Sihanouk International Airport, one of the three airports developed and managed by Cambodia Airports, has started welcoming scheduled flights between Sihanoukville and Siem Reap operated by Cambodia Angkor Air, Cambodia Airports' press release said on Monday.

The Cambodia Angkor Air's ATR 72 with a capacity of 65 seats touched down at the airport on Dec. 19 at 15:20, it said.

A ceremony to celebrate the national flag carrier's flight was presided over by Deputy Prime Minister Sok An, Minister in charge of the Office of the Council of Ministers.

According to the press release, Cambodia Angkor Air operates three-weekly flights (Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. Arrival and departure times in Sihanoukville are 15:20 and 15:50 respectively while departure and arrival times in Siem Reap are 14:10 and 17:00 respectively.

"We are proud and delighted to have the national flag carrier be the first airline to launch scheduled flights to/from Sihanouk International Airport. Regular air access is critical to unlock the huge potential of the Kingdom's coastal area, to create opportunities for tourism and trade and to drive the socio-economic development of Cambodia," said Emmanuel Menanteau, the CEO of Cambodia Airports.

Since taking over the management of Sihanouk International Airport, Cambodia Airports has incurred investments in excess of US$30 million. Major overhaul of the facilities includes the extension of the runway from 1,400 meters to 2,500 meters, the enlargement of its shoulders to 45 meters and the doubling of the floor surface of the passenger terminal to 1,000 square meters.

Sihanouk International Airport is expected to become Cambodia's busiest airport with a maximum capacity of 10 million passengers per year.