

VISIONS of CAMBODIA

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CAMBODIA TO BOOST CHINA RICE EXPORTS

Cambodia expects to export around 300,000 tonnes of milled rice to China per year, Minister of Commerce Cham Prasidh said during the 44th ASEAN Economic Ministers Meeting in Siem Reap.

Speaking to reporters after a meeting with Chinese Minister of Commerce Chen Deming, Cham Prasidh said that during the bilateral talk, both sides discussed how to export more cassava, corn and rice to China from Cambodia.

The Chinese minister also expressed the intention to promote investment from China to rice processing and garment in Cambodia.

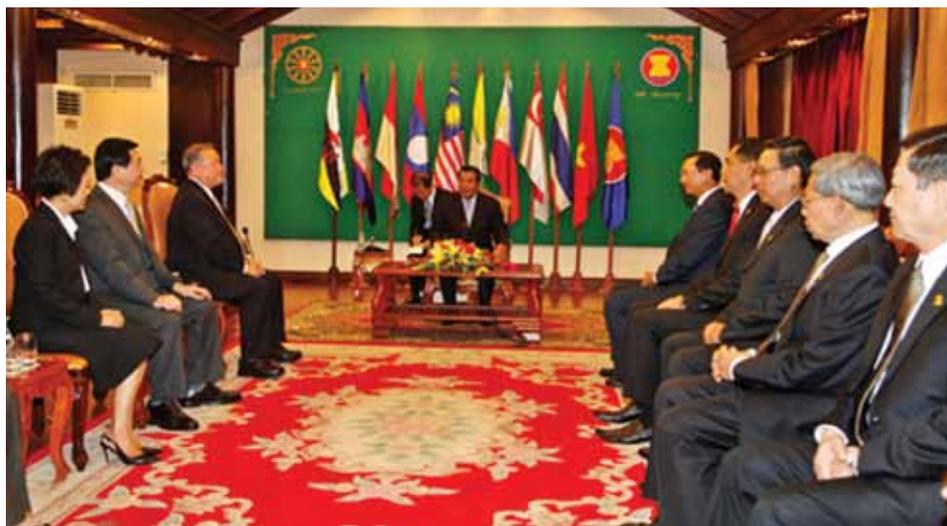
Cham Prasidh said that there are two big companies from China already investing in rice mills in Cambodia, which are expecting to be finished later this year.

"We expect to export soon. Actually, there is a Chinese company from Guangxi province of China that is in the final stage of completing the construction of the rice milling plant in Kampong Chhnang province. And, there is another company from Yunnan also investing, in Takeo province, to install a huge rice processing mill," he said.



Continued on page 2

PM SAMDECH TECHO HUN SEN PRESIDES OVER THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE 44TH AEM MEETING & 4TH CLMV ECONOMICS MINISTERS' MEETING



ASEAN needs to seek more funds from development partners to develop infrastructure and connectivity in order to narrow the gap among member states, said Prime Minister Hun Sen yesterday at the opening ceremony of the 44th ASEAN Economic Ministers meeting.

The Premier said strengthening the connectivity of ASEAN through physical and institutional infrastructure, and people to people connectivity, is the key to narrowing the development gap between member states and ensuring the successful integration of ASEAN.

Though the Asian Development Bank established the ASEAN Infrastructure Fund, which was launched in May this year, it is still small compared to the amount needed for true development, he said.

"Although the development gap among ASEAN members has been narrowed down over the years, it is still huge. We need to expedite the implementation of the master plan on ASEAN connectivity," he said, "We admit that the fund of around US\$500 million is still very small. It cannot sufficiently respond to the great need of the ASEAN connectivity," he said.

"Therefore, ASEAN Economic Ministers and ASEAN Finance Ministers need to take the necessary measures to attract more financing partners to increase the fund's size, especially the ASEAN plus three partners, the East Asia Summit (plus eight), and multilateral institutions," added the premier.

Continued on page 1

PM SAMDECH TECHO...

Cham Prasidh, the chair of 44th ASEAN Economic Ministers' meeting, told reporters after the opening that there are many initiatives and projects that have to be set in order before they can seek more funding from dialogue partners.

"We are not only seeking [more funds] from China, we are trying to find sources of development from other dialogue partners," he said.

"We are preparing the projects now and when we are ready we will seek partners to fund them. We have a lot of projects for ASEAN. We will try to seek funding from all dialogue partners. We cannot say how much will be sufficient at this time."

Prime Minister Hun Sen pushed ASEAN's economic leaders to consider bringing Hong Kong under the wing of the ASEAN Free Trade Agreement, which now encompasses the 10-nation bloc plus China, India, South Korea and Japan.

ASEAN was Hong Kong's second-largest trading partner after China in 2011, making China's so-called Special Administrative Region a candidate for accession. While some officials expressed approval for the plan, insiders said any attempt to include Hong Kong would be blocked by ASEAN "rivals".

During the opening of the 44th ASEAN Economic Ministers Meeting, the Premier called on member states to assess the impact and challenge of inducting Hong Kong.

Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines, Vietnam and Indonesia are among Hong Kong's top 20 trading partners.

Bilateral trade between Cambodia and Hong Kong rose by more than 22 per cent last year, reaching \$741 million, according to official data from the Hong Kong Trade Development Council.



Cambodia's total exports to Hong Kong surged by almost 90 per cent to \$42 million in 2011, up from \$22 million in 2010.

The Kingdom's imports from Hong Kong increased by 20 per cent to \$698 million. Garment and footwear accounted for nearly 80 per cent of Cambodia's exports to Hong Kong, although rice exports jumped by more than 130 per cent last year.

Hong Kong's main exports to Cambodia included telecommunications equipment, textiles, leather, manufactured tobacco, jewelry and electric machinery.

When deciding what aspects of their economies to prioritise to grow their economies, ASEAN's less developed countries, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam (CLMV), should look to the organisation's oldest members (the ASEAN-6) for guidance, according to a joint statement following the fourth CLMV Economics Ministers' Meeting.

As 2015 and the realisation of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) draws near, narrowing the development gap is a goal that

would benefit all members, as it would help ensure the success of the economic confederation, the statement added.

"The ASEAN-6 have provided us with the privilege of their example of how to integrate, how to put Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia and Myanmar on track. They have favoured us on these issues by showing us where we can accelerate our economies and fill the gap between the ASEAN-6 and the ASEAN-4. And that's just the beginning," said Nam Viyaketh, Laos's minister of industry and commerce and the chairman of the CLMV meeting.

"Until now we have only been using the opportunities ASEAN provides to connect our economies with the ASEAN-6," he continued.

Prime Minister Hun Sen said during the opening of 44th ASEAN Economic Ministers' Meeting that although the development gap among ASEAN members is still huge and requires all ministers to address it.

"Narrowing the gap is important. It is not only a pre-condition for ensuring ASEAN competitiveness and reducing poverty, but also for helping ASEAN achieve real regional integration as well as promoting its centrality for the integration with other regional and global economies," he said.

"This requires us to double our efforts to promote further growth and improve equitable distribution of the fruits of labour at both national and regional levels," Hun Sen said.

According to the CLMV's joint statement, the CLMV ministers said they did agree on the importance of the integration for the CLMV countries into ASEAN, in order to sustain projected growth.

They also endorsed the CLMV Action Plan 2013, which includes 15 priority activities on economic-trade, human resource development, and a co-ordination mechanism.

"The ministers also agreed to include additional activities, as the need arises, which would help to contribute to the promotion of equitable economic development of CLMV countries," the statement said.

CAMBODIA TO ...

Cham Prasidh said he hopes there will be more investment from China into the rice milling industry as Minister Chen Deming discussed.

"Minister Chen Deming is going to invite COFCO, one of China's biggest companies, to explore possible value-added opportunities to our rice by investing and transforming rice into food-stuffs. That's something we would like to invite COFCO to come and explore and also invest in Cambodia," he said.

The bilateral trade between Cambodia and China reached nearly \$2.5 billion in 2011 while leaders from the two countries pledged to double the amount by 2017.



"This is already the target. Both ministers have discussed ways and means to help each other promote more trade and more investment from China to Cambodia," Cham Prasidh said.

The relationship between ASEAN and China has become increasingly important, and a counterbalance to economic relations with the euro zone and the United States, analysts have said.

The economic bloc of Southeast Asian nations is now China's third-largest trading partner.

ASEAN SECRETARY GENERAL DR SURIN PITSUWAN SPEAKS TO "VISIONS OF CAMBODIA" ABOUT HOW ASEAN WILL INTEGRATE INTO THE ASEAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY IN 2015



Cambodia's Prime Minister Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen delivers his speech and hands over the ASEAN Lecture Poster to ASEAN Secretary General H.E. Surin Pitsuwan after he signed on it, at a reception on the occasion of the 45th ASEAN Day organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Cambodia on Aug. 8 in Phnom Penh.

Dr Pitsuwan, who is in Siem Reap this week for the 44th ASEAN Economic Ministers' Meeting speaks about the progress of the four newer ASEAN member states, especially Cambodia.

Q Surin, you have joined many meetings since the opening of the 44th ASEAN Economic Ministers Meeting – like the AEM-26th AFTA Council Meeting, AEM-15th AIA Council Meeting. Could you tell us of the outcomes of these meetings?

A Well, I think they worked on the various economic issues that would threaten closer cooperation on the economic agenda among ourselves.

They have discussed the issue of customs cooperation to make sure that goods can pass through borders more easily, to make sure that there would be facilitation along the borders. But, people of ASEAN will feel that they can buy and sell and they can move goods across the borders easier.

They hope that the leaders will be able to push through the endorsement of many of the initiatives that they have taken up here.

They are working on the comprehensive regional trade agreements with all the six dialogue partners so that we will have an agreement with each of them. But, the big one, they hope for that to be endorsed some time in November in Phnom Penh.

They are also concerned with the fact that not all people of ASEAN are benefiting from the cooperation, from the development of ASEAN and they want to make sure that everyone is included across ASEAN. So they want to make sure that everybody feels some benefit from ASEAN.

They're also working on the issue of what they called connectivity – meaning that all ASEAN countries are not connected from each other – structurally with road, rail, shipping, airlines, and other infrastructure. They also would like to see all the laws and regulations concerning movement of goods, services, investments, and people be integrated to aid facilitation.

These are the areas and ways that the peoples of ASEAN will benefit.

Q We have seen that the six ASEAN member states had already liberalised trade to zero tariffs, mean-while the four younger members need more time to prepare themselves. Can you offer an evaluation of their progress? Are they ready for the AFTA? Do you still see any challenges for them?

A Well, the four have flexibility because they still are not fixed, not all ready to open up of full competition. The older member states certainly understand and sympathise with that so there is flexibility among them as well. But, all of them are working towards the community by 2015.

I think, eventually, all four will join the other six in opening up in agreeing to cooperate on every level in every issues.

It's only what we call 'accommodation' for newer member states of ASEAN who are not at the same level of economic development to go step by step rather than opening up immediately, but it is still the goal.

But, you can see the world of ASEAN, in all six elder ASEAN members, you can see the recent evidence here in Siem Reap – that's tourism in Cambodia.

Q All the ASEAN Economic Ministers have been talking a lot about the ASEAN Economic Community which is going to materialised in 2015. As you are the Secretary General of ASEAN, what is the progress of the AEC?

Well, you know that we have a lot of instruments that we need in place first.

We have three years left, we have about 26 or 27 per cent of the issues remaining that need to do agreed on. I think that we have reached a point that we will work on.

Now, we have to concentrate on the implementation. We have to concentrate on the operation of realisation of those agreements on the ground in every country.

We may need something in terms of new laws, new legislation, or amendments of old laws, rules and regulations or even of those other things that we are working on.

Of course, it is not easy. But, of course, at the same time, it is overly difficult so we have to work hard – that's what we are doing.

Q Can you evaluate the progress of Cambodia complying with the other requirements of AEC? What else does Cambodia need to be do? What else needs to be done?

A Well, Cambodia is doing very well – it's very responsible, a contributing partner of ASEAN. And this year, Cambodia has a very, very important role to play – the role of chair. I think, Cambodia is doing everything it can – moving very quickly, very fast on the integration process. I think that the phase is fine.

SONG SAA PRIVATE ISLAND SIHANOUKVILLE ONE OF 10 BEST TRAVEL DESTINATIONS FOR 2012

When you close your eyes and think of paradise, what do you see? An island hideaway, with white-sand beaches kissed by gin-clear waters? A place covered in virgin rainforest, bordered by tropical reefs? If so, what you're thinking of is Song Saa, a private island resort in the warm sapphire waters of Koh Rong Archipelago in the Gulf of Thailand. Cambodia's islands nestle like dazzling natural jewels.

Song Saa Private Island lies secluded in this magnificent seascape, just 35 minutes by boat from the port of Sihanoukville. Most of the islands remain undeveloped – deserted oases of virgin rainforests, tropical reefs and glistening white beaches.



As a guest, you'll be among a handful of lucky adventurers to experience this beautiful, untouched paradise. Walk among old-growth rainforest, watch dazzling reef fish swim under your villa or see rare hornbills land on your balcony. In this private intimate setting, you will lose yourself in the natural world. No intrusions. No work. Nothing but play.

The 27 villas open with open-air showers, private verandas and pools, sunrise or sunset views and, in some cases, a private jetty where your speedboat transfer can dock. Fancy.

There's the obligatory spa and wellness centre on its own island, as well as nature trails through the forest, kayaking, snorkelling with the resort's marine biologists, and visits to local fishing villages. Or you could just sink into the

vast white day beds, sip cocktails, and wonder what executive chef Neil Wager is going to knock you up for dinner, served in the restaurant on stilts in the ocean.

Cambodia has been on the up as a tourist destination for a number of years, as more and more of us have been drawn to a country that has so much to offer – beaches, adventure, exciting food, friendly people – but is still coming to terms with its potent, often tortured past. But it's never before had anything like Song Saa: a high-end oasis of tranquillity which will, the owners hope, put Cambodia firmly on the luxury travel map.

Need to know: Cambodians are used to shaking tourists' hands in the Western fashion, but you'll win points by pressing your hands together in prayer and bowing when you meet locals. The best time to visit Cambodia is our winter, when it's less humid, and while you can visit at any time of the year, it can get pretty hot and sticky from April to June. If you want to treat yourself to a night or two at Song Saa after exploring the rest of the country, you can fly from Siem Reap, the gateway to Angkor Wat, in an hour, three times a week, for around £50.

FOUR CAMBODIAN ANCIENT TEMPLES THAT AREN'T ANGKOR WAT

Unlike the UNESCO site at Siam Reap, you can have these ancient beauties all to yourself

At the turn of the millennium, when Cambodia was still reeling from decades of civil war, one could spend hours walking around Angkor Wat Archaeological Park without seeing a single foreigner.

But Cambodia today – and the 12th-century temple complex that sits at its geographic, historic and spiritual heart – is awash with tourists.

More than 640,000 visited in the first three months of 2012, with archaeologists claiming the UNESCO World Heritage Site is being loved to death.

Yet there are dozens of Angkor-era temple complexes in Cambodia that receive a fraction of the visitors Angkor Wat gets, some of which you can have all to yourself.

These are four of the most impressive.



The square stone walls, lion sculptures and octagonal towers of Sombor Prei Kuk are fighting a losing battle against the jungle.

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