

Tourist numbers still rising

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THE number of foreign tourists visiting the Kingdom has increased nearly 15 percent in the first nine months year on year, while Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh announced that Cambodians would qualify for visa on arrival at the world's second-most-populous country. A total of 1,803,180 tourists entered the Kingdom via land, air, and sea in the first nine months, a 14.6 percent increase on 1,573,940 tourists in the same period last year, according to statistics from the Ministry of Tourism. Cambodia aims to meet a goal of 2.5 million international visitors during 2010, up from 2.16 million last year, according to Tith Chantha, director general at the Ministry of Tourism. "Growth could be at around 15 percent for all of 2010 because of economic recovery, more regional flight connections and broad promotions," he said yesterday. Meanwhile, Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh announced at the India-ASEAN summit in Hanoi on Saturday that citizens of Cambodia as well as Vietnam,

Philippines and Laos would qualify for visas on arrival beginning in January 2011. Ang Kim Eang, president of the Cambodia Association of Travel Agents, said the visa-on-arrival scheme would lead to more trade and investment activity between Cambodia and India, but was unlikely to boost tourism to Cambodia. "It's good for business, but for tourism, if there are no direct flights to and from India, there will still be few Indian tourists here," he said. The Ministry of Tourism statistics show that in the first nine months of this year, 9,646 Indians came to Cambodia, an 8 percent increase from 8,916 in the same period last year. Ang Kim Eang said that tourism to Cambodia was likely to grow by 15 percent throughout the year, but that it could increase further if there were flights to Sihanoukville. The Kingdom's airports were the entry points for 51 percent of international visitors, with 920,627 arriving by plane, according to the Tourism Ministry's statistics. Siem Reap International Airport saw a 17.65 percent increase in arrivals during the first nine months compared to the same period last year, with 498,697 foreign visitors entering the Kingdom through the airport. Phnom Penh saw 421,930 visitors enter Cambodia through its airport in 2010 to the end of September, an 11 percent increase on the same period last year. The largest source of overall arrivals to the Kingdom was Vietnam, with 341,113 visitors in the first nine months, a 49 percent climb from the period last year. Some 207,412 Koreans entered Cambodia during the period, 32 percent more than last year, while China rounded out the top three markets for arrivals, with 127,829 visitors, a 40.8 percent increase from the first nine months last year. However, China was the largest source of business visitors to the Kingdom during the first nine months with 27,660 business arrivals, more than double Thailand, the second-largest source of business visitors. Thailand was the ninth-largest source of overall visitors to Cambodia, but saw an overall 8.77 percent decline in arrivals with 76,036 travelling from Thailand to Cambodia in 2010 to the end of September.

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