



## PM: Media Enjoys Uncensored Publication



PPP/May 03

Prime Minister Hun Sen praised press freedom in Cambodia, saying the media has enjoyed uncensored news publication without fear.

In a note marking World Press Freedom Day, the PM said the government has promoted freedom of expression and the press law in line with the Constitution.

However, he said journalists will be held accountable before the law if they abuse other people's rights or publish "fake news" that could cause social chaos. He also warned media against publishing news that is inciting, insulting and discriminating. Fake news can be more detrimental to society and cause even more harm than the COVID-19 pandemic.

PM Hun Sen wanted journalists to join hands with the state in building the nation and tackling corruption.

Such collaboration could help the government provide more efficient public services for the people as they could report officials' inaction and bring people's concerns to light.

But in echoing the prime minister, journalists need to maintain professionalism and refrain from abusing the rights of others. ●

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## Double-Tax Deals Signed and More in Pipeline

KT/May 08

Cambodia has signed avoidance of double taxation agreements (DTAs) with six countries in ASEAN and has more in the pipeline. The deals' ultimate goal is to facilitate better investor access.

Seng Cheaseth, director, Department of Law, Tax Policy and International Tax Cooperation at General Department of Taxation, said Cambodia has an obligation within the Asean framework to sign DTAs with all ASEAN members.

Cambodia had already signed the agreement with South Korea and China – two of the Asean+3, while it is still in negotiations with the third member, Japan. The Kingdom also also signed a DTA with Hong Kong.

Once an agreement is concluded, it must be submitted to the government institution that is recognised by the regulative body for ratification before it can come into effect. DTA is not only to foster a business-friendly environment among partners, but the agreement is also paving the way to reach free-trade agreements (FTAs) with potential partners.

Cambodia has recently concluded the second round of FTA negotiations with China, which is expected to be signed by the end of this year. The Kingdom is also negotiating FTAs with South Korea and the Russian-led Eurasian Economic Union. •

## Consumer Protection Act Set To Go Into Effect

PPP/May 05

The government will set up a National Commission for Consumer Protection to implement the Consumer Protection Act, which is aimed at promoting integrity in competition and trade.

The commerce ministry plans to discuss the draft sub-decree on organisation and function of the National Commission for Consumer Protection in early May.

The purpose of the law, according to proponents, is to determine the measures and mechanisms that contribute to an improved trade environment and protects the rights and interests of consumers.

The law applies to all entities doing business, whether for profit or non-profit, including sales of goods, services or real estate, unless otherwise noted exempt by other regulations.

Keo Mom, general director of Ly Ly Food Industry Co Ltd, one of the Kingdom's largest food processing factories, said that the law would help curb imports of counterfeit food products and protect consumer health and safety. •

## Two Investment Projects Approved By CDC To Create Hundreds Of Jobs



KT/May 10

The Council for the Development of Cambodia (CDC) has approved two more investment projects which are expected to create almost 687 jobs for the locals.

According to two recent CDC's separate press releases, with a total investment capital of some \$18.7 million, the newly approved projects are by two different companies – Boeung Ket Packaging Factory Co., Ltd. in Kampong Cham province, and KH Paper Mill Co., Ltd. in Phnom Penh capital city.

The new investment projects cover the production of cardboard boxes.

Such investments amid COVID-19 outbreak demonstrate confidence of foreign investors in Cambodia's macroeconomic, political and social stability though threatened by the pandemic. •

## UN Nods for Special Funding

PPP/April 30

The UN has expressed support for the government's expansion of social protection agendas to include the most vulnerable groups such as workers in the informal economy and migrant workers who have returned amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

During a meeting between an inter-ministerial task force led by Cambodia Minister of Health Mam Bun Heng and more than 20 partner organisations under the UN umbrella, UN Resident Coordinator to Cambodia Pauline Tamesis said the pandemic has more severe impacts on those who are already at risk – women, children, youths, the elderly, low-income workers, those in the informal economy, and people with disability and underlying illnesses.

She said health and social protection measures in other virus-hit countries have proven to be essential not only to contain the disease and provide income security to those most affected but also to ensure the economy was able to weather the current and future crises.

Tamesis added the fiscal measures are designed as investments in system transformation for long-term development and as an emergency response that helps the government effectively address challenges posed by COVID-19.

Although there has been no sign of coronavirus spread among communities, this could change quickly. She warned that a community-wide spread is not impossible and called on Cambodia to prepare for a possible worst-case scenario and adjust its response to COVID-19 accordingly.

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## NGO Rolls Out Inclusive Learning App for Students with Disabilities



KT/May 01

Children with disabilities generally grapple with equal access to education owing to the special needs they require to interpret information or express themselves. To aid in their educational needs, the mobile learning application Words and Pictures was created.

The newly launched 'Words and Pictures' app is designed to tackle communication challenges faced by hearing- and speech-impaired children by advancing the use of sign language. Even their relatives and friends can access a tool in the app to practice Cambodian Sign Language.

The application was developed in collaboration with the tech NGO Open Institute and a consultant for the Krousar Thmey organisation, and backed by the Ministry of Education.

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## Three COVID-19 research projects in Cambodia get French financial support

KT/May 10

In a meeting with Cambodian Minister of Health Mam Bunheng, Ms. Eva Nguyen Binh, the French Ambassador to Cambodia said France has committed 400,000 Euro to support three research projects on COVID-19 pandemic in Cambodia

The Ambassador also informed Minister about the 2-million-Euro project of the French Development Agency (AFD) to support leading laboratories in Southeast Asia, including the Institut Pasteur du Cambodge, which has close cooperation with France, in the fight against COVID-19 pandemic.

She took the opportunity to thank the Minister as well as all officials and institutions concerned for having successfully cured 40 French COVID-19 patients in Cambodia.

She also lauded the good health situation in Cambodia, but called on the Cambodian people to remain vigilant.

Mr Bunheng and Ms. Nguyen Binh spoke highly of the good cooperation between the two countries in almost all domains since 1991. ●

## Malaysia Investment Firm Eyes Opportunity in Cambodian Finance

PPP/May 07

Malaysia-listed Gunung Capital Bhd, an investment holding company involved primarily in chartering out land-based transportation assets, is looking to acquire a 20% stake in a Cambodian financial institution.

The management of the company has been invited by promoters of a yet-to-be-issued, fully fledged commercial banking licence in Cambodia to evaluate a proposal to participate in.

It said the company management is currently in advanced discussions regarding the allowable equity participation in financial institutions. The parties are also in advanced discussions on other qualitative and quantitative requirements, such as governance issues, imposed by the relevant authorities in the Kingdom on foreign equity participation.

Gunung is potentially looking to unlock the value of the bank through a listing on the Cambodia Securities Exchange. Gunung said it was premature to conclude that a listing exercise in Cambodia is the company's only option to unlock the value of an equity investment.

As of the end of last year, the Kingdom has 46 commercial banks, 15 specialised banks and 82 microfinance institutions (MFIs). There are also 248 rural credit operators, 15 leasing companies and 20 payment service providers, said the NBC Annual Report 2019.

Banks' outstanding loan portfolio reached \$24.5 billion last year while deposits stood at \$25.5 billion. Among MFIs, loans reached \$7.2 billion and deposits \$3.9 billion. •

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## UN Nods for Social Funding

Minister Mam Bun Heng also applauded the US for joining Cambodia in close collaboration to prevent, stop and respond to the COVID-19 situation as well as mitigate impacts from the pandemic.

To mitigate COVID-19 impacts, he said the government has provided \$30 million for the Ministry of Health's emergency rescue foundation. The government has also prepared between \$800 million and \$2 billion to revive the economy. •

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## NGO Rolls Out Inclusive...

With a simple design, the inclusive application features over 500 words that are relevant to everyday-life situations, selected for their suitability to the Cambodian background.

The purpose of the application is to offer a fun picture dictionary with integrated sounds and sign language pictograms to facilitate and enhance communication between hard-of-hearing and deaf children, and their families or peers.

Available for free on both the Google Play and Apple stores, the application has signs displayed as pictograms available in Cambodian sign language and American Sign Language with an audio file for each word, in Khmer and English. •

## Cambodia-U.S. Trade up 35% in Q1

KT/May 07

Bilateral trade between Cambodia and the United States was valued at U\$1,678 million in the first quarter of this year, a 35% increase compared to the same period last year, the latest data from the U.S. government shows.

From January to March, Cambodia exports to the world's largest market grew by 42%, to US\$1,594 million, while the Kingdom's imports from the U.S. were worth about US\$85 million, down 30%.

According to the Cambodian Ministry of Commerce, Cambodia mostly exported textiles, footwear, travel goods, and agricultural products to the U.S., while the latter shipped mostly vehicles, animal feed, and machinery to the Kingdom.

Last year, the two-way trade between the countries reached US\$5.8 billion, a year-on-year increase of 37%. •