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Developer finds new partners for planned resort in Preah Sihanouk

Kali Kotoski and **Sor Chandara** | Publication date 21 March 2016 | 07:12 ICT Share



A section of beach in Ream National Park in Preah Sihanouk province in 2008 where part of Yeejia Development's Golden Silver Gulf resort is to be built. Photo supplied

A Chinese developer has announced new partnerships in its bid to develop a massive tourism project in a protected national park in Preah Sihanouk province – a project it claims could become Cambodia's second-biggest tourism draw after Angkor Wat.

Yeejia Tourism Development Co Ltd, a subsidiary of Chinese-owned firm Unite International (Cambodia) Investment Group Co Ltd, has signed memoranda of understanding with more than a dozen mostly Chinese companies to develop and supply services to its Golden Silver Gulf resort project, it announced on Friday.

The resort is already under construction on 3,300 hectares inside Ream National Park, and is set to include villas, five-star hotels, an exhibition centre, duty-free shopping and health facilities.

The development will cover 28 kilometres of pristine coastline on the Ream Peninsula and western half of Koh Thmei island.

Fu Xian Ting, chairman of Unite International and Yeejia, said construction of a highway connecting the resort to Sihanoukville's airport, 7 kilometres away, as well as the main highway to Sihanoukville and Phnom Penh, will begin later this year.

"Through our cooperation, I believe that in three to five years, a new city surrounded by the natural forest located on a bay will appear, and that it will be an entertainment paradise for all tourists," he said.

Ting said the seaside location would attract both local and international tourists, while "houses will be fairly priced for Cambodian and Chinese investors".

Yeejia signed MoUs with 13 companies on Thursday, according to Friday's press release, though it did not name all of the companies.

Among those confirmed are Chinese International Travel Service Corp Ltd (CITS), a Chinese state-run tourism company that will be responsible for facilitating tourist access to the island. The company is already involved in at least one Cambodian airline and a subsidiary that runs off-airport duty-free stores in Phnom Penh, Siem Reap and Sihanoukville.

Meanwhile, gaming junket operator Jimei International Entertainment Group Ltd announced separately in a filing to the Hong Kong Stock Exchange a framework agreement with Yeejia to jointly develop an "entertainment resort complex, including property, hotel, golf course, theme park and other entertainment and tourism business".

Jimei, which last year entered into a junket arrangement with NagaWorld, did not indicate whether the resort property would include a casino.

Yeejia did not indicate the cost of the project or timeline for completion. Previous media reports have indicated the development would cost around \$5 billion and take 20 years to complete.

The government granted Yeejia the 3,300-hectare land concession in 2009 after the company made a series of "donations" to Prime Minister Hun Sen's bodyguard unit.

The prime minister publicly endorsed the resort project later that year following a personal visit by the company's chairman.

However, in May 2010, the project's future appeared in doubt after the Council of Ministers issued a royal decree revoking Yeejia's ownership of its concession inside Ream National Park and turning the land's management over to the Environment Ministry.

Sao Sopheap, a spokesman for the ministry, yesterday denied that Yeejia's concession had been revoked, insisting that the company had all the necessary licences to proceed with its tourism development project.

"They have the licences to build on that land and they need more investment to make it successful, because currently it lacks access to water and electricity," he said. "They need to make more effort to develop the resort to make it attractive for visitors."

Tourism Minister Thong Khun, who presided over Thursday's MoU signing ceremony, said the opening of the Golden Silver Gulf resort would draw more Chinese tourists to Cambodia's coast.

"This investment is part of a response to [China's] 'One Belt, One Road' strategy and will attract more Chinese tourists," he said.

When asked about concerns over developing a resort inside a protected national park, Khun told the *Post* yesterday that "I think they are being careful with their plan."

"Some areas need to be developed, but all developments need to serve environmental preservation," he said, adding that the Ministry of Environment needs to have a clear policy on the project's ecological impact.

Additional reporting by Cheng Sokhorng

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MOST VIEWED



PM imposes nationwide Covid restrictions, curfew over Delta scare

Prime Minister Hun Sen late on July 28 instructed the municipal and provincial authorities nationwide to strictly enforce Covid-19 measures including curfew for two weeks from July 29 midnight through August 12 to stem the new coronavirus Delta variant. The instruction came shortly after he issued a directive



Two luxury hotels latest quarantine options for inbound travellers

The Inter-Ministerial Committee to Combat Covid-19 has designated two luxury hotels as alternative quarantine options for travellers who wish to enter Cambodia through Phnom Penh International Airport – Sokha Phnom Penh Hotel & Residence and the Courtyard by Marriott Phnom Penh. In a notice detailing guidelines issued



Provinces on Thai borders put in lockdown amid Delta fears

The government has decided to place several border provinces in lockdown for two weeks in a bid to prevent the new coronavirus Delta variant spreading further into community. According a directive signed by Prime Minister Hun Sen late on July 28, the provinces include Koh Kong,



Delta spreading in Kingdom

Cambodia has so far detected more than 200 cases of the highly contagious coronavirus Delta variant, with 109 found on July 31 and August 1. The Ministry of Health has expressed deep concerns that the variant may have already reached communities and be spreading as some of the cases



China denies Mekong hacking

As the US and its allies joined hands last week to expose what they allege to be China's Ministry of State Security's malicious cyber activities around the world, the attention also turned to Cambodia with the US Department of Justice claiming that four



US' Johnson & Johnson Covid-19 vaccines arrive

The first batch of 455,000 doses of the Johnson & Johnson Covid-19 vaccine donated by the US touched down in Phnom Penh on the morning of July 30. They are part of the total 1,060,100 doses the US has pledged to provide to Cambodia through the World Health Organisation-led (