

Highlight News / April 01/2020



- PM bans white rice and paddy exports in effort to safeguard local supply
- Operators get the green light for launching on the 5G network after completing trials
- Laos goes into total lockdown
- Laos put brakes on all bus services, stations
- Construction contraction due to virus outbreak
- Yangon's circular railway line carriages to be reduced
- Hanoi reports 3.27-percent GDP growth in Q1
- Ministry proposes limiting rice exports to 400,000 tonnes per month



ADVISORY INSTITUTE FOR TRADE AND INVESTMENT BY TCC (Aiti)

PM bans white rice and paddy exports in effort to safeguard local supply



Cambodia News | 31 March, 2020

Prime Minister Hun Sen has ordered a stop to all exports of white rice and paddy from April 5 until further notice. Speaking at the news conference after the parliamentary session yesterday, Mr Hun Sen said the decision was made to safeguard local supply in response to COVID-19 food shortage fears. “Starting from April 5, we will not allow the export of any white rice or paddy to the international market. This is because we want to keep supplying domestic demand. However, fragrant rice can be exported normally,” Mr Hun Sen said. The government has given one week’s notice in order to allow rice millers and exporters to clear stock as per their buying and purchasing agreements. According to a report from the Ministry of Agriculture, Cambodia has officially exported 214,612 tonnes of milled rice to the international market so far this year, with product going to China (94,060 tonnes), the EU (62,998 tonnes), the Asean market (27,937 tonnes), and other markets (29,617 tonnes). With unofficial exports being estimated at more than 800,000 tonnes to Vietnam so far this year, a practice used to prevent payments of various import and export taxes. Mr Hun Sen has also urged the Ministry of Economy and Finance to investigate the possibility of releasing funds to enable rice millers to purchase more paddy from farmers to store in stock in an effort

to stabilise prices because there will be no Vietnamese or Thai rice brokers purchasing products from Cambodian farmers. “I asked deputy prime minister and minister of Economy and Finance Aun Pornmonirath to check the lack of working capital among rice millers and if possible provide additional funds so they have the capital to purchase paddy from farmers,” Mr Hun Sen said. “At this moment I ask all rice brokers and millers to not use this opportunity to downgrade rice paddy prices, in response to the lack of both Thai and Vietnamese buyers. Be assured the government can release funds to ensure that rice millers will continue to purchase paddy from Cambodian farmers to maintain a stable stock price,” Mr Hun Sen added. Chan Sokheang, vice-president of the Cambodia Rice Federation (CRF), told *Khmer Times* that until today, exports of white rice remain stable, explaining the approximately 20 to 25 percent of locally produced white rice is exported each month. “I think it is good news the government has announced a ban on the export of white rice and paddy because we need to participate with the government to stabilise food security in the country amid the COVID-19 outbreak,” Chan said. “We are working closely with the Agricultural and Rural Development Bank, Ministry of Agriculture, and rice millers to make sure that farmers still have a market for their paddy, as well as ensuring we have enough rice stockpiled for domestic consumption.” Kao Thach, director of the state-owned Agricultural and Rural Development Bank, (ARDB), told *Khmer Times* the bank is in the

process of implementing \$50 million from a special government fund to the rice sector. “This special fund can be issued at our discretion to provide more funds to lend to rice millers if they require it and under the direction from the government,” Kao said.

Source : <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/50700937/12-more-chinese-ships-carrying-garment-raw-materials-to-arrive-in-cambodia-this-week>

Operators get the green light for launching on the 5G network after completing trials



Cambodia News | 31 March, 2020

The Ministry of Posts and Telecommunication has issued an approval letter to five companies launching on the 5G network, the next step beyond 4G and LTE mobile networks that provides faster speed and more bandwidth. Meas Po, Secretary of State at the Ministry of Post and Telecommunication, said yesterday all five operators have completed trials on the network. They include; Cam GSM, Smart Axiata Co Ltd, Vietnam-based Metfone, Seatel, and Kingtel Communications Ltd. These trials have allowed the Kingdom to move faster towards fully launching the latest technology in the near future. However, Meas said the time frame to begin commercialising the 5G service has not been set. “This is because we have to wait for approval for identifying frequency bands for the 5G from the International Telecommunication Union (ITU),” he said. Im Vutha, spokesperson for the Cambodian telecoms regulator, also confirmed to *Khmer*

Times yesterday that all five operators have now tested their services with a 5G trial. “After finishing their trials, they will now have to wait until an official policy is set by the Ministry of Post and Telecommunication identifying range frequency that will align with the ITU, the global standards body on 5G technology.” The Ministry is now working on a policy that will allow all operators to have the required 100MHz spectrum to run on the 5G network. However, no set date could be confirmed, with only 2020 given as a starting period, Im added.

Source : <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/50707625/operators-get-the-green-light-for-launching-on-the-5g-network-after-completing-trials/>

Laos goes into total lockdown



Laos News | 1 April, 2020

VIENTIANE, Laos, 1 April 2020 : Laos a tiny landlocked country sharing borders with Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, China and Myanmar went into lockdown 30 March. The measure comes as the country reported its eighth Covid-19 case amidst fears that if the disease takes hold, the nation’s health system could collapse. Following the initial announcement 29 March, land borders closed with all of its neighbours and effective 1 April the last flights departed from Luang Prabang and Vientiane the country’s capital. The Lao Government announced a raft of measures starting with an order for citizens and residents to stay home. “All people must remain at home, unless buying food and other essentials, visiting medical facilities and/or going to

work at 'essential organisations'. Medical facilities (including pharmacies), supermarkets, banks, petrol stations, hotels and restaurants are allowed to remain open with some restrictions to services. Travel between provinces can only occur with local authorities' approval." Public servants start working from home effective today 1 April until 11 April when a national holiday to observe the Lao New Year holiday extends to 19 April. All festival celebrations have been cancelled. Gatherings of more than 10 people are prohibited, including, cultural events, the Lao New Year festivities, religious gatherings, weddings, and recreational activities. International and provincial borders will remain closed from 30 March through to midnight on 19 April. Meanwhile, the US embassy said it was planning an evacuation flight from Vientiane to a yet to be determined destination in the US for its citizens remaining in the country, possibly during the first week of April. Estimated cost per passenger will be around USD1125. The announcement posted on Facebook said passengers would need to reimburse the US government for the flight, and a promissory note would need to be signed before boarding the aircraft.

Source : <https://www.ttrweekly.com/site/2020/04/laos-goes-into-total-lockdown/>

Laos put brakes on all bus services, stations



Laos News | 31 March, 2020

The Ministry of Public Works and Transport has announced the suspension of all bus services and temporary closure of bus stations as a preventative measure against Covid-19 following the first confirmed cases in the country. The ministry announced on March 30 the temporary nationwide cessation of bus travel from April 1-10. This includes the Southern and Northern Bus Stations in the capital and related passenger transport businesses working from these locations as well as services from the Central Bus Station (aka Morning Market/Khua Din Bus Station) operated by Vientiane Capital State Bus Enterprise. The move comes after health official confirmed the first cases of Covid-19 in Vientiane on March 24. The number of infections had increased to nine as of Monday. The government on March 29 announced the closure of all international checkpoints and prohibited public movement for non-essential activities for almost three weeks to control the coronavirus pandemic as fears of a major outbreak escalate. All international checkpoints are closed for passengers exiting and entering, including to anyone previously granted permission, with the measures imposed from March 30 to April 19. Subsequent changes could be made in accordance with further announcements. All local checkpoints had already been closed. Referring to the Prime Minister's order, a government spokesman warned distributors and merchants not to increase

prices unreasonably, especially food and medical equipment used for virus prevention.

Source : http://www.vientianetimes.org.la/freeContent/FreeContent_Laos65.php

Construction contraction due to virus outbreak



Myanmar News | 31 March, 2020

Industry insiders say that the country's construction sector has slowed by around 30 percent due to the COVID-19 pandemic. "There are construction projects that have been suspended due to a shortage of imported building materials and some have been stopped temporarily due to cash flow problems. About 70pc of projects are still running as usual. The situation is not so bad yet," Myanmar Construction Entrepreneurs Federation (MCEF) Chair U Shein Win told The Myanmar Times. However, if the situation worsens or drags on longer than expected, more construction projects may stop, he warned. "Health is the most important thing. Construction projects have to stop if the government calls a halt on projects as a precaution to stop the spread of the virus," said U Shein Win. Workers are allowed to return to their hometowns if they want and construction projects are operating with half their workforce on a rotational basis, said U Ye Lin the head of the Danu San Yar Construction company. "Like other types of businesses, construction companies are making their workforce work on a

rotational basis to preserve jobs and to keep the business running," U Ye Lin said. Many of the construction business owners spoken to said they are waiting for new government tenders while also hoping that the completion deadlines for current contracts will be loosened as efforts to stop the spread of the virus will also slow construction work. "To operate the business while the workers in the projects are worried is not easy. Tenders need to be completed on a deadline so we dare not stop projects. Everything may be okay if the government postpones deadline for completion," MCEF general secretary U Myo Myint said, adding that transportation is being provided by companies so that workers don't have to take public transport. "The central bank has reduced interest rates but it hasn't changed the situation yet. Given the current conditions, people are holding on to their money so there have been some delays in payment to construction companies. In the meantime, workers still have to be paid. To prevent job losses, the government has to take decisive action," said U Myo Myint. "I have already made arrangements for the next two months for the sake of employees and the company to survive. If the situation becomes worse or drags on until May, businesses may have to go through a tougher time," said U Ye Lin.

Source : <https://www.mmmtimes.com/news/construction-contraction-due-virus-outbreak.html>

Yangon's circular railway line carriages to be reduced



Myanmar News / 31 March, 2020

As news of COVID-19 infections has circulated in Myanmar over the past week, the number of passengers on Yangon's railway system has declined. As a response to the lack of passengers, Myanmar Railways has decided to reduce the number of operating trains from March 29, according to the state-run operator. Currently the circular route in Yangon has a capacity of 198 carriages. Of the total, 69 carriages, which make up around 40 percent of the total passenger-carrying capacity, will be suspended temporarily, leaving 99 operating as normal, said U Zaw Lwin, manager of Myanmar Railways, Region 7. Although more than 50,000 commuters travel on the trains every day, that number has reduced to about 30,000. "The number of passengers on trains dramatically declined. The trains have better ventilation than cars, and we think that might make them safer for the virus," said Ma Mya Kay Khaing, who takes the train to work each day. "But some people also throw water into the train when it approaches the Tarmwe station, as it's nearing the Thingyan festival – and that's not good," she added.

Source : <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/yangons-circular-railway-line-carriages-be-reduced.html>

Hanoi reports 3.27-percent GDP growth in Q1



Vietnam News / 31 March, 2020

Hanoi (VNA) – Hanoi posted an increase of 3.27 percent in Gross Regional Domestic Product (GRDP) in the first quarter of 2020 – the lowest in recent years, according to the municipal Statistics Office. This was attributed to impact of the ravaging COVID-19 pandemic. The agro-forestry-aquaculture sector saw a decrease of 1.17 percent, while the industry-construction and service fields respectively rose by 5.46 percent and 3.2 percent, the office said. In the reviewed period, retail and service revenue in the capital city totaled 135.7 trillion VND (over 5.7 billion USD), up 2.3 percent year-on-year. Meanwhile, its export turnover reached 2.74 trillion USD, 18.1 percent lower than the figure posted in the same period last year. Tourism, transportation, accommodation and catering services; processing and manufacturing industries; import and exports and a number of other service sectors recorded sharp declines. As much as 63 trillion VND of development investment was disbursed in the period, representing a yearly increase of 5.2 percent. The capital city attracted 646.4 million USD in foreign direct investment (FDI), including 389 million USD from 170 new projects and 36 with added capital, and 257.4 million USD in capital contribution to buy shares. Hanoi is now home to 6,102 FDI projects with a total registered capital of

42.75 billion USD, of which 26.5 billion USD has been disbursed./.

Source : <https://en.vietnamplus.vn/hanoi-reports-327percent-gdp-growth-in-q1/170976.vnp>

Ministry proposes limiting rice exports to 400,000 tonnes per month



Vietnam News | 31 March, 2019

VOV.VN - The Ministry of Industry and Trade (MoIT) has put forward a plan to the Prime Minister which would regulate monthly rice exports and cap them at 400,000 tonnes amid the increasingly complicated nature of the novel coronavirus (COVID- 19) epidemic. The proposal estimates that the export volume of rice in April and May will reach approximately 800,000 tonnes. Based on the developments of the COVID- 19 and reports compiled by relevant ministries, the PM will consider the matter of May's rice exports in the last week of April. The MoIT has also suggested that rice should only be exported through international border gates that have been equipped with internet devices which would allow the General Department of Vietnam Customs to strictly monitor them. Border guards have been directed to intensify their inspection and supervision of future exports in an attempt to prevent rice smuggling taking place through border gates. In an effort to ensure domestic circulation, 20 of the nation's largest rice exporters have been requested to sign agreements with at

least one supermarket chain that will see them ensure reserves. With regard to consumption and storage needs, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development have forecast that the year's domestic demand, including reserves, will hit 29.96 million tonnes of paddy. The remaining paddy for export stands at approximately 13.5 million tonnes, equivalent to between 6.5 million and 6.7 million tonnes of rice. According to a report released by the Vietnam Food Association, the total number of signed contracts that have yet to be delivered had reached roughly 1.6 million tonnes of rice by March 27.

Source : <https://english.vov.vn/economy/ministry-proposes-limiting-rice-exports-to-400000-tonnes-per-month-411991.vov>