



## Cambodia Calls for More ASEAN-EU Cooperation on Pandemic Response



Khmer Times/02 December

Minister of Foreign Affairs Prak Sokhonn called on ASEAN and the EU to strengthen “unity, solidarity and an effective multilateralism” to fight against the global health crisis sparked by COVID-19.

His call was made during the 23<sup>rd</sup> ASEAN-EU Ministerial Meeting via videoconference. The meeting noted the progress of cooperation through the implementation of the ASEAN-EU Plan of Action (2018-2022).

The minister said with the second and third waves of pandemic still raging in some countries, it is extremely crucial that the EU sustains its support of ASEAN’s current initiatives to better prepare for future public health emergencies. ASEAN and the EU have a strong commitment in connecting the two regions.



Cambodia encourages both sides to work on identifying practical joint activities to implement the Joint Statement on Connectivity, which is in total synergy with the [Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity] 2025 and the EU’s connectivity strategy.

He added Cambodia welcomes efforts to conclude the ASEAN-EU Comprehensive Air Transport Agreement (CATA), as this would be a step forward to promote physical, institutional and people-to-people connectivity.

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## Cambodia, S. Korea FTA Much Closer



Khmer Times/04 December

Ministry of Commerce (MoC) said negotiations towards a free trade agreement (FTA) between Cambodia and South Korea saw agreement on 90% of the issues addressed as the fourth round of talks concluded in November.

Both countries have agreed on issues including economic cooperation, trade remedies, general regulation, conflict solutions mechanism and lists of measures for products.

Cambodian Ambassador to South Korea said economic concerns have been set as a core and key priority for foreign policy as executed by the Kingdom's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. Therefore, the Kingdom's diplomats are responsible for both their politically driven diplomatic duties and maintaining a sharp focus on economic diplomacy.

As of November 2020, bilateral trade between Cambodia and South Korea had reached more than \$700 million. South Korean exports to Cambodia accounted for about 70 percent of that total with South Korean imports from Cambodia comprising the remainder. The ambassador pointed out that pre-COVID-19, the value of trade between the two countries reached nearly \$1 billion in 2019.

Cambodian exports to South Korea were primarily garments and textiles, footwear, travel bags, spare parts, electronic equipment, rubber, pharmaceuticals and agricultural products. Cambodia's imports from Korea were largely in categories including vehicles, electronics, kitchen appliances, beverages, pharmaceuticals and plastic products. •

## Minister Heralds Women's Roles in Social Leadership

Phnom Penh Post/09 December

Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Prak Sokhonn said Cambodia is committed to further professional and civil recruitment of women and integrating their contributions as the nation continues to develop.

The Minister delivered a speech at the opening session of Strengthening Women's Roles in Building and Sustaining Peace: from Commitments to Results, an international conference held online on 07 December.

From its tragic past, Cambodia has witnessed the fortitude and resilience of women in rebuilding society and engendering a peaceful and secure environment vital for economic and social development.

He noted that the government had taken efforts to promote women, who now constitute 41 percent of the civil service workforce, with a growing number engaged in leadership and decision-making positions.

Since 2006, Cambodia has deployed 419 women among 7,123 peacekeepers to UN missions in nine countries. Currently, 92 women are among 781 Cambodian troops deployed in five missions. Cambodia ranks second in ASEAN behind Indonesia and 17<sup>th</sup> in the world for its share of female troops contributed to the UN peacekeeping efforts. •

## Gov't Tackles Fake News amid Pandemic

Phnom Penh Post/09 December

The Ministry of Information has warned of legal action against individuals who spread fake news amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

The warning came as the ministry and Government Spokesperson Unit issued statements in response to the spread of fake news related to the government's efforts to combat COVID-19.

The ministry had always urged journalists to obey the laws and regulations and to adhere to professional ethics.

The ministry warned if a small number of journalists continue to act unprofessionally, the ministry and relevant institutions would take action that may lead to the suspension or termination of a publishing license.

To eliminate the unethical acts of unprofessional journalists, and in the case of any person affected by the mentioned issues, the ministry supports the person to exercise their rights by the law and request the authorities to take legal action without advance notice to the Information Ministry. •

## More Than 6,600 Disabled Employed in the Kingdom



Phnom Penh Post/03 December

Prime Minister Hun Sen said the government has a clear vision to ensure persons with disabilities and their families have good quality of life, with 6,652 of them currently employed by the public and private sector.

Around 2,860 people with disabilities, including 789 women, have been employed by 40 ministries and other state institutions. Among them, 1,557 have severe disabilities.

He added 102 business entities from the private sector have also employed 3,792 persons with disabilities. They include banks, microfinance institutions, hotels and factories.

The government has launched a Strategic Plan on Disability 2019-2023, with a focus on increasing employment and economic security to reduce poverty among persons with disabilities. The plan aims to promote proper employment growth, career advancement and creating jobs to improve living standards for persons with disabilities.

He called on all ministries and state institutions to encourage qualified persons with disabilities to work as officials, civil servants, workers, employees, apprentices or internship trainees.

King Norodom Sihamoni also called on all people to continue their support for persons with disabilities by helping them to eliminate barriers to be independent, as well as having strong individual ownership in the society.

He said the wellbeing of persons with disabilities is taken into consideration and will be a priority in emergency situations, such as natural disasters. •

## PM Urges Promoting E-Commerce



Phnom Penh Post/09 November

Prime Minister Hun Sen proposed that the leaders of the five inland ASEAN countries devote more resources to promoting digital commerce as a driving force for post-COVID-19 recovery.

The remarks was made during the 9th ACMECS Summit, held under the theme “Partnership for Connectivity and Resilience” via video link.

The five countries – Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Vietnam and Thailand (often called CLMVT) – are members of the political, economic and cultural Ayeyawady-Chao Phraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy (ACMECS) organisation.

The PM said against the backdrop of a post-COVID-19 horizon, we are expected to become increasingly more dependent on the digital economy. ACMECS countries should be more proactive in promoting diversification strategies to promote trade investment complementarities, especially in relation to new market opportunities under the recently signed Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership [RCEP] agreement.

“Obviously, the digital economy will unleash the unlimited market potential for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises [MSMEs] to expand their businesses through e-commerce and other online activities without having to travel or move anywhere.”

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## PM Slams Politicising of COVID-19 in UNGA

Khmer Times/05 December

Prime Minister Hun Sen called for joint international action to combat COVID-19 and criticised countries that “politicise” the ongoing pandemic in a United Nations General Assembly meeting.

In his keynote address to the 31st Extraordinary Session of the United Nations General Assembly on “Responses to COVID-19 Pandemic”, held in New York via videoconference, the PM said the fight against COVID-19, which has globally infected more than 65 million people and claimed around 1.5 million lives, shouldn’t be used by any country to further its own geo-political agenda.

The premier said while the lives of millions of people around the world are at risk, no country should politicise [COVID-19] and denounce the ability to contain the spread of this infectious disease as it would not add any benefit to the fight against this pandemic.

“In addition, the fight against this global pandemic requires joint prudent decision-making, under the framework of multilateralism, by respecting international laws and the sovereignty of each individual nation, regardless of its size or wealth, with the United Nations and World Health Organization as the core agencies,” he added.

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## Kingdom's Airports Get High Marks on Health and Hygiene



Phnom Penh Post/01 December

Cambodia's three international airports have earned health accreditations from an aviation watchdog group that carried out audits on the safety and hygiene measures put in place after the global COVID-19 outbreak.

Cambodia Airports said the airports in the Capital, Siem Reap and Preah Sihanouk provinces had obtained Airport Health Accreditation from Airport Council International (ACI) for practicing proper health procedures, including cleaning and disinfection, social distancing and staff safety.

The ACI audit also focused on the measures airports had put in place to protect passengers, specifically when they interacted with airport personnel during checking in, boarding and disembarking. The inspection included airport facilities such as duty-free shops, food and beverage areas and business lounges.

France's VINCI Airports, which is a 70% shareholder in Cambodia Airports, has developed and promoted the "protecting each other" campaign based on recommendations by the World Health Organisation and the International Civil Aviation Authority.

The three airports were among the first in the ASEAN region to obtain the ACI Airport Health Accreditation. According to the ACI, this puts the Kingdom's airports "in the same league as bigger regional hubs in Singapore, Jakarta and Manila".

Cambodia's airports were ranked first in the category of airports with less than 15 million passengers per year. ●

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## PM Slams Politicising of...

He also underlined Cambodia's full support to list the COVID-19 vaccine as one of the global public goods and the participate in the initiative of the UN Secretary-General's COVID-19 Response and Recovery Trust Fund, which was launched earlier this year. ●

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## Cambodia Calls for More...

He believed that the realisation of a region-wide ASEAN-EU FTA is the ultimate key to unlock business and investment potentials, adding that he is delighted to see that ASEAN-EU dialogue relations continue to grow over the years.

He welcomed the elevation of the ASEAN-EU Dialogue Partnership to a Strategic Partnership which was confirmed during the meeting, with the belief that this new milestone would further enhance the existing friendship and mutually beneficial cooperation.

The meeting also adopted the ASEAN-EU Joint Ministerial Statement on Connectivity, and appreciated efforts to explore synergies between the MPAC 2025" and "Connecting Europe and Asia: The EU Strategy".

ASEAN members also welcomed the EU's continued support for ASEAN Centrality and Community building and the EU's announcement of about \$24 million to support the "South East Asia Health Pandemic Response and Preparedness Programme". ●

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## PM Urges Promoting...

"In this sense, there is no doubt that MSMEs will continue to be key players in the market and major drivers of economic growth, promoting education through e-learning platforms and providing benefits to the business community."

Referring to one of the three pillars of ACMECS' master plan for 2019-2023, the premier added: "We need to adopt modern technology and turn major cities into multi-purpose hubs that connect the ACMECS sub-regional market with the greater ASEAN and those in neighbouring countries in order to achieve a 'smart and sustainable ACMECS'.

The other two pillars are "seamless connectivity" and "synchronised ACMECS economies".

ACMECS was established in April 2003 in a bid to bridge the economic gap among its five member states and to build sustainable prosperity in the sub-region. ●