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CAMBODIA-ASEAN BUSINESS SUMMIT KICKS OFF IN PHNOM PENH



The Cambodia-ASEAN Business Summit officially kicked off in Phnom Penh on 2 April under the presidency of Samdech Moha Borvor Thipadei Hun Manet, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia.

The two-day event, organised by the Cambodia Chamber of Commerce, ASEAN Business Advisory Council of Cambodia with the support of the Royal Government of Cambodia, especially the Ministry of Commerce in partnership with all international chambers and business associations in the Kingdom, attracted delegations from ASEAN member countries, most are key business leaders, policymakers and thought leaders.

Addressing the summit, Samdech Thipadei Prime Minister called on all the participants to pay attention to the ASEAN's connectivity and technological innovations for the inclusive growth in the region.

The Cambodian Premier said that this event themed "Unleashing ASEAN's Potential: Technology, Sustainability, and Inclusive Growth" will be a catalyst for unlocking enormous potential of Cambodia and ASEAN.

At the same time, the premier stated that the Royal Government has been fostering an environment of open dialogue through the

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CAMBODIA AND LAOS PLEDGED TO DEEPEN THE COMPREHENSIVE AND LONG-LASTING STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP



At the invitation of His Excellency Dr. Sonexay SIPHANDONE, the Lao Prime Minister, Samdech Moha Borvor Thipadei HUN Manet, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia, led a high-level delegation on an official visit to the Lao People's Democratic Republic from 25 to 26 March 2024. The visit aimed to further strengthen and deepen good bilateral relations in the spirit of a comprehensive and long-lasting strategic partnership. During the visit, Samdech Moha Borvor Thipadei HUN Manet had a meeting with His Excellency Dr. Sonexay SIPHANDONE, paid a courtesy call on His Excellency President Thongloun SISOULITH, and received His Excellency Khambai DAMLATH, President of the Lao-Cambodian Friendship Association. The meetings were held in a cordial and warm atmosphere, covering areas such as politics, trade and investment, energy, public works and transport, tourism, education, security and defence, border affairs, and multilateral cooperation.

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On political cooperation, the two Prime Ministers expressed their commitment to effectively implement the Action Plan for the Comprehensive and Long-Lasting Strategic Partnership between Cambodia and Laos (2023-2027), signed in 2023, to increase exchanges of visits at all levels and convene the Meeting of the Joint Commission for

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CAMBODIA AND LAOS PLEDGED TO DEEPEN THE COMPREHENSIVE AND ...

Bilateral Cooperation in the near future. During his meetings with Lao Leaders, Samdech Thipadei Prime Minister conveyed an invitation from His Majesty the King of Cambodia to His Excellency the President of Laos to pay a state visit to Cambodia in April 2024.

On energy cooperation, Samdech Thipadei expressed appreciation for the Lao provision of electricity to Cambodia. He also reaffirmed Cambodia's support for Lao green energy trading with ASEAN countries including Singapore, contributing to enhancing energy security in ASEAN. Samdech Thipadei and His Excellency Dr. Sonexay SIPHANDONE welcomed the signing of a new agreement on energy cooperation between the two governments and Memorandum of Understanding on green power purchases and a feasibility study on an electricity transmission line to Cambodia.

On Trade, Investment and Tourism, Samdech Thipadei and Laos Prime Minister agreed to convene the Cambodia-Laos Trade Committee Meeting in 2025, in conjunction with a business and investment forum in order to enhance cooperation in the preparation of trade fairs, exhibitions, business and investment matching and tourism promotion. Both Leaders also agreed to encourage both relevant institutions to ensure tangible results of the tourism cooperation initiative "Three Countries, One Destination" between Cambodia, Laos and Viet Nam. The two Prime Ministers welcomed the resumption of direct flights between Vientiane and Phnom Penh by Lao Airlines on 19 March 2024 and agreed to encourage tourists to travel in private vehicles between the two countries.

On transport and connectivity, the two sides urged relevant authorities – particularly border authorities – to facilitate people-to-people ties, tourism and trade between the two countries. The Prime Ministers agreed to encourage technical teams to select the site for a bridge between Tonle Ropov in Cambodia and Selam Pao in Laos as soon as possible.

On security and defence, Samdech Thipadei and His Excellency Dr. Sonexay SIPHANDONE agree to urge their authorities to continue

efforts to maintain border security in line with laws and agreements, consolidating good cooperation between border forces and other relevant authorities through regular information exchanges and timely joint actions against hostile politically destabilizing activities that undermine security, public order and social stability, and increase cooperation to prevent and combat all transnational crimes, especially drug smuggling, human trafficking and other border crimes.

On border affairs, the two Prime Ministers highly valued the results achieved of 86% of the boundary demarcation and committed to expedite settlement of the remaining 14 percent as soon as possible. The two Prime Ministers witnessed the exchange of instruments of ratification for the treaty on delimitation of the border signed in 2023 and the signing of minutes on the exchange of instruments for its effective implementation to build a border of peace, friendship and cooperation between the two countries.

The two sides agreed to continue to promote cooperation in the fields of culture, education, sports, and agriculture and also agreed to elaborate on a memorandum of understanding on agricultural cooperation and extend by five years a cooperation agreement between the Cambodian Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport and the Lao Ministry of Education and Sports.

The two Prime Ministers exchanged views on regional and international development and reaffirmed their commitment to continue supporting each other and further promote bilateral cooperation in regional and international fora – especially under ASEAN frameworks – for regional and global peace, stability and prosperity.

Samdech Thipadei cordially invited His Excellency the Prime Minister to pay an official visit to Cambodia which he accepted with pleasure, promising to find a convenient time in the near future. During his meetings

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Government-Private Sector Forums, where we actively collaborate with local and international businesses to address challenges and ensure your success in Cambodia.

He said that Cambodia has promulgated the new Law on Investment to offer investors a compelling combination of untapped potential and strategic advantages with generous incentives for investment projects in key priority sectors.

Cambodia is strategically investing in an interconnected infrastructure network. This encompasses the development of expressways, deep-sea ports, international airports, and state-of-the-art logistics hubs. This comprehensive approach fosters seamless regional connectivity, ensuring efficient access to vital economic corridors within Cambodia and throughout ASEAN.

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CAMBODIA CONDEMNS TERRORISM ATTACK IN MOSCOW

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Cambodia has released a statement on the terrorist attack at Moscow Crocus Concert Hall in Moscow.

"We are shocked by the deaths of dozens of people and hundreds injured in a terrorist attack at the Moscow Crocus Concert Hall on March 22, 2024. The Royal Government of Cambodia condemns the vicious attack in the strongest possible terms," the source added.

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CAMBODIA CONDEMNS TERRORISM ATTACK ...

The ministry extended the deepest condolences and sympathies to the families of the victims and the Government of the Russian Federation, and wish a speedy and full recovery to those injured.

“Cambodia reiterates that any acts of terrorism are criminal and unjustifiable, regardless of motivation. We stand with the Russian government and people during this time of grief,” underlined the statement dated March 23.

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with Lao Leaders, Samdech Thipadei reaffirmed Cambodia’s full support for the Lao chairmanship of ASEAN this year.

Samdech Thipadei and Cambodian delegation visited Thanaleng Dry Port and Vientiane Logistics Park and lauded efforts to transform Lao geographical challenges into opportunities through land connections (from landlock to landlink). Samdech Thipadei also met with Cambodian business club, trainees and students studying in Laos.

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These strategic investments directly translate into reduced logistics costs and enhanced operational efficiency for businesses operating in Cambodia, allowing them to effectively capitalize on the vast potential of the regional market, the premier added.

In recognition of the crucial role of skilled human capital plays in fostering sustainable economic growth, the premier continued that Cambodia has addressed the skill shortage head on by launching a comprehensive vocational and technical training program.

This initiative empowers 1.5 million young people over the next five years. By equipping a new generation with in-demand skills, this program ensures a readily available pool of qualified talent to meet your business’s specific needs, contributing to your long-term success in Cambodia.

“Next year, Cambodia will give high priority to creating a conducive business environment,” the premier underscored.

On the occasion, the premier urged ASEAN businessmen and partners to seize the extraordinary opportunities flourishing within ASEAN’s dynamic economic landscape. “Cambodia stands ready to be your strategic partner on this exciting journey.”

DCTS BOOSTS CAMBODIA’S EXPORTS TO UK BY 25%

Cambodia’s exports to the UK rose 25.1 percent to \$136 million in the first two months of this year, compared to the same period last year, backed by the latter’s new Developing Countries Trading Scheme (DCTS) which allows tariff-free exports for 99 percent of goods including textiles, travel goods and leather items.

Much to its relief, Cambodia has been told that it will continue to receive the tariff benefits in the exports to the UK under DCTS even after it graduated from the Least Developed Country (LDC) status, according to a roundtable discussion, organised by the Cambodia Development Centre, recently.

Upon graduation, Cambodia can either still be entitled to a preferential scheme under DCTS Enhanced Preferences for economically vulnerable low-income and lower-middle-income countries with zero tariffs for more than 85 percent of tariff lines or DCTS Standard Preferences for low-income and lower-middle-income countries, with partial or full removal of customs duties on over 80 percent of tariff lines.

It may be noted that Cambodia will lose most of the tariff benefits in international trade offered by developed countries once it graduates from the LDC status. For example, the country will cease to benefit from the Everything But Arms (EBA) trade scheme of the European Union,

which is a major trading partner of Cambodia, upon graduation.

But Cambodia has the option to switch to the GSP Plus scheme of the EU upon complying with 32 pre-specified international conventions which included commitments on human rights and labour rights.

LDCs can access the GSP Plus which provides tariff suspensions for 66 percent of EU tariff lines, the roundtable discussion heard from a presentation by Chandarany Ouch, Economist at the United Nations Resident Coordinator Office.

Otherwise, developing countries upon LDC graduation will be automatically included in the Standard GSP scheme, which provides duty reductions for 66 percent of tariff lines. If not qualified for GSP Plus or Standard GSP, textile and clothing exports will face MFN (Most Favoured Nation) tariffs which are much higher.

Meanwhile, Cambodia’s trade with ASEAN Countries, China, Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand is not expected to change upon graduation due to various free trade treaties including the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) agreement, Cambodia China Free Trade Agreement and Cambodia South Korea Free Trade Agreement.

FOSTERING SME GROWTH WITH SCIENCE AND TECH TOOLS

Cambodia commemorated its 2nd National Day of Science, Technology & Innovation (STI Day 2024), marking a significant milestone in the nation’s quest for technological advancement and economic growth.

The event, being held from 25 March to 26 March at Koh Pich Convention and Exhibition Centre in Phnom Penh, brought together leaders, innovators, and stakeholders from various sectors to celebrate

FOSTERING SME GROWTH WITH SCIENCE ...

the key role of science and technology in Cambodia’s development journey.

The three-day event serves as a platform to reaffirm Cambodia’s commitment to embracing innovation and fostering a culture of technological excellence.

The theme of this year’s STI Day, “SMEs Go STI,” reflects Cambodia’s dedication to leveraging technology to drive progress, particularly within the SME sector.

With the rapid evolution of the Industrial Revolution 4.0 and digitalisation, Cambodia recognises the need to equip its enterprises with the tools and knowledge necessary to thrive in an increasingly competitive global landscape.

In his welcome remarks, Minister of Industry, Science, Technology and Innovation H.E. Hem Vandy outlined the role of STI as a catalyst for Cambodia’s 2030 and 2050 vision.

“The 2nd STI Day and its accompanying exhibitions serve as a platform for local industries and SMEs to thrive, creating employment opportunities and driving economic growth,” Minister said.

“Our focus on small and medium enterprises (SMEs) underscores the importance of integrating technology to enhance production, quality and productivity.”

The event also witnessed the participation of the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation of Thailand and the Korea Institute for Robot Industry Advancement, signifying Cambodia’s commitment to international collaboration in STI.

MISTI has been developing key policy documents such as the Cambodia STI Road Map 2030, National Research Agenda 2025, Report on Research and Innovation Roadmap in the

Kingdom of Cambodia, Report on Technology Needs Assessment and Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, Research Code of Conduct, as well as technology roadmaps for education, health, agriculture, tourism, energy, and digital technology.

It is also advancing legislation to foster technological growth. Among the key developments are the preparation of a draft law on technology transfer, alongside several draft sub-decrees focusing on crucial aspects of research and development management and establishment and management of STI Parks.

Addressing a press conference, H.E. Hem Vandy, anticipated the participation of approximately 30,000 individuals, including scientists, researchers, innovators, entrepreneurs, policymakers, students, and members of the general public from Cambodia and beyond.

The event features a total of 237 booths where presenters are showcasing prototypes, technological tools, and solutions tailored to SMEs. Additionally, an exhibition is highlighting the achievements of producers, manufacturers, spare part developers, digital solution providers, and consulting services.

Furthermore, the event aims to shed light on technological advancements poised to revolutionize various sectors, driving progress and prosperity in Cambodia.



PHNOM PENH-DELHI FLIGHT FROM JUNE 16

The national flag carrier Cambodia Angkor Air will launch its India flight on June 16 between Phnom Penh and New Delhi with four weekly trips.

According to the airline’s announcement on Friday, the new service will be operated on Sunday, Monday, Wednesday and Friday.

“Cambodia Angkor Air is embarking on an extraordinary journey as we launch the first-ever direct flight from Phnom Penh to New Delhi with four flights per week to serve the Cambodia-India Tourism Year 2024,” the airline said.

The new service is going to strengthen the bilateral ties between Cambodia and India, facilitating increased tourism and business opportunities between the two nations, stated the airline.

“This new route will attract more tourists and business travellers, which contribute to the development of the tourism and economic sectors of both countries,” the Phnom Penh-based airline said.

The flight service begins amid the Cambodia-India Tourism Year 2024, a campaign to promote and encourage more people from both countries to visit each other’s destinations.

Cambodia attracted 5.43 million international tourists in 2023, a sharp increase of 139 percent from 2.27 million in 2022, earning \$3.04 billion, up 115 percent from \$1.41 billion in a year earlier, official figures showed.

The Ministry of Tourism indicates that Cambodia welcomed 68,836 Indian guests last year, a surge of more than 102 percent from 34,016 in 2022.