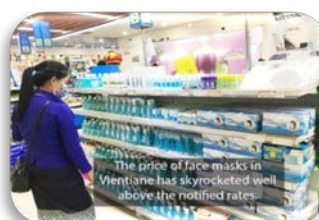




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## Aviation sector calls for government aid



*Cambodia News | 19 March, 2020*

The country's main airport company, Cambodia Airports, has called for a "global and comprehensive plan" to aid the ailing aviation industry. The knock-on effect of the tumbling numbers in flight bookings into Cambodia, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, has led to "sizeable slowdown" in revenues, according to Khek Norinda, Director of Communication and PR for Cambodia Airports, which represents three international airports, including Phnom Penh International Airport. "While the aviation industry continues to operate, the impact of the crisis has rippled through the aviation value chain and hit airlines, airports and associated partners hard. We have experienced a sizeable slowdown in activities and reduction in revenues," he said. "It is therefore an opportune time for authorities to step in with a global and comprehensive plan to alleviate the severe challenge impacting the aviation sector," he added. The call follows figures released by the Ministry of Tourism that shows that in the first two months of this year, the number of foreign tourists visiting the Kingdom declined by 30 percent, a direct response to the virus outbreak. This represents a shortfall of 360,000 on the 1.2 million foreign tourists who flew into the country in the same period last year. In a recent Khmer Times' report, another spokeswoman for Cambodia Airways, Sok Ravy, revealed the company has reduced 40 percent of

flights across Asia due to COVID-19 fears. "The decline has impacted income and some employees have taken short-term rest periods," she said. To prevent further possible spread of COVID-19, the Cambodian government has temporarily banned nationals from six countries, the US, Germany, Italy, France, Spain and Iran, from entering the country. Additionally, Cambodian outbound passengers to the infected countries are also banned. The State Secretariat of Civil Aviation could not be reached for a response.

Source: <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/50703133/aviation-sector-calls-for-government-aid/>

## Plentiful rice reserves for domestic and inter'l demand: Government



*Cambodia News | 19 March, 2020*

The government and private sector have assured the nation that their combined stockpile of rice will be more than enough to supply domestic demand during the ongoing Novel Coronavirus situation. With numbers of reported cases rising to 35 in the past few days, panic buying – a term used to describe bulk purchasing of essential goods such as food and fuel in an uncertain climate – has been witnessed in some stores in Phnom Penh. In a joint statement between the state-owned Green Trade Company (GTC), an arm of the Commerce Ministry and the Cambodia Rice Federation (CRF), they said that media coverage of an increase in reported cases of the virus has sparked fear among the population. It added that when people panic buy, the subsequent

food shortage leads to a hike in food prices. “We appeal to the public not to be worried about the rice shortage because bulk-buying amidst the virus fear will enable some profiteers to increase price of milled rice,” the statement read, adding that members of CRF, together with GTC, has plentiful stocks of rice to sell in Phnom Penh’s markets and in provinces across the country. To add further reassurance, the Federation noted both high milled rice and un-milled rice grains in stock in the warehouses of 400 companies. As well as being able to meet domestic demand, these volumes will be enough to meet export requirements. As of March 16, the rice harvest for the 2019-2020 dry season ran at about 80 percent, equivalent to 2.3 million tonnes. Figures from CRF show that over the January/February period, the Kingdom exported about 136,499 metric tonnes of milled rice, an increase of around 22 percent when compared to the same period last year. The statement followed a warning issued by the Ministry of Commerce (MOC), in collaboration with other government bodies, that it will take legal action against business owners, such as shopkeepers and market traders, who are profiteering from the outbreak situation by pushing up prices of essential goods. “Officers representing the Cambodia Import-Export Inspection and Fraud Repression Directorate-General (Cam-control) will conduct spot checks at markets, shops, malls and stores and explain to sellers why they should desist from hiking up their prices,” said MOC spokesperson Seang Thay. He said the measure is being taken to calm

any potential panic or chaos in the population. Dr Ka Sunbaunat, psychiatrist and former Dean of the University of Medical Sciences, speaking exclusively to Khmer Times, also called for calm, touching on the panic which ensued during the SARS outbreak in 2003, when Cambodians were tricked into believing that eating mung beans before midnight would prevent an infection. “Cambodians are panicking, but this is not new to the people of this country. We are prone to falling for baseless rumours and conspiracy theories,” he said.

Source : <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/50703131/plentiful-rice-reserves-for-domestic-and-interl-demand-government/>

## Laos launches APPS, PRN at int'l airports amid COVID-19 pandemic



Laos News | 19 March, 2020

(KPL/Xinhua) The Immigration Department under the Ministry of Public Security has launched an advanced passenger processing system (APPS) and passenger name record (PNR) for pre-screening of air passengers at international airports. A press conference on the twin system was held in Vientiane Capital on March 17 chaired by Director General of Immigration Department Saysaming Sivily. APPS and PNR are a computer system that the public sector will use to manage and pre-screen air passengers checking in and out of the Lao PDR. At the same time, it will be a system to record passenger travel details as a database for immigration officials to use in the future. This is

accordance with the International Civil Aviation Organization and the recommendation of the UN Security Council, which has notified member countries to install systems for the management and inspection of passengers in advance. At the end of 2016, the Immigration Department had coordinated with the Civil Aviation Department under the Ministry of Public Works and Transport and other relevant government agencies and the private sector to conduct a feasibility study for the use of this system in Laos. "In 2019, the government authorised our department to install and use such systems in order to enhance security measures for passengers in the country," said Mr Saysaming. "The system had a test launch in February 2020 with immigration officials deploying it to check passengers entering and leaving Laos on international flights," Mr Saysaming. APPS and PNR are the most advanced systems that will enable officials to carry out the technical task of managing passengers who travel in and out of Laos effectively and quickly. "Passengers will feel more confident about the safety measures taken by the airlines, while the public sector will be able to reduce expenditure on security management tasks," he added

Source : [http://www.vientianetimes.org.la/freeContent/FreeContent\\_Huayxai.php](http://www.vientianetimes.org.la/freeContent/FreeContent_Huayxai.php)

## Health Ministry to import face masks from Vietnam



*Laos News | 20 March, 2020*

The Ministry of Health plans to import face masks from neighbouring countries, including Vietnam, Thailand, and China, to overcome shortages of the item in Laos. "The first lot of two million face masks will be imported to Laos soon, of which 1.5 million will be for health workers. Their tasks put them at risk of infection from patients. Then masks will be provided to patients in hospitals to control the spread of their illnesses to others," Minister of Health, Dr Bounkong Syhavong said. "Another 500,000 face masks will be sold to the public," he added. An import agreement was concluded following a request from the Lao government to Vietnam, which had temporarily suspended the export of face masks as they are in high demand within the country. Vietnam agreed to export the masks to Laos because of the special relationship between the two countries. "Within a few weeks, a company from the neighbouring country will set up a factory in Laos for producing face masks. When completed, it will produce up to 500,000 face masks per month," he added. Even though the imported face masks will not satisfy current demand, they will meet elementary needs. Face masks selling across Laos have increased by up to tenfold because of worries related to COVID-19 infections in neighbouring countries, even though no case has been reported in Laos. The Ministry of Industry and Commerce issued a notification last

month that stated the price of face masks must not exceed 25,000 kip for a box of 50 pieces, or 1,000 kip per piece for retail sales. However, consumers have complained they cannot find masks at the notified prices. Masks sold on social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram are going for 165,000 kip to 200,000 kip for a box of 50 pieces. An official from the Goods and Price Management Division said representatives from the Food and Drugs Department under the Ministry Of Health and the Provincial Industry and Commerce Departments were regularly checking the prices of mask in pharmacies across the country. "Those found selling the face masks over the notified prices are warned, but it is quite difficult to control the prices because we import all the face marks," he said. "Meanwhile, countries which export face masks to Laos are dealing with their own outbreaks of COVID-19 and demand for masks in those countries has increased," he noted. "About 250,000 face masks will be imported to our country in the next few weeks by a Lao company, but to sell such items at the notified prices, we have to give them incentives such as tax cuts and other measures," he said.

Source : [http://www.vientianetimes.org.la/freeContent/FreeConten\\_Health\\_57.php](http://www.vientianetimes.org.la/freeContent/FreeConten_Health_57.php).

## Myanmar closes Myawady-Thai border gates



Myanmar News 19 March, 2020

The government on Thursday shut down the Myawady border gates in Kayin State, which is one

of the busiest border gates going to and from Thailand, a local legislator said, as part of the efforts to prevent COVID-19. The closure will continue until further notice, according to Kayin State Hluttaw MP U Thant Zin Aung. He said the instruction to close the gates came from Colonel Saw Chit Thu, general secretary of Kayin State Border Guard Forces (BGF). "All Myawady (Thailand-Myanmar) border gates under BGF will be closed starting today, until further notice," U Thant Zin Aung said. There are about 30 illegal border routes between Thailand and Myanmar. Despite the announcement to close the gates, people were still seen passing crossing to and from Thailand until late Wednesday, and residents are worried. Myanmar has yet to confirm a COVID-19 case since the outbreak was first reported in Wuhan, China, on December 31. On the other hand, Thailand reported 212 confirmed cases with one death. The Thai government reported that 42 of those infected have fully recovered from the disease. "We sent three foreigners back this morning," said U Thant Zin Aung. "We will continue watching. We will enforce the entry ban until the next statement is released. Thousands of workers return to Myanmar daily and we carefully scrutinise them." Daw Thin Thin Myat, chair of Myawady Border Traders Association, said authorities are closely watching some illegal routes people might use to enter Myanmar. "If they come via official routes, the

officials spray pesticides on the bridge daily and take temperatures,” she said. “The Red Cross and the ward administrators strictly patrol the region.” Ministries and agencies are discussing closing other borders across the country amid the escalation of the disease, which has spread to 158 countries and territories. Aside from Thailand, Myanmar also shares borders with Bangladesh, India, China and Laos.

Source: <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/myanmar-closes-myawady-thai-border-gates.html>

### Tourism-industry body to seek financial help from Myanmar govt



*Myanmar News / 19 March, 2020*

The Myanmar Tourism Entrepreneurs Association says it is seeking a K50 billion loan from the government in order to help overcome the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the tourism sector in Myanmar. Tourism companies have seen their revenues severely hit since the virus was first reported in late December, the association says. U Naung Naung Han, chair of the Myanmar Tourism Entrepreneurs Association, said that he estimates the severe drop in visitor numbers due to the pandemic could last as long as six months up to a year. Such a prolonged loss of business would have severe impacts on the associations’ members ability to pay their employees, he added. U Naung Naung Han said that there are some 1100 companies

involved in local tourism and the loan would be used to help the companies pay salaries and keep workers employed during the slowdown. “We won’t ignore the proposals of tourism-industry organisations, and will convey the request to the government,” said Ministry of Hotel and Tourism Deputy Director General U Aung Aye Han when asked to comment on the request for financial aid for tourism companies. As the coronavirus has spread to 150 countries, causing travel restrictions to be put in place by many governments around the world, local tourism companies have had to cut costs wherever possible to continue operating, said U Naung Naung Han. State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi said in a televised speech on March 16 tax reductions and interest rate cuts will be implemented; soft loans and tax exemptions will be arranged for businesses hardest hit by the outbreak, such as garment manufacturers, hotels and tourism companies, and small and medium-sized businesses.

Source: <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/tourism-industry-body-see-financial-help-govt.html>

### Vietnam jumps 23 places in economic freedom index



*Vietnam News / 19 March, 2020*

Vietnam jumped 23 places from last year to reach 58.8 points, ranking 105th place in the economic freedom index this year. The Heritage Foundation

has released the 2020 Index of Economic Freedom report. The country's overall score has increased by 3.5 points due to a dramatic gain in fiscal health. Vietnam is ranked 21st among 42 countries in the Asia-Pacific region, and its overall score is slightly below the regional and world averages. The Vietnamese economy has gradually been climbing the ranks of the mostly unfree since 2011. Strong GDP growth over the past five years has mirrored this improvement, driven by export-focused manufacturing and processing sectors. Economic freedom will be enhanced in Vietnam if the government can successfully expand economic liberalisation by promoting international trade and restructuring state-owned enterprises, said the report. "Improvement of the investment climate will be slow without improvements in judicial effectiveness and stronger efforts to fight corruption." Although all land is collectively owned and managed by the state, as of September 2018, the government had issued land-use rights certificates for 96.9% of land in Vietnam. The top personal income tax rate is 35%, and the top corporate tax rate is 22%. Other taxes include value-added and property taxes. The overall tax burden equals 18.6% of total domestic income. Government spending has amounted to 28.3% of the country's output (GDP) over the past three years, and budget deficits have averaged 4.7% of GDP. Public debt is equivalent to 57.5% of GDP. "Starting a business has become easier, and the cost of business registration has been cut. Corporate governance standards and

the enforcement of labour laws are weak," said in the report. Price stabilisation controls remain in effect for fuel, energy and water utilities, natural resources, and pharmaceuticals. The total value of exports and imports of goods and services equals 187.5% of GDP. The average applied tariff rate is 2.7%, and 80 non-tariff measures are in force. The overall investment framework has been modernised and facilitates foreign investment, but it lacks efficiency. The financial sector continues to evolve, and directed lending by state-owned commercial banks has been scaled back in recent years.

Source : : <https://english.vov.vn/economy/vietnam-jumps-23-places-in-economic-freedom-index-411516.vov>

## Vietnam Airlines suspends flights between Viet Nam and Russia, Taiwan



*Vietnam News | 19 March, 2020*

HA NOI — The national carrier Vietnam Airlines has suspended flights between Viet Nam and Russia and Taiwan (China) from March 19 due to the evolving COVID-19 pandemic and the policy of restricting entry among countries. Vietnam Airlines said the latest cancelled flights were VN63 from Ha Noi to Moscow and VN570 from HCM City to Taiwan. The flights will be temporarily stopped until further notice from the authorities. To support affected passengers, a Vietnam Airlines representative said that the carrier will waive conditions and fees for

changing itinerary or changing flight dates for all passengers flying between Viet Nam and Russia, Taiwan (China). The carrier will inform passengers about the plan to re-operate these routes after a new decision by the authorities. For other destinations, the airline is continuing to monitor the situation and decisions of host governments to plan appropriate operations. Vietnam Airlines will constantly provide updates on the latest information for passengers in Viet Nam as well as Vietnamese citizens in foreign countries. For more information and assistance, passengers can visit the website [www.vietnamairlines.com](http://www.vietnamairlines.com), the official Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/VietnamAirlines](http://www.facebook.com/VietnamAirlines). — VNS

Source : <https://vietnamnews.vn/economy/653820/vietnam-airlines-suspends-flights-between-viet-nam-and-russia-taiwan.html>

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