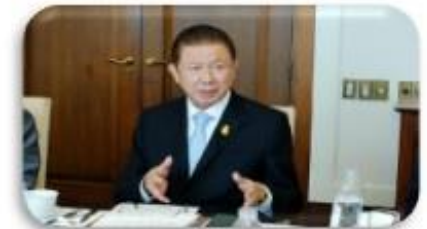




- New GDP prediction is not optimistic
- Cambodia and Japan: \$2.3 billion record trade in 2019
- Travel restrictions nationwide to prevent the spread of Covid-19
- Distance education broadcasts on TV, radio, social media
- Loans approved from COVID-19 fund for 400 small firms
- Govt cancels annual Thingyan celebrations in Yangon, Mandalay
- Ho Chi Minh City's GRDP estimated at 14.26 billion USD in Q1
- Thai melamine maker ramps up investment in Vietnam



New GDP prediction is not optimistic



Cambodia News | 6 April, 2020

that after two decades of strong performance, Cambodia's economic growth is expected to drop to 2.3 percent in 2020, as a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic that will cause significant global slowdown to major economies such as China, the US and the European Union, resulting in the reduction of Cambodia's access to vital export markets. "However, Cambodia's economy is expected to rebound to 5.7 percent in 2021, assuming that the pandemic ends and economic activity normalises by the end of the year," said ADB's Country Director for Cambodia Sunniya Durrani-Jamal. She added, "Facing unprecedented challenges posed by COVID-19, the Cambodian government has taken the right steps to respond to the crisis, including providing wage support for garment workers and tax and credit relief for businesses. The government has also created the fiscal space to minimise the economic impact of this crisis, especially on the most vulnerable people." The ADB says that Cambodia's services sector is also expected to contract by 1.7 percent in 2020, as tourism drops and growth in real estate slows. Industry growth is forecast to slow to 6.5 percent, with a deceleration in garment production for exports and slower growth in construction. While inflation is expected to remain low, averaging 2.1 percent in 2020 and will remain subdued in 2021, with international fuel prices remaining low. The report highlights the

government's commitment to diversify the non-banking financial sector and developing local capital markets to provide much-needed financing for growth. Durrani-Jamal said, "The government's focus should be on COVID-19 containment or the recovery of the tourism and services sectors will be difficult." "The government can draw from a \$6.5 billion COVID-19 response package the ADB announced on March 18 to meet its immediate needs to stimulate the economy and provide social protection," she added. Mey Kalyan, Senior Adviser of the Supreme National Economic Council, told Khmer Times that COVID-19 will fundamentally change Cambodia and the world. "After war, we (Cambodia) are integrated into global system, without have much time to think deeply. Now a fundamental and balanced development model is required, defensive and offensive. For us, lots needs be done in the agriculture sector," Mey added. Financial Specialist Ngeth Chou, told Khmer Times COVID-19 that if Cambodia can strengthen its small and medium businesses, it would insulate the country because they can produce enough for domestic consumption. "Now, the first quarter has just ended, we have three quarters to go. With the slowdown of 50 percent of garment exports and 14 percent of the gross domestic product [GDP] (\$28billion), Cambodian GDP will continue to drop," he said. Ngeth also explained that the construction sector is also going down, and foreign direct investment is also down as Cambodia has mostly investors from China. Now China is in crisis. "If the

situation recovers fast, the world recovery will be fast. We need things to improve in the next three months,” Ngeth said. Lately, the World Bank has also predicted the Kingdom’s real economic growth will slow to around 2.5 percent this year mainly because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The country consistently achieved economic growth of around 7 percent for several years. In its just-released publication titled April 2020 Economic Update for East Asia and the Pacific in the time of COVID-19, the World Bank said the Coronavirus outbreak caused sharp decelerations in most of Cambodia’s main growth drivers in the first quarter of 2020. “Real growth is projected to slow sharply to 2.5 percent in 2020, but the growth rate will recover to 5.9 percent in 2021 under the baseline scenario,” the bank’s report stated. It added that the unprecedented global shock triggered by the pandemic has significantly affected the country’s economy in all its major sectors: agriculture, tourism, garments, textiles and construction. “In the worst case scenario, real growth is projected to diminish to 1 percent in 2020 and 3.9 percent in 2021,” according to the report. “Spillovers to the construction and real estate sector – one of Cambodia’s growth drivers and heavily invested in by Chinese investors – amid financial market turmoil – could potentially be detrimental to growth,” it said. The report also said rebounds in economic activity in China and major markets in 2021 will improve Cambodia’s growth outlook next year.

Source: <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/50709859/new-gdp-prediction-is-not-optimistic/>

Cambodia and Japan: \$2.3 billion record trade in 2019



Cambodia News | 6 April, 2020

Cambodia and Japan’s bilateral trade rose by 13 percent last year to \$2,292 million, according to a recent report from the Japan External Trade Organisation (JETRO). The increase highlights the fact that Japan is amongst the top five importing countries from the Kingdom. Between January to December 2019, Cambodia exported goods to Japan worth \$1,730 million, a year-on-year increase of 7.7 percent, the report stated. Meanwhile, Cambodia imports from Japan rose by 33.4 percent, increasing to \$562 million. With a report from National Bank of Cambodia showing that the country’s total exports in 2019 totalled \$14.53 billion in 2019, a 12.7 percent year-on-year increase, this represents a significant portion of export volumes. Total imports into Cambodia were valued at \$22.19 billion last year, marking an 18.6 percent on the previous year. Japan represents the second biggest market for exports by country for Cambodia, with the US in first position. At the same time, Japan had the fourth highest import volumes into the Kingdom in 2019. Commenting, Lim Heng, vice-president of the Cambodia Chamber of Commerce, said that the bilateral figures highlight the positive demand for Cambodia’s products abroad. “Further Japanese investments into the country has piqued the interest

of other nations who are now looking into the possibility of Cambodia producing goods to service their own heavy industry sector,” Heng said. In 2013, Cambodia and Japan inked a strategic partnership agreement to boost the countries’ trade investment and security. Since then, the trade volume in the Kingdom to Japan increased to more than \$2,000 million. Currently, there are 137 Japanese investment projects in Cambodia valued cumulatively at \$2,500 million. These are mainly involved in the manufacturing of electronic and electricity components, auto spare parts, agro-industry products and food-processing materials, hotels, tourism, hospitals and malls. In 2018, the two-way trade of the two nations was valued at \$2,028 million, a 25 percent increase on the year before.

Source: <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/50709857/cambodia-and-japan-2-3-billion-record-trade-in-2019/>

Travel restrictions nationwide to prevent the spread of Covid-19



Laos News | 6 April, 2020

Districts and villages nationwide are imposing travel restrictions to prevent the spread of Covid-19 among communities following detection of 12 infections in the country. Prime Minister Thongloun Sisoulith issued an executive order last week to intensify measures to prevent and control the spread of the Coronavirus. According to this order, people from all walks of life, including expatriates in Laos, are not allowed to go out of their homes or other

accommodation for non-essential purposes during April 1-19. Authorities in the provinces, districts and villages are seriously implementing the travel restrictions in counter the pandemic. The head of the traffic group in Sikhottabong district of Vientiane, Lieutenant Colonel Bounkhong Phetthalangsy, told Lao National Radio that in line with the PM’s Order no 06 for preventing and controlling the spread of the Coronavirus, authorities have been advising local residents and foreigners to stay at home. The district has set up temporary checkpoints since April 3 to implement the precautionary measures and to inform the public about the dangers posed by the virus and ways to protect themselves. Lieutenant Colonel Bounkhong said the people are now more aware and understand the regulations and the PM’s Order as most roads are almost empty. District authorities have cooperated with medical staff to create awareness of the methods to prevent the spread of the disease, the symptom and when people should go to doctors for a check-up. The public also can get the latest information on Covid-19 and ask questions via the website <http://www.covid19.gov.la>, or they can call the hotline number 166 if they have symptoms such as fever, cough and difficulty in breathing. Village committee representatives and police have informed people living in apartments about measures taken by the government which

issued by the PM on March 29, and asked the people to cooperate with the administration and stay safe.

Source:http://www.vientianetimes.org.la/freeContent/FreeContent_Travel_71.php

Distance education broadcasts on TV, radio, social media



Laos News | 7 April, 2020

Broadcasts of educational programs for students of primary schools on television, radio, and government online social media pages have been designed to engage students in Laos during the school shutdown. According to the Ministry of Education and Sports, the ministry began to produce online study programmes on March 23 for key subjects after the government ordered all schools and tertiary institutions to close temporarily from March 19 to April 21 in an attempt to prevent community transmission of the Covid-19 virus during the global pandemic. The online learning content aims to provide learning opportunities and soften the impacts of school closures on affected students while lessening the risk of viral infection. An official in charge said that online studies programmes include key subjects of mathematics, Lao language and English. The programmes will be available on television, radio, official Facebook pages, and via YouTube. Young learners can enjoy Math and Lao language subjects for Grade 1 and Grade 2 students. These two subjects plus English is the plan

for students in Grade 3, Grade 4, and Grade 5. These distance and online educational programmes are expected to be broadcast on Lao National Television Channel from 8:00 to 8:30 from April 7 and scheduled to be aired every day from Monday to Sunday. The programmes also will be broadcast on Education Radio, AM 567 kHz, from 9:00 to 9:30 on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, and they are aired on FM 103 MHz from 14:30 to 15:00 on Saturday and Sunday. Also, these online educational programs will appear on YouTube and Facebook page 'Edu-sport TV' and 'Research Institute for Educational Sciences. Online educational television programmes for primary schools students are being produced by the Research Institute for Educational Sciences, Ministry of Education and Sports. Some students have begun online studies in key subjects since the government ordered all schools and tertiary institutions to close temporarily from March 19 to April 21. Teachers are using social media and messaging apps to contact students and support their studies and to provide and check homework. The Ministry of Education and Sports and members of the National Taskforce Committee for Covid-19 Prevention and Control have cooperated to closely monitor state and private schools and educational institutions following the suspension of classes. Education officials have visited schools and tertiary institutions in Vientiane to devise model lessons and homework ideas for

teachers to offer their students while discussing curriculum management to ensure that teaching and learning goals are achieved. The ministry has advised officials of the General Education Department, Research Institute for Educational Sciences and information and communications technology centres across the country to cooperate on assessing ways to manage the curriculum in the present circumstances.

Source: http://www.vientianetimes.org.la/freeContent/FreeContent_Distance_71.php

Loans approved from COVID-19 fund for 400 small firms

 *Myanmar News | 6 April, 2020*

The Myanmar Investment Commission (MIC) says it will be issuing emergency loans to around 400 small businesses that have suffered financial losses due to the COVID-19 pandemic sweeping the world. “Over 400 businesses submitted their loan application forms on April 4, and the applicants have been determined to be genuine companies that have actually suffered losses. Most of the applicants small and medium enterprises, including hotels and travel agencies. We’re planning to issue the first batch of funds on April 9, and other batches after the Thingyan holidays,” said MIC Permanent Secretary U Aung Naing Oo. The loan scheme was announced on March 29, and the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (UMFCCI) and its state and regional offices began accepting

the loan applications from March 30. The deadline for applications is April 9. In order to avoid crowding, an application was made available starting April 2 for online submission of the loan applications via <https://umfccicovid19loan.mitcloud.com>. “Over 200 businesses submitted their forms online so far. We’ll look at the financial status of the businesses in different sectors. They may or may not get the amount they applied for, but there’s no limit as to how much we’ll lend to a particular company. The amount depends on the needs of the business. We check the applicants at two levels. The first is to see if they comply with the specified sectors and requirements. If these requirements are met, the Myanmar Institute of Certified Public Accountants will inspect the accounts and recommend the loan amount that should be extended to each business. Finally, a working committee will make their decision on the application,” said U Aung Naing Oo.

Source: <https://www.mmmtimes.com/news/loans-approved-covid-19-fund-400-small-firms.html>

Govt cancels annual Thingyan celebrations in Yangon, Mandalay

 *Myanmar News | 6 April, 2020*

Authorities are restricting the movement of people in the country’s two largest cities, Yangon and Mandalay, during the Thingyan festival from April 10-17, in an effort to stem the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Myanmar has reported 21 COVID-19 cases, including one death, and the government is worried

that an outbreak could occur, especially because of the return of tens of thousands of migrant workers for the holiday. Thingyan, the traditional Myanmar New Year, is the country's biggest holiday, and is typically celebrated by several days of street parties and water dousing. On April 3, Mandalay Chief Minister U Zaw Myint Maung announced on his Facebook page that travel restrictions in and out of the city will be in effect from April 7 to April 21, after which a decision will be made on whether to extend them. All hotels and guesthouses will be closed during the 15-day lockdown. "The main purpose is to block unnecessary travel for recreation and pilgrimage," he wrote. Only shops selling medicine and essential goods will be allowed to open. The point of the measures is to make sure people stay at home to reduce the risks of contracting and spreading the virus. "It can be prevented if people cooperate," he wrote. "If you do not want a total lockdown, please follow the measures," he wrote. Over the weekend, Yangon city government workers rode through the streets on trishaws broadcasting the regulations for Thingyan over loudspeakers. They broadcast warnings to people in the economic capital to stay at home during the April 10-17 holiday, except to buy food and medicine. "The Yangon Region government wants to prevent any large public gatherings on the streets during Thingyan to control the spread of the virus," said U Hla Htay, a regional legislator. Last month, the Health Ministry prohibited the holding of mass gatherings and festivals during Thingyan. Authorities have quarantined thousands of

people across the country, especially those who have come into direct contact with COVID-19 patients, who recently returned from abroad, or who showed symptoms of the disease, such as fever, coughing or shortness of breath. U Ko Ko Gyi, a leader of a local political party, urged people to welcome the tens of thousands of migrant workers who have recently returned to the country instead of discriminating against them. He urged people who know a returning migrant to convince them to quarantine themselves for 14 days for their safety and that of the community. "Breaking trust between each other can be dangerous," he said, noting that some villagers block migrants from returning home because of fears they might carry COVID-19. "This could create enmities."

Source: <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/govt-cancels-annual-thingyan-celebrations-yangon-mandalay.html>

Ho Chi Minh City's GRDP estimated at 14.26 billion USD in Q1



Vietnam News | 6 April, 2020

HCM City (VNA) – Ho Chi Minh City's gross regional domestic product (GRDP) has been estimated at 335.6 trillion VND (14.26 billion USD) in the first quarter of 2020, up 0.42 percent year-on-year. According to the municipal Department of Statistics, the agro-forestry-fisheries sector posted a growth rate of 4.06 percent, and the industrial and construction sector, 3.13 percent. On the other side, trade and services fell by 1.23 percent. Due to the

serious impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, growth rates across all regions and economic sectors were lower than the same period last year, with the trade and services sector most affected. Five of the nine main industries recorded negative growth, including real estate (12.85 percent), education and training (26.57 percent), and accommodation and catering services (31.69 percent)/.

Source: <https://en.vietnamplus.vn/ho-chi-minh-citys-grdp-estimated-at-1426-billion-usd-in-q1/171241.vnp>

Thai melamine maker ramps up investment in Vietnam



Vietnam News | 6 April, 2019

Bangkok (VNA) - Leading melamine maker of Thailand Srithai Superware Plc is pushing up investment in Vietnam, a country with relatively high growth opportunities. Bangkok Post newspaper quoted the firm's Chairman and President Sanan Angubolkul as saying that it will splash out 450 million baht (13.64 million USD) this year to expand its business in Vietnam. Of the total, about 300 million baht is to install new machines to increase production capacity of its PET preform and closure products at its two factories in Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi. The remaining 150 million baht will be used to build a new melamine factory in HCM City and install new machines at this factory. The construction of the new melamine facility is scheduled to start in 1-2 months, with operations commencing in the first quarter of next year. The new factory will serve the demand from Vietnam's domestic market. Upon the

completion of the new factory, the company will have four in Vietnam: one is a PET preform and closure factory in Hanoi, another in HCM City and two melamine factories in the southern hub. With the market facing a host of negative factors, particularly the COVID-19 pandemic, Sanan expects sales to stand at 8.62 billion baht this year, 2.6 percent lower than last year's 8.84 billion baht. Despite the huge demand for food and beverage packaging for the delivery channel, the company foresees sales in the first quarter of about 10 million baht lower than its earlier expectation. But the bottom line is likely to improve as the baht weakens from last year's rate, Sanan said./.

Source: <https://en.vietnamplus.vn/thai-melamine-maker-ramps-up-investment-in-vietnam/171250.vnp>