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## Local analytics firm uses 'big data' to keep employees safe at work



*Cambodia News | 18 May, 2020*

A local analytics firm is harnessing the power of big data in conjunction with new medical testing technology to assist businesses to maintain or return their employees safely to work during the COVID-19 pandemic. Oojal Jhutti from Mekong Big Data told Khmer Times that over the past few months his team has been in close collaboration with local medical facility the Institut Pasteur du Cambodge in response to understanding the COVID-19 status of workers in the country. In response, the firm has developed SurePass, an ePassports style validation service, that uses antibody testing and viral load tracking to understand who has already been infected by the virus and who has not, allowing employers to say with certainty their workplace is virus-free. "Using our SurePass system employers can say with certainty the viral status within their company better allowing them to make vital decisions about reopening or keeping open their business," Jhutti said "That said, this system not only helps businesses, it can also help local health ministries and governments better understand current infection clusters, view historical spread patterns and critically work to predict future outbreak clusters," Jhutti added. The SurePass system uses lab-verified serological point-of-care tests (finger-prick blood tests) to gather blood samples for testing and analysis. These tests are then deployed using a trained, certified team of field

agents who visit those to be tested at home or the employees' place of work. "These results are then securely and privately shared with the patient and their employer via the SurePass app, allowing for swift, secure results delivery. Information is further available in an anonymised format, removing all personal identity information, allowing the information to be used for epidemiological, big-data and statistical research without compromising the identity and test status of any of those tested. The SurePass platform also manages the relationship between all key stakeholders – from patient to field nurse, laboratories, employer, government agencies and researchers etc. It is an essential tool in providing swift, secure and highly accurate data and insights access as this pandemic evolves," he said. The firm is also looking to further applications for their big data validation services after the COVID-19 pandemic such as large financial transactions, real estate purchases and land title transfers. "We use similar technology systems to the National Bank of Cambodia's 'Bakong' system which is lauded around the world as extremely innovative and industry-leading. We truly believe Cambodia has a leadership role it can play globally in terms of the application of modern technologies to large social and enterprise problems," he added. Extreme social distancing measures implemented to combat the COVID-19 pandemic is expected cost the global economy between \$5.8 trillion and \$8.8 trillion in losses – equivalent to 6.4 percent to 9.7 percent of global gross domestic product (GDP), according to

an updated report released last week by the Asian Development Bank (ADB). The new report also outlines that Asia and the Pacific – encompassing Cambodia – will be the worst hit for job losses, estimating the region will account for 70 percent of total employment losses around the world, as global job losses are predicted to decline between 158 million and 242 million. Economic losses in Asia and the Pacific could range from \$1.7 trillion under a short containment scenario of three months to \$2.5 trillion under a long containment scenario of six months, with the region accounting for about 30 percent of the overall decline in global output.

Source: <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/50723991/local-analytics-firm-uses-big-data-to-keep-employees-safe-at-work/>

## Cambodia considers how to cope with its first tourism catastrophe



*Cambodia News | 18 May, 2020*

The Ministry of Tourism is seeking recommendations from the COVID-19-hit tourism-based businesses in order to prepare a rescue plan for the sector. Businesses such as hotels, guest houses, resorts, massage and spas, restaurants other tourism-related businesses can share their recommendations in order for the ministry to define the scale of the impact and come up with solutions after the crisis ends, said the ministry Chhay Sivlin, president of the Cambodia Association of Travel Agents, told Khmer Times the Ministry's measure will provide an important input to restore the sector to its

previous increasing health. "We have informed our members this will help the ministry define how the companies were affected and then they can make decisions," she said. "However, we didn't receive the response as much as we expected because most companies have already closed." This is the first catastrophe we have encountered, with as many as 99 percent of tourism based-businesses closed. "We have nothing to say now. We are stalled," she said. According to Sivlin, only 1 percent of businesses remaining open are mostly in Phnom Penh and they are serving only long-stay expats and investors. "Some hotels are still open. They don't want to close because they need to keep their skilled staff members. They don't want to lose them or they will be in a position with no talent when the situation returns to normal," she said. The COVID-19 pandemic caused the world to suffer both in terms of public health and economically, especially a poor country such as Cambodia. COVID-19 has affected a total of 630,000 people in the tourism sector and some 30,000 of them are now unemployed, according to Sivlin. She said the time to rebound will involve two phases, first locally and then internationally. "We will focus locally first and the Ministry of Tourism is now preparing to boost local tourism I think that will take about months bounce back and a year for regional travel," she said. "We have a strategy that we will start to attract visitors from neighbouring countries and gradually the Asean region." However, she said to restore the whole industry to its previous, improving condition

could take up to four years. Sivlin said that the association is in talks with the Asean Tourism Federation (ATF) to boost the sector in the region. “We will have a meeting with [the ATF] in the next few weeks, which will be participated in by Asean members because don’t expect many long-haul flight visitors. We first should focus on intra-Asean travel,” she said, adding Cambodia will attract more Chinese than other Asean members. “Because we have good relations with China and expect that they will help us in attracting visitors from China. We are looking for the Chinese and South Koreans as the second target,” Sivlin said. Ministry of Tourism data shows that Cambodia welcomed 6,610,592 foreign visitors last year, a 6.61 percent increase from 2018. Chinese tourists topped the list, with 2.36 million visitors, an increase 16.7 percent. Vietnamese ranked second with 908,803, up 13.6 percent.

Source: <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/50724126/cambodia-considers-how-to-cope-with-its-first-tourism-catastrophe/>

## Lao economy needs cash injection



*Laos News | 19 May, 2020*

The government needs to speed up the provision of the loans it has approved as this is one of the best ways to help Lao businesses survive amid the Covid-19 pandemic, according to a senior business representative. Speaking in an interview on Lao National Television last week, Vice President of the Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry,

Mr Daovone Phachanthavong, said the best way to help Lao businesses was to inject money into the economy. “The Chamber meets almost every day to discuss ways to inject money into the economy,” he told reporters in response to questions about what the Chamber was doing to help its members. The Chamber has more than 4,000 members nationwide, most of which are small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Mr Daovone said Lao businesses, especially (SMEs), were struggling after suspending their operations for more than a month as part of the nationwide effort to limit the spread of Covid-19. The businesses that had been worst affected by the virus outbreak included airlines, travel agents, hotels, transport operators, restaurants, massage parlours, golf clubs, and garment factories. Mr Daovone welcomed the government’s allocation of concessional loans worth 100 billion kip to SMEs to minimise the harmful impact of the virus outbreak on businesses. The low interest loans will be distributed to SMEs through four banks. The money will be a much-needed source of finance and enable businesses to deal with the challenges they are facing due to the Covid-19 pandemic, he added. He also said an international financial institution had offered Laos a loan of US\$80 million, half of which would be provided for the development of SMEs. China has also offered a huge loan package. The Chinese government has agreed

to provide US\$300 million in loans to SMEs, with the first US\$100 million to be distributed soon. Mr Daovone advised the government to speed up the development of agriculture so that more produce could be exported, adding that China is in need of agricultural produce. At present, 300 trucks of produce are shipped from Laos to China each day. The high demand for agricultural produce in China would create a better environment for the development of agriculture, he added. A positive effect of the virus outbreak was that people in Laos now spent less on unnecessary luxury goods, he noted. Mr Daovone also said businesses needed to adjust their operating methods, adding that the pandemic had created both challenges and opportunities. Some business operators would see the outbreak as an opportunity, as was evidenced by the number of people who had begun offering food delivery services.

Source: [http://www.vientianetimes.org.la/freeContent/FreeConten\\_Lao94.php](http://www.vientianetimes.org.la/freeContent/FreeConten_Lao94.php)

## Myanmar GDP estimate to be slightly reduced

 Myanmar News | 18 May, 2020

The estimated GDP for the current fiscal year of 2019-20 will be slightly reduced, said U Maung Maung Win, Deputy Minister for Planning, Finance and Industry. "Based on initial estimates, Myanmar's GDP, which is the value of all finished goods and

services produced for the year, has been revised to K118.9 trillion from over K119 trillion before, given the decline in the world economy and oil prices as a result of COVID-19," he told the Hluttaw while submitting the Supplementary Budget bill on May 18. As a result, Myanmar's fiscal deficit to GDP ratio will be decreased to 5.5 percent from 5.7pc. Tax revenues expected over the next four months of the current fiscal year is expected to total K506 billion, resulting in tax to GDP of 7.1pc from 6.7pc. A supplementary budget totaling K2660.9 billion was requested at parliament and if approved as proposed, will take the country's spending to more than K27,227 billion. That could take the fiscal deficit to more than K6755 billion.

Source: <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/myanmar-gdp-estimate-be-slightly-reduced.html>

## Korea extends \$30 million to support Myanmar's COVID-19 relief plan

 Myanmar News | 18 May, 2020

The Export-Import Bank of Korea will provide Myanmar with a US\$30 million COVID-19 Emergency Equipment loan from its Economic Development Cooperative Fund (EDCF). The decision was made on May 14, during a meeting between Mr Kim Yu-Shin, director of EDCF's Operations Department, and U Thant Sin, Myanmar ambassador to the Republic of Korea. The loan term is 40 years and the interest rate is from 0pc to 0.01pc. The funds will go towards implementing Myanmar's COVID-19 Economic Relief Plan (CERP), announced April 27.

The Export-Import Bank of Korea has been providing ECDF loans to Myanmar since 1992. Both countries are cooperating to implement six major infrastructure projects in Myanmar, including the Dala Bridge connecting downtown Yangon to Dala township across the Yangon River. Myanmar and South Korea are also in discussions to carry out nine other projects with \$1 billion from the ECDF. Myanmar estimates that it will require up to \$2 billion (K2.8 trillion) in funds to implement the CERP and has been negotiating with its international development partners for loans and aid. On May 9, U Set Aung, Deputy Minister for Planning, Finance, and Industry, said 4-5 partners have agreed to provide most of the funds. Last week, U Maung Maung Lay, vice president of the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (UMFCCI), said the Myanmar economy has shrunk by more than 50 percent since the COVID-19 pandemic. He added that the impact on the economy would last for at least 18 months after the virus passes. The UMFCCI has submitted suggestions for supporting the economy during and after the COVID-19 period. "We provided an overview of what has happened to the economy since COVID-19 first broke out and insight on how business will resume after virus passes. Our suggestions on how to achieve a quicker recovery are based on our understanding of Myanmar and observations of how the sectors from food to tourism in other countries are reopening," said U Maung Maung Lay. The document also includes an estimated budget to support economic

recovery. "We did not make recommendations or provide details on which sector should be prioritised. We included the situation across all the sectors and it is for the government to decide. All businesses are affected," he said.

Source: <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/korea-extends-30-million-support-myanmars-covid-19-relief-plan.html>

## Hanoi's agriculture sector looks to grow post-COVID-19



*Vietnam News | 18 May, 2020*

Hanoi (VNA) - Hanoi's agriculture sector is facing a host of difficulties from the COVID-19 pandemic that require it continue with restructuring and switch to new crops to ensure growth. Director of the municipal Department of Agriculture and Rural Development Chu Phu My said the sector's growth fell 1.17 percent year-on-year in the first quarter due to difficulties in pig breeding following the occurrence of African swine fever. There were only 1.1 million pigs in the city, down 31.25 percent year-on-year, with output of 51,000 tonnes, down 41.22 percent. The winter crop, meanwhile, was down about 10 percent. Fishery output, however, increased 4.25 percent to 27,000 tonnes, while poultry heads totalled 33.5 million, up 17.54 percent. My said the agriculture sector in the capital targets yielding 89,500 ha of rice, 1.8 million pigs, and 38 million poultry heads this year, and is expected to grow 6.26 percent. Secretary of the Hanoi Party Committee



Vuong Dinh Hue asked that pig breeding be stepped up to 1.8 million heads to curb the rising CPI and that more fruits and vegetables be grown. He suggested effectively using industrial and non-cultivation land to meet food demand, issuing mechanisms and policies to use existing agriculture land effectively, and attracting unemployed people from rural to urban areas. Hue asked the Steering Committee on Programme No. 02-CTr/TU from the municipal Party Committee on the development of agriculture, new-style rural areas, and improving farmers' lives during the 2016-2020 period to increase resources for public investment, contributing to economic growth and improving workers' incomes. The city's Farmers' Union has been assigned to guide farmers on production, connect them with scientists, businesses, and banks, and form new-style cooperatives./.

Source: <https://en.vietnamplus.vn/hanois-agriculture-sector-looks-to-grow-postcovid19/173482.vnp>

## Import turnover climbs to over US\$78 billion during four-month period



*Vietnam News | 18 May, 2019*

VOV.VN - The opening four months of the year have seen the nation's total import turnover rise to over US\$78 billion, a drop of 0.3%, with China maintaining its place as the country's largest import market, according to figures released by the General Department of Customs. Elsewhere, in terms of turnover scale, Asia represents the largest trading market for the nation. Throughout the reviewed

period Vietnamese trade with the Asian market reached US\$103.61 billion. Despite suffering a slight annual decrease of 0.4%, the continent accounted for 65.2% of overall import and export turnover for the country. Most notably, although declines occurred in the majority of major markets, Asia still maintains 80.1% of the nation's total import turnover. With a general decline occurring across the board, several import groups recorded slow or negative growth. The only commodity group to enjoy increases over the four-month period were computers along with electronic products and components. Indeed, these items represent the nation's largest import group of the reviewed period. Since the start of the year, imports of computers, electronic products and components reached approximately US\$17.6 billion, representing a 11.5% increase on-year. In particular, FDI enterprises spent a total of US\$14.7 billion during the period, equivalent to 84% of the total import value of computers, electronic products and components, an increase of 11.7% from last year. The Republic of Korea remains the largest consumer of Vietnamese computers, electronic products and components with a value of US\$5.44 billion, a drop of 6.1%, followed by China, Taiwan (China), and the United States. Other import items which recorded remarkable growth include crude oil, in addition to telephones and components. Despite a number of items recording growth, the General Department of Customs noted that several key import groups endured a decrease in turnover of up

to hundreds of millions of dollars during the reviewed period. The commodity group that suffered the largest fall in turnover was petroleum, with a total import volume of 2.4 million tonnes over the four-month period, a sharp decline of 41.7%, equivalent to US\$800 million, in comparison with last year's same period. Completely built-up automobiles, along with iron and steel, also recorded sharp drops, with falls of US\$430 million and US\$290 million, respectively. Indeed, the commodity groups which suffered the biggest drops in import turnover are those that make major contributions to the customs sector's revenue.

Source: <https://english.vov.vn/economy/hanoi-retail-space-rentals-down-30-due-to-covid19-413778.vov>

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