

# VISIONS of CAMBODIA

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## WORLD BANK: CAMBODIA'S ECONOMY STILL SHOWS SIGNS OF VIGOROUS HEALTH

Cambodia's economy still shows signs of vigorous health despite the slowdowns in the key export markets of the United States and European Union, according to a report issued by the World Bank, which forecast the Kingdom's GDP, would grow by 6.6 per cent in 2012.

In its East Asia and Pacific Economic Update, released on May 23, the World Bank predicted slightly higher growth rates than the Cambodian government, the International Monetary Fund and the Asian Development Bank (ADB), all of which predicted the Kingdom's economy would expand by 6.5 per cent this year.

The report found that growth would be even higher in 2013, forecasting a 6.7-percent rate, slightly lower than the ADB's forecast of 7 per cent.

Cambodia has been one of the fastest growing countries in the world over the past ten years with an average growth rate of 8 per cent since 2000. The economy continues to be in good shape, according to Hout Chat, a World Bank economist, since the four "pillars" of the Cambodian economy, agriculture, manufacturing, tourism and construction-have seen a strong recovery from the recent global downturn.

The agriculture sector proved resilient after the floods of 2011 and production expanded by 3.3 per cent last year. The industrial and service sector grew by 14.3 per cent and 5 per cent respectively. At the same time, real estate rose by 4.3 per cent and construction was up by 6.1 per cent.

Tourist arrivals in 2011 rose 15 per cent to 2.9 million, with the Angkor Wat temple complex drawing 60 per cent of visitors. The country's tourism receipts are estimated to grow by 7 per cent over 2011 to nearly US\$2 billion in 2012.

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## CAMBODIA-GUINEA FRIENDSHIP AND COOPERATION AGREEMENT SIGNED

The Royal Government of Cambodia and the Government of the Republic of Guinea reached a friendship and cooperation framework agreement during the visit of President Apha Conde, President of Guinea at the invitation of His Majesty Norodom Sihamoni, King of Cambodia, to Cambodia.

The agreement was inked by H.E. Hor Namhong, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Cambodia, and H.E. Koutoubou Moustapha Sano, Minister of International Cooperation of Guinea under the presidency of Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen, Prime Minister of Cambodia and visiting H.E. Alpha Condé, President of Guinea.

During the bilateral talk with Samdech Techo Hun Sen, H.E. Alpha Condé expressed his sadness to what happened in Cambodia during the Khmer

Rouge regime and also congratulated the Kingdom on its fast development under the leadership of Samdech Techo Hun Sen, H.E. Ieng Sophalet, Assistant to the Cambodian premier told reporters.

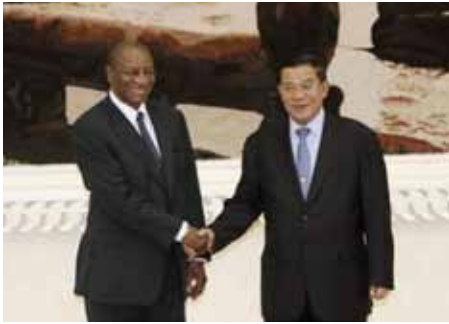
Cambodia and Guinea reached an agricultural cooperation agreement in 2008, but it was interrupted due to the Guinean side, said H.E. Alpha Condé, adding that his visit to Cambodia is to resume and expand the agricultural cooperation with Cambodia.

Guinea further requested the Cambodian side to send its agricultural experts to Guinea and the country will buy some 40,000 tons of Cambodian milled rice in the near future, the assistant said.

For his part, Samdech Techo Hun Sen informed his guest of the royal government's policy in developing the country including the reduction of poverty rate of over 1 percent a year and the

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## CAMBODIA-GUINEA...



ensuring of the economic growth of around 7 percent annually, H.E. Ieng Sophalet said.

The Cambodian prime minister accepted the Guinean side's request to send agricultural experts to Guinea, and suggested the Guinean side to cooperate with the Cambodian Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Ministry of Commerce, and Cambodian rice miller associations regarding the rice buying plan.

Cambodia is committed to do its best to help Guinea, stressed Samdech Techo Hun Sen.

H.E. Alpha Condé and his entourage arrived here on May 24 at 9:00 pm for a working visit until May 26. He was welcomed at Phnom Penh International Airport by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Royal Palace H.E. Kong Sam Ol, Minister of Information H.E. Khieu Kanharith and many other senior officials.

The Republic of Guinea is a country in West Africa with 246,000 square kilometers and a population of more than 10 millions

## WORLD BANK...

Economic growth will be driven by vibrant private-sector activities, mainly in trade, banking, real estate and construction as well as some agriculture activities such as rice milling, and industry, the report said.

In the banking sector, Cambodians are gaining new confidence in financial institutions and deposits have grown steadily. Bank lending is also up, rising by an average of 28 per cent per month over the past 12 months.

However, World Bank economist Hout Chat expressed some concern about the slowdowns in the US and EU since they are the key export markets for Cambodia's garment and textile sector. But he said that the Kingdom's export market had not yet been negatively affected and since the US is showing some signs of recovery, there was no need yet to sound the alarm.

Exports in 2011 jumped by 36 per cent over the year before, with garment and textile exports up 32 per cent, reaching US\$4 billion. The Cambodian garment sector appears to have benefited from a shift of labour-intensive industries from China to lower-wage countries like Cambodia.

## THE OPENING OF UK PERMANENT TRADE OFFICE

An office of United Kingdom Trade and Investment (UKTI), a British government body working with business to ensure their success on international markets, will open permanently in the British Embassy in Phnom Penh as bilateral trade continues to rise.

The announcement of the trade office's permanent representation was made by Cheryl Gillan, secretary of state for Wales, who was in Cambodia during a five-day tour of Southeast Asia.

The establishment of the office, which will work toward streamlining business information exchange between the UK and Cambodia and assist with business registrations, is a significant recognition of Cambodia's rapid economic development and the potential for a larger British role in it.

"I urge British businesses to explore the wealth of opportunities available in Cambodia to take advantage of the chance to get the support they need and to be competitive on the world stage," said Gillan. Derren Conquest, vice-chairman of the British Business Association of Cambodia, told Economics Today that the permanent office could well increase the number of UK businesses setting up shop in Cambodia by providing investors detailed information about the possibilities in the Kingdom.

Trade has been growing rapidly between the two countries and investment by UK firms has also been on an upward curve.

According to figures from the Council for the Development of Cambodia (CDC), UK firms invested US\$2.4 billion in the Kingdom between 1995 and 2011. However, last year alone, the number jumped to US\$2.2 billion.

Data from the British Embassy in Cambodia revealed that UK exports to Cambodia increased 158.9 per cent year-on-year in 2011, while imports from the Kingdom increased 52.4 per cent.

In the first quarter of this year, bilateral trade was US\$177.88 million, nearly a 50 per cent increase over the same period in 2011.

As one of the UN's Least Developed Countries, Cambodia can export goods duty-free to the European Union under the bloc's everythingbut Arms initiative. That advantage, according to Sorasak Pan, secretary of state of Ministry of Commerce, is helping trade develop in a positive direction.

The UKTI office is not completely new fixture on the landscape. In 2009, a temporary office was opened in the embassy, but due to the rising trade volumes, it was decided to make it permanent.

UK Ambassador to Cambodia Mark Gooding told that during the temporary office's operation over the past three years, more investors have contacted it every year for information and business registration help.

Most British investment has been in the garment sector, such as Dewhirst Cambodia and Quantum Clothing Cambodia, but Gooding said UK investment will likely move beyond textiles.

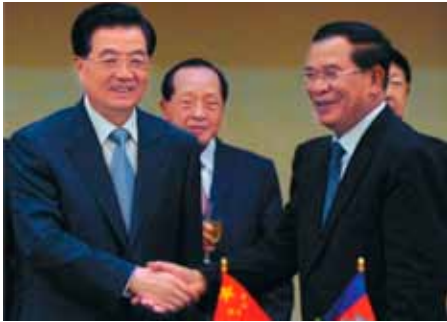
"British companies will look at education, construction and financial-services investments in the future," he said.

It is already happening. At least eight British or British-affiliated companies are working on the Vattanac skyscraper going up in Phnom Penh.

Bilateral trade between Cambodia and the United Kingdom reached US\$178 million over the first three months of 2012, a 48-percent increase over the same period last year, according to a trade report from the British embassy in Phnom Penh. The report said Cambodia's main exports to the UK are garments, footwear, sugar, honey, rice and bicycles. The Kingdom imported industrial machinery, automobiles, medical and pharmaceutical products and malt from the UK. Currently more than 15 UK companies have set up offices in Cambodia in different sectors including the garment and footwear industries, banking and finance, engineering and architecture, education, hospitality and property services.



## CAMBODIAN, CHINESE FIRMS INK AGREEMENTS ON TRADE



*Furthering sincere relations with China has long been a consistent policy of Samdech Techo Hun Sen, Prime Minister of Cambodia*

Cambodian and Chinese firms have signed a series of agreements that will boost business and trade ties between the two countries, especially in the field of agribusiness.

Cambodia's Power Partner Profit Group inked 10 Memoranda of Understanding with a variety of Chinese firms on May 18 in Phnom Penh. The Chinese companies include Yunnan Yun-manganese Group, Sinsing Rubber, Sichuan Jingong Chuanpai Flavoring, Sichuan Chuanyin Textile, Futureco Group and Gao Shun Settles Down Group.

While the deals cover a variety of sectors, including mineral resources, garments and electronic products, the primary focus was on agriculture. The signing comes in the wake of a rice export goal set by Cambodia of one million tons by 2015. The government also wants to export 290,000 tons of rubber by 2020. In April, Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen and Chinese President Hu Jintao set a goal of US\$5 billion in bilateral trade.

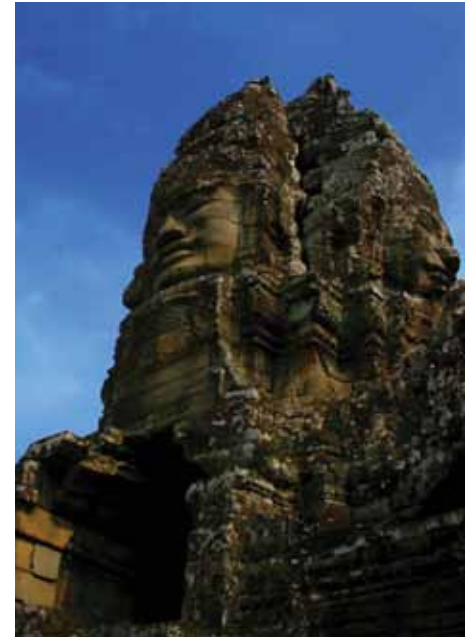
Yim Sawy, Power Partner Profit Group CEO, said that as China is the biggest market in Asia, the signing agreements represent a good opportunity for Cambodia to significantly boost its agricultural exports.

"The signing gives new hope to Cambodian agroindustry and it has a lot of potential," Sawy told reporters at the signing ceremony.

The products involved include rice, natural rubber, cassava, wooden furniture, black pepper, mineral resources, electronic products, industrial equipment, clothing and ingredients for chicken soup.

According to the agreements, Cambodia will to export 60,000 tons of rubber latex, 500,000 tons of rice, one million tons of cassava and 3,500 tons of black pepper annually to China through the participating Chinese firms. Cambodia will import electronic products, industrial equipment, textiles and the chicken soup constituents. Serei Kosal, permanent vice chairman of One Village One Product, a government initiative that encourages regional products and production, said at the signing ceremony that the good trade relationship that has existed between China and Cambodia over the last decade will likely keep getting better. "We will see more and more Cambodian agricultural products exported to China in the near future," he said.

Bilateral trade with China jumped 73 percent last year to US\$2.49 billion, according to the Chinese embassy in Phnom Penh. While Cambodian exports only totalled US\$184 million, that number was still almost a 100 percent increase over 2010.



The number of foreign visitors to the Kingdom reached nearly a million in the first three months of this year. According to the Ministry of Tourism, there were 995,210 arrivals in the first quarter of 2012, up nearly 28 per cent over the same period last year.

The number visitors coming from ASEAN countries from January to March, 337,249, was also up significantly over the first three months of 2011, growing by 43 per cent. They accounted for 34 per cent of the total tourist numbers, while 37 per cent came from other Asian countries and Oceania, 21 per cent from Europe and almost 8 per cent from the Americas.

More than half of ASEAN visitors were from Vietnam. But the numbers from Cambodia's other neighbours grew as well. Thai tourist rates were up 64 per cent and the number of Lao tourists jumped 88 per cent to almost 50,000.

The easing of visa requirements played a big role in the growth, officials said. Almost 89,000 Chinese tourists visited the Kingdom last year, a number the government would like to see grow substantially. It aims to welcome at least 600,000 Chinese by 2015 and a million by 2020 by encouraging tour operators and establishments to make themselves more Chinese-friendly.

Despite the instability of the European and American economies, first quarter European tourist numbers risen almost 15 per cent over 2011 and almost 20 per cent more Americans came during the same period.

Tourism is a central pillar of the Cambodian economy. It generated 12 per cent of GDP in 2011 while creating about 350,000 direct jobs and millions of indirect jobs, the Ministry of Tourism said.

## TOURISM BY THE NUMBERS



## CONSTRUCTION TO BEGIN IN SEPTEMBER ON KAMPOT PORT



*New roads in Kampot aiming to boost tourism*

Kampot Port Co. has announced it will start construction of the US\$18 million Kampot Port in September, part of a plan to boost the region's trade and industrial profile.

When complete, the port will be 12 meters deep and able to handle ships carrying up to 20,000 tons.

The port will be part of the long-delayed Kampot Special Economic Zone (KSEZ), which was scheduled for completion in 2011 but which has been pushed back several years. Around US\$80 million is being invested in the zone.

The Kampot Port will likely handle different goods than the Sihanoukville Port further to the west. Kampot will process goods that are not normally loaded into containers, such as agricultural products and minerals. But it would also take some spill-over from Sihanoukville, which does not have enough capacity for all the boats passing through it.

According to KSEZ President Vinh Huor, the port and KSEZ will have good transportation links so that agricultural products from Battambang, Pursat and Kampong Chhnang can reach the port and destinations abroad more cheaply.

He said several garment and shoe factories from China, a car assembly plant, a cassava processing facility as well as a car tire factory are waiting to invest in KSEZ. He added that the port and special economic zone will strengthen the overall investment environment and diversify the region's economy.

Tourism is a main economic driver of the region now, but Kampot governor Khoy Khun Huor said the new development is important to reduce poverty in the region.



## SIHANOUKVILLE PORT EXPANSION SET TO ENTER FINAL PHASE AND FIRST STATE-OWNED SEZ INAUGURATED

The government will provide US\$85 million, thanks to a Japanese government loan, to complete the third and final phase of the Sihanoukville Autonomous Port expansion, which will enable the port to handle 50,000 tons of cargo at any given time, up from the current capacity of 20,000 tons, once the project is completed in 2015. Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen made the announcement of the completion plans at a speech to port workers on International Labour Day. The project will also see the deepening of the ocean bed from 8.5 meters to 13.5 meters so larger ships can be accommodated. More than US\$70 million has been spent so far on the expansion.

Project, which began in 2002, with at least half of the funds coming from the Japanese government. According to the prime minister, 2.44 million tons of goods passed through the port last year, compared to 284,000 tons in 1992. Sihanoukville Autonomous Port is one of two state-owned companies preparing for a listing on the Cambodia Securities Exchange alongside the Phnom Penh Water Supply Authority, whose stock began trading on April 18. Officials say the IPO should be ready in July.

### First state-owned SEZ inaugurated

The Kingdom's first state-owned special economic zone (SEZ) has been inaugurated by Prime Minister Hun Sen, who appealed to Japanese investors to set up businesses there. The Sihanoukville Port Special Economic Zone (SPSEZ) is located next to the Sihanoukville Autonomous Port, about 230 kilometres south-west of Phnom Penh. Construction on the 70-hectare zone began in October 2009 and cost US\$35 million, provided by Japan in the form of a low-interest loan. Speaking at the inauguration, the Prime Minister said that he believed Japanese investor would begin to build factories in the zone to manufacture goods for export, especially given the area's proximity to the port. According to the Council for the Development of Cambodia, the Kingdom has 21 SEZs, although media reports say fewer than 10 are operational. Special economic zones were designed to make it easier for companies to do business by having government authorities on site to help with administrative matters like clearances and permits. Businesses operating in the areas also enjoy benefits around income tax, customs and value-added taxes.

## FLIGHTS FROM SPAIN RAISE TOURISM OFFICIALS' TO BOOST FOR EU BUSINESS

The arrival of 1,290 Spanish tourists on four charter flights from Madrid is being seen as an encouraging sign that the tourism business from Europe is still robust, despite the economic downturn in the EU. The planes—three Airbus 330s and one Boeing 767 which landed on April 21—were some of the biggest to ever land at Siem Reap. "I hope it will attract more European tourists," Kong Sangvar, managing director of Orchestra Travel & Tours, told the Phnom Penh Post. Tourism is one of Cambodia's biggest

revenue generators and there are worries that the weak economies in the EU and the US could hurt tourist numbers and put a drag on the sector's growth. Although, experts say, tourism from Asia is playing an increasingly bigger role. There are currently no plans for direct flights from the Spanish capital, but Tith Vanna, chairman of Siem Reap's airport, said these kinds of charter flights often pave the way for the establishment of regular air connections.

## ASEAN 2012 SUMMIT ROUND UP

The ASEAN Leaders met and discussed with the representatives of the Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) from the ASEAN Member-States, at the Peace Palace, Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

During the Meeting, the CSOs Representatives presented their collective statement under the theme "We the People of ASEAN Joining Hands Together for an ASEAN Community" with their recommendations to the ASEAN Leaders.

Based on the outcomes of the ASEAN Civil Society Conference/ASEAN People's Forum 2012, they raised the issues of gender and development, labor, migrant workers and decent work, disability

and development, ethnic and minority groups, democracy, and human rights, good governance, natural resources, environment and climate change, livelihood improvement and food security, ICT, mass media, financial and banking infrastructure development, CSOs-state partnership, peace and security.

The ASEAN Leaders had agreed to convene annual meeting with the CSOs Representatives since 2005, which started in Malaysia.

### Outcomes of 20th ASEAN Summit (Plenary Session)

The ASEAN Heads of Government/ State and the Secretary-General of ASEAN gathered at the Peace Palace, Phnom Penh, Cambodia, for the 20th ASEAN Summit. Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo HUN SEN, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia and the Chairman of the 20th ASEAN Summit, presided over the Plenary Session.

The Plenary Session of the 20th ASEAN Summit opened at 10:45 am with the different topics and issues. The ASEAN Heads of Government/State discussed on the Progress of the Implementation of the ASEAN Charter and Roadmap for an ASEAN Community, the Progress of the Implementation of the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity (MPAC), the Phnom Penh Agenda on ASEAN Community Building, the Phnom Penh Declaration on "ASEAN: One Community, One Destiny," the Declaration on Drug-Free ASEAN 2015, the Global Movement of Moderates (GMM), G-20, Exchange of Views on Regional and International Issues, Implementation of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC) and the ASEAN Global Dialogue.

The ASEAN Leaders adopted the following documents, namely the Phnom Penh Agenda on ASEAN Community Building, the Phnom Penh Declaration on "ASEAN: One Community, One Destiny", the ASEAN Leaders' Declaration on Drug-Free ASEAN 2015 and the Global Movement of Moderates (GMM).

#### **Outcomes of the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting (AMM)**

The Foreign Ministers from all ASEAN Member States met today at the Peace Palace in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, for the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting (AMM). The Meeting was chaired by H.E. HOR Namhong, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Kingdom of Cambodia, and Chair of the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting.

The Foreign Ministers adopted the Rules for Reference of Non-Compliance to the ASEAN Summit and endorsed the draft Phnom Penh Agenda on ASEAN Community Building and the Draft ASEAN Declaration on Drug-Free ASEAN 2015, which will be further submitted to the ASEAN Leaders for adoption during the 20th ASEAN Summit in Phnom Penh.

The ASEAN Foreign Ministers welcomed the successful holding of the by-elections in Myanmar on 1st April 2012, and strongly supported the by-elections in Myanmar and its commitment to democracy. The Meeting also had a fruitful discussion on a number of issues, including regional and international issues.

#### **Outcomes of 10th Meeting of the ASEAN Coordinating Council (ACC)**

The ASEAN Foreign Ministers met at the Peace Palace, Phnom Penh, Cambodia, for the 10th Meeting of the ASEAN Coordinating Council (ACC). The Meeting was chaired by H.E. HOR Namhong, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation.

The Meeting considered and took note of the report of the Executive Director of the ASEAN Foundation to the 20th ASEAN Summit and endorsed the Phnom Penh Declaration on

"ASEAN: One Community, One Destiny" in which will be recommended to the 20th ASEAN Summit for adoption.

The ACC considered the preliminary report of the Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR) to ASEAN to the 10th Meeting of the ACC on the Report of Secretary-General of ASEAN on ASEAN's Challenge, the report of the Chair of Initiative for ASEAN Integration (IAI) Task Force, the report of the ACCC on Connectivity, the report of the Joint Meeting of the ASEAN SOM, SEOM and SOCA on the ASEAN Coordinating Council Working Group (ACCCWG).

During the Meeting, the ACC also considered and endorsed Malaysia's Concept Paper on the Global Movement of Moderates (GMM) and adopted the Rules of Procedure for the Interpretation of the ASEAN Charter and Terms of Reference of the ASEAN Coordinating Council Working Group.

Outcomes of 4th Meeting of the Working Group of the ASEAN SOM on the Regional Code of Conduct (COC) in the South China Sea. The 4th Meeting of the Working Group of the ASEAN SOM on the Regional Code of Conduct (COC) in the South China Sea was convened at the Peace Palace, Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

The Meeting was chaired by Mr. NONG Sakal, Deputy Director-General of the General Department of ASEAN, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Kingdom of Cambodia.

The Meeting exchanged views on the possible key elements for the Code of Conduct in the South China Sea. The Meeting also adopted the report of the 3rd Meeting of the ASEAN SOM Working Group on COC, convened in Viet Nam last February.

#### **Statement of the 11th AEM – EU Trade Commissioner Consultation**

1. The ASEAN Economic Ministers (AEM) and the EU Trade Commissioner held their Eleventh Consultation on 1 April 2012 in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. The 11th AEM-EU Trade Commissioner Consultation was cochaired by H.E. Dr. Cham Prasidh, Senior Minister and Minister of Commerce of Cambodia, and H.E. Mr. Karel De Gucht, the EU Commissioner for Trade.
2. The Ministers exchanged views on the current economic environment in the EU and noted the latest developments in ASEAN, in particular, the initiatives towards realising the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) by 2015. The EU Trade Commissioner welcomed the continuing progress in ASEAN's regional economic integration process and encouraged ASEAN in its efforts in driving the economic integration in East Asia.
3. The Ministers noted that despite the prevailing financial crisis in the EU, trade between ASEAN and the EU grew by 21.5% in 2010, amounting to US\$208.6 billion. The EU continued to be ASEAN's second largest trading partner and the biggest source of investment flow.
4. The Ministers stressed the importance of the WTO as a strong multilateral trading system, which has been successful in promoting free trade. The Ministers reiterated their commitment to this stable, transparent, and rules-based system and emphasized, as a priority, the need to ensure it is continuously strengthened and improved on to remain relevant. The Ministers welcomed the pragmatic approach currently employed to move the Doha Development Agenda forward in areas where progress is feasible, in particular trade facilitation. The Ministers agreed to work together towards the prompt conclusion of the Round and, building on the progress already made, for an ambitious and balanced outcome. The Ministers also reiterated their support for the accession of Lao PDR to the WTO at the earliest time possible. (General Department of ASEAN, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Kingdom of Cambodia)
5. Following the success of the first ASEAN-EU Business Summit in Jakarta, Indonesia last year, the second ASEAN-EU Business Summit was held on 1 April 2012 in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. In their dialogue with the business delegates on the recommendations of the Business Summit, the Ministers reiterated the important role of the private sector in the development and implementation of the ASEAN-EU trade agenda.
6. The Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to strengthen trade and investment between ASEAN and the EU through the activities endorsed under the ASEAN-EU Trade and Investment Work Programme. The Work Programme aims at enhancing economic cooperation as well as address emerging challenges and opportunities for enhanced trade and investment between ASEAN and the EU.
7. The Ministers were pleased to note the status of the implementation of the various ASEAN-EU economic cooperation programmes and encouraged greater use of these programmes for technical assistance and capacity-building requirements as ASEAN and EU deepen and broaden economic and trade relations.
8. The Ministers also agreed on the importance of enhancing ASEAN-EU cooperation in the area of trade facilitation. The Ministers noted the progress made by ASEAN in the ASEAN Single Window initiative. The Ministers agreed to look at the possibilities for region-to-region trade facilitation initiatives to further enhance intra- and inter-regional trade.
9. The Ministers acknowledged the support and contribution of H.E. Dr. Surin Pitsuwan, Secretary-General of ASEAN towards the AEM-EU Consultations and economic relations. Dr. Surin Pitsuwan was participating in the Consultations for the last time as Secretary-General of ASEAN as his term of office will expire at the end of 2012.

## AN AWARDED COUNTRY WITH PRISTINE TROPICAL ISLANDS WORLD'S SECOND FAVOURITE LONG - HAUL DESTINATION

Cambodia was voted the world's second favourite long-haul destination for British tourists at the Guardian, Observer and guardian.co.uk Travel Awards in the UK. Cambodia finished second to New Zealand and ahead of Chile (3); Vietnam (4); and Japan (5).



## KOH KONG ISLAND

Lonely Planet has listed Cambodia's Koh Kong province among its top-ten regions for 2010 in its Best in Travel 2010 publication.

Released in November 2009, Best in Travel 2010 is the publisher's fifth annual collection of the world's best journeys, destinations, and experiences for the coming year.

Located in south-west Cambodia, Koh Kong province has a long undeveloped coastline and a mountainous, forested and largely inaccessible interior which embraces part of the Cardamom Mountains and a section of Kirirom National Park.

Koh Kong is linked to Phnom Penh and Sihanoukville by National Route 4. The road is newly surfaced and has five new bridges across attractive rivers.

The Cardamom Mountains are one of Asia's most pristine ecological areas but also one of its most inaccessible, so this route provides a unique glimpse of Cambodia's least developed and unspoiled region.

Border crossing aside, travelling by road to Phnom Penh or Sihanoukville via this route is a scenic and enjoyable experience. Alternatively, taking the boat from Koh Kong town around

the coast to Sihanoukville can also be enjoyable, provided you don't try this in the rainy season when the seas can be quite rough. Koh Kong Island has one of the best beaches in south-east Asia. Day tours and overnight adventure trips to Koh Kong Island and other islands in Koh Kong province, as well as the Pream Krasop mangroves (Asia's largest), waterfalls, trekking, and 4 wheel-drive Cardamom Mountain tours are all available from Koh Kong Divers.



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