

VISIONS of CAMBODIA

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CAMBODIA, EU SUCCESSFULLY CONCLUDE THE 8TH JOINT COMMITTEE MEETING



The 8th EU-Cambodia Joint Committee Meeting, held in Brussels in March under the co-chairmanship of H.E. Ouch Borith, Secretary of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, and Mr. Ugo Astuto, Director for South and Southeast Asia of the European External Action Service, was successfully concluded.

The meeting was preceded by the subgroups on development cooperation, on trade and on institution building, administrative reform, legal and judicial reform, governance and human rights, according to an EU's press release.

Both sides welcomed the meeting as timely and held frank and in-depth exchanges on a broad range of bilateral issues, including political developments in Cambodia and the EU, it pointed out.

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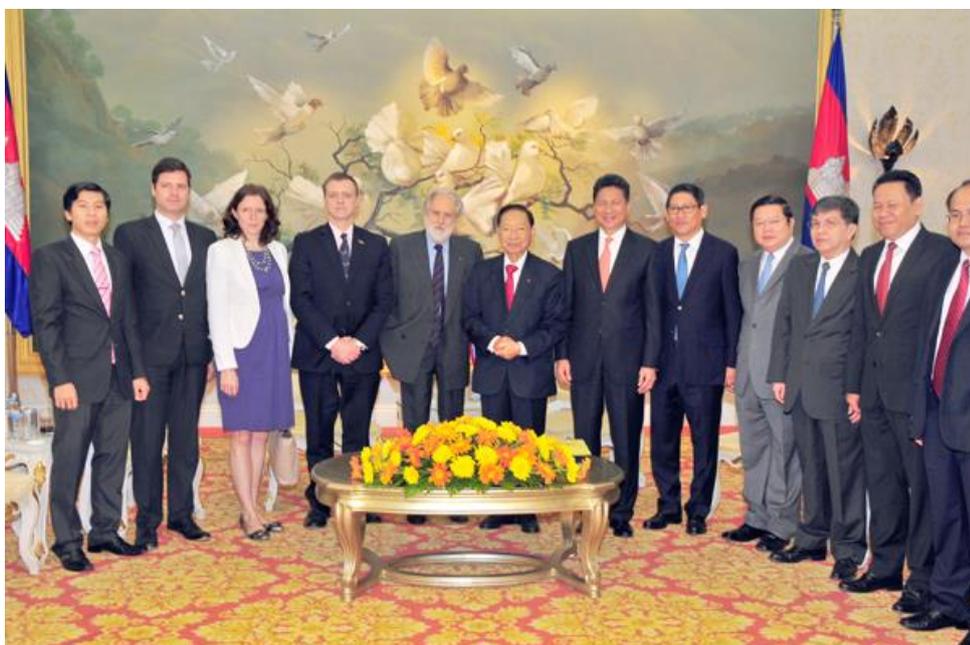
CAMBODIA'S TRADE WITH EU AND ASEAN



The total trade volume between Cambodia and the EU Bilateral trade between EU and Cambodia reached 3.9 billion U.S. dollars last year, up 34 percent year-on-year, said the EU statement. Cambodian exports to the EU rose by 30 percent to 3.34 billion U.S. dollars last year.

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UK TRADE ENVOY VISITS CAMBODIA TO STRENGTHEN TRADE, INVESTMENT TIES



Permanent Deputy Prime Minister H.E. Keat Chhon (centre, right) meets with the visiting British Trade Envoy for Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam, Lord David Puttnam (centre, left) in Phnom Penh in early March 2014.

British Prime Minister's Trade Envoy Lord Puttnam has visited Cambodia from March 4 to 7 to strengthen bilateral trade and investment relations.

Lord Puttnam said in his statement that he is delighted to visit Cambodia for the first time as David Cameron's Trade Envoy to understand more about trade and investment environment in Cambodia, and wishes to boost commercial, educational, cultural and political relations between the two kingdoms.

During his visit, Lord Puttnam has called on Prime Minister Hun Sen, Education Minister Hang Choun Naron, and Commerce Minister Sun Chanthol, to discuss business and education opportunities and challenges.

He also met British business representatives and will host a film screening of 'The Killing Fields' at Meta House.

Speaking at a lunch hosted by the British Chamber of Commerce in Cambodia on the third and penultimate day of his trip, Mr. Puttnam said that the Cambodian government had adopted an admirable approach to stamping out corruption that focused on changing people's attitudes and values.

"I don't think I've ever been anywhere...where I have received such an absolute answer from government on the issues of stopping and stamping out corruption," Mr. Puttnam told.

"I find the commitment and determination here to confine it and root it out is very real. Now, in five year's time I might be found to be a complete fool, but I don't think I will be, I really don't think I will be."

Lord Puttnam, an Oscar-winning film producer, who produced the 1984 film "The Killing Fields" and now serves as the U.K.'s trade envoy to Cambodia, praised the government for its commitment to ending corruption and called on the media to develop a more constructive role as the government seeks to develop the country.

Answering a question after his speech about the legacy of his film, Mr. Puttnam relayed a message he said he had passed on to university students who had attended a screening of "The Killing Fields" night.

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THE 17TH GOVERNMENT-PRIVATE SECTOR FORUM



Prime Minister Hun Sen chairs the 17th Government-Private Sector Forum.

The Government-Private Sector Forum was held after it has had a hiatus for two consecutive years because of Cambodia's ASEAN chairmanship in 2012 and general election in 2013.

The Government-Private Sector Forum is an enlarged cabinet meeting consisting of members of the Royal Government of Cambodia and the heads of the 10 working groups of the Forum delivering reports and making requests to the prime minister.

The dialogue was presided over by Prime Minister Hun Sen with the participation of about 400 people who are government officials, business representatives, diplomatic corps and development partners.

The forum provided a reliable dialogue mechanism for consultation between the government and the private sectors on investment climate issues ranging from long range policy to day-to-day operations to encourage private sector initiatives.

Permanent Deputy Prime Minister Keat Chhon and also the forum's Coordinator said the forum was convened in a context of continued peace, national unity, and political stability and all branches of Cambodia, viz. legislative, executive and judicial branches, are operating normally.

"This forum is obligated to spell out key policy and strategy outputs for addressing major challenges to Cambodia in the context of its membership in the ASEAN Economic Community 2015," said he stressed.

After the presentation of requests from the working groups, Prime Minister Hun Sen chose 13 which he announced he would see implemented in the next month, including tax holidays for companies milling rice, unidentified incentives for companies importing materials used to make luggage, and the creation of new immigration counters at various checkpoints.

Last but not least, the president of the Garment Manufacturers Association in Cambodia (GMAC) expressed thanks to the government for restoring peace and order in early January and bringing a stop to the illegal behaviour of certain minority trade unions. ■

UK TRADE ENVOY...



"I said to the students...whether they like it or not, they are forever the children of the Killing Fields—forever. What they have to decide is whether the Killing Fields were a watershed upon which this extraordinary country is willing to rise, and be enormously successful, or will it just always remain a terrible dark memory from which it never recovers?" he said.

The trade envoy also clarified why Prime Minister Hun Sen had cancelled a meeting the pair had scheduled.

"I received a very, very, very profound apology [from PM Hun Sen] and I don't feel remotely offended or put out," Mr. Puttnam said, noting that PM Hun Sen had complained of illness at a government-business forum.

Prompted by a reporter's question about the meeting's cancellation, Mr. Puttnam then offered some advice to the media.

"The challenge [for the media] is that you have to decide what your role is. Is it to inflame or inform?" Mr. Puttnam asked the reporter.

"I would suggest...that there is only one answer, which is accurate information with attempts to build on people's initiatives for the future. Not by berating everything at hand, and not by falling over to whoever is in power," he added.

He also further said that over the next 20 years the government would negotiate the "tension" between stability and freedom of expression, and that freedom of expression itself would be at risk if abused by the media.

"It really does come down to how responsible the media is prepared to be, or does the media just become another arm of the opposition?" he said.

On the political situation in Cambodia three decades after the release of his film, which helped raise global consciousness about the Cambodian civil war, Mr. Puttnam said the peace was to be commended and called for patience.

"I would prefer to see a Cambodia that got the fundamentals right and got the pieces in place—as it were, the pieces of the jigsaw puzzle in place—before it starts plunging forward with overambitious promises because they're forced to make ambitious promises by the electoral cycle," Mr. Puttnam said.

U.K. is the fourth largest investor in Cambodia. The two-way trade volume was valued at 742 million U.S. dollars last year and is expected to reach 1 billion U.S. dollars this year. ■



CAMBODIA TO LIST 22 GI PRODUCTS

Ministry of Commerce is pushing to list 22 potential products as the Geographical Indication (GI) products to boost the export.

The 22 products, ranging from pepper, coffee, rice to palm sugar, silk products and fruits, are from Takeo, Kampot, Rattanakiri, Siem Reap, Kandal, Banteay Meanchey, Stung Treng, Battambang, Kratie, Prey Veng, Kampong Cham and Pursat provinces.

The Ministry is currently working on giving a GI status to Kampot durians, it added. ■

CAMBODIA, EU...

They exchanged views on Cambodia's reform agenda and priorities in the post-electoral context, emphasising reforms in the election process, governance and the respect for human rights as key drivers for Cambodia's democratic development, said the press release, adding that land management was part of the agenda, while multilateral and regional issues were also touched upon, in particular the Lower Mekong sub-region.

H.E. Ouch Borith stressed that through Cambodia-EU Cooperation Agreement, which forms the basis of the cooperation, the EU has provided substantial assistance to Cambodia covering several sectors. Ranging from public finance management and good governance, to food security and education, from poverty reduction to sustainable development and private sector development, the EU-sponsored programs and projects have made a significant positive impact on the living condition of the Cambodian people. He also expressed on behalf of the people and Government of Cambodia his sincere thanks to the EU and its Member States for their invaluable assistance to Cambodia and its commitments to continue assisting Cambodia's development.

"The EU has always been at the forefront to promote Cambodia's recovery and development. This 8th Joint Committee Meeting was an excellent opportunity to reaffirm our strong support for a democratic, prosperous and sustainable Cambodia. We discussed a broad spectrum of issues including human rights, trade and development. We reaffirmed our commitment to work for the consolidation of our relationship," recalled Mr. Ugo.

On the sub-group of "Trade and Investment", which was held on Mar. 10, noted the increase in bilateral trade, in particular Cambodia's export performance, with the EU now becoming the primary destination of Cambodian exports. The two sides discussed in detail the trade regime "Everything But Arms", which grants preferences to Cambodia as a least developed country. They also addressed a number of other bilateral, as well as regional or multilateral issues. Both sides agreed to continue working together towards improving Cambodia's business and investment climate.

For the sub-group on "Development cooperation", both sides took stock of ongoing bilateral, thematic and regional cooperation activities. Fruitful exchanges were conducted on both Cambodia's and the EU's future policy agenda and planning. This was especially significant in the context of the programming of EU development cooperation for 2014-2020 in Cambodia.

Lastly, the sub-group on "Institution Building, Administrative Reform, Legal Reform, Governance and Human Rights" was candid and constructive and focused on concrete cooperation in the protection and promotion of Human Rights, including on promoting the abolishment of death penalty. Freedom of expression and association, legal and judicial reform, the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia, the situation of human rights defenders and trade unions representatives, as well as the protection of land and social rights were key priorities to address.

The EU is one of the major development and trade partners of Cambodia. Between 2007-2013 the EU provided development assistance of some €143 million to support the National Strategic Development Plan, education, trade-related assistance, governance and human rights in Cambodia.

Last year, Cambodian exports to the EU amounted to €2.4 billion, concentrated in clothing (68.8 percent), footwear (12.9 percent), bicycles (10.3 percent), rice (5.2 percent) and sugar (1.6 percent). ■

TRADE REPORT IN TWO MONTHS



Cambodia's total import and export volume was valued at 2.95 billion U.S. dollars during the January-February period this year, up 9 percent from 2.7 billion U.S. dollars over the same period last year, according to the figures of the Ministry of Commerce in March.

Cambodia has recorded a trade deficit of 23 percent in equivalent to 390 million U.S. dollars in the first two months of this year, the figures said.

Export surged by 13 percent to 1.28 billion U.S. dollars, while import rose by 6 percent to 1.67 billion U.S. dollars, leading the trade deficit of 390 million U.S. dollars.

The country's main trading partners are the United States, European countries, China, South Korea, Japan, Thailand, Vietnam, Singapore and Malaysia.

Cambodia exports mostly garments and shoes, dry rubber, milled rice and cassava chips and it imports raw materials for garment production, petroleum, construction materials, automobiles and motorcycles, food items and pharmaceutical and cosmetic products.

Apparel products accounted for more than 80 percent of the country's total exports.

Last month, the country launched a five-year trade integration strategy, aiming at boosting exports so as to reduce trade deficit.

At the launching, Prime Minister Hun Sen said the country's exports of goods and services increased by more than twofold in the last seven years from 4.5 billion U.S. dollars in 2007 to 9.4 billion in 2013.

He said Cambodia's key products need to be broadened promotion overseas including garments, footwear, bicycles, processed food, fisheries products, milled rice, cassava, rubber, tourism and silk products. ■

PHNOM PENH BUS SERVICE PILOT PROJECT EXTENDED

The service began its first trial on February 4 on Preah Monivong Blvd, from the Old Stadium roundabout (near Chroy Changvar Bridge) to Chbar Ampov market, under the cooperation between Phnom Penh Municipality and Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

The one-month pilot service operates from 5:30 am to 8:00 pm with 36 bus stops in every 10-15 minutes, on Preah Monivong Blvd., from the Old Stadium roundabout to Chbar Ampov. The bus ticket costs 1,500 Riel (US\$0.37) and each bus can accommodate from 50 to 60 passengers.

During the one-month trial, some 42,000 passengers have used the bus service, or 1,700 people a day on average for the first two weeks, and 1,500 for the last two weeks.

The public's apparent receptiveness to the buses was evidence that a citywide bus service was viable.

The Phnom Penh Municipality recently has announced that the public bus service pilot project in Phnom Penh city will continue for another month.

In addition, the Phnom Penh Municipality is planning to expand the public bus service on two more boulevards



of Phnom Penh – Kampuchea Krom and Mao Tse-Tung.

The City Hall was considering a bus discount card for students, among whom the trial bus service has proved especially popular.

The bus service project is aimed to reduce traffic accidents and traffic congestion as well as to change the Cambodians' habit from using personal cars to public buses, while the number of cars in Phnom Penh now reached 300,000 and that of motorbikes 1 million. ■

JAGUAR, PORSCHE STEP INTO CAMBODIA

RMA Cambodia in early March opened the country's first Jaguar Land Rover showroom, establishing exclusive dealership over the iconic British brand.

The dealership, located on Russian Boulevard a short distance from RMA Cambodia's Ford showroom, will offer Jaguar models priced at between \$145,000 and \$165,000.

Later in mid-March, the newly appointed local distributor of German carmaker Porsche broke ground on a \$2 million dealership that is set to open Porsche Centre Phnom Penh within eight months on Russian Boulevard.

The Porsche Cayenne SUV will have a starting price of \$114,000 and is pegged to be the most popular model. The new Macan compact SUV is also expected to sell strongly.

Currently there are already about 70 registered Porsche vehicles in the country, making their way here through private importers. ■

BANKING SECTOR CONTINUES ITS ROBUST GROWTH



According to the report of the National Bank of Cambodia, lending at the kingdom's 34 commercial banks rose by 26 percent to 7.4 billion U.S. dollars in 2013 from 5.88 billion U.S. dollars in 2012.

On the deposit side, the banks received a total deposit of 7.74 billion U.S. dollars as of last year, up 14 percent from 6.8 billion U.S. dollars in a year earlier.

"The figures show the progress in Cambodian banking sector," Prime Minister Hun Sen said during the 17th Government-Private Sector Forum, which was attended by some 400 government officials, business representatives, diplomatic corps and development partners. "Our banks are in good health."

Meanwhile, the Premier appealed to banks to increase lending to agriculture, particularly rice sector in order to assist the government to achieve its self-imposed goal of exporting 1 million tons of milled rice by 2015.

Last year, the banks lent 712 million U.S. dollars to agriculture, up 29 percent from 552 million U.S. dollars in a year earlier, the National Bank of Cambodia said.

The Kingdom has a population of about 14.8 million with its banking sector serving about 1.6 million borrowers and 1.9 million depositors. ■

CAMBODIA'S TRADE...

Meanwhile, the imported goods from the EU were amounted to a total value of some US\$234 million, up 4 percent, the report pointed out.

Besides, Cambodia's trade volume with its ASEAN member states hit 4.16 billion U.S. dollars in 2013, up 12 percent from 3.71 billion U.S. in 2012, said a report from the Ministry of Commerce.

The country exported products in equivalent to 482 million U.S. dollars to ASEAN last year, up 51 percent year-on-year as it imported goods in a total amount of 3.68 billion U.S. dollars from ASEAN last year, up 8 percent year-on-year, the report said.

Cambodia's major trading partners in ASEAN include Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia and Singapore.

Cambodia's major exported products are garment, textile and footwear products, bicycles, white sugar and agricultural produce, etc. whereas the main imported goods include vehicles, petrol, electronic tools, construction materials, cosmetic products, and so on. ■



ANGKOR SANGKRAN TO BE CELEBRATED DURING KHMER TRADITIONAL NEW YEAR 2014

“The Angkor Sangkran celebration will again be a feature of Khmer New Year’s observances in Siem Reap. This is the second year the Sangkran will be held, and this year it will be bigger, more exciting and more interesting than last year.”

The Angkor Sangkran will be celebrated in front of Angkor Wat temple, Bayon Temple, and Elephant Terrace, along the Siem Reap River, in the Angkor Gyeongju area and in Pub Street.

It is very different to last year’s festivities. Three more areas for special modern concerts and trade fairs, along with cultural activities such traditional Khmer games and dancing will be added.

Visitors will be able to participate in traditional Khmer games, such as the Boh Angkunh or seed throwing, Chaul Chhoung or twisted-scarf throwing, and Leak Kanséng or twisted-scarf hiding. Participants will also be able to dance together to traditional Khmer songs.

Angkor Sangkran celebrates the end of the harvesting season from April 14-16, when farmers enjoy the fruits of their labour before the rainy season begins.

The event was a great success last year and after it was held, and many people suggested that the celebration stage again this year. So it is held again and will be improved by adding handmade and commercial goods exhibitions and food exhibitions to the traditional games and dancing to make it more exciting.

This year’s Angkor Sangkran will enable the young generation to understand the progress of Cambodia since the empire period until today.

Last year, more than 3,000 Cambodian youths, actors and actresses participated and welcomed more than 180, 000 local and international visitors during the New Year period. This year the numbers are expected to increase.

The celebration is held in cooperation with Siem Reap provincial authorities, the Apsara Authority and relevant ministries such as the Tourism Ministry, Information Ministry, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, and the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts. ■

OSCAR-NOMINATED FILM 'THE MISSING PICTURE' ON LOCAL SCREEN

Oscar-nominated feature film 'The Missing Picture' is screened at two cinemas in capital Phnom Penh after it failed to win the award for best foreign film at the 86th Oscars in Hollywood in early March.

The film has shown at Legend Cinema and Platinum Cineplex since March 6. It is screened in Khmer language with English subtitles.

'The Missing Picture,' produced by Rithy Panh, was the first- ever Oscar-nominated film from Cambodia.

The film tells the story of the four years Rithy Panh spent in labor camps during the Democratic Kampuchea, or known as the Khmer Rouge regime from 1975 to 1979.

In the film, Rithy Panh enlisted about 700 clay figurines to re- create scenes from the dark period of the Khmer Rouge regime.

"The Missing Picture" had won the "Un Certain Regard" prize at the Cannes Film Festival in France in May. ■

“The Missing Picture is a 2013 Cambodian-French documentary film directed by Rithy Panh about the Khmer Rouge. It was screened in the Un Certain Regard section at the 2013 Cannes Film Festival where it won the top prize. It was also screened in the World Cinema section at the 2013 Cinemanila International Film Festival where it won the Grand Jury Prize.”

“The film has been selected as the Cambodian entry for the Best Foreign Language Film at the 86th Academy Awards, and was nominated. Approximately half of the film uses news and documentary footage, with the other half using clay figurines to dramatise what happened in Cambodia when Pol Pot came to power.”

