

VISIONS of CAMBODIA

ISSUE 16: 11-17 APRIL 2016

WB: CAMBODIA'S GROWTH REMAINS ROBUST IN FACE OF CHALLENGING GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT

Cambodia's real growth is projected to remain healthy at 6.9 percent in 2016, said a World Bank's East Asia and Pacific Update on 11 April.

Cambodia is one of the several small economies, including Lao PDR, Mongolia, and Papua New Guinea, that will continue to be affected by low commodity prices and weaker external demand, but Cambodia's growth is in a healthy projection, it pointed out.

Continued on page (2)

SKY LAND, KAMWORKS INVEST US\$12.5 MILLION IN CAMBODIA'S SOLAR POWER SECTOR

SKY LAND, a subsidiary of 7NG, in collaboration with the Netherland-based Kamworks Company, has invested some US\$12.5 million to supply a five-megawatt solar power in Vihear Sour Special Economic Zone of the 7NG development project.

The solar deal between the two companies was signed here on 10 April by Oknha Srey Chanthorn, Director of SKY LAND, and Mr. Jeroen Verschelling, Chairman and Co-founder of Kamworks Solar.

Continued on page (2)

PRIME MINISTER HUN SEN'S GREETINGS TO ALL CAMBODIANS ON THE KHMER NEW YEAR 2560 BE



Independence Monument, Phnom Penh

Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia, has extended his warmest greetings and best wishes to all Cambodian compatriots living in the country and overseas on the occasion of the upcoming Traditional Khmer New Year (the start of the Buddhist Year 2560 BE, the Year of Monkey), to be held from 13th -16th April 2016.

Samdech Techo Hun Sen said in his new year message this year that the celebrations of Traditional Khmer New Year are taking place while the Royal Government of Cambodia in the fifth legislature has reached half of its term and carried out the in-depth reform in all domains with a view to promoting the sustainable economic growth to be ready to implement the ASEAN Economic Community from 2016.

Last year, the Royal Government of Cambodia did its best to overcome all obstacles and challenges, both inside and outside the country, to develop a political system that can maintain peace, political stability, security and social order in the country, said the premier in his five-page message to his compatriots on the occasion of the Khmer Traditional New Year (Year of Monkey).

Samdech Techo Hun Sen also highlighted achievements in various areas, especially education, physical infrastructure construction, power generation, industrial development, agricultural production, clean water supply and sanitation, construction, tourism, and public financial management.

Continued on page (2)

PRIME MINISTER HUN SEN'S GREETINGS...

All achievements obtained by the royal government in the past are thanked to the right policy with the support from all members of the legislative and executive bodies, civil servants at all levels, armed forces and all citizens despite the difference in their political tendencies, origins, religious beliefs and social roles, as well as with support from the friendly countries and international communities.

The per capita income reached US\$1,238 in 2015, up from US\$1,136 a year earlier, while the poverty rate decreased from 47.8 percent in 2007 to 14 percent in 2014 and further went down in the following years.

By the end of 2015, there are more than 40,000 factories across Cambodia, employing a total of over 1,000,000 workers. Of the total number, he added, more than 1,400 factories are heavy industries with about 860,000 workers, and 39,000 are small enterprises and handicrafts with some 194,000 workers pointed out Prime Minister Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen in his five-page message to his compatriots on the occasion of the Khmer Traditional New Year.

In March 2015, the Royal Government of Cambodia adopted the Industrial Development Policy (IDP) 2015-2025 which is the country's new growth strategy to further promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth in the long run.

The volume of rice production last year in both rainy and dry seasons reached the total

estimation of over 9 million tons, of which the rice surplus was around 4.5 million tons or approximated 2.9 million tons of husked rice for exportation. Last year, over 500,000 tons of rice was exported.

In term of tourism sector, last year, there were over 4.7 million international tourists visiting Cambodia, allowing this sector to create jobs for 620,000 people. In the construction sector, some 2300 construction projects were approved with the total investment of US\$ 3 billion.

In this new year, the royal government will make a further effort to maintain peace, political stability, security and social order; to protect the constitution and all attainments obtained by the Royal Government and its citizens; and to prevent all acts aiming at creating chaos, social instability in the country; as well as to continue promoting reform in all domains as stated in the Rectangular Strategy-Phase III with a strong commitment to enhance good governance of all ministries and institutions, both at national and sub-national levels, and to provide public services with effectiveness, transparency, quality, timeliness so as to gain trust from the citizens.

Samdech Techo Hun Sen extended, in his message, the New Year greetings and best wishes to His Majesty Norodom Sihamoni, King of Cambodia, and Her Majesty Queen-Mother Norodom Monineath Sihanouk as well. ■

SKY LAND, KAMWORKS INVEST US\$12.5

It would take two years to develop the project of generating the 5-megawatt solar power, said Oknha Srey Chanthorn, adding that it will contribute to reducing pollution and the electricity cost of about 10-15 per cent lower than the electricity produced by generators.

The project will begin with 5 megawatts, and for the next step it will increase to 7-8 megawatts depending on the real demand, he added.

Solar power can be extracted for daily use with lower price than energy from hydropower dams and it does not impact the

environment, according to Mr. Jeroen Verschelling.

Kamworks has been investing in Cambodia for ten years with a total of more than 40 skilled workers and 10 solar system skilled workers, said Mr. Verschelling. ■



WB: CAMBODIA'S

Growth remains strong, estimated to have reached 7.0 percent in 2015, led by the garment and the construction sectors, according to the latest Cambodia Economic Update. In 2016, growth is expected to be around 6.9 percent, making Cambodia one of the fastest growing countries in East Asia, it underlined.

There are downside risks to this outlook which may include continued appreciation of the U.S. dollar, slower economic recovery in Europe, and spillovers from a slowdown in the Chinese economy and potential labor market issues, said the report, adding that given the narrow production and export base and concentrated export markets in the European Union and U.S., the country is exposed to increased competition which gradually constrains growth.

"Scaling up public investments to address key infrastructure bottlenecks and further improving the business climate will be important for Cambodia to remain competitive," said Mr. Alassane Sow, the World Bank's Country Manager for Cambodia.

According to the report, following a slowdown in early 2015, garment exports rebounded in the second half of the year, ending at a nominal year-on-year growth rate of 12.3 percent, compared with 9.2 percent in 2014. Construction remained a main engine of growth in 2015, driven by sustained foreign direct investment into the sector. Growth in the tourism sector remained moderate despite a recovery in tourism activities in neighboring countries, particularly in Thailand and Vietnam. The total tourist arrivals in 2015 grew by 6.1 percent (reaching 4.78 million visitors), compared with 6.9 percent growth in 2014. Slow improvement in rice yields largely caused by less favorable weather conditions and depressed agriculture commodity prices constrained growth in the agriculture sector.

The Cambodia Economic Update highlights how the financial sector has supported economic growth in Cambodia over the past few years.

Domestic credit accelerated by 27 percent year-on-year in 2015. In the current context, strengthening banking supervision would be advisable to safeguard financial stability and sustainability. Recent measures such as the increase in capital requirements for financial institutions are welcome developments. ■

CAMBODIA WELCOMES MORE WATER DISCHARGE FROM CHINA



Cambodia's newly-appointed Foreign Minister Prak Sokhonn on 12 April welcomed the news that China has released water into Mekong River for the third time from Jinghong Hydropower Station in Yunnan Province to downstream Mekong River from April 11, 2016 to help alleviate the impacts of drought sustained by countries at downstream areas of the Mekong River, including Cambodia.

The minister made the remarks during a meeting with Chinese Ambassador to Cambodia Bu Jianguo, Chum Sounry, a spokesman for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, told reporters.

During the talks, Bu conveyed congratulations from Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi to Prak Sokhonn on his recent appointment as the foreign minister of Cambodia.

The two sides also discussed ways on further enhancing bilateral relations and exchanging views on regional and global issues. Downstream Mekong River countries include Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam.

It should be noticed that the People's Republic of China has already discharged water twice between January and April 10, 2016 for emergency use by the Mekong countries, it added.

Chinese News Agency Xinhua quoted Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mr. Lu Kang as saying that China decided to continue discharging water starting April 11 and last until the end of low water period. ■

ELCS GENERATE SOME US\$5 MILLION AS STATE INCOME

The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) earned a total of some US\$5 million as state income from the economic land concessions (ELCs) last year.

The figure was shared at a recent power transfer ceremony of Minister of MAFF held under the presidency of Deputy Prime Minister H.E. Yim Chhay Ly.

H.E. Ouk Rabun, outgoing MAFF Minister, said 1.4 million ha of ELCs located in 18 provinces throughout Cambodia have been granted to 173 companies.

Of the companies, 122 have registered at the ministry, 36 at the provincial level, and 15 have not yet registered, he pointed out.

According to H.E. Ouk Rabun who became Minister of Rural Development, the contracts with 23 companies have been revoked. ■

"TRODDI", A FOLK DANCE ON KHMER NEW YEAR DAY

"Troddi" (Troddi) is one of the much-liked Khmer folk dances performed most often on the occasion of Cambodia's traditional New Year "Chaul Chhnam Thmei" to drive out all bad lucks in the old year and wish for the good in the New Year, and on some big festivals.

It also used to be performed at praising-for-rain rite when long spells of drought struck a locality.

Actually, nobody knows when and where "Troddi" first appeared in Cambodia. According to one hypothesis it might be linked to people's belief that if a wild animal got in the village, it would take from them good lucks, so they gathered, sprayed some kinds of fragrance and spread pigments on the animal asking it to give them back good lucks. Maybe in this process "Troddi" dance was created with performers, representing different animals such as red deer, bull, peacock, who would appear before the villagers for being sprayed with fragrance and painted with pigments.

In so doing, the people believed that if a real animal comes, no harm will be done to them. From then on, the dance was performed every year.

Yet, according to some documents, the "Troddi" dance took origin in 'Samre' national – an ethnic group – living together with the Khmers on the old land of "Sovannaphum" (golden land) when it was not influenced by Indian civilization (from the 1st century).

Then, the dance has become a heritage of the Cambodian people, worthy of note is that now a small number of 'Samre' people are still living in the northern part of Tonle Sap Lake.

In the former time, the "Troddi" dance was brought to perform on every New Year occasion before the kings and royal families to wish them the Happy New Year. This also explains why "Troddi" is still very popular particularly in Siem Reap province and the vicinity of the former capital city of "Angkor Wat" which was built from the 9th to the 13th century.

The number of dancers varies according to the people's wish, but usually about 16, including four main dancers, two female and two male, one as a stag which represents evil forces, a 'Dangdol' (a person who carries some kind of musical instrument), four 'Kanhche' (person who clowns here and there), two giants, two monsters, two drummers, a hunter and some others. ■



អង្គរសង្ក្រាន្ត

Angkor Sankranta is organized each year to celebrate the Khmer Traditional New Year on 13 – 16 April in Siem Reap province, home to the famous Angkor temples. It is aimed to show off the solidarity of the Cambodian family as a whole and to contribute to maintaining Cambodian tradition, culture and custom.

This year, beside religious ceremonies, art performances, popular games, chess competition, Labokator (a Khmer martial art), ox cart races, Tean Prot (Tug-of-War), etc., there is the display of two giant traditional cakes, Num Treap Bay (sticky rice with toasted sesame seeds) and Num Ple Ay (Glutinous rice balls filled with palm sugar).

According to Cambodia Chef Association, some 1,000 kilogrammes of sticky rice, 1,000 kilogrammes of sticky rice flour, 500 kilogrammes of palm sugar, 1,000 litres of coconut milk, 200 brown (mature) coconuts, 500 kilogrammes of banana leaves, 30 kilogrammes of sesame and 5 kilogrammes of beans have been set aside to make the two giant cakes.

National and international visitors can taste the two giant cakes during the Angkor Sankanta event.

Last year's event featured a four-ton Nom Ansoom, a traditional Cambodian rice cake made from sticky rice, mug bean, and pork, which won on April 13, 2015 a Guinness World Record, a giant palm leaf hat of 191.5 kilogrammes; a giant Angrot (a fish catching tool) of 5.5 meters height; a giant palm juice container of 15 liters, and so on.



ANGKOR SANKRANTA

Siem Reap, Cambodia