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CAMBODIA ALLOWS 100% PRIVATE INVESTMENT IN HIGH-SPEED RAILWAY

Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen, Prime Minister of Kingdom of Cambodia, has affirmed that Cambodia allowed the private sector to invest 100% in the new high-speed railway linking Phnom Penh capital of Cambodia to Ho Chi Minh City of Vietnam.

The Prime Minister made the affirmation while receiving On 25 January 2023 a visiting French delegation led by H.E. Olivier Becht, Minister Delegate for Foreign Trade, Economic Attractiveness and French Nationals Abroad, Attached to the Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs of the French Republic, H.E. Eang Sophalleth, Personal Assistant to Samdech Techo Hun Sen told reporters after the meeting.

At the same time, the Prime Minister encouraged the private sector to invest in the upgrading of the two existing rail lines under BOT (Build, Operate, Transfer) format.

H.E. Olivier Becht expressed French investors' trust in investing in Cambodia thanks to the Kingdom's 20-year economic growth record, continued reform creating a conducive environment for investment, and large middle-income population.

In this regard, the French delegation decided to work with Cambodia to seek investment in high-speed rail; water, land and air transport; construction; energy and other sectors, he underlined, requesting Samdech Techo Hun Sen's recommendations on priority areas.

In reply, the Prime Minister said Cambodia is encouraging investment in high-tech industries, processing industry with Cambodian raw materials such as cashew, rubber, cassava and paddy rice, etc. for local demand and export.

For energy, Samdech Techo Hun Sen said Cambodia is using about 62 percent of clean energy and attracting more investment, but the country did not approve the establishment of new coal-fired power plant or hydropower dams across the Mekong River.

PM: CAMBODIA NO ABILITY TO PROVIDE MILITARY SUPPORT FOR UKRAINE



Prime Minister Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen reaffirmed on 26 January 2023 that Cambodia does not have the ability to extend military support to Ukraine.

"Cambodia did not provide any military support to Ukraine. Cambodia has no ability to do so. Cambodia's technical assistance to Ukrainian deminers is purely a humanitarian act," the Prime Minister underlined at a graduation ceremony of the Western University.

Cambodia did not send neither troops nor demining trainers to Ukraine, what we have done is purely for a humanitarian cause as we are also a nation affected by landmine and UXOs, he added.

Cambodia has so far dispatched its mine clearance forces to many other countries under the UN umbrella and they are currently fulfilling their mission in four countries, including Mali, South Sudan, Lebanon, and Central Africa, Samdech Techo Hun Sen pointed out.

Regarding this issue, on 24 January 2023, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation released a statement reconfirming Cambodia's policy on Ukraine.

The ministry reiterated that the decision to provide technical trainings in mine clearance to Ukrainian deminers in Cambodia, in collaboration with Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), is purely made on humanitarian basis as similarly demonstrated in its many Peacekeeping Missions in Africa and the Middle East under the auspices of the United Nations.

The ministry thus categorically dismissed the classification of the Kingdom under the category of "Military supportive of Ukraine" as published in the infographic by Telegram Channel "Demografiya upala" (<https://t.me/populationdemography/1208>), and urged the channel to rectify the above said publication on the account of the fact that this grouping is not only inaccurate, but could prove to be detrimental to Cambodia as a peace-loving country which strictly adheres to a foreign policy of neutrality as anchored in its Constitution.

Samdech Techo Prime Minister also took the opportunity to welcome any countries that wish to receive mine clearance training in Cambodia, including Russia, recalling that besides Ukraine, Cambodia used to provide such training to Columbian demining officers.

CAMBODIA SOLEMNLY MARKS 100-DAY COUNTDOWN TO SEA GAMES-ASEAN PARA GAMES 2023



Cambodia on 25 January 2023 celebrated the 100-day countdown toward the SEA Games-ASEAN Para Games 2023 to be hosted by the Kingdom.

The solemn celebration took place at Morodok Techo National Stadium located in Khan Chroy Changvar, Phnom Penh under the presidency of Samdech Pichey Sena Tea Banh, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of National Defence and Chairman of the Cambodian SEA Games Organising Committee and the Cambodian ASEAN Para Games Organising Committee (CAMSOC-CAMAPGOC).

The ASEAN countries' SEA Games mission heads were also present at the 100-day countdown ceremony live-streamed on TV network and social media, while Dato Seri Chalyapak Siriawat, CEO of SEA Games Federation (SEAGF) delivered a speech via Videoconference.

In his opening remarks, H.E. Dr. Thong Khon, Minister of Tourism, President of the National Olympic Committee of Cambodia (NOCC) and President of SEAGF Council said this event affirmed Cambodia's readiness to welcome all athletes, sports officials, and visitors to the 32nd SEA Games in Cambodia.

The SEA Games is more than just a regional multi-sport event, he continued, underlining that not only is it an opportunity for athletes to compete fairly, and display their prowess – it's an opportunity to promote friendship, respect, and solidarity to build a peaceful, stable, and resilient Southeast Asian Community.

Samdech Pichey Sena Tea Banh announced to warmly welcome all sports delegations and athletes as well as all national and international visitors who will join the upcoming regional sports events.

"In 100 days, Cambodia's dream of 64 years of hosting the SEA Games will become a reality," he stressed.

Approximately 1,000 athletes and artists took part in the 100-day countdown programme, ranging from demonstration of Kun Lbokator, Taekwondo WT and Breaking Dance to presentation of sportswear, Mascots for each type of sports, and SEA dance.

Besides the 100-day countdown, CAMSOC will also celebrate the royal sports fire ceremony scheduled for 21 March 2023 in Siem Reap province, which will coincide with the natural phenomenon when the sun rises over the central tower of the Angkor Wat Temple (Equinox).

As planned, the sports fire will be run around the small circuit of the Angkor Archaeological Park before flying to the Philippines and other ASEAN member countries.

The sports fire will then head to Laos and continue around Tonle Sap River of Cambodia till 05 May 2023 when the country will officially launch the SEA Games-ASEAN Para Games 2023 at Morodok Techo National Stadium.

Thirty-seven (37) sports and a demonstration sport have been officially listed for the SEA Games 2023 and 13 for the 12th ASEAN Para Games.

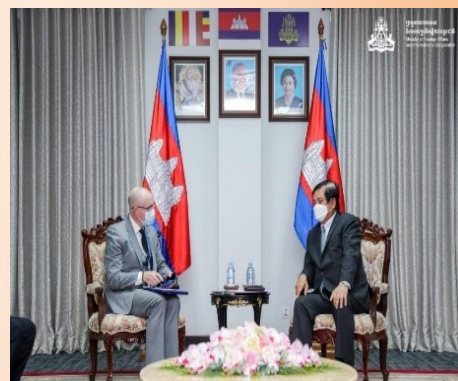
Cambodia will host the 32nd SEA Games and the 12th ASEAN Para Games from 5 to 17 May 2023 and from 3 to 9 June 2023 respectively, under the motto "Sport: Live in Peace".

CAMBODIA, UNICEF TO FURTHER PROMOTE...

The UNICEF's recent endeavours to assist in the welfare of children and their families during the Covid-19 pandemic as well as in the safe reopening of schools were acknowledged, said H.E. Ouch Borith.

Finally, both sides reiterated their shared determination to further enhance the close collaboration between the country and the UN agency.

CAMBODIA, UNICEF TO FURTHER PROMOTE EXISTING CLOSE COOPERATION



UNICEF affirmed its continued support and assistance to Cambodia, said the newly appointed United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Representative to Cambodia Mr. William Parks.

The new UNICEF representative confirmed this commitment when he presented his letter of credence to H.E. Ouch Borith, Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation on 24 January 2023 at the Ministry.

Mr. William Parks is amazed by Cambodia's present transformations, compared to the time he was in the Kingdom in 2002. While highly appreciating the close cooperation between Cambodia and UNICEF, he affirmed his commitment to maintain this existing bond and to continue to work closely with all relevant stakeholders in the areas highlighted earlier.

In the meeting, the Acting Minister welcomed and reassured the new envoy of the Royal Government of Cambodia's full support for him together with his team in fulfillment of the vital work of the UNICEF. Moreover, he recalled the long history of cooperation between Cambodia and UNICEF, especially the post-Khmer Rouge regime assistance, which had contributed to mitigating the hardship of Cambodian people. Also, he highly appreciated the UNICEF's projects in the spheres of education, health and nutrition, child protection, water sanitation and hygiene, and policy and public financing for children.

CAMBODIA, JAPAN TO STRENGTHEN AND BROADEN RELATIONSHIP



Cambodia and Japan are satisfied with the state of the relationship between the two countries and share the commitment to deepen the ties.

The satisfaction and commitment were highlighted during the courtesy meeting between H.E. PRAK Sokhonn, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, and H.E. UENO Atsushi, Ambassador of Japan to Cambodia, in Phnom Penh on 19 January 2023, according to a press release of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation issued on 19 January 2023.

The Deputy PM recalled with appreciation the exchange of high-level visits during 2022 such as those by Prime Minister FUMIO Kishida, Samdech Techo Prime Minister HUN Sen, Foreign Minister HAYASHI Yoshimasa, Defence Minister KISHI Nobuo, and General HUN Manet, Deputy Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Armed Forces (RCAF) and Commander of the Royal Cambodian Army, and so on.

The Deputy PM was pleased to note that the friendship and multifaceted cooperation between the two countries remain strong and continue to thrive despite the COVID-19 pandemic as evidenced by strong trade recovery close to the pre-COVID-19 level, strong investment, enhanced military cooperation and the continued support by Japan in all fields. The Deputy PM and Japanese Envoy noted with satisfaction the elevation this year of the bilateral relations from “Strategic Partnership” to “Comprehensive Strategic Partnership”.

Deputy PM PRAK Sokhonn thanked Japan for the Official Development Assistance provided to Cambodia for its socio-economic development and Japan’s contribution to help the country fight against Covid-19 through the provision of 1.3 million doses of vaccine, US\$416 million loan for Cambodia’s post-pandemic recovery and other health equipment. He also appreciated Japan’s prompt response to support the Kingdom’s “Mine-Free Cambodia 2025” goal.

The Deputy PM and Japanese Envoy discussed ways to further enhance the cooperation in various fields including trade and investment, peace building, demining, human resource development, human rights and democracy, culture, people-to-people ties, tourism, among others. They also shared the view to push for the early resumption of direct flights between the two countries to boost tourism.

Both the Deputy PM and Japanese Ambassador touched on the preparation for the upcoming official visit of H.E. PRAK Sokhonn to Japan, during which he will hold a meeting with Japanese Foreign Minister HAYASHI Yoshimasa, followed by an official dinner hosted by his Japanese counterpart. He will also preside over the reception to celebrate the 70th Anniversary of Diplomatic Relations at the Royal Embassy of Cambodia in Tokyo.

Deputy PM PRAK Sokhonn and Ambassador UENO Atsushi also had an exchange of views on the current regional and international developments as the Ambassador underlined Japan’s commendation for Cambodia’s successful 2022 ASEAN Chairmanship and the endeavors of the ASEAN Chair’s Special Envoy to help Myanmar return to normalcy. The Deputy PM, in turn, thanked Japan for its support to Cambodia’s ASEAN Chairmanship.

CAMBODIA PROMOTING SMOKE-FREE TOURISM

Ministry of Tourism has set guidelines for the establishment of smoke-free tourism city to discourage the harm of tobacco products in Cambodia.

The recent introduction of the guidelines on the establishment of a smoke-free tourism city will strengthen the implementation of minimum standard operating procedures on smoke-free tourism through engagement of municipal, district and Khan administrations.

H.E. Hor Sarun, Secretary of State at the Ministry of Tourism, expected that the guidelines will contribute positively to health, economy, society and the environment.

The Ministry of Tourism has disseminated and raised awareness of laws and regulations related to the control of tobacco products among tourism businesses, he said.

He added that the Ministry of Tourism has also presented awards and recognition to tourism service businesses that have excelled in implementing a smoke-free environment.

CAMBODIA’S ECONOMY PROJECTED AT 5.6 PERCENT GROWTH THIS YEAR

Cambodia’s economy is expected to expand at 5.6 percent in 2023, supporting by growth of garment product export, agriculture, and tourism, the Ministry of Economy and Finance said on 25 January 2023.

The ministry said in the Cambodia’s Macroeconomic Situation at a Glance 2022-2023 that the exporting sectors, especially garment sector, is expected to slow down with a 5.5 percent growth due to the unfavourable external demands, especially in the EU market.

The non-garment sector, meanwhile, is expected to continue to remain favourable with the growth of 11.7 percent, supported by the high potential of some export productions –furniture, solar, and electronic components etc., and productions for domestic demand, particularly food and beverage, the ministry said.

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CAMBODIA'S ECONOMY PROJECTED ...

Construction and real estate sectors are expected to continue to have a slow pace with the growth of 1.1 percent and 1.2 percent, respectively, due to the slow recovery of foreign capital flow. However, these sectors are continuously supported by investment and domestic demand (housing markets) and rising trend of construction activities for industry as well as domestic services.

Agriculture sector is estimated to maintain a favourable growth at 1.1 percent, thanks to crop sub-sector including rice and other industrial and subsidiary crop –cassava and corn, and livestock and poultry sub-sector, especially pig production.

Tourism sector (hotel and restaurants) is expected to continue rising with the growth of 32.7 percent due to the continuation of recovery of global and regional people's mobility, the ministry said, adding that domestic tourists continue to increase due to further improvement of tourism services and destinations, as well as convenient supporting infrastructure.

This outlook, however, is surrounded by risks and uncertainties such as the rising of regional and global geographical tensions, further global economic slowdown, and the tightening of monetary policy longer than expectation, particularly the U.S, as well as the appreciation of the U.S. currency which could affect the flow of investment and trade.

"Cambodia will strengthen and revive its economic growth drivers and seize the new opportunities that are emerging in line with the global and regional trends, to build up long-term economic growth model," the ministry stressed.

For 2022, the Cambodian economy continues to pick up with an estimated growth of 5.2 percent on the back of strong external demand notwithstanding rising geographical tension and the escalating war in Ukraine.

FIFTY-FOUR ROYAL TURTLE EGGS FROM FOUR CLUTCHES FOUND IN KOH KONG

The WCS Turtle Conservation Team has recently collected 54 Royal Turtle eggs from four clutches deposited on an artificial sand bank beside a breeding pond at the Koh Kong Reptile Conservation Centre (KKRCC), according to WCS Cambodia's press release dated 19 January 2023.

The eggs were laid on the night of 16 and 18 January 2023 according to images obtained from a camera trap installed on the sand bank. This is the third consecutive year that Royal Turtles have laid eggs in captivity in Cambodia.

The team expects to collect more eggs of captive turtles at the Centre during the 2023 nesting season which began in January and will continue through March. Last year, the team found 81 eggs from nine clutches on the same sand bank. Captive breeding is one of several conservation strategies used by WCS Cambodia and Fisheries Administration to restore the population of the Royal Turtle in Cambodia, the same source added.

KKRCC currently holds 184 Royal Turtles, and 147 young adult Royal Turtles have been released back into the wild since 2015. Sub-adult and adult turtles at the KKRCC are kept in four breeding ponds, whilst younger animals are raised in large plastic tanks before transferal to the breeding ponds.



The Royal Turtle, scientifically known as Southern River Terrapin (*Batagur affinis*), is one of the world's 25 most endangered freshwater turtles and tortoises. It is listed on the IUCN Red List as Critically Endangered and has been designated as Cambodia's National Reptile by a Royal Decree issued in 2005.