



CAMBODIA
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Economic Diplomacy Strategies Prioritised



Phnom Penh Post/18 January

Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Prak Sokhonn on 18 January announced the launch of the “Economic Diplomacy Strategy (EDS) for 2021-2023” as a framework for future diplomatic and cultural initiatives. He also unveiled a collection of traditional recipes dubbed *The Taste of Angkor*.

The new strategy prioritises economic issues and instructs diplomats to move beyond traditional diplomacy and seek opportunities for the country’s economic diversification.

Speaking at the event, the Minister said the EDS was developed over the course of two years and focused on four goals consisting of the promotion of the tourism sector, international trade, foreign direct investment (FDI) and fostering cultural exchanges – including the showcasing of Khmer foods.

He said the ministry will promote existing mechanisms to attract FDI, expand bilateral and multilateral trade and entice tourists to visit by exhibiting Cambodia culture abroad.

Continued on page (4)

IN THIS ISSUE

Cambodia Readies for EU Meet on 7-Year Work Plan

Page 2

PM Hun Sen Eyes India FTA

Page 2

Campaign Sets Out to Inspire Young Women into Leadership

Page 2

NBC Governor Wins Award

Page 3

COVID-19 Containment Policy – First Technical Meeting to Procure COVID-19 Vaccine Convened

Page 3

‘Kingdom One of Safest to Visit in COVID-19 Era’

Page

Cambodia Readies for EU Meet on 7-Year Work Plan



Phnom Penh Post/12 January

The Kingdom is set to host a consultative meeting with EU representatives and partners based in the country next month and prepare a 2021-2027 joint development cooperation plan that centres on market diversification, according to the Council for the Development of Cambodia (CDC).

The remarks was made at a meeting between the CDC’s Cambodian Rehabilitation and Development Board (CRDB) Secretary-General and EU delegation to Cambodia’s head of cooperation.

The two sides discussed preparations for next month’s consultative meeting, which will address the drafts of the Joint European Development Cooperation Strategy for Cambodia for 2021-2027 and the EU’s next Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027.

The joint strategic plan was agreed in principle by both sides, which they determined would effectively diversify the economy and promote the private sector, sustainable development work and human resources development.

Continued on page (3)

PM Hun Sen Eyes India FTA



Khmer Times/20 January

Prime Minister Hun Sen has requested India to examine the possibility of a free trade agreement in order to expand investment and trade between the two countries.

During the meeting, the PM and the newly appointed Ambassador of India to Cambodia discussed and noted the improvement of Cambodia-India relations.

The ambassador commended the wise leadership of Prime Minister Hun Sen in using civilization, culture and religion as the tools to improve Cambodia-India relations. She pledged to further strengthen Cambodia-India trade and cooperation.

The premier recalled that India was the country that supports Cambodia’s fight for the independence in 1950s, and in 1980s, India was among the first to recognize Cambodia’s People Republic of Kampuchea government, while the UN still recognized Democratic Kampuchea government.

Continued on page (4)

Campaign Sets Out to Inspire Young Women into Leadership



Phnom Penh Post/12 January

The Cambodian Women Parliamentarians Caucus (CWPC) has launched the “Girl2Leader Cambodia” campaign to share experience and knowledge with young women throughout the country, instilling in them ideas of responsibility, decision-making and women’s leadership in politics.

The focus of the campaign is to communicate with girls studying in high school to pave the way for them in terms of instilling ideas and dreams for choosing jobs and careers in the future. We hope to facilitate their development into courageous, independent thinkers,” she said.

The previous iterations of the campaign had seen enthusiastic participation from young women, and the new campaign is slated to be introduced in all provinces.

Joining the campaign are members of the CWPC and representatives from other organisations who shared personal experiences of their rise to positions of leadership. •

NBC Governor Wins Award



Phnom Penh Post/13 January

National Bank of Cambodia (NBC) governor Chea Chanto won Central Banker of the Year, Asia-Pacific award from premier financial magazine “The Banker” for his leadership in successfully navigating through a stormy 2020 during the COVID-19 crisis.

The periodical, owned by London-based Financial Times Group, said the Kingdom managed the health crisis created by the coronavirus well, with fewer than 400 cases confirmed and zero deaths recorded to date.

The Banker said: “Despite these conditions, Cambodia is forecast to see [minus] 1.9% growth in gross domestic product [GDP] during 2020... remarkable considering the hardships the country has faced.”

Following the impact COVID-19 and flooding have had on businesses, the central bank stepped up to help out companies experiencing financial hardship.

On 28 October, the NBC officially launched the Bakong interbank blockchain-based payment platform in a bid to enable interoperability between banks and financial institutions that is safe, efficient and cost-effective, and gives a powerful impetus to rural financial sector development and nurture financial inclusivity. •

Youth Groups Win UN Human Rights Awards



Phnom Penh Post/19 January

The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Cambodia recognised six youth groups with Young Human Rights Champions 2020 awards for outstanding contributions to the promotion and protection of human rights and accountability.

Contest participants were taught about addressing human rights issues and trained in video production skills and then tasked with developing their own video content addressing specific human rights issues in the nation.

Continued from page (2)

Cambodia Readies for EU Meet on 7-Year...

The two sides will focus on “priority areas” of the financial framework, including the economy and employment, governance, education and vocational training.

They are to each prepare a draft by the end of this month and collect feedback and suggestions to present at February’s consultative meeting.

The Secretary-General said implementation of the previous iteration of the 2014-2020 joint strategic plan significantly contributed to the sustainable development and economic inclusivity in Cambodia.

The six-year plan focuses on bilateral cooperation in four priority areas – social development, promotion of equitable and sustainable economic growth, urban-rural infrastructure development and governance.

“These achievements are a testament to the continued commitment of the EU and its member states and the Swiss Confederation for the development process in Cambodia,” he said.

Cambodia Rice Federation (CRF) president welcomed the initiative to develop the joint strategic plan, hoping to bring more benefits to those in the Kingdom’s rice sector. •

Continued from page (1)

Economic Diplomacy Strategies...

To this end, the ministry is training a new generation of professional diplomats who will actively promote national interests across all sectors.

Sokhonn said: "This EDS is designed to contribute to strengthening economic growth, reducing dependency on foreign aid and promoting Cambodia's interests in the region and around the world."

In the last two years, the ministry has made efforts to promote economic diplomacy through developing human resources and produce materials for a public awareness campaign sharing information about the nation's economy, trade, investment opportunities and tourism.

These materials will be used by diplomats when meeting political leaders, business people and international visitors. The materials are also intended for use during trade and culture fairs and forums with foreign companies.

Sokhonn described Cambodia as bearing the brunt of the COVID-19 pandemic as well as geopolitical conflicts between superpowers and the 20 per cent suspension of the EU's Everything but Arms' (EBA) trade scheme.

But strategies put in place by the government would facilitate stark reforms to draw investors and help restore the country's economy.

"The situation clearly shows us that we need to change the way we work by moving from traditional diplomacy to a strategy that focuses on the promotion of economy, culture and tourism. That is to say, we will implement a foreign policy which places prosperity as its core priority. No country is successful without prioritising economic issues on its diplomatic agenda," Sokhonn said.

He went on to urge all diplomats receiving foreign guests to utilise the cookbook *The Taste of Angkor* which details more than 30 entrees including prahok and amok. The cookbook should also be given to guests as a souvenir. •

'Kingdom One of Safest to Visit in COVID-19 Era'



Phnom Penh Post/13 January

The Ministry of Tourism has recently proclaimed Cambodia as one of the safest countries to visit in light of the Kingdom having been ranked number one in the world by the Senegalese Economic Prospective Bureau for its success in handling the Covid-19 pandemic.

In rankings of 166 countries published on 20 December last year, Cambodia received a perfect score of 1.0, slightly edging South Sudan and Brunei which each scored 0.99.

Following the containment of an outbreak in November 2020, Cambodia was ranked 3rd in the world – behind the Caribbean state Saint Kitts and Nevis and the Indian Ocean archipelago of the Seychelles – and 1st in the Asia-Pacific.

The ministry requested support and cooperation from the public, media outlets, tour operators and development partners to disseminate the good news and promote the nation's tourism industry. •

Continued from page (1)

PM Hun Sen Eyes...

Premier Hun Sen said it is high time for the two countries to strengthen and deepen the cooperation, particularly in investment and trade; and that the free trade agreement is the key.

The trade volume between the two countries reached \$250 million in 2019, up 10% compared to 2018's \$227 million.

Both parties also discussed the arrangement of the official visit of His Majesty Cambodian King Norodom Sihamoni to India in the near future in order to strengthen the relations of both countries. •