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A Chinese firm that plans to invest \$2 billion into developing the Kingdom's first special economic zone (SEZ) dedicated solely to agricultural processing and storage has signed on a new partner to help jumpstart the stalled project, a top agriculture official said yesterday.

Tian Rui (Cambodia) Agricultural Cooperation SEZ Co Ltd, a subsidiary of China's Qingdao Tian Rui Group, signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with China's De Zhou Zhong Group from Shangdong province on Sunday.

Agriculture Minister Veng Sokhon, who presided over the MoU signing, told The Post yesterday that Tian Rui still needed to find more financial backers before it could begin construction of its SEZ, which envisions having from 30 to 100 agro-industrial factories once it is fully operational in five to 10 years.

'The \$2 billion is a huge investment for an agricultural SEZ and the company needs time to find the right investors to join in," he said.

'We have to show the investors that their investment is potentially profitable compared to the competition from neighbouring countries."

According to Sokhon, Tian Rui has scaled back the size of its planned SEZ from 200 hectares of land to 100 hectares, and intends to commence construction by the end of the year.

He said the downsizing was not a sign that the project lacked viability, but rather reflected the challenges it faced in securing land titles from local villagers in the Kong Pisey district of Kampong Speu province.

He added that Tian Rui also agreed to establish an agricultural research centre and an office for sanitary and phytosanitary controls inside the zone to help investors clear export hurdles.

'This project will add more value to our agricultural products and promote the livelihood of our farmers, allowing us export more to the Chinese and EU markets," he said.

Ever Han, international manager for Tian Rui (Cambodia), said changes have been made to the project and it was now ready to move ahead.

"Now that the Tian Rui SEZ has redesigned itself to be in line with the government's vision,

https://archive.ph/iHBRs 1/3 overall construction planning can begin," she said.

According to Han, De Zhou Zhong Group is one of China's largest pepper and chilli exporters and has joined the 17 other firms that have come onboard to develop the SEZ.

"De Zhou will work together with the SEZ to develop 2,000 hectares of land [outside the SEZ] for pepper and chili production and they will build a processing plant, while Tian Rui is committed to building a cold chain storage and logistics system for them," she explained.

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Michiko Kanzaki, the wife of prominent Japanese philanthropist and businessman Koji Kanzaki, donated 3ha of land in Chaom Chao II commune's Chrey Kong village of the capital's Por Sen Chey district to the City Hall to develop it into a public garden. The



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