sites around the world, and under the AFCP grants, the Department of State has provided Cambodia more than US\$4 million since 2001. ■

A US\$7.8 MILLION GARMENT FACTORY PROJECT APPROVED BY CDC

Council for the Development of Cambodia (CDC) has approved a new investment project with a total capital of US\$7.8 million in Takeo province.

According to the CDC's press release issued on 18 January 2021, invested by HC Global Textile Co., Ltd., the newly approved project is expected to create a total of 843 jobs for the locals.

Under the project, a garment factory will be built in Roneam commune, Traing district, it pointed out.

Since early January, CDC has given green light to 4 investment projects, including the above-said project, with a total capital of nearly US\$16.5 million, generating over 2,000 job opportunities.

Such investment amid COVID-19 outbreak demonstrates confidence of investors in Cambodia's macroeconomic, political and social stability though threatened by the pandemic. ■



Four Key Poles and Over 250 Projects Included in the Draft of Kep Tourism Development Master Plan

The inter-ministerial commission has identified four prime tourism poles and over 250 projects to include in the draft of the Kep provincial tourism development master plan.

H.E. Thong Khon, Minister of Tourism on 14 January 2021 chaired the inter-ministerial commission meeting to review and discuss additional inputs for the drafted master plan at the ministry office in Phnom Penh.

The drafting of the Kep provincial tourism development master plan was informed by a comprehensive study by the inter-ministerial commission.

According to H.E. Thong Khon, the master plan aims to transform Kep into a high-end luxury tourism destination, not only for Cambodia but the region and the world.

The effort, he continued, will need to look into aspects such as equality, equity, transparency, sustainability and innovation of the tourism service in the coastal province.



Once in place, the provincial tourism development master plan will serve as an important strategic document to restore and further promote tourism in Kep during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

The four prime tourism poles identified include the current Kep city, Angkaol region, Phnom Vor area, and the province's archipelago.

