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Inside



Ministry updates self-quarantine rules, violators to be punished [*Page 2*]



A call for global action for common health [*Page 6*]



Kualao Restaurant founder honored with regional award [*Page 9*]

Tough life for family in boat drive [*Page 12*]

Laos confirms third Covid-19 case



Local media cover a press conference, which officially announces the third coronavirus case in Laos.

Ekaphone Phouthonesy

Laos has confirmed another Covid-19 case, bringing the total number of dangerous infections nationwide to three.

At a media conference at the Ministry of Health in Vientiane on Wednesday, the National Taskforce Committee for Covid-19 Prevention and Control officially announced that it detected the third case in the country.

According to the announcement, the committee tested eight suspected Covid-19 cases on Tuesday; of the total, only one tested positive while the rest were negative.

CONTINUED PAGE 3

Working from home, nation in a sensitive situation: PM

Souksakhone Vaenkeo



Prime Minister Thongloun Sisoulith. --*Photo Phoonsab*

Prime Minister Thongloun Sisoulith told all local and central sectors to consider allowing their staff to work from home where possible in a bid to prevent coronavirus (Covid-19) infections.

"If it's possible to work at home and communicate with each other online, implement it," the premier told a press conference yesterday.

He gave the advice after confirmed cases were reported in Vientiane and thousands of Lao workers in neighbouring countries, especially Thailand, where the outbreak has been reported, rushed home and posed a challenge for prevention efforts.

Health officials yesterday confirmed the third infected person, who had close contact with one of the two virus patients who tested positive on March 23.

"We are in a sensitive situation. Covid-19 could infect more people," the PM said.

He told all local and central sectors to consider suspending meetings within their organisations or

CONTINUED PAGE 3

Confirmed COVID-19 cases exceed 8,000 on first day of UK lockdown

LONDON (Xinhua) -- The number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Britain reached 8,077 as of Tuesday morning, according to the lastest figure from the Department of Health and Social Care.

A total of 90,436 people have been tested across Britain, of which 8,077 were confirmed positive, while 422 patients who contracted the novel coronavirus have died, said the department.

Health Secretary Matt Hancock said Tuesday in a press briefing that a temporary hospital will be set up in the ExCeL centre, an exhibition centre in east London, with a capacity to hold up to 4,000 patients.

Meanwhile, Britain is also looking for 250,000 volunteers to help National Health Service (NHS) employees with "shopping, delivery of medicines and to support those who are shielded," Hancock said.

Asked about Britain's call for retired medics to return, Hancock said more than 11,500 have stepped up, including 2,660 doctors and 6,147 nurses, adding that more than 18,000 medical students will also join the NHS workforce.

The latest figures came on the first day of "lockdown" in Britain as more stringent measures were taken to curb the spread of COVID-19 in the country.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson declared a "moment of national emergency" on Monday

CONTINUED PAGE 5



Photo shows a general view of the Westminster Abbey after the British government placed further restrictions on movement in London, Britain. --*Photo Xinhua*







Minister of Labour and Social Welfare, Dr Khampheng Saysompheng greets Lao labourers returning from Thailand earlier this week. He urged the workers to self-isolate for 14 days as part of efforts to minimise the risk of spreading Covid-19 to people in their hometown.

Ministry updates self-quarantine rules, violators to be punished

Ekaphone Phouthonesy

The Ministry of Health has updated its self-quarantine guidelines in view of the Covid-19 pandemic, and all people entering Laos must strictly follow these rules or face fines in accordance with the law.

The Director General of the Department of Communicable Disease Control, Dr

Rattanaxay Phetsouvanh, signed the latest guidelines on self-quarantine on March 22, adding additional rules applicable to people entering Lao territory.

The changes were made against the backdrop of the Lao government facing pressure to contain the spread of Covid-19. A large number of Lao workers are returning home from areas affected by the Coronavirus, posing a high risk to the country.

According to the updated rules on self-quarantine, people who enters Laos from overseas must implement self-quarantine at their own designated area for 14 days and take the following steps:

1. Check body temperature twice a day (morning and evening), monitor health and check if they have fever, cough, difficulty in breathing and other symptoms (the results, including symptoms and body temperature, must be recorded on a given table sheet).

2. They must not leave the designated areas (houses, hotels, dormitories, or arranged venues) for 14 days. Assigned people must place food and drinks in front of the designated rooms.

3. They must not go outside of the designated areas and get close to other people.

4. In case they do not have their own designated rooms, they must arrange designated areas, which must be a least two metres away from surrounding people. They must not share personal items with others.

5. Open windows to allow air to flow in and out.

6. They must regularly wash hands with soap and clean water or hand sanitisers which contains at least 70 to 90 percent alcohol.

7. Cover their mouths and noses with flexed elbow or tissue while coughing and sneezing. Throw the used tissues into a bin immediately.

8. If they feel sick, have fever, cough or experience difficulty in breathing or need medical service, they are advised to consult the medical team at hotline number 166 or + 856-2054066777. The callers are required to provide the medical team with details of their travel history to risky areas.

9. After 14 days, if they have no abnormal symptoms, they can leave their designated areas and live normally.

According to the Communicable Disease Control Department, those who fail to strictly comply with the self-quarantine rules will be fined in accordance with the laws of the Lao PDR.

Lao Red Cross seeks more blood donors

Phomphong Laoin

The Lao Red Cross' National Blood Transfusion Centre has called for more blood donations to boost its supplies at a time when the number of donors is decreasing.

The Director of the Lao Red Cross' National Blood Transfusion Centre, Dr Chanthala Souksakhone, told *Vientiane Times* yesterday that the number of donors has decreased because people are worried about the Coronavirus outbreak.

"We also suspended blood donation activities at schools because the government has issued an order suspend activities at educational institutions to prevent the spread of Covid-19," he said.

"Over the past year, 85 percent of blood donations came from donation campaigns in schools, but this is difficult now because it's the time of school breaks and we are unable to organise blood donation activities in schools," he added. The centre also suspended blood donation activities at factories and companies to prevent the spread of virus.

Dr Chanthala said: "We need to store over 100 bags of blood each day or about one percent of the population needs to donate blood. Currently, the centre has been receiving only 10 to 20 bags a day while the demand is more than 100 bags a day. So, it's not enough to meet the growing demands of the people in need."

The centre has requested people to donate more blood to boost supplies across the country.

The main purpose of the request is to collect blood that can be used to help save the lives of Lao people, he said.

The centre has put in place measures to screen people who come to donate blood to prevent the spread of Covid-19. Blood can be donated at the centre between 8.30 am and 4 pm and all contributions are welcome.

The blood centres in the provinces will also open blood donation facilities to help boost diminishing supplies at major healthcare facilities.

Blood transfusions are often required for patients undergoing surgery and for those who have lost blood following trauma events.

The treatment of thalassemia disease and malaria also often requires blood transfusions. Patients involved in accidents and other surgeries also need more blood donations, according to the centre.

If anyone in Vientiane would like to donate blood, they can go to the Lao Red Cross' National Blood Transfusion Centre in Xiengyeun village of Chanthabouly district or call either 021 214 763 or 021 218 922, or contact other blood centres in the provinces.

Huaphan increases crop production over 10 years

Times Reporters

Agricultural authorities in Huaphan province recently reviewed the implementation of a programme to expand the growth of crop production to boost sustainable income for the people over a period of 10 years.

The Agro-Biodiversity Initiative (TABI) under the National Agriculture and Forestry Research Institute of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and Huaphan's Agriculture and Forestry Department has been implemented since 2009 to improve the production of crops.

The initiative was aimed at helping farmers to opt for sustainable production methods and to improve their living conditions. Officials reported the programme has expanded to activities aimed at encouraging farmers to improve their crops.

For example, the project encouraged 22 villages to plant 76 hectares of rice, and to manage and preserve 32 local fish species in 160 reservoirs. It has helped 32 families with techniques to rear bees in 12 villages, and encouraged the planting of local orange trees by 162 families in 10 villages.

Other activities included helping 212 families to plant wild tea in five villages to generate a quality product. The programme also helped villagers to improve feeding techniques for local chickens and pigs in six villages.

Provincial officials said all these activities have created sustainable income for the local people, and authorities were looking forward to further cooperation with partners to expand such activities.

TABI is an initiative that develops and facilitates opportunities to develop agro-biodiversity activities, and to integrate ABD into relevant programmes and policies by providing funding and technical support to ongoing programmes and especially new initiatives in agriculture, environment, livelihood, education and health with the intention of embedding agro-biodiversity issues in decision-making processes at the national and local levels.

Lao Press in Foreign Languages

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Laos confirms third Covid-19... FROM PAGE 1

The latest case involves a 26-year-old businessman from Huayhom village, Sikhottabong district in Vientiane.

On Tuesday, the committee confirmed the first two cases, affecting a hotel worker and a tour guide. The third infection is related to the previous hotel worker case in Vientiane. The two people had dined together, according to the media statement from the committee.

At present, the National Taskforce Committee for Covid-19 Prevention and Control is investigating who else came in contact with the three confirmed cases so that authorities can test them and identify other at-risk people and impose measures to prevent the spread of the disease.

Authorities are using public announcements get in touch with the Covid-19 infected people and speeding up the identification of those at risk.

Officials are urging them to identify themselves and to implement self-isolation. During the media conference, the committee provided some travel details of the first two cases.

For the hotel worker case, on March 4, he travelled to Bangkok on flight number TG 2570 and stayed with his team members at the Holiday Inn Express Siam.

On March 5, he took part in an exhibition in Bangna, Bangkok, Thailand which 10,000 people attended.

On March 6-8, he moved to another hotel. He returned to Laos on March 9. Upon his arrival in Vientiane, he felt sick with a cough. On March 10, he went to Mittaphab Hospital where he was advised to self-monitor. From March 11-13, he returned to work, working with 12 people in the same room.

On March 12, he had body aches but refused to get tested as he believed the pains were the result of his travel. On March 14 to 15, he went to the Souvanny shop and dined with friends there. From March 17 to 20, he travelled to several places around Vientiane. On March 23, he felt sick with a cough, headache, muscle pain, sore throat and had difficulty breathing. For the tour guide case, from March 7 to 10, she took a group of guests to Vangvieng and Luang Prabang.

From March 12 to 20, she took guests to Luang Prabang and Oudomxay and Vangvieng. On March 21, she stayed in a Vientiane hotel before feeling sick on March 22. She got tested on March 23.

Asia News Network: Wed Mar 25

China Mainland +47 to 81,281

Deaths +4 to 3,281

Recovery : 73,650

S Korea	9,137 (126D) (3,507R)
Japan	1,202 (42D) (251R)
(ship)	705 (6D)
Malaysia	1,624 (15D) (183R)
Pakistan	916 (7D) (13R)
Thailand	827 (4D) (52R)
Indonesia	686 (55D) (30R)
S'pore	558 (2D) (156R)
Ph'pines	552 (35D) (20R)
India	519 (10D) (40R)
HK	386 (4D) (102R)
Taiwan	216 (2D) (29R)
Vietnam	134 (17R)
Brunei	104 (2R)
Sri Lanka	101 (2R)
Cambodia	91 (2R)
Bangladesh	39 (4D) (5R)
Macau	25 (10R)
Maldives	13 (5R)
Mongolia	10
Myanmar	3
Laos	3
Bhutan	2
Nepal	2 (1R)
E Timor	1

(D=Death, R=Recovered)

Asia News Network as of 9.00 am Bangkok time

Working from home, nation ... FROM PAGE 1

offices to avoid crowded gathering or getting too close to one another to minimise infection risk. Representatives or officials of all sectors were suggested to avoid visiting each other but communicate online or via telephone instead.

Health officials are tracking places and accommodation where the infected victims visited as well as people they had close contact with in an attempt to control the outbreak.

Meanwhile, the influx of Lao workers occurred after authorities in neighbouring countries imposed prevention measures including shutting down workplaces, leaving the Lao workers jobless. The unprecedented return triggered fears that they could carry the virus.

PM Thongloun stated that the government would strictly enforce the prevention measures promulgated, especially scanning and quarantine measures.

Health authorities in provinces have monitored and checked the incoming workers. Those with high temperature were isolated and tested.

But those without Covid-19 symptoms were suggested to impose self-quarantine at home for 14 days. Premier Thongloun called for the incoming workers to cooperate in exercising self-quarantine.

"Stay at home. Don't go out. Don't meet friends for 14 days. When irregularity occurs, report it to health officials," PM Thongloun suggested.

He suggested those developing irregularities or Covid-19 like symptoms inform health authorities via hotline number 166.

Teams of medical staff have been dispatched to work in villages overseeing the returnees in particular.

Asked about the government's measures to help Lao workers still stuck in Thailand, the PM said the government welcomed them home, but they needed to undergo strict scanning and quarantine measures to prevent the virus.

But those workers having favourable conditions continuing their stay in the neighbour are suggested to avoid travel for the time being.

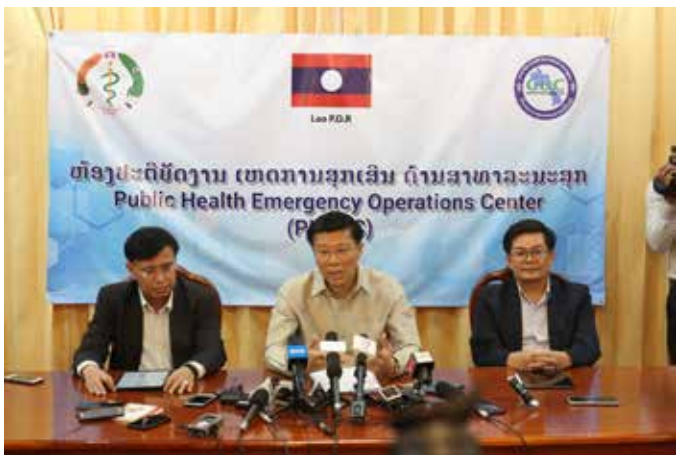
PM Thongloun said the government had instructed provincial, district and village authorities to oversee the implementation of the prevention measures.

He told the National Taskforce Committee to formulate additional prevention measures, saying stricter action would be taken accordingly if the situation escalates.

"Don't panic. Don't be nervous. We will fight Covid-19 together until we win," the PM told all walks of life via the press conference.

Health authorities outline ongoing measures against Covid-19

Phetphoxay Sengpaseuth



Dr Phouthone Muongpak (*centre*) addresses the media.

Laos has been preparing medical teams to prevent a widespread outbreak of Covid-19, and more control measures are expected in the wake of confirmed cases, according to a leading health official.

Deputy Head of the National Taskforce Committee for Covid-19 Prevention and Control, Associate Prof. Dr Phouthone Muongpak told a press conference on Tuesday that health officials were strengthening measures for coronavirus response and ensuring that the public can access healthcare.

"We expect that over 800 medical staff, including doctors and nurses from government and private hospitals, as well as medical teams from the Lao People's Armed Forces, will join the effort against Covid-19," he said.

The government was also mobilising support and assistance from development partners and friendly countries, he added.

Lao health authorities also have close coordination with their counterparts in China, who have experience in controlling the virus and treating patients.

Recently, Lao doctors attended training and exchanged lessons learned from foreign countries concerning the treatment of virus patients.

He noted the government had supported training for thousands of local health workers at the national and sub-national levels to prevent the spread of infectious diseases.

The ministry is also advising the general public to protect themselves against the virus by limiting contact with people suffering from acute respiratory infections.

Everyone is instructed to wash their hands with soap and water, especially after touching surfaces or coming into contact with someone who has been coughing.

The government urges everyone to be on their guard and take precautions such as distancing themselves from people with coughs.

According to the ministry, Mittaphab Hospital and Mahosot Hospital in Vientiane have medical staff on standby along with specialised equipment to treat people with the Covid-19.

Lao Airlines suspends most international flights

Souksamai Boulom



Passengers on international routes have fallen over 90 percent compared to the same period last year.

The Lao national flag carrier, Lao Airlines State Enterprise, has suspended most international flights due to the dramatic decline in passengers amidst the global Covid-19 pandemic.

The airline said the decision to suspend flights was to help prevent the spread of the coronavirus.

Director of the airline's Commercial Department, Mr Noudeng Chanthaphasouk, told *Vientiane Times* that passengers on international routes had fallen by over 90 percent compared to the same period last year. Therefore, the airline had to suspend international routes or reduce the number of flights.

According to the notice from Lao Airlines issued on Friday, all flights to Seoul of South Korea, Hanoi and Ho Chi Min of Vietnam, Phnom Penh of Cambodia, and many provinces of China including Changzhou, Shanghai, Hangzhou, Wenzhou, and Jinghong, have been suspended until April 30.

Services to Chengdu of China have been suspended until April 14, while flights to Danang of Vietnam were indefinitely postponed and flights to Bangkok and Chiangmai of Thailand have been suspended until April 20.

There are two services to Siem Reap with one suspended until April 30, with the company to announce details of the other suspension later.

Meanwhile, the number of flights to Guangzhou of China has reduced to twice a week and Kunming three times a week. However, passengers on these routes must pay US$2,000 for 14-day quarantine in China. Only flights to Changsha remain the same as scheduled.

"We have kept some flights to China because there are some passengers travelling on these routes, but both countries have issued measures to prevent the spread of Covid-19," Mr Noudeng said.

"Even passengers on domestic flights have fallen nearly 90 percent in recent weeks. Many passengers have suspended their travel plans due to the fear of this virus," he added.

The airline plans to decrease the number of domestic flights to match passenger demand.

"We will fly from Vientiane to Pakxe once per week whereas now we have two flights a day. We have to cut the flights from Vientiane to Luang Prabang to once per day, down from three times a day," he noted.

Lao Airlines suspended flights from Vientiane to Seoul early this month and most flights to China in early February following Covid-19 outbreaks in these countries.

Lao Airlines State Enterprise asked its employees to take several days of unpaid leave so the company could cut costs amid plummeting flight reservations.



A man catches fish in the Xedone River in Saravan province, using a simple net. The nutritious fish will be cooked up for his family's dinner.



Many shops in Vientiane are limiting the number of people entering their premises at any one time as part of social distancing measures. They are also asking customers to wear a face mask to prevent the spread of Covid-19. This follows confirmation of the first two coronavirus cases in Laos on March 24 by the Ministry of Health.

Le Rénovateur

Avis de changement d'adresse Internet

Pour des raisons techniques l'adresse du Rénovateur en ligne a été modifiée. Nous informons nos fidèles lecteurs ainsi que nos sponsors qu'ils pourront dorénavant consulter le journal francophone quotidiennement sur le site : http://www.lerenovateur.la Nous vous prions de bien vouloir nous excuser pour ce désagrément. La Direction de la Presse lao en langues étrangères.

Excerpts from the Lao Media

Commercial farming can help Hadxaifong villagers lead better life

Translated by Meuangkham Noradeth



Mr Savieng's farm.

Commercial agricultural production can help villagers in Thakaek village, Hadxaifong district, Vientiane to lead a better life.

Mr Savieng Chanthavong's is one family in Thakaek village that had been growing crops for their own consumption and was living in a pitiable condition.

Officials from the agriculture and forestry office of Hadxaifong district adviced him to grow commercial organic vegetables to give a boost to Mr Savieng's family income. His family is now a role model in Hadxaifong district.

Mr Savieng said his family has been growing crops over 5.5 hectares. They grow banana trees in 2 hectares, sapodilla in 2 hectares and rice over 3,600 sq m.

Besides, they also grow coriander with edible leaves, chilli, gourd, onions and lettuce.

The produce is transported for sale in Thongkhankham market by Mr Savieng. He has earned more than 200 million kip last year. He said that after switching over to commercial organic vegetables and fruits his family is leading a better life and is able to alleviate poverty.

--*vientianemai.net*, March 23

Champassak police detains four drug dealers

Police in Champassak province has arrested four drug dealers and has seized 10,042 amphetamine tablets from them.

Police arrested Mr Phoukhaoka, 32, Mr Somxay, 29, both from Nathing, Mr Ki, 50, from Kenghuad village and Mr Kiew, 22, from Kengkhon village - all four from Khongxedon district in Saravan province.

On March 8, police received a tip-off about a drug deal in Kyly village. It formed a special unit to track and arrest the four drug dealers.

During questioning they confessed that they had purchased drugs and police arrested them red-handed.

Police in Champassak province will continue to investigate them and trap more drug dealers associated with this group. This will help address the drug menace.

--*lsecuritynews.com*, March 24



Drug dealer Mr Ki.

Xayaboury companies invest in agriculture

There are 13 companies that have been investing in agriculture in Phieng district, Xayaboury province. This has helped the locals find employment.

The Deputy Governor of Phieng district, Mr Khamphan Khamphouboua, said that the province is supporting the growth of commercial crops with financial backing from domestic and foreigner investors. He said as of now there are 13 companies that have been investing in agriculture in Phieng district over 2,248 hectares.

Mr Khamphan said that they are growing dry season rice, bananas, grapefruit, watermelon and soy bean.

He said villagers are earning handsomely from rent and their average income is 3.5 million. They also earn 50,000 kip per day for doing farm work.

--*Lao Economic Daily*, March 24



Growing rice in Phieng district, Xayaboury province.

Coronavirus deaths top 1,000 in France as gov't struggles to contain "unprecedented" epidemic

PARIS (Xinhua) -- French Director General of Health Jerome Salomon on Tuesday announced that 1,100 people diagnosed with the COVID-19 have died, an increase of 240 in one day, as the country entered the second week of a nationwide lockdown.

An additional 2,444 positive cases were detected, bringing the tally to 22,300. A total of 10,176 people are now hospitalized, including 2,516 in intensive care, while 3,281 patients have recovered, said Salomon at a daily briefing.

More than a third of the patients who need life support are aged below 60, and 85 percent of those who lost their lives are older than 70 years. Facing "rapid worsening epidemic," France would conduct 10,000 tests by the weekend, up from 9,000 currently, according to Salomon.

He added that a special high-speed train TGV would transport on Wednesday 20 patients in critical condition from eastern city of Strasbourg to hospitals in Angers, Nimes, Nantes and La-Roche-sur-Yon in western France to help relief strained hospitals in Grand east region, the country's worst-affected area.

"We are facing an unprecedented, serious and rapid virus circulation. Stay at home to avoid more deaths, more critical cases," Salomon said, adding that the effects of movement restriction could be assessed within days.

France was in its second week of a national lockdown. Only trips for purposes of work, health needs or shopping of necessities are allowed.

Early Tuesday, the scientific council, which advises the government on the epidemic crisis, recommended to prolong containment at least for six weeks, noting that three weeks were needed to obtain an initial estimate of the impact.

Speaking after the council meeting at the Elysee Palace, Heath Minister Olivier Vera said: "it is an estimate among others," while calling for "great caution."

"We will know when we can lift containment only when the epidemic curve allows it. It will last as long as it is necessary," he added.

France has already ordered a country-wide closure of all public institutions and museums, suspending sporting events, halting non-essential shops, cafes, restaurants, cinemas and nightclubs.

Starting on Tuesday, France's lockdown rules and measures have become stricter. People are allowed to go out for a walk with their children or to exercise once per day for no more than one hour, and within one kilometer of their home.

Confirmed COVID-19 cases... FROM PAGE 1

evening, bringing Britain largely into line with most big European nations.

Johnson announced that starting from Monday night, people in Britain will only be allowed to leave their homes for "very limited purposes," including shopping for basic necessities, for any medical need, for one form of exercise a day, and to travel to and from work when necessary.

Meanwhile, all shops selling non-essential goods, such as clothing and electronic stores, are ordered to close, and places like libraries, playgrounds, and outdoor gyms will also be closed.

All social events and even gatherings of more than two people in public, excluding people one lives with, are banned.

According to British authorities, the measures will last at least three weeks and could be renewed, or even toughened, depending on the spread of the disease.

Asked how social distancing rules would be enforced by police, Martin Hewitt, chairman of the National Police Chiefs' Council, explained on Monday that police will warn rule-breakers before taking action.

He said it is "not turning into a position that everyone on the streets is immediately dealt with in an enforcement way."

Instead, officers will seek to "talk to people, explain the rules and, if people do not listen to that, then clearly we have to take action", he said.

Meanwhile, jails in England and Wales have been put on immediate lockdown with all visits cancelled, according to the union which represents prison officers.

British government expects another 5,000 ventilators to be made available in the coming weeks to help those suffering with severe coronavirus symptoms.

The prime minister's official spokesman said: "We have over 8,000 ventilators on the front line currently with 5,000 more expected to come online in the next few weeks... We have been working with private hospitals to secure extra capacity and we have also been working to deliver extra capacity from international manufacturers."

Asia News Network (ANN)

The Asia News Network (ANN) is a network of leading daily English language newspapers in Asia, supported by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation of Germany through its regional representative bureau in Singapore.
It was established in March, 1999, to provide avenues for cooperation and optimise coverage of major news events in the region.
It also aims to promote journalism, share news stories, feature articles, editorials and personality profiles. ANN is the world's most active newspaper alliance with a membership base of 24 newspapers in 21 countries. The combined circulation of these newspapers is more than 14 million copies per day.
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Military trucks carry bodies of patients who died from COVID-19 infections from Bergamo to Bologna, Italy. *--Photo Xinhua*

Italy registers 69,176 coronavirus cases

ROME, March 24 (Xinhua) -- The coronavirus pandemic has claimed 6,820 lives in locked down Italy as of Tuesday with the cumulative total number reaching 69,176, according to new data released by the Civil Protection Department.

Speaking at a televised press conference, Civil Protection Department Chief Angelo Borrelli said Italy reported 5,249 new cases of coronavirus and 743 new deaths on Tuesday and that 54,030 people are currently positive for the coronavirus, one month after the pandemic broke out in northern Italy on Feb. 21.

As well, a total of 8,326 patients have recovered, said Borrelli who is also the national commissioner in charge of the coronavirus emergency.

The numbers are up from an official tally on Monday evening of 50,418 active infections, 6,077 deaths, and 7,432 recoveries.

Borrelli also confirmed that former Civil Protection Department chief Guido Bertolaso has tested positive for the virus.

Franco Locatelli, president of Italy's Higher Health Council, denied media rumors that the nationwide lockdown, which under the current government decree expires on April 3, might be extended to the end of July. "Absolutely not," Locatelli said.

Dispute over number held for disseminating fake news

CAMBODIA (Phnom Penh Post) -- The National police told The Post that nine people were sent to court for sharing fake news about Covid-19 infections, while NGO Licadho claimed 19 people were arrested, 13 of whom were released.

National Police spokesman Chhay Kim Khoeun told The Post on Tuesday that it is on the hunt for one more person involved in sharing fake news.

On Monday, Licadho posted on Facebook that several Cambodians had been arrested for sharing rumours on social media, even if they shared the information through private messages. According to the Facebook post, the users either pledged to stop spreading "government-labelled" fake news or were charged and sent to pre-trial detention.

"From January 30 until now, we have found 19 cases. Among them, six suspects were detained and 13 others were released," said Am Sam Ath, the deputy director of monitoring at Licadho. He said all six accused were former Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP) activists.



According to a Facebook post by NGO Licadho, several Cambodians have been arrested for sharing rumours on social media, even if they shared the information through private messages. *--Photo Police*

Sam Ath said the cloud of uncertainty over Covid-19 has led some to post their theories online. Sometimes, such theories could be considered fake news and deemed a threat to society.

"These arrests could be construed as restricting freedom of expression. This is not a good option. The good thing to do would be to educate people about Covid-19 with real information. Make sure that they understand, so they can cooperate in preventing its spread," he said.

Ministry of Interior spokesman Khieu Sopheak told The Post on Tuesday that the suspects were sent to court for further legal action. Sopheak referred to them as opportunists taking advantages of the outbreak to promote their political party and criticise the government.

"Everyone is worried and cooperating to prevent this virus, [but] these people took the opportunity to promote propaganda, so let's give the court the privilege of making a decision," he said.

A call for global action for common health



Medical workers pose for photos after seeing cured patients off at the Wuchang temporary hospital in Wuhan, central China's Hubei province. --*Photo Xinhua*

BEIJING, March 23 (Xinhua) -- From the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 to the 2008 global financial meltdown, humanity has been no stranger to daunting challenges so far this century.

Coincidentally, those challenges often pop up around the turn of a decade.

This time around, a previously unknown coronavirus has caught the world off guard. As the infectious disease it causes, COVID-19 has spread to over 180 countries and regions, posing an unprecedented risk to global health security.

While nations around the world are racing against time to contain the virus and uncover a remedy, the pandemic has also prompted a time for reflection.

"What has happened to the world and how should we respond?" That was the question posed to the world by Chinese President Xi Jinping at the UN Office at Geneva in 2017.

In fact, Xi tried to answer that penetrating question as early as seven years ago, when he first put forward on an international occasion the idea of building a community with a shared future for mankind, the theme of his Geneva speech.

"It is a world where countries are linked with and dependent on one another at a level never seen before. Mankind, by living in the same global village within the same time and space where history and reality meet, have increasingly emerged as a community of common destiny in which every one has in himself a little bit of others," Xi said in his speech at Moscow State Institute of International Relations on March 23, 2013.

When addressing the general debate of the United Nations (UN) General Assembly in 2015, Xi set forth a five-point proposal on how to build a new type of international relations featuring win-win cooperation and create a community with a shared future for mankind, with partnership, security, development, culture and ecology being the key aspects.

Those remarks ring even truer today as the strike of the coronavirus pandemic has tied together the fates of all people inhabiting this global village once again.

Viruses know neither borders nor ethnicities, attacking anyone anytime and anywhere. And once they strike, no country can stand alone in this age of super-connectivity.

Since the outbreak was first reported in China, Beijing has all along held fast to Xi's idea that mankind is a community with a shared future.

To protect the health of its own people and everyone on this blue planet, China rolled out a chain of unprecedented measures to contain the fast spread of the virus. Such efforts and sacrifice bought valuable time for the world to better prepare.

Bearing in mind its responsibility as a member of the global village, China has been sharing information and cooperating with the World Health Organisation (WHO) and other countries in a timely, open and transparent manner.

When China was in the most difficult time of its epidemic fight, countries around the world extended a helping hand. Now that the pathogen has gone global, China has been rushing to the aid of those in urgent need by offering medical supplies, sharing containment experience, and sending teams of medical experts.

As Xi said, solidarity and cooperation are the most powerful weapon to tackle public health crises.

However, as the global fight against the pandemic rages on, some politicians in the West chained to a zero-sum mentality are seeking to weaponize the coronavirus to stigmatise China and hype up "de-coupling" theories. Their attempts to spread this "political virus" will only sow division and hate at a time when solidarity and trust are badly needed.

Opponents of globalisation have a new opportunity to bolster their protectionist bent. They argue that globalisation expedites massive flows of people and an international division of labor, and thus it is to blame for the proliferation of the pathogen and the strain in global supply chains.

Yet as Xi pointed out in his landmark speech at the World Economic Forum at Davos, Switzerland, in 2017, "it is true that economic globalisation has created new problems, but this is no justification to write economic globalisation off completely." The world, as he suggested, "should adapt to and guide economic globalization, cushion its negative impact, and deliver its benefits to all countries and all nations."

One major problem exposed in the ongoing pandemic is a deficit in global public health governance, which resulted in a mainly country-based approach so far when the common health of global villagers is under assault.

There is an urgent need for governments to better coordinate their respective prevention and control measures to avoid trans-border spread as the epidemic has become global.

Due to the absence of a global pool of emergency medical supplies, countries are tightening their control on exports of masks and protective suits, leaving places with fragile health system, such as Africa, even more vulnerable.

Moreover, countries should also pool their resources to develop drugs and vaccines as early as possible.

In the long run, a global architecture for the common health of mankind should be strengthened so as to better respond to future health emergencies. To do that, the UN and the WHO should be given a core role.

Along with joint efforts against the pandemic, the international community should do everything in its capacity to prevent this global health crisis from dragging down the global economy.

As Xi told UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres in a recent phone call, in an era of economic globalisation, COVID-19 will not be the world's last major emergency, and various traditional and non-traditional security issues will constantly bring about new tests.

Following the Septembet 11 attacks, the world demonstrated great international solidarity against terrorism.

In the aftermath of the 2008 international financial crisis, leaders of the Group of 20 (G20) major economies came together for the first time.

Now the G20 has become a main forum for international cooperation on financial and economic issues and a primary platform for global economic governance.

Today, as the world jointly battles the coronavirus, it can be a desirable place for countries to build solidarity and seek a global approach to both the health and economic crises.

For our shared future, we brave human beings always emerge stronger from a crisis. And for the common health of mankind, the pandemic should serve as a call for action.

Japanese education ministry completes its first screening of textbooks under new teaching guidelines

JAPAN (Japan times) -- The education ministry said Tuesday it has completed its first screening of new textbooks under new teaching guidelines that are planned to be fully implemented from April 2021, approving 106 textbooks in 10 subjects.

The average number of pages for a batch of textbooks approved to be used by junior high school students starting in fiscal 2021 rose 7.6 percent from that for current textbooks, the ministry said.

The total number of textbook pages exceeded 11,000 in A5 format at the time of applications.

The new teaching guidelines place importance on active learning methods, in which students learn proactively through debates and other learning activities, in order to nurture their intellectual ability to find and resolve problems themselves.

For this purpose, many of the new textbooks present learning challenges at the outset of chapters and subchapters, and encourage students to have debates in groups after the end of the sections to deepen their understanding.

The use of QR codes and URLs, which was approved for the first time in last fiscal year's screening of elementary school textbooks, is featured in many of the new junior high school textbooks. They are used for features including English pronunciations by native speakers and science experiment videos.

As for social studies, the new teaching guidelines clearly describe the Takeshima islets in the Sea of Japan and the Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea as part of Japan's inherent territory, as is the case with references to four Russian-held islands of Hokkaido. The Takeshima islets are under the effective control of South Korea, where they are called Dokdo, while China claims the Senkaku Islands, calling them Diaoyu. South Korea and China protested the approval of the textbooks.

But this description for the islands has been already included in the commentary for the current teaching guidelines and is already reflected in the current textbooks, so no opinions were made on this topic during the latest screening.

Of 110 textbooks that underwent the ministry screening, a total of four, in the fields of history, as well as technology and home economics, were rejected.

Five Japanese and English textbooks were withdrawn by textbook publishers before the outcome of the screening was announced.



In brief from Asia News Network

Nine Thai airlines get the nod to ground flights during Covid-19 crisis

THAILAND (Nation multimedia) --The Civil Aviation Authority of Thailand (CAAT) has allowed nine airlines to halt their flights due to the Covid-19 situation, director-general Chula Sukmanop said on Tuesday (March 24). "The nine airlines that had submitted requests to temporarily halt their operations are: Thai Airways International, THAI Smile, Bangkok Airways, Thai AirAsia, Thai AirAsia X, Thai Lion Air, Nok Air, Nok Scoot and Thai VietJet Air," he said. "Most airlines want to cancel only some flights and some routes, so we have approved their requests accordingly.

Seoul to evacuate 581 S. Koreans from Italy next week

ITALY (Korea herald) -- Around 600 South Korean nationals in Italy are set to be evacuated on government charter flights home next week, as the grim tally of coronavirus cases and deaths continues to surge. There are 151 people in Rome and 430 in Milan who will fly on the charter flights, according to Seoul's Foreign Ministry on Wednesday. A majority of the passengers are Korean citizens and some are foreign family members. The Korean government will send two flights to the country - one will depart next Tuesday from Malpensa Airport in Milan and the other will leave the next day from Fiumicino International Airport in Rome.

Philippine president signs self-granting special law to deal with COVID-19



Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte. ***--Photo Agencies***

MANILA (China Daily) -- Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte has signed a law that authorises him to exercise "stand-by powers" necessary to carry out urgent measures to deal with the COVID-19, Senator Christopher Go said early on Wednesday.

The act, entitled the Bayanihan to Heal as One Act, was passed by the Congress following a marathon special session on Monday.

Presidential spokesman Salvador Panelo said in an earlier statement that the law grants "stand-by powers to the president to carry out effectively the national policy of stopping the spread of the novel coronavirus disease which has endangered the lives of the Filipino people."

Among others, the law authorised the president to expedite and streamline the accreditation of testing kits, facilitate prompt testing of suspected cases and provide emergency subsidy to 18 million low income families in the country.

The measure also empowered the president to temporarily direct the operations of "privately-owned hospitals, medical and health facilities including passenger vessels and other establishments" when the public interest requires.

The management and operation of enterprises will be retained by the owners, according to the law.

The law also tasked the president to ensure the availability of essential goods, in particular food and medicine, and protect the people from illegal and pernicious practices affecting the supply, distribution and movement of certain essential items.

"The Filipino people are assured that the powers granted to the president shall be enforced strictly in accordance with the constitution. The grant of powers is for a limited period and subject to the restrictions contained therein," Panelo added.

The Philippines has so far recorded 552 COVID-19 cases, including 35 deaths, according to the Department of Health.

The blame game by US defies norms of diplomacy

MEXICO (Xinhua) -- Politicians in the United States have been defying proposals by the World Health Organisation and diplomatic norms by repeatedly and intentionally calling the novel coronavirus a "Chinese virus".

Their whimsical renaming is unfortunate for several reasons, not the least of which is to take the focus off the pandemic while also needlessly attributing blame.

As everyone knows, the outbreak started in Wuhan, Hubei province.

Until now, viruses that have reached the public consciousness have not been given a name associated with a country of origin, but rather the animal that is thought to have been the origin or was especially damaged-for example, swine or bird flu-or a scientific name such as SARS or H1N1. The Spanish flu from 1918, which did not originate in Spain, is the one exception to this norm.

The WHO has exercised scientific means in naming the disease COVID-19. The International Committee on Taxonomy of Viruses has its entrenched mechanisms for the classification and nomenclature of viruses, which led to the naming of the novel coronavirus SARS-CoV-2. US politicians' renaming of the virus fits well with their overall modus operandi, which is to use a strategy of diversion through blaming and name calling to hide their mismanagement over the past weeks.

By attacking the United States' main political competitor through labeling of the virus, they apparently hope to attribute blame to China, while drawing attention away from the abysmal job the US administration has done in preventing the country from suffering the worst effects of the pandemic.

Until recently, US politicians had been quite dismissive about the dangers that COVID-19 posed. And many Americans are pointing fingers at the administration for what they see as slow and ineffective responses long after the WHO issued warnings to all nations.

Even as little as a week or two ago, the White House was claiming that "everything is under control", which gave Americans a false sense of security while undermining the gravity of the situation. Now with the stock market crashing and COVID-19 cases rising exponentially, the US situation is anything but under control.

The blame game of US politicians in tweets and news briefings of past days has prompted the National Basketball Association's Asian-American star Jeremy Lin to take them to task: "Can you honestly tell me there is ZERO anti-Chinese sentiment in all his (US President Donald Trump's) characterizations of the virus? Can you honestly tell me Asians aren't being unfairly physically attacked today in the US?"

Now is not the time for blaming. When all is said and done and we are either immune from the virus, having acquired it and recovered, or have acquired immunity through a yet-to-be-formulated vaccine, the time will have come for a grand reckoning.

One should bear in mind that although the flu pandemic of 1918-19 is now known as the Spanish flu, there are indications its origin was a pig farm in the US state of Kansas.

Covid-19: Malaysia, Singapore to implement 'reciprocal arrangements' to transfer ill travellers

PETALING JAYA (The Star) -- Malaysia and Singapore will be implementing "reciprocal arrangements" to transfer symptomatic travellers detected at the entry points of each other's country to help curb the spread of Covid-19.

The Malaysia-Singapore Joint Working Group (JWG), in its second meeting held Tuesday (March 24), said it had agreed to continue the existing temperature screening procedures at land and sea checkpoints.

The JWG meeting, which was held via video conference, saw both countries giving updates on the Covid-19 situations in their respective nations.

They also shared existing temperature screening procedures at land and sea check points, and discussed a set of protocols for the transfer of symptomatic travellers detected at entry screening across at these checkpoints between both Malaysia and Singapore.

"The JWG agreed to continue entry screenings by both countries, align temperature screening protocols by applying the same temperature cut-off (>37.5°C) for febrile travellers, and implement reciprocal arrangements for the transfer of symptomatic travellers detected at entry screening back across the land and sea checkpoints.

"The co-chairs tasked the senior officials of the JWG to coordinate the implementation of these initiatives, which would serve as a comprehensive package to enhance joint border screening at both the land and sea borders connecting Malaysia and Singapore," said the JWG in a joint statement on Wednesday (March 25).

The second JWG meeting was co-chaired by Deputy Health Minister Datuk Dr Noor Azmi Ghazali and his counterpart Singapore's Senior Minister of State for Transport and Health Minister Dr Lam Pin Min.



The Johor Causeway lying empty after the closure. ***--Photo the Star***

The JWG also acknowledged the recent establishment of the Malaysia-Singapore Special Working Committee (SWC) on Covid-19 to discuss a joint plan to ensure the safe and sustainable movement of people, goods and services between both countries during the implementation of Malaysia's movement control order (MCO).

"The JWG agreed to continue health discussions specific to these matters separately under the SWC," it said.

Entertainment

Companies begin promoting 'work from home' to reduce Coronavirus infections

Sisouphan Amphonephong

Members of the entertainment industry and other entrepreneurs in Laos have begun allowing their staff to work from home to reduce the risk of Coronavirus infections.

Educational institutions in the country have already been closed and students are learning at home and sending their homework to teachers through WhatsApp and online tools. Kaona Laos Entertainment Director Mr Thepmahavixay Saythilath its staff and entertainers posted messages on social media and Facebook pages, sending their best wishes to the people and asking them to be part of efforts to help the situation return to normal as soon as possible.



Mr Thepmahavixay Saythilath show message for stop Covid-19.

Most of them urged people in the public following health care measures against coronavirus strictly from Ministry of Health and World Health Organization wear mask, clean your hands with alcohol or gel ,avoiding a places where have crowed people among others.

He urged people in the public stay at home, save us and Stop Covid -19.

Most of them changed their profile Facebook that has message Stop Covid-19 Stay Home , Stay save among other for give the empowerment to people in the public passing this situation together

Private enterprises such as Big Blue Agency Laos are supporting their staff in working from home to reduce the risk of infections.


Ms Nattaorn Sanudomchok explains the policy of working from home.

Big Blue Agency Laos' representative, Ms Nattaorn Sanoudomchok said: "Our company gives a lot of importance to the health of its staff and society, and we have launched a 'working from home' campaign to reduce the risk as much as possible."

She added, "Our staff are motivated about dealing with the situation arising because of this virus. This campaign depends on the duties of each staff member in the different divisions and departments, and that determines whether they will work from home 100 percent or work from home but be ready at all times to come in, such as members of the maintenance division."

Implementing the policy of working from home has not been easy because the firm's office has all the required equipment and materials and the staff can consult each other quickly when they are in the office, she said.

"Working from home has affected our business but why we decided to allow our staff to work at home because the safety of the staff is more important. When the Covid-19 outbreak is over, our staff will have good health and be ready to work normally," Ms Nattaorn said.

"The life of every person is very important and we have to help each other," she added.

In the current situation, members of the staff can stop working temporarily even from home if they feel unwell. They should stay away from crowded places to prevent the risk of further infections, she said.

How's business for the reopened cinemas in the Chinese mainland?

CHINA (China Daily/ANN) -- A total of 486 cinemas returned to business on Friday after being closed for about two months to contain the spread of the coronavirus. However, the overall box office on that day was just US$1,945, according to China's largest ticket website Maoyan.com.

The data also show ticket incomes in Northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region accounted for over 80 percent of the total amount. The autonomous region reopened its first cinema on Monday, which was also the first in the Chinese mainland as a whole.

On the first day of returning to business, cinemas in Xinjiang also saw zero revenues but the situation is apparently improving. "We had 10 movie sessions from 12 to 7 pm on Monday, but we haven't seen any people coming," an employee from a cinema in Xinjiang was quoted as saying by the "First Director," an influential We Media on film reviews in China. China has made a great sacrifice containing the novel coronavirus, and those efforts are paying off as less and less confirmed cases have been reported inside the country. However, it will take a long time before people go back to cinemas without fear or hesitation, as a survey made by the digital magazine "Sir Film" shows - although discounts are offered to audiences and disinfection measures have been strengthened.

Thousands of movie fans in 70 cities across the country participated in the survey, which shows that most of them have no plans to go to the cinema at the moment. The survey listed several reasons behind their reluctance and the interviewees could choose more than one option.

'Let it go!' Disney streams to virus-stricken Europe

INDONESIA (The Jakarta Post/ANN) -- Princess Elsa from Frozen will be unleashed across Europe in her glitter heels next week as Disney launches its digital streaming platform on the continent.

With millions of restless children currently cooped up inside by the coronavirus outbreak, the timing could not have been better for the world's largest entertainment company.

The US giant is hoping its subscription of 6.99 euros a month (£5.99 in Britain) will be a small price to pay for stressed-out parents struggling to entertain their kids from dawn to dusk.

Everything from timeless classics like Cinderella and Pinocchio right up to the Marvel series, Toy Story, Monsters Inc, Finding Nemo and Ratatouille will all be on the menu.

All the Star Wars films except the most recent one and an archive of 640 episodes of The Simpsons will be among the other big draws.

Disney+ launched in the US, Canada, New Zealand, Australia and the Netherlands last November. With its vast back catalogue, it has already clocked up 29 million subscribers despite a crowded field dominated by Netflix, Amazon Prime Video and Apple TV.

The platform will start streaming Tuesday in Austria, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Spain, Switzerland and Britain.


Elsa, one of the characters on Disney's 'Frozen'.

Belgium, Portugal and the Scandinavian countries will have to wait until the summer.

French families will have to wait a further fortnight after the government there asked Disney to hold back for fear of slowing down the internet.

Disney said Saturday that it would lower the quality of its stream by a quarter elsewhere in Europe so as not to overload systems.

Teething problems

Disney said it was eagerly anticipating the European launch. "There is a lot of expectation in Europe and we are very confident," said Kevin Mayer, who is in charge of rolling out the service.

"We hope the launch will go as well as in the US, or even better, as we have been able to test the technology," he added, trying to put a positive spin on the problems the platform encountered on its first day five months ago due to high demand.

Despite appearances, with coronavirus confinement measures keep millions in lockdown, Disney said the timing is far from perfect.

The pandemic has actually cast a shadow over events, according to Mayer.

"I would have preferred circumstances to be different," the executive told AFP.

"But if we can bring a bit of joy, alleviate the suffering caused by this virus, it will be very satisfying."

Disney has stopped production on some of its live-action movies, including The Little Mermaid, amid growing concerns about the spread of the pandemic in North America, with cinemas also shutting.

Quality not quantity

Disney+ is set to be a major streaming player with over 500 films and 300 series from the Disney, Pixar, Marvel and Star Wars universe as well as National Geographic documentaries and docu-dramas.

At almost seven euros a month, Disney+ is slightly cheaper than Netflix's basic plan (7.99 euros, or US$8.60).

But despite the varied content, the Disney catalogue is not as deep or diverse as that of Netflix, the market leader with 167 million subscribers in 2019.

"We don't have the same philosophy as Netflix. We will never have as much content. We hope to privilege quality over quantity," said Mayer.

"We think that we have the best content on Disney+ and content that you can't find elsewhere," he added.

Malaysian men's suit designer offers online video consultations during MCO


Shahrin Bahar is now consulting with clients who are interested in placing orders for bespoke suits online through video calls.

MALAYSIA (The Star/ ANN) -- With the movement control order, the fashion industry is certainly feeling its effect. For designers who deal with custom-made orders, this is even more so – as they are unable to meet with clients.

One menswear tailor is rolling with the punches and making best of the situation. Shahrin Bahar, who designs bespoke suits for men, is taking his business fully virtual to adhere to the need for social distancing.

"We can have a Zoom call or WhatsApp video, and it's like a free one-to-one call to consult on the details – who they are, when will their future wedding be and other considerations," Shahrin points out.

He reveals that his suit orders mostly come from men who are getting married. These are "big receipt" purchases, as the groom would also get family members and groomsmen to suit up. His business is taking a big hit as weddings are being pushed back.

"Potential customers interested will just explain to us the possible date of their wedding that's been postponed and we consult them on the fabrics they can choose based on the wedding theme and budget."

Shahrin, 35, adds that a few people thought that he was joking when he made the announcement on Facebook. A tailor doing consultations without actually meeting the person? He is however, very serious about making this online thing work. He is aware of the limitations.

"Some have asked if we could do house calls with precautions, but with the strict rules from the government, we refrained," the Subang Jaya-born designer notes. His atelier is located in Kuala Lumpur.

Shahrin founded his business in 2016. This was after spending years working in cities like Singapore, Hong Kong, Amsterdam and London. He graduated in 2007 with a degree in menswear from the London College Of Fashion.

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Phongsavanh BANK

Business

Kualao Restaurant founder honored with regional award



Kualao Restaurant founder Mrs Manola Daravong.--*Photo Sisay*

Advertorial Desk

Kualao Restaurant has become a well-known dining icon of Lao cuisine for both locals and overseas visitors who arrive in the country's capital city.

The restaurant was founded in 1994 by a native of the Plain of Jars' Xieng Khuang province, Mrs Manola Daravong, who came to the capital in 1964 when she was 13 years old with no grand plans of personal success. But today her significant accomplishments in serving society with authentic Lao cuisine and a fantastic dining experience have been recognised by the 2020 Women of Asean Award at an Entrepreneur Summit held in the Philippines this month to go with several other local and international awards she has received.

Mrs Manola said that she had no background in managing a restaurant, but all of her success today comes from her striving to achieve her goals.

"Before opening this restaurant, I had no experience in cooking or being a chef to serve many customers in a dining establishment, but I had to learn by myself day by day, and today I'm very proud of my achievements, especially the recent 2020 Women of Asean Award," Mrs Manola said.

For a successful restauranteur, she has an interesting background. This includes being a journalist at the Lao News Agency from 1975 to 1980 after graduating from law school in Vientiane.

Today, Mrs Manola enjoys running with her restaurant business and is willing to continue serving society with delicious Lao cuisine.

Kualao Restaurant is open daily from 10am-2pm and 5pm-10pm and also showcases traditional Lao dance and musical performances.

Kualao Restaurant is housed in a charmingly elegant, vintage villa that, until only decades ago, formed the residential estate of French colonial officials.

The restaurant's exterior epitomises architecture 'à la française', invoking thoughts of the society parties, business deals and political intrigue that must have taken place there in the colonial era.

In its days as a prominent colonial estate, the Kualao building played host to Vientiane's elite society. Now, as Vientiane's most prestigious Lao restaurant, it is still the perfect place to meet, relax, enjoy sumptuous food and impeccable service and be captivated by enchanting Lao entertainment.

For more information can visit: www.kualaorestaurant.com or www.facebook.com/Kualao



One of the delicious dishes on offer at Kualao Restaurant. --*Photo Kualao Restaurant*



A showcase of traditional Lao dance and musical performances. --*Photo Kualao Restaurant*



Outside views of Kualao restaurant. --*Photo Kualao Restaurant*

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Exchange Rate
as of March 25, 2020

Foreign Currencies		Buying	Selling
US Dollar	USD	8.919	8.937
Vietnamese Dong	VND	0,3998	0,4078
Thai Baht	THB	295,68	297,86
Euro	EUR	9.571	9.620
Renminbi Yuan	CNY	1.232	1.257

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Phongsaly expects 460 billion kip investment in 2020

Times Reporters

Phongsaly province says the investment in 2020 is likely to cross the 460 billion kip mark.

The figure was mentioned at a recent meeting with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Planning and Investment Mr Sonexay Siphandone when he visited the province.

Mr Sonexay was briefed about the implementation of the work undertaken by the provincial Planning and Investment Department Director Mr Khamlek Chaisan. He was informed that the implementation of the socio-economic development plan for the first three months of 2020 was impacted by various factors, especially outbreak of Covid-19. This has hit production, imports and exports, and it is difficult getting funds for private investment or to boost incomes.

However, with the cooperation of all parties the public investment plan approved by the National



Mr Sonexay Siphandone --Photo Media Laos Facebook

Assembly and the Provincial People's Council has been approved for 21 projects worth 11.55 billion kip, equivalent to 35.74 percent of the approved annual budget.

The department has proposed that the Provincial People's Council approve the use of revenue budget that exceeded the target for 2019 to pay off debts of public investment projects that are to the tune of 4.85 billion kip.

The capital for the development of Phongsaly province by 2020 is expected to be 460.45 billion kip, of which domestic investment (public funding) is 32.32 billion kip, official development assistance is 52.02 billion kip. This includes assistance from Vietnamese friends and China. The domestic investment is 216.74 billion kip and foreign - 152.37 billion kip is banking credit capita.

The minister praised the department for its outstanding performance in the past.

He urged the department to pay attention and discharge their duties as per rules and improve the structural mechanism of the department, support the province to get funding to invest in the province. He encouraged them to continue to inspect projects, both that have domestic and foreign investments in order to ensure their efficient and timely implementation.

The Minister visited the pumpkin planting project in Xiengfa village and sugarcane planting project in KM 46 village in Bounneua district.

Imported consumer goods, freight continues to flow

Times Reporters

The Department of Import and Export confirmed that imports of consumer goods from Thailand through border checkpoints continue to flow as normal despite their temporary closure to travellers to prevent the spread of Covid-19.

Vehicles transporting goods with customs permits are still permitted to cross at the international border checkpoints.

Nevertheless, many households around the country, especially Vientiane, have been stocking up on items such as dried foods following concerns about imported goods coming in. Consequently, wholesalers and retailers in Vientiane are currently reporting shortages of these products.

Freight between Laos and Thailand was still moving freely as authorities of both countries have close cooperation on this issue to promote bilateral trade, Export and Import Department Director General, Mr Soulinhon Philavong told *Vientiane Times* recently.

However, Laos consumers may struggle to acquire certain imported products from Thailand as many factories have reduced or stopped production amid the Covid-19 outbreak.

Another reason is that Thailand distributors may be diverting shipments to domestic supply during this crisis, according to observers.

The vast majority of consumer goods available in Laos are imported, mainly from Thailand as well as China and Vietnam.

In response to Covid-19, the government has urged the Lao people to prepare for an unpredictable scenario as the number of coronavirus cases continues to grow.



Many wholesalers and retailers in Vientiane are reporting shortages of some consumption goods despite imports arriving as normal.

The Lao people have well-established traditions in agriculture, and this will absorb the impact of international trade disruption if it eventuates.

Laos has not yet received any reports regarding the impact on imported goods from border checkpoints since the start of the virus outbreak, according to the Department of Export and Import.

Imports in January reached US$480 million and dropped to US$378 million in February, according to the Ministry of Industry and Commerce.

Lao consumers will not face severe food shortages as in other countries if the international supply chain is disrupted due to the Covid-19 pandemic, according to a senior economist.

Many Lao people, in particular those living in the countryside, have expressed no fears of food shortages if the international supply chain is interrupted, with many already having reserves of grain and livestock.

Supply chain disruption could create opportunities for the country to increase agricultural production. At the same time, many farmers have demanded the government shut down illegal produce imports to eliminate unfair competition.

Singapore working with 6 other countries to maintain supply of essential goods

SINGAPORE (The Straits Times/ANN) -- Singapore will work closely with six other countries to identify and address trade disruptions by the coronavirus pandemic that could affect the flow of essential goods.

In a joint ministerial statement issued on Wednesday the countries - including Australia, Canada, Chile, New Zealand, Myanmar and Brunei - said they will ensure that trade lines remain open, including via air and sea freight, to facilitate the flow of goods including essential supplies.

Freight carriers around the world are struggling to deliver goods by land, sea or air as the pandemic has forced governments to impose lockdowns, threatening supplies of vital products including medicines.

"We are committed to working with all like-minded countries to ensure that trade continues to flow unimpeded, and that critical infrastructure such as our air and seaports remain open to support the viability and integrity of supply chains globally," said the joint statement issued by Singapore's Ministry of Trade and Industry.

The countries said they will refrain from imposing export controls or tariffs and non-tariff barriers.

They will also remove any existing trade restrictive measures on essential goods, especially medical supplies, at this time.

While China's extreme measures to stop the spread of the virus are now allowing its economy slowly to come back online, supply chains are disintegrating in other parts of the world.Problems ranging from finding enough truck drivers to restrictions on seafarers and a lack of air freight are hitting the smooth flow of goods.

Travel restrictions, border closures, air travel cancellations and ports quarantining ships for 14 days or more are now commonplace.

Border controls have slowed down traffic or forced re-routing of good, pushing up freight costs of even necessary supplies such as food and medicine.

Stockpiling and panic buying by consumers are also adding to supply strains.



Border controls have slowed down traffic or forced re-routing of good, pushing up freight costs of even necessary supplies such as food and medicine.

Malaysia banks' loss absorbing buffers can mitigate risks

PETALING JAYA (The Star/ANN) -- While the asset quality and profitability of Malaysian banks are set to come under pressure due to the Covid-19 pandemic, their loss-absorbing buffers will be able to mitigate risks, said Moody's Investors Service.

In addition, its vice-president, senior credit officer, Alka Anbarasu said local banks are equipped with sound funding and liquidity, which provided an additional layer of buffer against risks.

He told StarBiz that Malaysia is facing slowing regional growth and trade, and disruptions from the pandemic would hurt the country's electronics exports as well as the tourism and aviation sectors.

Malaysian banks, he said, would see asset quality deteriorate, driven by impairments of loans to export-oriented manufacturers, and to companies in the leisure, tourism, hospitality and aviation sectors.

"Banks' profitability will also come under pressure. Nevertheless, the banks' loss absorbing buffers, which include capital and loan loss provisioning, are strong and will mitigate the risks," he said.

Moody's vice-president, senior credit officer, Eugene Tarzimanov said the greatest negative credit effects would be felt initially by banks in economies and regions most immediately and acutely disrupted or with concentrated lending to the most impacted sectors.

Also facing significant negative credit effects, he said, are thinly capitalised banks.

"We expect our rating actions to initially focus on those territories where Covid-19 has had the most immediate impact, although such actions will likely affect banks in other countries as the virus spreads," he said.

Other financial institutions that are highly exposed, under the rating house's baseline scenario, and likely to experience the most negative credit implications include those in sectors whereby capitalisation or profitability is highly vulnerable to prolonged low interest rates and equity prices, he said.

Airfreight support key for supply chains

CHINA (China Daily/ANN) -- China will take further steps to boost international airfreight capacity to stabilise supply chains, the State Council's executive meeting chaired by Premier Li Keqiang said on Tuesday.

"With the (COVID-19) pandemic rampaging across the world and air passenger services dwindling worldwide due to the outbreak, cargo volume carried by passenger planes has plummeted and shipping costs have risen significantly," Li said.

"In the course of the outbreak response, weak links in our air transport capacity have been exposed. We must facilitate both international and domestic air transport services and keep up our international airfreight capacity to avert potential shocks to supply chains and facilitate resumption of business operations," he said.

The meeting called for stronger international collaboration to keep international express delivery and other airfreight services up and running. Policy support will be provided to international cargo flights during the outbreak. Airfreight carriers will be provided support to expand their fleets by bringing in more cargo jets through lease or purchase.

The role of the market will be fully harnessed and all airfreight companies will receive equal support regardless of ownership type. The merger and reorganisation of airfreight and logistics firms will be encouraged, and express delivery companies will be supported in expanding air services and overseas operations.

"We must plan ahead and harness the initiative of logistics firms in developing an international air transport network," Li said.

The meeting urged strengthening networks of air cargo hubs. Restrictions on time slots for cargo flights will be lifted at airports with strong cargo-handling capacity.

Where conditions permit, international hub airports in Beijing, Tianjin, Hebei province, the Yangtze River Delta, Guangdong province, Hong Kong, Macao, Chengdu, Sichuan province and Chongqing will provide 24/7 customs clearance services and improve efficiency in security checks and clearance processes.

"The manufacturing sector has been the first to resume operations, and experience has been gained in this process. The major challenge is clogged supply chains. To date, micro, small and medium-sized enterprises have yet to resume full-capacity production, and this has affected the entire industry chain. It is thus critical that all supportive policies for smaller firms be promptly and fully delivered," Li said.

The meeting also required harmonising airfreight service standards, simplifying documentation requirements and promoting paperless handling procedures. Platforms for logistics information sharing will be developed to serve airlines, postal services and express delivery companies.



Workers unload aid materials from a cargo plane of China Postal Airlines at the Wuhan Tianhe International Airport in Wuhan, Central China's Hubei province.

Toyota, NTT to form capital alliance, aiming to build 'smart city'

JAPAN (The Yomiuri Shimbun/ANN) -- Toyota Motor Corp. and NTT Corp. agreed to form a capital tie-up, the companies said on Tuesday.

Both companies are planning to invest about ¥200 billion in the tie-up. They will cooperate with each other in the development of autonomous driving technologies and the building of a "smart city," a community using the internet to bring products and services together.

It is to be a full-scale tie-up between a major Japanese automaker and a major telecommunications company.

Under the tie-up, Toyota will provide advanced technologies, such as self-driving cars, while NTT will provide communications technologies, including those using the 5G next-generation communications standard. Competition across industries is intensifying overseas, with US information technology giant Google Inc. developing self-driving cars. Toyota and NTT aim to counter such moves by bringing their strengths together.

Competition is also intensifying in the car industry to develop next-generation vehicles, such as self-driving cars and cars that are continuously connected to the internet.

At the same time, there is an urgent need in the telecommunications industry to develop technologies for 5G as well as 6G, which is expected to spread in the future as the post-5G communications standard.

Advanced communications technology is essential for next-generation vehicles, and the two companies will work together to develop them efficiently.

Toyota has already announced a plan to start construction of the "smart city" in early 2021 on the site of a former factory in Susono, Shizuoka Prefecture, employing state-of-the-art IT to help create an efficient lifestyle. The automaker has positioned the facility as a testing ground for robots, self-driving cars and environmental technologies, and plans to accelerate such efforts together with NTT.

Toyota has deepened ties with other major telecommunications companies as well. The company cooperated with KDDI Corp. and Softbank Corp. in the development of automatic driving systems, among other projects.



Dragon fruit being processed for export at a Lavifood factory in the southern province of Long An.

Agro-forestry, fisheries exports to US, EU hit by Covid-19 pandemic

HCM CITY (Vietnam News/ ANN) -- With Vietnam's main agro-forestry and fisheries export markets after China such as the US and Europe being hit by the new coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic, Vietnamese exporters are suffering.

Nguyen Dinh Tung, chairman and CEO of Vina T&T Group, which exports fresh fruits to several demanding markets, said fruit exports by air to the US and EU were down 70-80 percent since many airlines had stopped flights.

"Shipments by sea are relatively stable but customs clearance in importing countries is expected to be prolonged because workers and officials are absent from work due to the pandemic, which could affect the goods quality.

"Therefore, at least in the next one month, vegetable and fruit exports to these markets will drop sharply."

After that the export situation would depend entirely on how the countries control the pandemic, he said.

His company now exports only three items, coconut, longan and durian, because they last long, and temporary stops exporting other fruits.

Dang Phuc Nguyen, general secretary of the Vietnam Fruits and Vegetable Association, said most fruits and vegetables were exported in fresh form and by air.

The sector must improve storage and packaging technologies to enable the products to last over 30 days so that they could be shipped to Europe and the US by sea, he added.

Truong Dinh Hoe, general secretary of the Vietnam Association of Seafood Exporters and Producers (VASEP), said the main seafood export markets such as China, the US, the EU, Japan, and South Korea had all been hit by Covid-19.

In the first two months of the year seafood exports were worth nearly US$935 million, down 15.9 percent from the same period in 2019, with exports to China down by 46.8 percent to US$80 million, and to the EU by 17.4 percent to US$106 million and to South Korea by 16 percent to US$90 million.

According to VASEP, shrimp exporters expect the China market to recover in April and will focus on shipping by sea.

Pangasius exports to China are expected to recover by 70 percent in May and fully recover in June.

Exporters will restrict exports to China through intermediaries and outsourcing to avoid oversupply.

In the case of non-essential items such as wood and wood products, demand could slump at a time like this. According to the Vietnam Timber and Forest Products Association (VIFOREST), exports of timber and timber products will plummet in the next three months, especially to the country's five key export markets that are severely affected by the pandemic.

The five are the US, EU, China, Japan and South Korea, which buy nearly 90 percent of the country's total exports.

Importers in these markets have informed suppliers in Vietnam they would delay or stop buying or defer payment.

According to insiders, agricultural exports in the first two months of the year were estimated at US$5.34 billion, down 2.8 percent year-on-year.

If the Government and related ministries did not provide timely support, the sector's export prospects were very gloomy, they said.

Government extends date for filing GST returns for March-May period till June 30

NEW DELHI (The Statesman/ANN) -- Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday announced the extension of the deadline for filing the Goods and Service Tax (GST) returns for March, April and May 2020 till June 30.

The minister made the statement while addressing the media via video conference. She was accompanied by the Minister of State for Finance and Corporate Affairs.

She further said that companies which have a turnover of less than five crore, no interest, no late fee, or no penalty will be charged.

Companies with turnover of above Rs 5 crore will not have to pay any late fee or penalty but will have to file a 9 percent interest rate for late filing of GST.

"I want to underline is the date for opting for composition scheme is also extended to 30th June 2020." The minister said.

At the beginning of her speech the minister also announced the extension of the deadline for filing income tax returns for the financial year 2018-19 till June 30, 2020.

Sitharaman also said that the government has reduced the interest rate on delayed TDS deposit to 9 percent from the previous 18 percent.

The relief comes amidst the whole of the country coming to a standstill due to the rising number of coronavirus cases and lockdown across states.

Feature

Tough life for family in boat drive

Patithin Phetmeuangphuan



Sonexay's family boat.

Laos is a landlocked country but it has many rivers, which influences the way a large number of people live as many communities line the banks of the Mekong - Laos' main waterway.

Those who travel by boat will see many houses along the riverbanks, which have been built there because the river is a main food source and benefits people in many ways.

You often see boats moored on the river but until recently I never realised that families lived on them.

I knew a family in Luang Prabang who had moved there from a poor village but I didn't know they had mostly been living on a boat for many years. I learnt that they found it to be cheaper as living costs in the town have spiralled in recent years.

The increasing number of big spending tourists has caused inflation and resulted in a higher cost of living for many of the locals.

Of the various socio-economic groups occupying the town, my observations reveal that it is the students of Luang Prabang who have some of the toughest times coping with the economic realities of modern life.

With more than 90 hotels, some 387 resorts and guesthouses, 300 restaurants and 19 entertainment venues, many would assume that part time work for students in the hospitality industry would be abundant. However, the students I spoke to said work opportunities were difficult to find because not many positions are advertised and competition is fierce.

Of those students who were in paid employment, the average salary they earned was a minimum of about one million kip a month.

I met a family with two sons and a daughter. The oldest son was 21-year-old Sonexay Duangphoupha who was studying at the Faculty of Agriculture and Forest Resources at Souphanouvong University. There was also a married daughter and a six-year-old boy who was in primary school.

They had a nice boat on which they took tourists on trips along the river to enjoy the sunset.

The family's boat is part of the operations of the Pha Tat Ke Botanical Garden. The father is a boat driver and works at the botanical garden from 7am to 4pm when Sonexay is taking classes at the university.

After classes, Sonexay hurries to the boat station in search of tourists who want a trip on the river.

For a small fee, he takes people out on his boat, offering them spectacular views of the Mekong coloured pink by the setting sun.

As we talked about life on the river I accepted his offer of a boat ride and he walked me to his well-maintained boat which was moored not far away.

Sonexay works for just a couple of hours on the river and then has an English class at 7pm each night.

He appreciates the classes and the boat driving work for the opportunity it gives him to improve his English conversation skills.

Finding a job in a hotel or restaurant right now is extremely difficult for anyone in Luang Prabang, Sonexay said, and everyone in the area has problems because Laos and neighbouring countries have closed their borders, so many hotels and restaurants are closed.

Sonexay and his brother also aren't going to classes because all centres of education have been closed, but he gets homework every day which is sent by email.

Their boat has everything that a simple house has and all of them, except for the married daughter, sleep on board.

The river in Luang Prabang has about 100 boats moored in various places, although not always in the same spot, but the family never has a problem trying to find their own boat.

It's a decent size compared to other boats, but in my opinion it was a bit small for a family to live in.

Inside they had a small collection of domestic necessities and only one sleeping area, but it was clear the family was happy with what they had and felt they had found a way to survive.



Mr Sonexay, a man in the front. Sometimes he takes some friends in his boat.



The international tourists like to sit in the front of the boat washing the sunset and Mekong view.

ສະພາການຄ້າ ແລະ ອຸດສາຫະກຳ ແຫ່ງຊາດລາວ

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Historical book reprinted for 5th time

HANOI (VNS) -- Hanoi the Vietnamese historical book Bien Ban Chien Tranh 1-2-3-4.75 (A War Account 1-2-3-4.75) by journalist Tran Mai Hạnh has recently been reprinted for the 5th time with 100 new pages including newly-revealed, highly-confidential material.

The 612-page book, reprinted by the Truth National Political Publishing House, has literary and historical value, with authentic documents, highly classified at the time by the Republic of Viet Nam (the Sai Gon administration) and the United States of America.

The writer has also quoted in the book documents associated with important events of the country in a precise and reliable manner. The book recounts and depicts accurately the fall of the Sai Gon administration with Nguyen Van Thieu as its president in the last four months of the American war -- from January to the end of April 1975.

The book, which was first published by the publishing house in April 2014, won the Literature Award by the Viet Nam Writers' Association and then the Southeast Asia (SEA) Writers Award 2015.



Writer Tran Mai Hạnh (*second right*) at the entrance to Sai Gon in the morning of April 30, 1975.

--Photo courtesy of Tran Mai Hạnh

It was translated into English in 2017 and into Lao language in 2018.

According to Vu Trọng Lam, deputy director, deputy editor-in-chief of the publishing house, in this reprint, the publishing house has added some highly confidential materials declassified by the US government in the past six years, some important events and incidents during the last moments of the US-aided-and-abetted Sai Gon regime that have been revealed recently by former Sai Gon leading figures, who are now living overseas.

Besides 21 original materials printed last time, the publishing house has added ten more materials including Plan 3 of Defending period of Military Zone 3, 4 and War Cabinet; a collection of fighting orders by the Sai Gon Military's General Staff; decision to depose Gen Cao Van Vien as the Chief of Sai Gon Military's General Staff, and decision to assign Gen Vinh Loc as the Chief of Sai Gon Military's General Staff.

All the original materials were collected from offices and residential areas of the leaders of the Sai Gon regime on April 30, 1975.

As a war correspondent of the Vietnam News Agency during the Ho Chi Minh Campaign, Hạnh witnessed the historic victory on April 30, 1975 at the Independence Palace in downtown Sai Gon, now HCM City.

"The 19-chapter novel, including 31 original highly confidential reference materials has vividly sketched out the collapse of the Sai Gon regime and portraits of its army leaders in the last four months of the American war in Viet Nam," Lam stressed. "The book highlights the great victory of the Vietnamese people and army under the brilliant guidance of the Viet Nam Communist Party."

The updated book is available at the bookshops of the Truth National Political Publishing House and other bookstores nationwide for VNĐ229,000 (US$9.8).

Coronavirus: All entertainment venues in Singapore to close, gatherings outside work and school limited to 10 people

SINGAPORE (The Statesman/ANN) -- Bars, cinemas and all other entertainment outlets will be closed from today (March 26) 11.59pm till April 30 as Singapore's fight against Covid-19 enters a new phase amid a wave of imported cases to the country.

In announcing its strictest measures yet, the multi-ministry task force also said on Tuesday that: All centre-based tuition and enrichment classes will be suspended to reduce the intermingling of students from different schools and enhance the safety of students.

- All religious services will be suspended.

- Malls, museums and restaurants must reduce crowd density to stay open.

- All Singapore residents returning from Britain and the United States from Wednesday (March 25) 11.59pm will have to stay in hotels to serve their 14-day stay-home notice (SHN).

- Those who breach the SHN will face fines of up to $10,000 or jail of up to six months or both.

- Any Singapore resident or long-term pass holder who leaves Singapore from March 27 will be charged unsubsidised rates should they be hospitalised in public hospitals for Covid-19 treatment.

They also won't be able to claim from MediShield Life or Integrated Shield Plans for these treatments at public and private hospitals.

The measures come as 49 new Covid-19 cases were reported on Tuesday, including 32 imported cases. This brings the total of patients to 558.

The measures are pre-emptive but come at a time of real risk, said National Development Minister Lawrence Wong at a press conference.

"All over the world, millions of people are living in a different reality. Workplaces are closed, shops are empty, roads are empty, everyone is asked to stay home," he said.

"We are not experiencing this in Singapore - not yet, but we cannot be complacent."

Despite efforts to isolate imported cases, the risk of local transmission will rise as Singapore sees more imported cases, he said.

"So we have to take seriously the measures to protect our family members and the people around us," he said.

The measures on entertainment venues cover bars and entertainment venues like night clubs, discos, cinemas, theatres, and karaoke outlets.

Other public venues such as retail malls, museums and attractions, where contact is more transient, may remain open. But operators must make sure the venue does not have more than one person per 16 sq m of usable space.



Bars, cinemas and all other entertainment outlets will be closed from 11.59pm on March 26 till April 30, 2020.

This is to significantly reduce the density of crowds in these venues, especially during peak periods, said the Ministry of Health.

Groups must not exceed 10 persons. Indoor and outdoor shows within attractions and open atrium sales events are suspended.

Retail malls and attractions that are unable to adhere to these requirements must be closed and additional penalties may be imposed on those found to have been a place of transmission if they had not adhered to requirements.

The ministry said existing measures for food and beverage venues continue to apply. While related diners can be seated together at one table, tables must be spaced out.

Groups of diners should also be limited to 10 persons or fewer.

Patrons of places with fixed seating - for example, hawker centres - must use alternate seats.

On religious gatherings, the ministry said that while services will be suspended, places of worship may remain open for private worship and essential rites, subject to group sizes of 10 persons or fewer at any one time.

Opinion

Streetwise

What should the government do to control prices of products during the Covid-19 outbreak?

People in Vientiane are stock up on essential goods such as rice, packaged foods and drinking water following the Covid-19 outbreak and there are fears of a shortage of food in the event of closure of all border checkpoints. The shelves of many mini-marts and super markets are almost empty and some vendors have taken advantage of the situation to increase prices. Vientiane Times asked some people for their thoughts on this issue.

Lamphone Pasanthong





Ms Souksavanh Thavongsin, a resident of Sisattanak district: Consumers in many areas in Vientiane, including me, are starting to stock up on essential items, such as staples, packaged food and cooking oil, amid concerns that the government may intensify measures to battle the Covid-19 outbreak. I have stocked a lot of essential items because I worry that the vendors will take advantage of the prevailing situation to increase the prices of goods and there



could also be a shortage of food if all the border checkpoints are closed. As we know, most products sold in Laos are imported from other countries and I think it will be quite hard for the authorities to control prices in a bad situation. The prices of face masks and alcohol-based sanitisers have already gone up

Ms Khamboun Silaphone, a resident of Xaythany district: It is a good thing that the authorities have instructed businesses not to cause any problems. However, I'm not sure this will be enough to discourage vendors from hiking prices. At present, some vendors have raised the prices of items such as instant noodles, which



has gone from 45,000 kip a carton to 55,000 kip a carton. Prices of rice and other packaged food have also increased. I've seen the authorities have made many announcements but I haven't seen any effective action being taken to enforce them.



Ms Chaemsai Hongthong, an owner of a grocery store in Xaythany district: As we all know, most goods sold in Laos are imported from neighbouring countries. I agree the prices of some goods have really increased, such as instant noodles. I normally sell noodles for 43,000 kip



a carton, but now I sell them for 45,000 kip because the wholesalers have increased their rates. I have also heard some consumers complain that they have been cheated by some vendors. I think the authorities should strictly regulate the prices of goods and regularly check vendors to protect the consumers. I would like to ask all sectors to show empathy, especially the vendors, who should not take advantage of the situation.

Ms Khamkieng Phaimany, an official in Xaythany district: I have seen the news about this and it's very good that the authorities are paying attention to monitoring the production process so that sufficient food and other goods are available in the markets. During such a bad situation, people start to stock up on food and other items. It would be good if the authorities closely monitor vendors in all markets, mini-marts and super markets. If they find anyone selling items at high prices, that person should be penalised. Everyone should pay attention to this matter to ensure we are not cheated.

Ms Davanh Saengsouvan, a resident of Luang Prabang province: I don't know much about this issue because I still have not started stocking up on everything. I have some



rice in my barn, and I have livestock. I can also grow some vegetables. I think this should help me cope with any food shortage. However, I will stock some packaged food. I would like to call on other people like me to protect themselves from a shortage of food or being cheated by vendors during the virus outbreak. The biggest concern is to avoid going to crowded markets, especially at a time when the government has urged people to maintain social distancing.

Collaboration key to win global anti-virus fight



People queue to enter a tent erected to test for the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) at the Brooklyn Hospital Centre in Brooklyn, New York City, US.

CHINA (China Daily/ ANN) -- Although novel coronavirus pneumonia cases are still rising in many countries, spreading panic across the world faster than the virus itself, the pandemic can still be contained using the right measures, as China has shown. To contain and prevent the spread of the disease, international coordination and collaboration are pivotal.

A public health emergency poses a danger to every person, and therefore can have broad repercussions on society and the economy. So governments and all sections of society have to engage at all levels to cope with the health emergency. But due to a lack of united international leadership, such an engagement is not possible. As such, only through global collaboration and coordination among countries, intergovernmental organisations and the private sector, with the World Health Organisation playing a key role, can a global crisis like the coronavirus pandemic be contained.

Fighting common challenges together

Countries around the world are closely interconnected due to economic globalisation, so it will be difficult to control the global spread of the virus without taking comprehensive and coordinated measures worldwide. Which makes collaboration and coordination among different countries, international organisations and the private sector critical to win the battle against the pandemic.

In this era of globalisation, we need to meet the common challenges together. And to win the battle against the virus, the international community should rally together and take a series of urgent, coordinated measures.

To begin with, the international community, including governments and international organisations, should ensure that people get correct and timely information on the virus and the depth and extent of the pandemic. There is too much misinformation about the virus doing the rounds, which has raised the panic level of the public, forcing many to respond to the situation hysterically rather than rationally and scientifically, which in turn has given rise to racism and xenophobia in certain places.

The WHO has been working with Google to ensure that people get facts from the world health body first when they search for information on the novel coronavirus. Social media platforms, too, have been urged to combat misinformation and scotch rumors about the disease.

Although authoritative information from the WHO has helped the public to respond rationally to the coronavirus outbreak, which is conducive to curbing the spread of the virus, there is an urgent need to strengthen global collaboration and coordination to better prepare for and more systematically respond to health emergencies at the global, regional and country levels. Also, the WHO must help coordinate the moves of different countries under the framework of International Health Regulations, so as to boost their capacity building and better prepare them to cope with medical emergencies.

In the future, once a disease outbreak shows signs of turning into a pandemic, all countries should mobilise their resources to timely and resolutely respond to the situation, and inform the public of the number of confirmed cases and their travel history. The WHO should also help train healthcare workers, especially from developing countries, and guide the governments how to control and prevent the spread of the disease.

Supply of medicines, medical products should be regulated

Also, the fact that many countries have imposed restrictions on the export of medicines, personal protective gear and other medical products, such as face masks and sanitizers, and banned travel and flights has affected the global value chains of medicines and personal protective gear, greatly reducing their supply in the market in many places. Therefore, the international community should make greater efforts to regulate the supply of such strategic medical products to the countries hit by the epidemic and facing a shortage of medicines and medical equipment, especially to help protect the healthcare workers there who are the most vulnerable group.

It is also important that scientists and doctors cooperate and share all relevant information and experiences among themselves, and with their peers across borders. The quick genetic sequencing of the virus by Chinese scientists and sharing of the information with the WHO in early January enabled the development of a variety of assays to diagnose coronavirus pneumonia patients. Genetic sequencing information is also crucial to track virus propagation, estimate virus mutation rates, and create vaccines and medicines.

Collaboration and sharing of knowledge and medical experiences among front-line medical workers across the world are significant; they are not only conducive to reducing healthcare-related infections, but also contribute to the treatment of diseases and reduction of fatality rate.

Collaboration and sharing of knowledge and medical experiences among front-line medical workers across the world are significant; they are not only conducive to reducing healthcare-related infections, but also contribute to the treatment of diseases and reduction of fatality rate. Chinese medical experts from Wuhan, capital of Hubei province and the epicenter of the outbreak in China, have shared their insights and experiences of treating coronavirus pneumonia patients with Chinese and foreign reporters, especially those from some of the worst-hit countries.

Raise funds to boost research on vaccines

Besides, the international community also needs to raise funds to boost the research programs of the most promising mebiotech companies, so they can develop a vaccine for novel coronavirus as soon as possible. As it is difficult to secure investment in medical R&D due to the uncertainties involved with medical research, WHO-coordinated fund raising from governments and charity organisations is the best way to help develop a vaccine.

Furthermore, since a pandemic will have a huge impact on the global economy, all countries should coordinate their economic policies to devise an overall global policy to fight the virus. And the World Bank Group should provide financial aid for countries, particularly most vulnerable developing countries, to help them to not only strengthen their healthcare services, bolster their disease-monitoring and reporting system, and train front-line health workers, but also to help small and medium-sized enterprises tide over the immediate difficulties.

Lending a hand to other countries

As of Monday, the fact that the virus had spread to more than 190 countries, infecting more than 340,000 people and killing over 14,000 reflects the inadequacy of the global public health governance system, which can be improved only with global collaboration and coordination. Having almost contained the outbreak in the country, the Chinese government has now dispatched medical teams and medical supplies to some severely affected countries, so they can help their fellow medical experts there to win the battle against the virus.

China has succeeded in largely containing the epidemic in the country, because it mobilised all its resources, and resolutely implemented comprehensive and stringent prevention and control measures, which in turn boosted global confidence in the fight against the virus.

Hence, the international community should see the coronavirus outbreak as a wake-up call and better prepare for eventualities by helping build a community with a shared future for mankind.

The author is director of the Centre for Global Governance and Law, Xiamen University of Technology. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.

Vientiane Times on CD-ROM

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Time to boost public confidence in authorities' virus measures

Editorial Desk

In the current situation of the severe and global outbreak of Covid-19, governments are working very hard to protect their citizens against this deadly virus.

According to the World Health Organisation, as of March 25, the pandemic had spread to 196 countries, 375,498 people are known to have contracted the virus, and 16,362 people have died.

In Laos, authorities confirmed the first two cases of Covid-19 infection on March 24 and found a new case on March 25. Now Laos has 3 infected patients. The government is being proactive by ramping up surveillance measures and taking numerous other steps. It has ordered the closure of schools across the country and closed border crossings with neighbouring countries, cancelled all public events, and imposed controls on people wanting to leave and enter Laos.

In addition to concerns about the epidemic itself, Lao people are worried about other impacts on their lives. These include the possibility of food shortages, and traders stockpiling goods and raising the price of items such as face masks and handwash gel, with supplies becoming irregular due to exceptionally high demand.

People are even more concerned now that the Thai government has imposed restrictions and controls after many cases of the virus were detected in Bangkok. These steps include the closure of all checkpoints and border crossings with Laos, including closing the Lao-Thai Friendship Bridge No. 1 to individuals, vehicles and goods as of March 23 until further notice.

Price tags should be used to indicate the cost of every essential consumer and food item. This should be done without exception for items such as rice, pork, beef, fish sauce, face masks, handwash gel and so on.

Vehicles transporting goods with customs permits are still permitted to pass through all international checkpoints, but drivers and their assistants must undergo health screening at border crossings.

Even though such vehicles are still permitted to cross international borders, the export of goods from Thailand to Laos may take longer than usual because of the extra steps required. These are likely to include hygiene controls and stricter health checks of drivers and their assistants, and of course we have to remember that the demand for food and consumer products will also rise sharply in Thailand. People there are also buying a lot of food and other essentials so that they have enough for their daily needs.

Laos imports almost all of its consumer goods from Thailand, China and Vietnam, which are our neighbours and main trading partners, but these countries are now suffering from Covid-19 outbreaks and their industries and manufacturers are all affected. This means that exports from these nations will become more limited because their governments will naturally want to ensure that domestic needs are met.

Therefore, the influence of the virus is threatening Laos and food shortages are a strong possibility. So it is a right time for the authorities and farmers to closely work to boost production, ensure that supply meets demand, and strengthen the country's farming sector.

We are all aware of the consequences and impacts of the new measures affecting our lives, but we must accept them and overcome our difficulties together.

To gain the public's confidence, the authorities must step in and effectively regulate product prices. The government, as well as commerce authorities, have instructed traders and businesses not to raise prices or stockpile goods. But some entrepreneurs are still ignore the notice and take this chance to raise prices of face masks, for which demand soared while supply dropped.

Now we are in an emergency situation and fighting a dangerous disease, so serious inspections and strict enforcement of laws are most important because these will raise public awareness and instil trust in authorities.

All of the measures available for regulating prices must be fully implemented. When it comes to making inspections, the authorities must do so rigorously to ensure they weed out everyone who is taking advantage of the situation.

Price tags should be used to indicate the cost of every essential consumer and food item. This should be done without exception for items such as rice, pork, beef, fish sauce, face masks, handwash gel and so on.

When this crisis has passed, the authorities can continue with these measures and ensure they don't lapse. This will improve the image of the State and people will have more faith in the authorities.

Secondly, the most effective control is needed for the posting of misinformation on social media. We are faced with a very serious situation that is affecting people in every country, including here in Laos. As we have seen, people are being subjected to misleading information because almost all the news posted on personal updates is confusing. Will we continue to allow certain groups of people to create fake news for public consumption?

So far, all the authorities have done is to try to persuade people to carefully select the information they choose to believe and to trust only online media reports from official sources. But this approach seems to be ineffective. We are faced with a dangerous threat so the authorities must use every means at their disposal to tackle the problem of fake news.

Stricter control is needed in this serious situation. We need to do as much as possible to prevent false reports and rumours. People who want to use this opportunity to post fake information, pictures and videos must be made to deeply consider their actions before putting false information online.

Every agency responsible for online news management must display its power as the country confronts this crisis. "Let's work and crack down on fake news. If related sectors act strongly, the use of online media will be appropriate, and its proper use will reflect their effective management. Authorities should not worry that people will complain about the actions they take to stop malicious voices because the law is on their side and can shut down people who issue fake news."

Readers can reach the author at chanfeature@gmail.com

Fighting COVID-19 hand-in-hand

If you are infected with the dreaded COVID-19 virus, you need to isolate yourself urgently and stringently follow the instructions of the ministry of health.

Editorial Desk

A large number of Lao people working in Thailand returned home last Monday through various Lao-Thai borders which have been closed temporarily to contain the spread of the new coronavirus. Their return shook Laos like an earthquake would.

Residents in all corners of the country were waiting with their fingers crossed for this large group of people to return from Thailand, perhaps infected with COVID-19. The residents were worried that the infection would now be passed to the locals, as Thailand, much like the rest of the world had reported several cases.

On March 24, Laos confirmed two COVID-19 positive cases in the country. However, both people are bonafide residents of Vientiane. A 36-year-old female tour guide and a 28-year-old male employee of Crowne Plaza Vientiane Hotel, who tested positive, are now being treated at Mittaphab Hospital in Vientiane.

The government has appointed an ad hoc committee to prevent the spread of the virus. It has issued guidelines to contain its spread and ways to protect the health of its people – the biggest asset of a country.

International organisations such as the World Health Organisation and Unicef are doing commendable work in association with the Lao government to avert a health crisis. A number of state organisations, particularly the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism are working hard to inform and educate the public on ways to keep the virus at bay.

All people living in the country need to pay more attention to these measures. We need to work hand-in-hand to stay healthy and keep our loved ones healthy. We are going through difficult times globally and we should take a leaf out of the countries that have successfully tackled the virus. They were together in this and cooperated with each other to fight the pandemic. We should do the same. All difficulties are temporary and this too shall pass if we stick close and cooperate.

If you learn that you are infected with the new coronavirus, you need to inform your loved ones immediately. The family member will help you get the best healthcare and will also take urgent measures to keep himself and the rest of the family safe as also the neighbourhood. Measures to self-quarantine or self-isolate should be followed strictly and this is the only way to contain the COVID-19 outbreak.

These are dark and difficult times not just in Laos but across the world. Locals as well as foreigners need to work in tandem to fight this deadly virus. We should remember that we are all sailing in the same boat and are moving towards the same destination. A little disbalance could rock the boat and we would all sink and never reach our destination.

We need to follow the instructions. These are measures taken by countries in the grip of the virus outbreak. They have successfully beat it and therein lies a lesson for the rest of us who overwhelmed by the spread of the virus.

The Chinese, for example, fought the dreaded virus hand-in-hand. They have done a good job even though they went through a deathly phase. The Chinese are a good role model for those of us dealing with COVID-19. They have saved lives and their country is limping back to normal. If they suspect they are carriers of the virus they report themselves to the authorities and make sure they are not further carriers of the virus. They self-quarantine themselves for 14 days.

A person, who self-quarantines for 14 days, should follow the instructions issued by the health authorities strictly. The Chinese did it and have beaten the virus. Lao people infected with the virus should follow suit and minimise the health damage.

What's On



Youth Khaen playing contest auditions

Interested students and young people in Vientiane including foreigners aged seven to 18 who can play the Khaen are encouraged to apply for the second audition round of a Khaen playing contest. The contest is divided into two age categories; 7 to 14 and 15 to 18 years.
When: The semi-final will be organised in October and the final in December.
Where: Lao National Television, Sivilay village, Xaythany district, Vientiane.

Job fair 2020



The European Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Laos (ECCIL), the Faculty of Engineering, and the Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LNCCI) will host a job fair to bridge the communication gap between the academic world and the business community.
When: May 8, 9 am – 4 pm
Where: Faculty of Engineering (Sokpaluang Campus)
For further information please contact: Mr Xayoudone
E-mail: xayoudone.aphyyavong@eccil.org or soupanith.lounalath@eccil.org
Tel: 021 264330

The *Vientiane Times* welcomes notices from members of the public for announcement on this page. Any events or functions open to the general public are suitable for publishing.
Contact: leukai@yahoo.com

Indonesian Master Degree Scholarship 2020

The government of the Republic of Indonesia is offering the Developing Countries Partnership Scholarship 2020 for Lao citizen. All applicants must complete the online application process through the website.
When: Online registration until 20 April 2020
Where: Apply online at https://knbscholarship.kemdikbud.go.id
For more information contact Indonesian Embassy: 020 76755866



Hip hop festival

Young people are invited to take part in a hip hop contest at the Lao hip hop festival, to put youngsters' dance talents on display. The event will also feature a rap battle, showcase contest, Bboy battle, all style battle, graffiti art showcase, and a hip hop concert.
When: March 28, starts at 2 pm
Where: World Trade Center, Vientiane

Appeal to donate face masks for health workers

People are urged to donate face masks for health workers, doctors and medical students across the country risking their lives to protect the country from Covid-19.
When and where: The initiative is open now. Masks and sanitisers can be donated to Mr Bandid Lasavong, the Men Folder brand owner, at Men Folder Fashion House. Or people can donate money for buying masks to Miss Laos 2011 Thidalat Vongsili, Account Number 090120000094627001, BCEL Bank.

Free foot-and-mouth disease treatment



Nabong Agriculture for Development in Vientiane is providing free foot-and-mouth disease treatment with traditional medicines for Vientiane's animal owners. Provincial animal owners will be provided advice on telephone.
When: Treatment will be available from March to July.
Where: For further information, please contact Mr Khonsavanh on 020 9969 2440 or 030 513 5339.



Hor Phakeo Museum



This ancient temple was first built in 1565 during the reign of King Saysethathirath to house the Emerald Buddha and was the king's personal place of worship.
When: Open daily 8am-12noon; 1pm-4pm
Where: Setthathirath Road, Chanthabouly district, Vientiane

That Luang stupa



This stupa is the most significant in Laos and is a symbol of both the Buddhist religion and a sacred place for Lao people. It was built in 1566 by King Xaysetthathirath.
Where: That Luang village, Xaysettha district, Vientiane
When: Open every day, 8:00am-12:00am; 1:00pm-4:00pm

Vat Sisaket Museum



Vat Sisaket Museum in Vientiane is famous for its cloister wall housing thousands of tiny Buddha images and rows of hundreds of seated Buddhas. These images mainly date from the 16th and 19th centuries and come in all sizes and are made from wood, stone and bronze.
When: Open daily from 8am-4pm
Where: Setthathirath Road

Buddha Park



Buddha Park (Vat Xieng Khuan) is a popular sculpture park with more than 200 statues including a huge 40-metre long reclining Buddha image.
There is a giant pumpkin structure standing about three storeys high whose entrance is crafted to look like a demon's mouth with a stone ladder inside leading to a bird's eye view of the park.
When: Open daily from 8am-6pm
Where: About 25km southeast of Vientiane city centre, by the Mekong River
Getting there: Bus or tuk-tuk

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	264 issues (1 year)	8,976,000k	+200,000k ☐	9,176,000k ☐
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6th Floor Capital Tower, 23 Singha Road, Nongbone Village,
Saysettha District, Vientiane Capital, Lao PDR
Telephone: 021 455 025
Facsimile: 021 455 025

INVITATION TO TENDER

The Xe-Pian Xe-Namnoy Power Company Limited (PNPC), owner, financier, developer and operator of the Xe-Pian Xe-Namnoy Hydropower Project in Champasack and Attapeu Provinces of The Lao PDR seeks a supplier for the following tools and equipment;

Tools/Equipment	Qty./Unit	Specifications	Brand/Manufacturer
Dewatering Submersible Pumps	2 sets	S/S 304, 230V, 257LPM, Hmax=12.8M, Automatic	DAVIES DO-75507-64
Dial Indicators	2 sets	Range=10mm, Reading: 0-100, with Magnetic Stand	STARRETT 3025-481
Last Word Dial Test Indicator	2 sets	Range=0.8mm, Reading: 0-40mm, Grad=0.01mm, with accessories and case	STARRETT 3809MAC
Outside Micrometer	2 sets	0 - 25mm, Analog	MITUTOYO 103-137
Outside Micrometer	1 set	0-100mm, Analog, Interchangeable Anvils	MITUTOYO 104-139A
Outside Micrometer	1 set	100-200mm, Analog, Interchangeable Anvils	MITUTOYO 104-140A
Inside Micrometer	1 set	50-1500mm, Tubular Inside Micrometer with Extensions	MITUTOYO 137-210
Digital Vernier Caliper	1 pc. each	0-150mm & 0-300mm, Stainless Steel, Inch/Metric, for Depth, Inside & Outside Measurements	MITUTOYO 573-734 MITUTOYO 500-193
Portable Oil Filtration Machine	1 set	Donaldson Oil Filter Cart, 220V, 50LPM, with Dirt & Water Filters	Donaldson X770793
Portable Vibration Meter	1 set	Portable Vibration Data Collector, Analyser & Balancer, SCOUT 140 Ex	Bently Nevada
Hydraulic Torque Wrench	1 set	P=700 bars with Hydraulic Pump & Hose	HYTORCK MXT
Thermocouple/RTD probe Calibration Kit	1 set	Temperature Range:55-200 °C, GE Druck Dry TC 165/TC 650 Dry Block Temperature Calibrator	General Electric Co.
Cable Marker Printer	1 set	Cable marker ID Printer + PC Connection For Heat Shrink Tubing wire marking machine lm-390a	LETATWIN Electronic Lettering Machine
Hot Air Blower	1 set	LCD + acc	Bosch GHG 660
Air Blower	1 set	620W / 3.5m³/min	Bosch GBL 620
Smoke Detector Simulator Device	1 set	Smoke Detector Testing Kit 7FT	SOLO 808
Heat Detector Simulator Device	1 set	Replacement Heat Detector Testing Head	SOLO 460
Optical Visual Fault Locator	1 set	Optical VFL 20mW VFL (ST/SC/FC)	Any Reliable Brand
Optical Light Source	1 set	Portable Light Source	YOKOGAWA AQ4280 Series
Precision Fiber Cleavers	1 set	Fujikura CT08	FUJIKURA
Kevlar Shears & Cutters	1 set	Fujikura Kit	FUJIKURA
Programming Cable for Kenwood	1 set	Kenwood NXR-700, NX-720-C, NX-200	KENWOOD
High Voltage Detector	1 set	240V to 500kV	Technology Products (TP-S9)
Power Chain Saw	1 set	Power Consumption: 61.5cc, Chain Guide Bar Length: 14" or 16"	STIHL MS1800
Binocular	1 set	1-5 Km. visible distance, Avalon 20×50 Outpost Binocular	AVALON
Video Drone Camera	1 set	3 km. flying radius	DJI Phantom 3 Professional Quadcopter 4K UHD

1. Interested and qualified business entities can submit their Tenders with the following requirements. Any entity with relatives working at the PNPC need not submit Tenders.
   a. Letter of Interest
   b. Business License/Permit
   c. Tax Identification Number
   d. Tax Certificate
2. Instructions to Suppliers and Tender Documents are available at the addresses indicated below from March 9 to April 24, 2020 only:
   a. Vientiane Head Office, 6F Capital Tower,23 Singha Rd., Nongbone Village, Xaysetha District, Lao PDR
      Tel: +8562055523597, +856(21)455025&454757, Mr. Visavanh SYSOMVANH
   b. Attapeu Branch Office
      Attapeu Province, Lao PDR
      Tel: 020-97345950, Mr. Khamphanh CHANBOUNLONG
3. All Tenders must be submitted personally by hand on 1 May 2020, 11:00am, at the above mentioned addresses. Any Tender received after the deadline will not be considered.
4. For further inquiries, please contact:
   Mr. Khamphanh Chanbounlong at khamphanhc@pnpclaos.com
   Mr. Khanthavong Nilavong at khanthavongn@pnpclaos.com

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6. **News Message Service via mobile phone (SMS)**
   Our breaking news message service in English is updated at least 5 times a day from Monday to Friday and on Sundays. Lao Telecom (LTC) customers should send 'R' to 1135 for news in English, while Telecom Lao (ETL) subscribers type 'ON' and send to 2246.
7. **Newspaper boxes**
   We now offer newspaper delivery boxes for use in homes and offices. The boxes, each of which is equipped with a lock and key, help protect your daily newspaper from the perils of inclement weather.
8. **Dictionary**
   Vientiane Times Lao-English-Lao and Lao-Lao Dictionary Software is available at our office.
   The dictionary has been compiled over years from many sources, and consists of contemporary Lao words and some older forms derived from ancient Pali and Sanskrit. The names of government agencies, trees, animals, fish and prominent locations in Laos have been added to this dictionary.

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Lao People's Democratic Republic

Peace Independence Democracy Unity Prosperity

Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
Department of Irrigation

Partnerships for Irrigation and Commercialization of Smallholder Agriculture (PICSA)

IFAD Loan No.2000003089

VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

The *Partnerships for Irrigation and Commercialisation of Smallholder Agriculture* (PICSA) is executed by the Department of Irrigation, MAF, with funding from the IFAD's 11th country allocation and Government of Lao PDR. PICSA is designed as part of a regional programme, financed by ADB/EU and BMZ/GCFA. PICSA provides added value to investments in irrigation infrastructure and catchment management by building market linkages, enhancing commercialisation and intensification of (irrigated) agriculture and supporting improved nutritional practices. The project will share with SRIWMSP a focus on fifteen irrigation schemes in 12 districts in 4 Northern provinces: Houaphan, Xieng Khouang, Luang Prabang and Xayaboury to be habilitated by SRIWMSP. The Government of Lao will use a part of IFAD's allocation to hire the technical expertise in following positions to support the PICSA implementation, as follows;

1. Chief Technical Advisor (for Lao & Regional Experts) – 1 position based in Vientiane capital.

Duration – 1 Year with possibility of extension

Experience and Qualifications

- Postgraduate qualification in some aspect of social, rural and SME. Background in rural development and / or agriculture, with more than ten years of relevant experience.
- Knowledge of financial procedures of loan funded projects/programmes and previous experience of working with IFAD-supported projects.
- Demonstrated skills in people's management and communication.
- Fluency in written and spoken English

2. Financial Management Officer (for Lao national only) – 1 position based in Vientiane capital.

Duration – 1 Year with possibility of extension

Experience and Qualifications

- At least bachelor qualification of financial and monetary management. Mover than five years' experience in leading financial management of large and complex operation
- Knowledge of financial procedures of loan funded projects/programmes and previous experience of working with IFAD-supported projects.
- Good social communication skills and experience of working effectively with local authorities and ethnic groups. And fluency in written and spoken English is essential.

3. Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Officer (for Lao national only) – 1 position based in Vientiane capital.

Duration – 1 Year with possibility of extension

Experience and Qualifications

- Five years' experience in monitoring, evaluation and knowledge management of large and complex operations.
- Experience in facilitating knowledge management with multiple stakeholders
- A team player with strong analytical facilities
- Good social communication skills and experience of working with local authorities and ethnic groups.
- Fluency in written and spoken English

4. Procurement Officer (for Lao national only) – 1 position based in Vientiane capital.

Duration – 1 Year with possibility of extension

Experience and Qualifications

- A postgraduate qualification in a relevant discipline and more than five years experiences working with loan-funded programmes and knowledge of the procurement procedures of multilateral financial institutions.
- Experience with decentralized planning, financing and development, programme planning, budgeting, procurement and monitoring.
- Good social communication skills and experience of working with local authorities and ethnic groups.
- Fluency in spoken and written English.
- Capable of living and working in a remote area.

All interested candidates should submit their application consists of the letter of interest, newest updated CV with a list of at least 3 referees from most recent employer to PICSA's National Project Director *(Ms. Bounthiene VONGKAYSONE. Email: picsa.ifad2020@gmail.com.). Tel: 856-21-264873* with CC to *Mr. Khansawanh Sisopha, National Project Coordinator. Email: khansawanh@gmail.com. Tel no: 856-21-264873,* no later than 3 April 2020. Only shortlisted candidates will be contacted for interview.

For more information, please contact Project Management Office at the Department of Irrigation (4th Floor):
Chao-Anou Road, Chanthabouly District, Vientiane, Capital, Lao PDR
Tel: 856-21-264873. *Email address: picsa.ifad2020@gmail.com*



Sports

Messi, Guardiola donate one million euros each to coronavirus battle

SPAIN (Xinhua) -- Barcelona forward Lionel Messi and Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola have each donated one million euros (US$1.08 million) towards the fight against coronavirus.

Argentina international Messi's donation will be split between Hospital Clinic in Barcelona and another medical centre in his home country, according to a report in Marca.

"Leo Messi made a donation to the clinic to fight the coronavirus," Hospital Clinic wrote on Twitter. "Thank you very much, Leo, for your commitment and your support."

Former Barcelona player and manager Guardiola made his contribution to a campaign launched by the Angel Soler Daniel Foundation and Medical College of Barcelona.

"Pep Guardiola has made a donation of one million euros to the Angel Soler Daniel Foundation for the acquisition and supply of health equipment to deal with the Covid-19 pandemic," said a statement from the College.

"The donation campaign promoted by the Medical College of Barcelona and managed through the Angel Soler Daniel Foundation aims to collect medical materials and financial contributions from collegiate doctors and the general population, for the purchase of medical equipment and equipment that is currently lacking in health centres in Catalonia.

"It will also help finance the alternative production, through 3D printing and other methods, of respirators and personal protection equipment for healthcare staff."

Before Guardiola made his donation, the campaign had raised 33,000 euros in three days.

Spain is the country worst affected by the disease in Europe outside of Italy, with 2,696 deaths and almost 40,000 positive cases.





RCD Espanyol's Wu Lei (*left*) dribbles during a Spanish league match against Athletico Madrid in Barcelona, Spain. *--Photo Xinhua*

Chinese footballer Wu Lei feels good despite testing positive for COVID-19 in Spain

BEIJING (Xinhua) -- Chinese international footballer Wu Lei said he feels good in isolation at home and currently has close to no symptoms after the 28-year-old strike tested positive for COVID-19 in Spain.

"As you know, I have been infected with COVID-19 and I am now isolating myself at home. I am in good spirits as all the symptoms have virtually disappeared," Wu said in a video released on his social media on Saturday, hours after the Chinese Football Association confirmed his positive test result.

"I have conducted a series of tests including a CT on my lungs, and the results are all good," the leading figure in Chinese football added, urging that everyone should pay attention to the ongoing global pandemic. "We must wash our hands and go out less. I believe we will beat the virus and I can't wait to return to the pitch."

Wu, who plays for La Liga outfit Espanyol, is the only Chinese player playing in one of the top five football leagues in Europe, and he became the first Chinese professional footballer tested positive for COVID-19.

Espanyol confirmed on Wednesday that six members of the club's staff have tested positive for the coronavirus, but didn't reveal the names of the players who have been infected. Wu's test result was eventually published on Saturday and has immediately become one of the top searches on China's twitter-like platform Weibo.

The CFA said on Saturday that Wu is now receiving medical treatment with mild symptoms, and the CFA will keep close contact with Wu and Espanyol to provide any necessary help.











