

VISIONS of CAMBODIA

ISSUE 48: 01 - 06 DECEMBER 2015

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY PASSES DRAFT BUDGET LAW 2016

The annual budget of some 4.3 billion U.S. dollars in the government spending for 2016 was approved by the National Assembly (NA) in a session held on 30 November 2015 under the Chairmanship of Samdech Akka Moha Ponhea Chakrei Heng Samrin, President of NA.

On the occasion, Prime Minister Hun Sen said the draft Budget Law 2016 was elaborated while the country has been benefiting from peace, national unity, political stability and development.

Continued on page (2)

ICC-ANGKOR HOLDS 25TH TECHNICAL SESSION AND 22ND PLENARY SESSION

The International Coordinating Committee for the Safeguarding and Development of the Historic Site of Angkor (ICC-Angkor) organized its 25th Technical Session and its 22nd Plenary Session on 2-3 December in Siem Reap province, home to Angkor temples, under the presidency of H.E. Sok An, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister in charge of the Office of the Council of Ministers.

Continued on page (2)

HIS MAJESTY KING NORODOM SIHAMONI IN PARIS FOR CLIMATE TALKS



His Majesty Norodom Sihamoni, King of Cambodia, attends the opening ceremony of the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), in Paris, France, on 30 November 2015

“Climate change is the major challenge of our time and we have experienced its effects over the past few years,” His Majesty Norodom Sihamoni, King of Cambodia, declared in the opening ceremony of the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 21) in Paris, France, on 30 November 2015.

“The main aspects of human development, such as agriculture, food security, access to water, health, migration and poverty are under the threat of climate change. The seventeen objectives of sustainable development recently adopted by UN General Assembly might be compromised,” His Majesty the King said.

“Currently, in Cambodia, farmers are struggling with changing seasonal rainfall patterns and prolonged periods of drought, which affect agricultural production and food security,” His Majesty the King continued, “The frequency and intensity of natural disasters have never ceased to increase.”

“The 2013 floods have cost my country 2 per cent of GDP, affected almost 380,000 households in 20 of our 25 provinces, and claimed 168 lives – the majority of which were children,” he stressed.

A recent UN study places the Kingdom among the top 10 countries most affected by weather-related disasters.

Continued on page (2) 1

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY PASSES....

The Royal Government has continued to solve all national and social issues peacefully and honestly, and to strengthen democracy, rule of law and human rights respect, he added.

During the session, Finance Minister Aun Porn Moniroth said that the 2016's government spending was equal to 21.31 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and was up 16.1 percent compared to the 2015's expenditure.

"The 2016 budget law is to ensure the economic growth of around 7 per cent per annum," he said, adding "the budget is also to contribute to the implementation of the recently-launched Industrial Development Policy 2015-2025."

The country will allocate 1.43 billion U.S. dollars of the budget for investing in public, ports, projects such as roads, bridges,

railroads irrigation system, and other economy-driven projects, said the draft bill.

It added that the ministry of education will get 500 million U.S. dollars, up 28 percent year-on-year and the ministry of defense will get 383 million U.S. dollars, up 17 percent year-on-year.

The ministry of health will receive 274 million U.S. dollars, up 8.6 percent, it said. In the draft law, the government will be allowed to borrow up to 961 million U.S. dollars from foreign countries and development partners in 2016.

The five-chapter and 16-article draft law was approved by the Council of Ministers on 12 October, 2015.

Sixty-six lawmakers unanimously approved the draft law after a half-day debate despite the opposition lawmakers boycotted the session. ■

CAMBODIA HOLDS 25TH TECHNICAL....



The two-day event was co-chaired by Mr. Yuji Kumamaru, Ambassador of Japan to Cambodia, and H.E. Jean-Claude Poinboeuf, Ambassador of France to Cambodia.

According to a press release of the Authority for Protection and Management of Angkor and the Region of Siem Reap (APSARA), the meetings followed up the implementation of recommendations of the 24th Technical Session and the 21st extraordinary meeting of ICC-Angkor on sustainable preservation, restoration and development affairs.

The preservation, archeological research and training as well as new reports on various projects were also the key items of the agenda.

ICC-Angkor was established in 1993 to protect, preserve and develop this vast cultural heritage site. It was set up in the wake of the Tokyo Conference in 1993 and confirmed by the Paris Conference in 2003.

ICC-Angkor has in total 37 member countries from the five continents. 13 international organizations also took part in the ICC-Angkor works.

In addition, the Government of Japan has decided to provide Cambodia with appropriate heavy equipment for use on the restoration of the Western Causeway at Angkor Wat Temple worth in total 94,700,000 Yen, equivalent to US\$766,588.

According to a press release of Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Cambodia Office, the renovation project will not only improve the appearance of Angkor Wat Temple and protect the structure of the Western Causeway for the future, but also provide a safer environment for tourists.

Since 1994, Japan has donated over US\$24 million to restore and rehabilitate Cambodia's Angkor Wat Temple, one of the most attractive world heritage sites. ■

HIS MAJESTY...

His Majesty The King further emphasized that we must simultaneously tackle poverty, grow our economy, develop our industries, improve the quality of our human resources and social services, securing our energy supply, and remain competitive in a regional and global environment. In the framework of this reform program, Cambodia has adopted clear objectives for the fight against climate change, which are set forth in its planned Contribution determined at the national level. His Majesty The King also went on to identify the Cambodia's need for a technology transfer agreement as well as adaptation and mitigation financing in order to meet its emissions targets. Appropriate mechanisms will also be essential to stimulate private investment in research and in renewable energies, energy efficiency, and protection of the forests, the resilient infrastructures and other technologies for adaptation.

"Our meeting must lead to a historic agreement on the reduction of emissions of "greenhouse gas" by the developed and industrialized countries, and on the voluntary commitments, financial and technological, for the Least Developed Countries," he said. "Let us deliver today the bold leadership that our people and future generations legitimately expect." ■

UNESCO RECOGNIZES TUG-OF-WAR AS INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE

Cambodia's Teanh Prot (Tug-of-War), a popular recreational game, has been listed as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) after studying Cambodia's request for one year.

The recognition was made during the 10th Session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage held from 30 November to 04 December, 2015 in Windhoek, Namibia.

H.E. Hap Touch, Director General of Cultural Technique at the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts, said the ministry has conducted research and compiled documents related to the tug-of-war in 2013 and sent a request to UNESCO to include the game on the Intangible Cultural Heritage List in 2014.

Tug-of-war of other three countries such as the Philippines, South Korea and Vietnam were also inscribed as Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. ■

CAMBODIA AIRPORTS TO BOOST SIHANOUK TOURISMS

Cambodia Airports, the private company that manages the Kingdom's three international airports, announced on 4 November that it will provide monetary incentives to airlines that bring foreign visitors to the coastal city in a bid to increase tourist arrivals and promote Sihanoukville as a beach destination.

Speaking at the Sihanoukville Showcase 2015, Patriline Tay, marketing and sales director at Cambodia Airports, said that starting next year airlines will be given \$10 per foreign passenger, up to a maximum of \$1,000 per flight.

She added that the incentive, effective January 2016, would only apply to scheduled international flights departing Sihanoukville. The offer would be valid on flights operating as little as once a week, provided the schedule covered an entire season.

Three airlines currently operate international scheduled flights to Sihanoukville, according to Pich Sopontara, routes development manager at Cambodia Airports.

Cambodia Angkor Air, the Kingdom's flagship carrier, operates a weekly flight from the coastal city to Tianjin, while Korean-Cambodian airline Sky Angkor Air has a twice-weekly charter flight to Hangzhou, he said.

The Chinese carrier Lucky Air has launched twice-weekly direct flights from Kunming to Sihanoukville.

Kunming-based Lucky Air, part of Hainan Airlines Group, has a fleet of 25 aircraft. It operates a Boeing 737-800 on the 1,600-



kilometre flight between Kunming in southern China and Sihanoukville on Cambodia's southern coast.

Lucky Air's route expansion to Cambodia, carried out in line with China's "Belt and Road" initiative, recognizes Sihanoukville as a "rising destination" whose beaches attract Chinese leisure tourists, said Kang Chunjian, vice general manager of sales and marketing at Lucky Air.

Eng Molina, deputy general manager for sales and commercial division at Cambodia Angkor Air, welcomed the new incentive, which he said would help support airlines in reducing their costs and increasing their revenues.

"These kinds of incentives will help motivate Angkor Air to have more direct international flights to other places as well," Molina said.

He added that Angkor Air was planning to launch direct flights from Ho Chi Minh City to Sihanoukville in 2016.

Sihanoukville International Airport received 43,400 passengers in 2014, a 120 per cent increase compared with a year earlier, according to Cambodia Airports data. The company projects indicate passenger volume will increase 133 per cent this year. ■

CAMBODIA HOLDS CAMBUILD 2015

Cambodia Biggest International Building and Construction Exhibition (CAMBUILD) 2015 was officially opened on 4 Decemeber at Koh Pich Convention and Exhibition Center under the presidency of Senior Minister and Minister of Land Management, Urban Planning and Construction H.E. Im Chhun Lim.

Speaking on the occasion, Oknha Pung Kheav Se, Chairman of the Cambodia Constructors Association said the expo attracted both local and international companies to display some 150 kinds of products on 250 stands.

This three-day event shows the progress of construction sector in Cambodia, especially the development of skyscrapers, he added.

H.E. Im Chhun Lim said that thanks to political stability, security and social order, free and open market economy, as well as support from the Royal Government of Cambodia, the country's economy has seen a remarkable growth in the past few years, and the investments in agriculture, construction, garment, tourism have been booming. ■

NBC: CAMBODIA'S ECONOMIC GROWTH TO REACH AROUND 7% THIS YEAR

Cambodia's economy has grown noticeably with the expected increase by 6.9 percent in 2015, said Governor of the National Bank of Cambodia (NBC) H.E. Chea Chanto at the inauguration ceremony of new building of NBC's branch in Kampot province early this week.

With favorable peace, political stability, social order and macroeconomic stability, the country's economy has grown with a remarkable speed, underlined H.E. Chea Chanto.

He attributed the growth to the increase in the export of garment industry, and to the construction and tourism sectors, he continued.

H.E. Chea Chanto further said that banking system in Cambodia has been fulfilling actively its functions in collecting and distributing funds for the development in all sectors by giving more capital to enterprises, companies and small-scale businesses for investment projects and productivity expansion with acceptable interest rates.

According to a new report, he added, around 46 percent of people aged over 15 get official financial service whereas five years ago, it was only 19 percent. ■

BUSINESS STRENGTHENED BETWEEN CAMBODIA & CHINA

The Sichuan-Cambodia business forum was held on 30 November, aimed to broaden trade and investment ties between Cambodia and China, officials said.

The half-day forum brought together business executives from 40 enterprises in southwest China's Sichuan Province and about 50 Cambodian company representatives.

The forum was crucial to further strengthen friendly relations, trade and investment cooperation between Cambodia and China, said Chhuon Dara, secretary of state of the Cambodian Ministry of Commerce.

Trade volume between Cambodia and China is expected to reach nearly 4 billion U.S. dollars in 2015 and 5 billion U.S. dollars in 2017, according to the officials. ■

PREK TOAL

A NEW RAMSAR SITE IN CAMBODIA



Prek Toal, located in the heart of Tonle Sap, has been designated as a Wetland of International Importance (Ramsar Site) by the Royal Government of Cambodia and recognized by the Secretariat of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands.

The declaration of Cambodia's fourth Ramsar Site was made on 2 October, 2015 by Prime Ministerial Sub-Decree, said a press release of the Ministry of Environment.

"Recognizing Prek Toal as a Ramsar Site not only draws attention to the international importance of this wetland, but it will be a bridge for Cambodia to nominate more wetland as Ramsar Sites in the future", said H.E. Say Samal, Minister of the Environment.

According to the press release, Prek Toal, South-East Asia's largest water bird colony, covers a total land area of 21,342 hectares. This is the main habitat and breeding place of more than 50,000 water birds of at least ten globally threatened species, including Spot-billed Pelicans, Greater Adjutants, storks and darters.

Some 30 percent of Cambodia is covered by wetlands and the majority of them have been identified as globally important, owing to the populations of threatened species that they support.

The other three Cambodia's Ramsar Sites are Boeung Chhmar and Associated River System and Floodplain, Koh Kapik and Associated Islets, and Middle Stretches of Mekong River North of Stung Treng province. Worldwide, there are 2,240 Ramsar Sites.

