LAO PRESS IN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Vientiane Times

65 years
22.3.1955 - 22.3.2020

The First National English Language Newspaper

TUESDAY MARCH 24, 2020 ISSUE 59

www.vientianetimes.org.la and *www.vientianetimeslao.la*

4500 kip

Inside



Govt urged to assist provincial businesses amid tourism slump [*Page 3*]



Chinese mainland reports zero increase in indigenous COVID-19 cases [*Page 5*]

Young men urged to join Mister Supranational Laos 2020 open [*Page 8*]

Ministry to advance human resources for national development [*Page 12*]

PM inspects facilities prepared for virus patients

Times Reporters



Prime Minister Thongloun Sisoulith inspects one of the facilities in Vientiane. Photo Lao News Agency.

Prime Minister Thongloun Sisoulith and authorities yesterday visited facilities prepared for coronavirus (COVID-19) patients, despite there being no confirmed case in Laos.

The premier visited and inspected first-hand the Vientiane Academy for Politics and Management in Nongbuathong village, Chanthabouly district, Vientiane.

He also inspected a state-run training complex in Dongxiengdy village as well as the National Stadium at KM 16 in Xaythany district.

The monitoring of the facilities by the PM came as concerns rise about possible infections or even an outbreak as many Lao workers in neighbouring Thailand – where hundreds of people were reportedly infected with the virus - head home.

Like many countries, Thai authorities ordered a temporary shutdown of some businesses and workplaces leaving many Lao labourers jobless, hence the journey home.

It is also believed that many Lao nationals are coming home for the upcoming Lao New Year, scheduled for the middle of next month.

There are concerns that some workers could carry the virus from the neighbouring country that is struggling to control the outbreak there.

The number of those infected with COVID-19 could soon escalate to thousands in Thailand if people don't strictly follow

Continued page 3

European nations strive to combat COVID-19 with raft of further measures as Merkel put in quarantine

BRUSSELS (Xinhua) -- With surging confirmed COVID-19 cases, European nations adopted a raft of further measures on Sunday to peg back the contagion, as German Chancellor Angela Merkel has put herself in quarantine after a doctor she met Friday tested positive.

Italy, which has been hit hardest by the epidemic in Europe, saw no abating sign in the spread of the novel coronavirus on Sunday. The sum of infections, deaths and recoveries now stands at 59,138, up from 53,578 of Saturday, according to the Health Ministry. The authorities also confirmed that 12 Civil Protection staff members have tested positive.

Meanwhile, France has

Continued page 5

Lao folk rush home from Thailand to avoid border closures

Khonesavanh Latsaphao

Thousands of Lao people, mostly workers, have hastily returned home across Thai-Lao borders before their temporary closing to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

According to the Royal Thai Embassy in Vientiane, it informed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Laos, by order of the Ministry of Interior of the Kingdom of Thailand, that the respective border provinces were temporarily closing their borders starting on March 23.

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

Sunday and Monday particularly saw large numbers

Continued page 4



Minister Mr Khampheng Saysomepheng (*front, centre*) inspects efforts to repatriate workers.





Korea supports inclusive business solutions for Lao youth

Times Reporters

Laos and the Republic of Korea are partnering to support Lao youngsters through the Inclusive Business Solution programme.

The People's Revolutionary Youth Union of Laos and Solutek System, an ICT company of the Republic of Korea, recently signed a memorandum of understanding on the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) and Inclusive Business Solution (IBS) scheme named "Laos Youth Union IT Center Sustainable Operation and Employment Support Programmes".

The IBS programme is one of the development innovation programmes run by KOICA, which collaborates with a corporation to raise funds and create strategies for ODA projects to contribute to the economically, socially and environmentally sustainable development of developing countries.

This programme costing more than US$1.3 million will be implemented during 2020-22 to increase the number of adolescents and adults with high-quality skills through IT centre education.

The programme will provide more opportunities for creating jobs in related fields after training at the IT centre, and it will also provide information accessibility at all levels. The programme, which reflects Korean expertise and experience, will lead to improved IT-related literacy for youngsters in Laos and improved IT expertise for existing employees.

This is expected to improve overall IT knowledge and opportunities to access information for existing employees, as well as opportunities for start-ups and employment that will eventually reduce the unemployment rate.

The Chief of the cabinet office of the Youth Union, Mr Nouanthong Souvanvixay, said the Lao government emphasizes ICT as part of the practical education for youngsters.

"This programme's performance could be linked to the achievement of the current government's core policies for reforming the ICT curriculum.

The programme will make efforts to help the IT Center of the Lao Youth Union to function as a top vocational education facility that trains IT instructors or to support those looking for jobs," Mr Nouanthong said. In addition, it will provide training in IT skills to students who wish to join higher education institutions in order to make important contributions to the advancement of IT manpower.

In the past, KOICA provided support worth US$3 million to the "Project for the Capacity Building of the IT Center" of the Lao Youth Union during 2016-19.

This project's main objectives were to promote the rate of entry of local youth into higher education and employment by strengthening the educational capacity of IT trainers, and supporting the construction of the IT Center of the Lao Youth Union and a studio room for multimedia contents. Through the success of the previous project, KOICA continues to support this IBS programme to build the capacity of the ICT sector in Laos.



A school building damaged by strong winds from a storm that hit Phonhong and Viengkham districts, Vientiane province on the weekend. *--Photo Sompasong*

Vientiane province storm wreaks havoc, 200 homes damaged

Phomphong Laoin

Around 200 houses in two districts of Vientiane province were damaged by a storm that lashed the area on the weekend, bringing lightning, rain, hail and strong winds.

The storm swept across Phonhong and Viengkham districts on Saturday evening, according to local authorities. District Governor of Phonhong district, Mr Sompasong Souvongkhamchanh told *Vientiane Times* on Monday, that the storm passed through many villages in the area on Saturday evening, especially the villages of Aekxang, Phonthan, Napho, Phonhong, Nathong, Phonsavath, and Nongsavang.

"According to initial inspections, about 100-200 houses and over 10 schools in Phonhong suffered severe damage. Roofs were torn off, and other structures were blown to the ground," he said. "Authorities are now assessing the damage and surveying the damage in their communities," he said. On this occasion, there were no reports of injury.

District Governor of Viengkham district, Mr Phonkeo Khounphon said many villages in the area were also affected by the large storm and authorities were now surveying the damage.

According to the daily weather report from the Meteorology and Hydrology Department under the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment yesterday, many regions are forecast to receive light rain until today, especially the provinces of Phongsaly, Huaphan, Vientiane, Borikhamxay, Khammuan, Savannakhet, Xaysomboun, Champassak and Saravan.

Authorities advise everyone to prepare for sudden changes in the weather with the advent of the hot season. The sector warned the public to monitor local news stations for weather updates.

Indonesia Embassy continues Bahasa promotion to Lao people

Times Reporters

Indonesia Embassy to Laos is continuing to encourage Lao people to learn both Bahasa language and the fellow Asean country's culture through an official course which opened on Friday.

The 11th batch of the Indonesian Language Course was launched at the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia in Vientiane with classes during the COVID-19 situation being conducted via online video.

The Embassy received 114 participants this year, including government officials, employees, members of the military, secondary-level students, and university students.

The opening ceremony was attended by a limited number of representatives from the course and participants due to the COVID-19 circumstances.

In his remarks, Indonesian Ambassador to the Lao PDR, Dr Pratito Soeharyo explained that language was one of the essential elements for the enhancement of bilateral relations between Indonesia and Laos.

"The implementation of the Indonesian Language course will be able to provide knowledge to the Lao community on the richness of Indonesia's culture and language," he said.

Dr Soeharyo profoundly hoped that participants of the course would continue to explore Bahasa Indonesia and be a part of Friends of Indonesia.

The Embassy was able to engage with participants and alumni as a form of communication and good friendship between the people of both countries, by inviting them to various Embassy's events, he added.

The number of participants in the Indonesian Language Course in Vientiane is expected to grow in future with increased demand.

The Indonesian Language Course has been conducted since 2010. This year, the course will be held for seven months during April to October and will consist of 2 (two) levels, a basic level and an advanced level, with six classes from Monday until Friday.



Representatives of the course and participants at the Indonesia Embassy.

Lao Press in Foreign Languages

Vientiane Times

Tel: (856-21) 336042, Fax: (856-21) 336041
P.O.Box: 5723; Postal Code: 01000
www.vientianetimes.la; info@vientianetimes.la

Supervisor:
Savankhone Razmountry
Tel: 021 336042
info@vientianetimes.la

Editor-in-Chief:
Thonglor Duangsavanh

Deputy Editor-in-Chief:
Phonekeo Vorakhoun
Tel: 021 336042
vorakhoun@gmail.com

Deputy Editor-in-Chief:
Phon Thikeo
Tel: 55624351, 021 336042
phonethikeo28@yahoo.com

Features Editor:
Panyasith Thammavongsa
Tel: 020 54046644,
021 336047, Fax: 021 336046
panyasith155@gmail.com

News Editor:
Sisay Vilaysack
Tel: 55615716, 021-336045,
Fax: 336046
sisay69@gmail.com

Business Editor:
Manichanh Pansivongxay
Tel: 020 55607017, 021
336047, Fax: 021 336046
chanfeature@hotmail.com

Graphic Designer/IT:
Malaythong Phayanouvong
Tel: 021 336048, 020 55729209

Copy Sub-editor:
Elizabeth Winch

Finance Manager:
Somphone Vongsa
Tel: 336040, 020 55647291

Marketing Manager:
Phoutthasack Inthakoummane
Tel: 021 336042,
Fax: 336041
Mobile: 020 55599209
sale.adv@gmail.com

If you have a problem accessing the website, please call directly to
Tel: +856-21 336041;
020 22235266,
Email: info@vientianetimes.la

Vientiane Times Facebook page is available now. Use any QR code scanners to scan it and it will take you directly to

Free testing for medically screened COVID-19 cases

Phetphoxay Sengpaseuth

The public, including foreign nationals in the country, suspected by medical personnel of carrying COVID-19 will be tested free of charge, according to a leading health official.

The information was relayed by Director-General of the Department of Communicable Disease Control, Dr Rattanaxay Phetsouvanh when addressing a press conference on Friday while reiterating there were no confirmed cases of coronavirus in Laos.

If a doctor determines a patient has symptoms matching COVID-19 or travel history to at risk locations, then they can be referred to receive testing free of charge. Individuals insisting on being tested without an official referral from a doctor will have to pay.



Dr Rattanaxay Phetsouvanh.

"Testing is needed to stem the spread of the disease. Health officials will test only people suspected of carrying the virus. We don't have enough budget for testing for all," Dr Rattanaxay said.

COVID-19 symptoms included fever, cough, sore throat or respiratory problems. If you have any flu-like symptoms after travelling to an outbreak area, testing was needed, he added.

The Ministry of Health has set up COVID-19 coordination units at hospitals nationwide to help monitor and prevent the spread of the virus.

People typically develop symptoms within 14 days after exposure to the virus. The risk of infection can be lowered by avoiding close contact with anyone with a fever, cough, sore throat or respiratory problems; covering one's mouth when coughing, washing one's hands with soap and using hand gel, and avoiding contact with live or dead farm or wild animals, according to the ministry.

Borikhamxay seizes over 200,000 amphetamine pills, 60 kg of ice

Times Reporters

A group of suspected drug traffickers was arrested by Borikhamxay provincial police last week, with officers confiscating over 200,000 amphetamine pills and 60 kg of methamphetamine from two pick-up trucks.

The police officer in charge of drug control and supervision at the Public Security Office of Borikhamxay province, who asked not to be named, told Vientiane Times on Friday that Lao police partnered with their Vietnam counterparts to share intelligence.

Their investigations ascertained that a large number of illegal drugs was being transported through Borikhamxay to Vietnam, so they set up a roadblock Namngiep village, Pakxan district to stop and search two suspected pick-up trucks.

Police checked inside the two vehicles and found 240,000 amphetamine pills weighing 29kg and 60 packages of crystal methamphetamine weighing 60 kg, which they took to the drug control and supervision office in Borikhamxay province.

Police detained four suspects (two men and two women) for questioning. According to initial investigations, the four accused admitted they were delivering the drugs to customers at the Vietnam border.

Officers are continuing their investigations to identify other individuals involved in the drug ring. Borikhamxay Police said this was their largest drug seizure so far this year with the province a known transit route to Vietnam for drug dealers and other smugglers.

Police across the country have been cracking down on drug trafficking and confiscating many types of drugs. The drug problem has been expanding in urban and rural areas of Laos, with many youngsters becoming drug users, leading to social ills and crimes, including robbery and even murder.

Laos is closely involved in regional and international collaboration to combat drugs and tackle challenges. The government is strengthening international cooperation to clamp down on drug trafficking and abuse.

Laos has signed bilateral agreements on cooperation against the trafficking of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances and precursor chemical control with several countries, such as China, Cuba, India, Russia and the US, as well as the UN Office on Drugs and Crime.



The massive haul of amphetamines and crystal methamphetamine confiscated in Borikhamxay province last week. *--Photo Borikhamxay Police News*



Ngoy district in Luang Prabang province is quiet as tourist numbers dwindle. *--Photo Patithin*

Govt urged to assist provincial businesses amid tourism slump

Times Reporters

Businesses in several provinces have requested the government reduce and postpone tax payments and for banks to reduce loan instalments following the devastating effect of the global COVID-19 pandemic on Lao tourism operators.

Deputy Director of Luang Prabang Information, Culture and Tourism Department, Dr Soudaphone Khomthavong told *Vientiane Times* that government officials and the local business sector met last week to discuss the effects of COVID-19 on the province's tourism industry.

Businesses proposed for the government to reduce taxes to help them ride out the current situation, she said.

"Accommodation providers have reported many cancellations for individual rooms as well as by tour operators because of the COVID-19 outbreak. In the circumstances, accommodation houses have been forced not to refund deposits to tour operators," she explained.

Vangvieng district, Vientiane province held a similar meeting between the government and private sectors to share ideas to assist business.

"Apart from tax relief, local businesses urged the government to ask banks to reduce interest payments in these tough times," Vangvieng district governor, Mr Bounchan Malavong said.

"Vangvieng district has seen a dramatic decrease in tourism, especially from tour operators. Currently, there are just a few domestic visitors and officials holding workshops in the district," he explained.

In Vientiane, the Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism held a meeting last week to discuss the effects of the coronavirus outbreak on the travel industry and measures to remedy the situation quickly. But details of the talks as well remedial actions suggested are yet to be released.

Many countries have instructed their citizens not to travel, in a bid to prevent the spread of the virus, causing visitor numbers to slump even though Laos has no confirmed cases to date.

Lao authorities previously told tour operators to cease organising package tours to countries where an outbreak had been reported until the virus is under control.

PM inspects facilities prepared ... FROM PAGE 1

the social-distancing measures, Thailand's *The Nation* reported yesterday.

Thailand, home to a huge number of Lao workers, is already in the "golden period" of infections since the country now has 721 cases.

Although there is no confirmed case of infection in Laos so far, local health authorities said they were prepared to handle infections or an outbreak should it occur.

Health officials and medical staff have been trained and facilities prepared in this regard, including those visited by the PM yesterday.

Facilities are also prepared for suspected cases.

In Vientiane, four hospitals – Mittaphab Hospital, Mahosot Hospital, Setthethirath Hospital and 103 Hospital have been designated for the isolation of suspected cases.

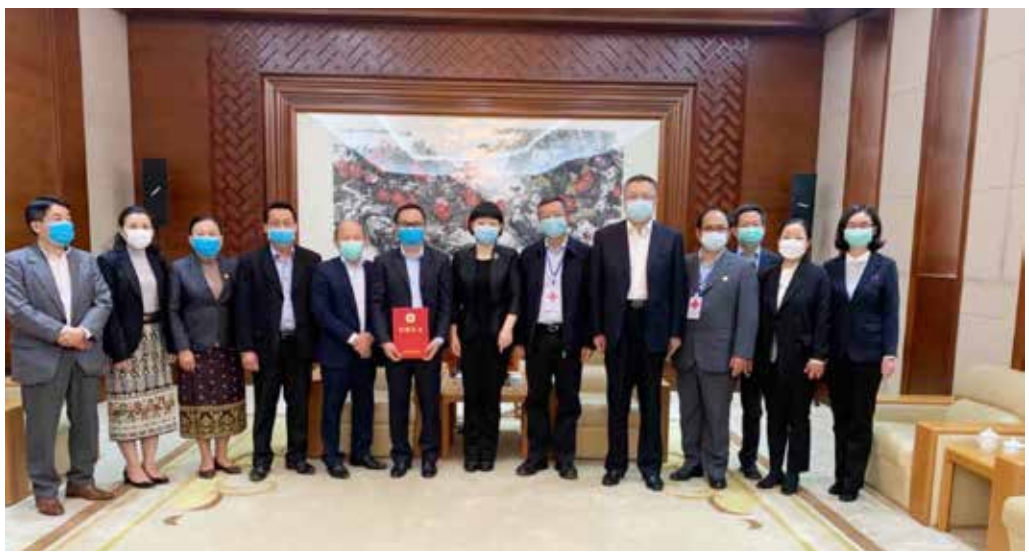
In the provinces, suspected patients will be isolated at provincial hospitals.

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.
The German News Agency of Deutsche Presse-Agentur, as one of the leading international agencies and ANN's exclusive partner, distributes news and features, background stories and commentaries from ANN to subscribers worldwide.
The ANN memembers consist of The Nation (Thailand), The Straits Times (Singapore), The Star (Malaysia), The Jakarta Post (Indonesia), Philippine Daily Inquirer (Philippines), Vietnam News (Vietnam), Rasmei Kampuchea (Cambodia), The Brunei Times (Brunei), Vientiane Times (Laos), Sin Chew Daily (Malaysia) and the Eleven Media (Myanmar), China Daily (China and Hong Kong), The Japan News (Japan), The Korea Herald (South Korea), The China Post (Taiwan), The Statesman (India), The Daily Star (Bangladesh), Dawn (Pakistan), The Island (Sri Lanka), The Kathmandu Post (Nepal) and Kuensel (Bhutan).



A director of the CEGGA Programme hands over IT equipment to a representative of the Lao National Assembly International Cooperation Committee at the assembly on Wednesday. The IT equipment will be sent to 18 People's Provincial Assemblies to be used in development work. Attending the ceremony were H.E. Jens Luetkenherm, German Ambassador to the Lao PDR and a representative from the Ministry of Home Affairs.



Representatives from the Consulate General of Laos in Kunming China hand over 28,000 CNY (36.4 million kip) to COVID-19 victims at the Foreign Affairs Office in Yunnan province last Thursday. The generous act aimed to promote unity between Laos and China.

Lao folk rush home from Thailand... FROM PAGE 1

of Lao people returning from Thailand with the highest estimates in the thousands.

Most queuing to cross the border are workers in Thailand who are rushing back home because their employers have temporarily stopped work.

Minister of Labour and Social Welfares, Mr Khampheng Saysomepheng visited the First Lao-Thai Friendship Bridge to inspect the work of officials facilitating the safe return of local labourers.

He also visited the temporary reception area for workers close to the Laos-Thai border, before they are sent to their hometowns after ID and health checks.

I their hometowns, village officials will supervise their 14-days of quarantine to ensure they are not infected with COVID-19.

The returnees are travelling via the first Lao-Thai Friendship Bridge (Vientiane, Laos - Nong Khai province, Thailand), second Lao-Thai Friendship Bridge (Savannakhet province, Laos-Mukdahan province, Thailand), third Lao-Thai Friendship Bridge (Khammuan province, Laos-Nakhon Phanom province), Vangtao-Chong Mek international border checkpoint in Champassak province and Nam Heuang-Nakaxeng International border between Xayaboury province of Laos and Loei province of Thailand.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, up to 5,000 people per day passed through the first Lao-Thai Friendship Bridge international checkpoint.

The coronavirus was first discovered in Wuhan, Hubei province in China, and is now spreading around the world. So far, no official virus cases have been reported in Laos.

News agencies from Thailand reported on Sunday there were nearly 600 coronavirus infections with boxing stadiums and social activities among young people in Bangkok cited as sources of contagion.

The WHO reported on Sunday there were 267,013 confirmed cases, with 11,201 deaths, in 184 countries and regions.

Online advertisement

Advertising your products at www.vientianetimes.org.la will bring benefits to your company. Customers around the world will appreciate the quality of your products via the Vientiane Times website. For more information please contact: Tel: 336042, 336048

Fax: 336041, Email: itvtimes@gmail.com

Excerpts from the Lao Media

Champassak police apprehend four drugs dealers

Translated by Souksamai Boulom

Champassak provincial police recently arrested four alleged drugs dealers and confiscated over 10,000 amphetamine pills, a mobile phone, and motorbike in their possession.

The alleged dealers are all from Khongxedon district of Saravan province; namely Mr Phoukhaoka, 32, and Mr Somxai, 29 both of Nathing village, Mr Khiew, 22 of Kaengkhon village, and Mr Ki, 50 of Kaenghuad village.

The dealers confessed they had been involved in the drug trade for quite some time. The four had arranged a rendezvous to share up the drugs when police arrested them.

On the same day, Champassak provincial police also arrested two suspected drug dealers in Nafang village of Khong district and confiscated over 1,000 amphetamine pills.

--*Khuamsangob*, March 20

UXO detonation kills three in Savannakhet

Three residents from Nong district of Savannakhet province were killed, and another injured from an unexploded ordnance (UXO) incident while they were foraging for wild foods and the forest.

The victims were named as Mr Xingboun, 28 and Mr Athouk, 30, both of Pateoyyai village, and Mr Bounkerd, 25, of Akai village, all of Nong district.

A local resident said that UXO accidents happen every year in the province. Many people were killed or severely injured while they were planting their crops in their field or searching for food in the forest.

--*Socio-Economic News,* March 20



Unexploded ordnance found in Laos. ***--Photo UXO Lao***

Xayaboury watermelon growers tasting success

Authorities in Hongsa district of Xayaboury are encouraging farmers to grow watermelons commercially to sell at markets.

There are two main watermelon growers' projects in the district which include over 350 sites, covering over 160 hectares.

The projects are backed by two companies which have five-year concession contracts which began at the end of 2019. The harvest will be sold in the province as well as exported to neighbouring countries.

--*Socio-Economic News,* March 20

Watermelon is a popular fruit among Lao people.



Customers enjoy hotpot at a restaurant in Chengdu, southwest China's Sichuan Province.

Chinese mainland reports zero increase in indigenous COVID-19 cases

BEIJING (Xinhua) -- No new domestically transmitted cases of the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) were reported on the Chinese mainland on Sunday, the Chinese health authority said Monday.

The National Health Commission received reports of 39 new confirmed COVID-19 cases on the Chinese mainland Sunday, all of which were imported.

Of them, 10 were reported in Beijing and Shanghai respectively, and six in the provinces of Fujian and Guangdong respectively. The provinces of Shandong and Gansu both reported two cases and the provinces of Zhejiang and Henan, and Chongqing Municipality each reported one. By the end of Sunday, 353 imported cases had been reported, said the commission.

Also on Sunday, nine deaths and 47 new suspected cases were reported on the mainland with all of the deaths reported in Hubei Province.

On Sunday, 459 people were discharged from the hospital after recovery, while the number of severe cases decreased by 96 to 1,749.

The overall confirmed cases on the mainland had reached 81,093 by the end of Sunday, including 5,120 patients who were still being treated, 72,703 patients who had been discharged after recovery, and 3,270 people who died of the disease.

The commission said that 136 people were still suspected of being infected with the virus.

The commission added that 10,701 close contacts were still under medical observation. On Sunday, 661 people were discharged from medical observation.

By the end of Sunday, 317 confirmed cases including four deaths had been reported in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR), 21 confirmed cases in the Macao SAR, and 169 in Taiwan including two deaths.

Hot day and thundershowers forecast for upper Thailand

THAILAND (The Nation) -- The Thailand Meteorological Department forecast on Saturday (March 20) that a thermal low covers upper Thailand, causing hot weather during the day.

The westerly trough covers the upper North and Northeast and the southerly and the southeasterly winds bring humidity from the South China Sea to the Northeast, the East, the Central and the lower North regions.

Summer storms are forecast with gusty winds and lightning in some parts of the upper country while hail is also possible in the Northeast.

People should beware of the severe weather by keeping off unsecured buildings and outdoor installations. Farmers should prevent crop damage.

The weather forecast for the next 24 hours is as follows:

Northern region: Hot to very hot with thundershowers in 10 per cent of the areas; temperature lows of 18-26 degrees and highs of 36-40 degrees Celsius.

Northeastern region: Hot with thundershowers in 10 per cent of the areas along with gusty winds and hail; temperature lows of 22-25 degrees and highs of 35-38 degrees Celsius. Central region: Hot during the day with thundershowers in 10 per cent of the areas; temperature lows of 24-27 degrees, highs of 36-40 degrees Celsius.

Eastern region: Hot with thundershowers in 10 per cent of the areas along with gusty winds; temperature lows of 24-27 degrees, highs of 33-37 degrees Celsius; waves a metre high. Southern region (east coast): Partly cloudy with thundershowers in 10 per cent of the areas; temperature lows of 21-27 degrees, highs of 32-36 degrees Celsius; waves a metre high.

Southern region (west coast): Partly cloudy with thundershowers in 10 per cent of the areas; temperature lows of 22-26 degrees, highs of 34-38 degree Celsius; waves a metre high and more than a metre offshore.

Bangkok and surrounding areas: Hot during the day with thundershowers in 10 per cent of the areas; temperature lows of 26-27 degrees, highs of 35-38 degrees Celsius.

Officials examine timber company for irregularities

CAMBODIA (the Phnom Penh Post) -- After winning the rights to transfer large shipments of timber from Mondulkiri province to the rest of Cambodia, Try Pheap Import Export Co Ltd is being examined by 10 officials to ensure there are no irregularities in its operation, Mondulkiri provincial forestry administration director Um Van Sopheak said.

The company had won timber auctions from the ministries of Environment, and Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries in September last year.

He said the company sent seven trucks from Mondulkiri province to depots in Phnom Penh, Kampot, Prey Veng, Preah Vihear and Tbong Khmum last week, and only three or four more trucks remained.

European nations strive... FROM PAGE 1

seen its first coronavirus death of health staff. A doctor from Compiegne hospital in l'Oise, one of the worst affected regions in the country, died of infection on Saturday, said Director General of Health Jerome Salomon. France has confirmed 16,018 coronavirus infection cases, 35 percent of whom are aged under 65.

In Spain, the number of confirmed cases rose to 28,572 on Sunday, and 1,720 people have lost their lives to the disease. The Czech Republic, North Macedonia and Romania recorded their first deaths from the COVID-19 on the same day.

Also on Sunday, German Chancellor Angela Merkel decided to immediately quarantine herself at home and take tests over the next few days after she was informed that the doctor who gave her a pneumococcal vaccination was diagnosed with COVID-19.

"The Chancellor will also conduct her official affairs from home quarantine," said government spokesman Steffen Seibert. According to Deutsche Presse Agentur, Germany reported more than 24,100 COVID-19 cases with 90 deaths by Sunday.

Before being informed of the confirmed case, Merkel told a press conference that Germany will prohibit public gatherings of more than two, but relatives who live in their own household are exempt from the ban.

German citizens are advised to reduce contacts with other people outside their own household to the least, and a minimum distance of 1.5 meters must be kept, preferably two meters.

Celebration gatherings in public places, at home and in private institutions are unacceptable, considering the current serious situation, Merkel said, adding that violations of the contact restriction will be sanctioned.

The restriction measures will be in effect for at least two weeks, showing "care for the elderly and ill people, " "in brief, save lives, " Merkel said. In Spain, Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez said on Sunday that his government was seeking to extend the current state of emergency, which was declared on March 14, for another 15 days after the end of the initial period.

In Greece, Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis announced in an address broadcast live on public broadcaster ERT a nationwide lockdown as part of measures to contain the further spread of the novel coronavirus.

The measure takes effect from Monday 6:00 a.m. local time, he said. All unnecessary movement of people is prohibited.

"It must be taken on time, so it is not taken in vain... We need bold and timely initiatives," Mitsotakis stated.

In Denmark, the authorities have acknowledged that the exact number of infections may be much higher in society since only those with clear symptoms have been tested. The Health Ministry announced an expansion of its COVID-19 testing strategy.

"We are working hard to increase test capacity with both private and public parties, and I want to work with the regions to execute this offensive testing strategy across the country," said Minister for Health and Elderly Affairs Magnus Heunicke in a press release.



Policemen check a motorcyclist in Rome, Italy.

Serbian Prime Minister Ana Brnabic said on Sunday that Chinese medical experts are "the most valuable resource in the fight against the spread of the coronavirus infection."

Brnabic made the remark while meeting with the six Chinese medical experts along with Minister of Health Zlatibor Loncar and Chinese Ambassador to Serbia Chen Bo. Noting that the novel coronavirus is still under-explored, Brnabic said Serbia put its biggest hopes in the Chinese expertise.

"The People's Republic of China is a country that has remarkably confronted the COVID-19 virus and we are extremely happy to have you here with us.

There are currently no people in the world who know more about this infectious disease and whose experiences would be more useful to us who are currently fighting the battle with the coronavirus. Thank you very much once again for being with us," said Brnabic, according to a release from the government's press office.

Meanwhile in Cyprus, Chinese Ambassador to the country Huang Xingyuan said a batch of medical supplies is en route to Cyprus from China.

"We are keeping close track of the first dispatch of med supplies already on their way from China to Cyprus. May they arrive in time to aid Cyprus' combat against COVID-19 at this critical point," the ambassador tweeted.

In brief from Asia News Network

MCO to be extended? PM says NSC to decide

PUTRAJAYA (The Star) -- The National Security Council will meet before the movement control order (MCO) ends to decide if the two weeks enforcement period is sufficient, or need to be extended, says Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin. The Prime Minister said the authorities need to gauge the situation throughout the MCO period, before a decision was made. "If there are improvements as a result of the action undertaken by the Health Ministry, as well as cooperation from all, including participants of the tabligh gathering who have yet to be tested, then this show that the MCO is working.

Trump approves Major Disaster Declaration for California over COVID-19

LOS ANGELES (Xinhua) -- US. President Donald Trump has approved California's request for a presidential Major Disaster Declaration to bolster the most populous US state's COVID-19 emergency response efforts, California Governor Gavin Newsom said Sunday.

The announcement came hours after Newsom sent a letter to Trump to request the action in response to the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Earlier today we requested a presidential Major Disaster Declaration and this afternoon we got it," said Newsom in a statement. "The declaration will supplement our state's comprehensive COVID-19 surge planning and make vital resources available."

"We appreciate the quick response and partnership from the White House," he added.

The governor noted in his letter that "unfortunately, California has been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19."

"Besides California being home to nearly 40 million people, which itself poses significant logistical issues few other states face, California partnered with the federal government in several extremely complex and challenging repatriation missions, which strained California's resources and impacted California's healthcare delivery system," Newsom wrote in the letter, adding that COVID-19 is rapidly spreading in the state day by day.

"The crisis is having wide-ranging impacts on families, communities, and in every sector of California public and private life," he explained. The Major Disaster Declaration enables individual assistance programmes to assist those affected by the outbreak and lessen its economic impacts, according to a statement of Newsom's office.



A bus driver wearing a face mask is seen in Los Angeles, California, the United States.

It allows for additional assistance, including but not limited to mass care and emergency assistance, crisis counseling, disaster case management, disaster unemployment assistance, disaster legal services and the Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Programme. Newsom issued a Stay-at-Home order last week, asking all Californians to stay at home unless it is absolutely necessary to head out.

Ministry seizes counterfeit alcohol

CAMBODIA (The Phnom Penh Post) -- Anti-Economic Crime Department officials at the Ministry of Interior announced the seizure of around 4,000 litres of fake alcohol, which was imported and due to be sold illegally in the Kingdom.

The department's deputy director Long Sreng said on Sunday that on Saturday, Boueng Keng Kang district police officers, in collaboration with his department, Phnom Penh Municipal Court deputy prosecutor Say Nora and Ministry of Health Drug Control Agency officer Touch Phalla, raided a location storing and distributing methanol in the district's Tuol Svay Prey I commune, in the capital.

House owner, Lim Huy, 61, was made to sign a contract agreeing to stop the import and distribution of fake alcohol.

The methanol, which is not suitable for hand washing and will not protect against Covid-19, was seized and is now being kept at the Ministry of Industry and Handicraft's Institute of Standards of Cambodia.

Sreng said the seized items included 19 yellow buckets of methanol weighing 163kg each, 75 jerry cans and pumping equipment.

"After the raid, the owner was required to sign a contract agreeing to stop importing and distributing fake alcohol. The seized products were handed over to the Institute of Standards of Cambodia.

"We are continuing to carry out raids and crackdown on counterfeit products. I will not reveal any identities yet, but we have a further three raids planned next week," he said.

Boueng Keng Kang district police Chief Lim Piseth said on Sunday that the owner had attempted to import the alcohol in secret, knowing it was illegal.

Sreng said: "If the product is made of methanol when we dip cotton wool in it and burn it, the flames will be invisible to us. However, when we do the same with ethanol, the flame is yellow.

"Another way to assess the content is when we wash hands with methanol, our hands dry in a few minutes. However with ethanol, it will take longer and the user will identify a slippery substance when applied," he said.

On March 18, officials from the Cambodia Import-Export Inspection and Fraud Repression Directorate-General (CamControl) said they were continuing to inspect pharmacies around the Olympic Market area.

They said that the operation has resulted in many litres of fake alcohol being seized while on sale.

Camcontrol called on the people not to buy any alcohol products without the correct trademarks and ethanol content, as it could mean the product does not protect against Covid-19.


CamControl officials crack down on fake alcohol in Toul Svay Prey I Commune in the capital's Boeung Kengkong district.

Italian doctors saw strange pneumonia cases before China's COVID-19 outbreak, report says

WASHINGTON (Xinhua) -- Italian general practitioners remember seeing strange pneumonia cases as early as November, which could mean the virus was circulating in parts of Italy before doctors became aware of China's COVID-19 outbreak, a US radio outlet reported, citing a paper on Italy's coronavirus crisis.

The report published Thursday by U.S. media outlet National Public Radio (NPR) cited Giuseppe Remuzzi, co-author of a recent paper in The Lancet about Italy's epidemic.

According to the report, some question why Italy was caught off guard when the virus outbreak was revealed on Feb. 21. Remuzzi said he is hearing information about it from general practitioners.

"They remember having seen very strange pneumonia, very severe, particularly in old people in December and even November," the report quoted Remuzzi as saying. "This means that the virus was circulating, at least in (the northern region of) Lombardy and before we were aware of this outbreak occurring in China."

Remuzzi believed other countries can learn important lessons from Italy. The takeaways include how to swiftly convert a general hospital into a coronavirus care unit with specially trained doctors and nurses, said the NPR report.

Italy reported 6,557 new cases of coronavirus on Saturday, raising the total to 53,578 since the pandemic first broke out in its north on Feb. 21, according to the latest data provided by the Civil Protection Department managing the COVID-19 emergency.

Jack Ma Foundation and Alibaba Foundation Donate Medical Supplies to 10 More Asian Nations

(Jack Ma Foundation and Alibaba Foundation) -- The Jack Ma Foundation and Alibaba Foundation today announced plans to donate much-needed medical supplies to 10 more countries in Asia to help the global fight against COVID-19.

The governments of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Laos, Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka will receive from the two foundations a donation totaling 1.8 million masks, 210,000 COVID-19 test kits, 36,000 pieces of protective clothing, as well as essential medical equipment and supplies that include ventilators and forehead thermometers.

"Go Asia! We will donate emergency supplies to 10 more countries across Asia," said Jack Ma, who announced the latest foundation pledges through his Twitter account. "Delivering fast is not easy, but we'll get it done!"

Delivery of the donations will leverage the robust capabilities of the Electronic World Trade Platform (eWTP) to overcome the significant logistical and transportation challenge presented by the vast number of countries and their geographical remoteness.



Washington under fire for labeling coronavirus

(China Daily) -- As the coronavirus continues to spread in the United States, the Trump administration is fielding criticism from some public health officials, politicians and Asian Americans for labeling the illness a "Chinese virus", a term that experts argued is inaccurate and has led to increased incidents of racist attacks against Asians of different ethnicities.

"The president of the United States, and other White House officials, using the term 'Chinese virus', or 'Kung-Flu', or 'Wuhan virus', we believe is inciting and provoking this anti-Asian sentiment and is really responsible in the rise of these more violent acts," said Cynthia Choi, co-executive director of Chinese for Affirmative Action, a community-based civil rights organisation in San Francisco.

"He's refusing to call it by its correct medical name, which is COVID-19, or the coronavirus. He's refusing to do that, even after it was called to his attention that this is harming and endangering the lives of Asian Americans," she added.

As of Sunday, 201 deaths and over 15,200 cases had been reported in the US, according to the World Health Organisation.

In response to the increasingly frequent harassment resulting from the coronavirus, Choi's organisation, along with the Asian Pacific Policy & Planning Council and the San Francisco State University's Asian American Studies Department, have launched a reporting center to track cases of discrimination against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders throughout the country.

The center opened on Thursday, and by Friday, it had already received 60 reports of cases from community members on the site, Choi said. One of the cases involves a 12-year-old Asian American boy in the San Fernando Valley in Los Angeles, who was so badly beaten by middle school classmates that he had to visit the hospital emergency room.

Another case occurred just a few days ago. It revolved around a Chinese woman who found herself accosted on the street by a stranger who cursed at her and blamed her for bringing the coronavirus to the US.

On March 14, a man from Myanmar and his young son were two of four people stabbed by a man at a grocery store in Midland, Texas. Although this case still warrants further investigation, Choi said she found out through her network that racism and coronavirus motivated the attack.

"We are starting to see a pattern that individuals who might not appear to be likely to defend themselves, or unable to defend themselves, are being targeted. We are seeing all kinds of racially derogatory comments being made toward people," she added.

The violence has spiraled so out of hand that David Liu, the owner of Arcadia Firearm & Safety in San Gabriel Valley, an area with a high concentration of Chinese immigrants, said gun sales at his store were 10 times the usual amount in the past three weeks, with many customers buying firearms to protect themselves against possible racial attacks and fear of social disorder caused by the coronavirus.

Trump defended his use of the term on Wednesday, saying "it's not racist at all", he told reporters. "It comes from China, that is why."

However, cases of a strange, severe pneumonia were witnessed last November in Italy before the world even became aware of the COVID-19 outbreak in China, said Giuseppe Remuzzi, an Italian physician.

In an interview with National Public Radio, Remuzzi said some family doctors told him that they had seen the pneumonia, particularly in old people, in December and even in November.

"It means that the virus was circulating at least in Lombardy before we were aware of this outbreak occurring in China."

Meanwhile, such terms have elicited a chorus of criticism from public figures, including former secretary of state Hillary Clinton, who argued that Trump is using racist rhetoric to distract from his administration's delay in preparing the country for the pandemic.

"The president is turning to racist rhetoric to distract from his failures to take the coronavirus seriously early on, make tests widely available, and adequately prepare the country for a period of crisis. Don't fall for it. Don't let your friends and families fall for it," she wrote on her Twitter account on Wednesday.

Analysts outside the US also believe that Trump's intentional use of the racist term is to distract the US public from the wide criticism of his missteps in his early denial of the seriousness of the pandemic. Now with the stock market gains of the past three years totally wiped out, he is eager to play the blame game, especially in a presidential election year.

Shada Islam, director of Europe and Geopolitics of Friends of Europe, a think tank in Brussels, Belgium, said at times of crisis like the one the world is living through, it is time for leaders and people to come together and work together to tackle the challenge, not exchange insults, accusations and engage in conspiracy theories.



A family member of a prisoner waits outside the prison where an attempted prison break happened in Bogota, Colombia.

Attempted prison break in Colombia leaves 23 inmates dead

BOGOTA (Xinhua) -- An attempted prison break in Colombia's capital Bogota left 23 inmates dead and 83 others injured, of whom 32 are hospitalised, Justice Minister Margarita Cabello said on Sunday.

"Today is a very painful day for the country. I have to report that last night there was a massive and criminal attempt to escape from the La Modelo penitentiary," said Cabello.

Seven prison guards and officials belonging to the National Penitentiary and Prison Institute (INPEC) were also injured, two of them critically, said Cabello.

Also on Saturday night, riots occurred in several other prisons in Colombia as part of a large-scale scheme to break out of jail, said the minister.

"There were no escapes ... there was a criminal plan to escape that was thwarted," she said.

Cabello denied that the hygienic conditions in the prisons raised the risk of contracting the novel coronavirus, and dismissed this as a concern for the inmates and the motive behind the riots.

"There also are no sanitary problems that could have led to the plan or the riots. Today, there is not even a single case of infection, not an inmate, administrator or guard who has the coronavirus or who could be quarantined due to the coronavirus," said the minister.

3.5-4.4 billion people will live with limited access to water by 2050, warns Guterres

UNITED NATIONS (Xinhua) -- United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres warned on Sunday that without further efforts, between 3.5 and 4.4 billion people in the world will live with limited access to water, with more than 1 billion of them living in cities.

In his message to the World Water Day, which falls on March 22, the UN chief said that "the world's water resources are under unprecedented threat."

"Today, some 2.2 billion people lack safe drinking water and 4.2 billion people live without access to adequate sanitation. Unless we act with urgency, the impacts of climate change are projected to exacerbate these figures," he said.

Noting that this year's World Water Day focuses on water and climate change, the secretary-general said that "with 2020 a make-or-break year for climate action, this focus is timely."

"Water is the primary medium through which we perceive the effects of climate disruption, from extreme weather events, such as droughts and floods, to glacial melting, saltwater intrusion and sea level rise," he added.

"Global heating and unsustainable use will create unprecedented competition for water resources, leading to the displacement of millions of people.

This will negatively affect health and productivity and act as a threat multiplier for instability and conflict," said the UN chief.

Talking about the solution, Guterres said that "we must urgently scale up investments in healthy watersheds and water infrastructure, with dramatic improvements in the efficiency of water use."

ບໍລິສັດ ໄຟຟ້າ ນ້ຳທາ 1 ລາວ ຈຳກັດ

Nam Tha 1 Lao Power Company Limited

Saphanthong Villa, House #3, Unit 15, Saphanthong Village, Sisattanak District, Vientiane Capital
Tel: 021 315 764 Fax: 021 316 498

Invitation to Quote For Labor Protection Items in 2020

24 March 2020

I. Project Name :

Nam Tha 1 Hydropower Station's Labor Protection Items in 2020.

II. Purchased Items

The purchased items mainly include: safety helmet, double protected safety belt (new model), filter type fire self-rescue respirator, self contained open circuit compressed air respirator, safety shoes, dust mask, etc. For detailed information, you are requested to see inquiry document. The supplier must supply and arrange delivery of those items listed above to 2nd floor, office building ,Nam Tha 1 Hydropower Station's Campsite (Address: Hadnam Village, Phaoudom District, Bokeo Province) within one month after signing the contract.

III. Required Qualification

1.The supplier must be an independent legal entity registered in Laos.

2.The supplier must be capable of executing the project and performing the contract independently.

V. Document Obtaining Time and Address

1. Document obtaining deadline: 5:00 PM, 25 March 2020

2. Document obtaining address: Vientiane Office (Address: House#3, Saphanthong Village, Sisattanak District, Vientiane Capital); or 2nd floor, office building, Nam Tha 1 Hydropower Station – Campsite (Address: Hadnam Village, Phaoudom District, Bokeo Province); or by sending e-mail to contact person.

3. The bidding documents are free of charge.

IV. Document Delivery Deadline and Address

Document delivery deadline：10:30 AM, March 31 2020,

Document delivery address : 2nd floor, Office building, Nam Tha 1 Hydropower Station Campsite（Hadnam Village, Phaoudom District, Bokeo Province, or send the quotation by the encrypted email to procurement@nt1.net.cn.

VI. Contact Information

Shen Hongbo：Phone 0085620 98840800, Email: shenhb@nt1.net.cn

Zheng Dingcheng：Phone 0085620 93336578, Email: zhengdc@nt1.net.cn

Wang Wanzhong：Phone 0085620 98887755, Email: wangwz@nt1.net.cn

Nam Tha 1 Lao Power Co., Ltd

Entertainment

Young men urged to join Mister Supranational Laos 2020 open

Sisouphan Amphonephong



The Mister Supranational Laos 2019, Singkham Phommasone, has called on young men to join this year's contest.
--Photo Mister Supranational Laos

The organisers of Mister Supranational Laos 2020 have encouraged young men to join the contest that will choose the country's representative for the regional competition to be held in Poland at the end of the year.

Mister Supranational Laos 2020 has opened the first audition round in the form of interviews, and the organisers last week encouraged young men to send in their applications and photos.

The representative for the pageant, Dr Ponsinh Boutkaska, said young men who meet the standards for the contest could send their photos to the Facebook for Mister Supranational Laos. The contest is open to young men aged between 18 and 33 years whose height is at least 180 cm, and can communicate well in English, he said.

"They can send their photos under comments or inbox the Facebook of Mister Supranational Laos, or inbox Facebook Ponsinh Toto Boutkaska to apply for the contest," he said.

"The committee and judges for the pageant will select candidates who have a good profile and match the contests standards."

The winner of Mister Supranational Laos 2020 will represent the country at the regional round of the competition in Poland at the end of this year and also promote Laos and its culture on an international stage.

Mr Ponsinh Boutkaska has uploaded posters and a message about this year's pageant and called on young men to apply for the contest.

The Mister Supranational Laos 2019, Singkham Phommasone, a 19-year-old student of the Computer Sciences Division of the National University of Laos, represented the country at the regional round competition.

He was the first Lao man to join the competition in 2019, which was also the first time that Laos sent a representative and he reached top 20 finalist of Mister Supranational 2019, He had a great experience at the competition and promoted Laos and its culture among people of other countries.

Through a video, Mr Singkham urged young men of the country to send in lots of applications for the contest.

Tales to help children cope with the outbreak

CHINA (China Daily/ANN) -- While adults are preoccupied by the fear of the novel coronavirus outbreak, what are the children thinking?

The loneliness of being apart from friends and the frustration of being penned up at home can be difficult to deal with. The subject is being tackled by media personalities and outlets.

"Are you feeling bored staying at home these days? Did your parents say that they would take you traveling but couldn't deliver on their promise? Please don't be mad at them, because there is a big evil outside!" Li Rui, 47, the presenter at Hunan Satellite TV, says in a relaxing tone in the audio book he created on Chinese podcast app Himalaya.

"Why do we call the virus the evil king? Because this guy wears a crown, is always bragging that he's the biggest and toughest, and impacts everyone, even kids," he explains to the children in his program.

Since 2013, Li has hosted six seasons of a parent-children interaction reality TV show that invites celebrities to bring their kids to enjoy country life, and he plays the role of the head of the village they live in.

"As the 'village head', I want to create some interesting stories about the prevention and control of the novel coronavirus, to both entertain and educate them," he says. Li was inspired by books and films, especially The Decameron and Life Is Beautiful, that depict disastrous events in history. He is especially touched by the film Life Is Beautiful, specifically the part when the father tells the son that the sufferings and cruelty of a Nazi concentration camp were just a game, and the final reward for overcoming the loneliness, hunger and fear is a real tank.

Li wishes to assign tasks to children through audio stories he created on Himalaya, such as washing hands frequently and staying safely at home, that will eventually win back the freedom to embrace nature outdoors without a mask or a worried heart.

He writes stories at home, mostly at night when everyone else in the family is asleep. He usually works until two or three in the morning.

Li writes the stories based on the touching moments of people fighting the virus, and the knowledge about disease control and prevention that needs to be shared.

Zhong Nanshan, 84, a respiratory doctor who was involved in fighting SARS and is now fighting coronavirus at the frontline, is called "Doctor Shanshan" in his story. Bat, the suspected infectious host, is described as the victim caught and eaten by Mr Silly. The virus is personified as the evil king who wants to harm humans, while masks and alcohol-based sanitizers become the magic weapon to fight against the evil.

"Every time I finish a draft, I will read it to my 12-year-old daughter. I will publish the story if she laughs, or rewrite it if she doesn't," Li says. The audio book has had more than 59 million clicks by March 6.

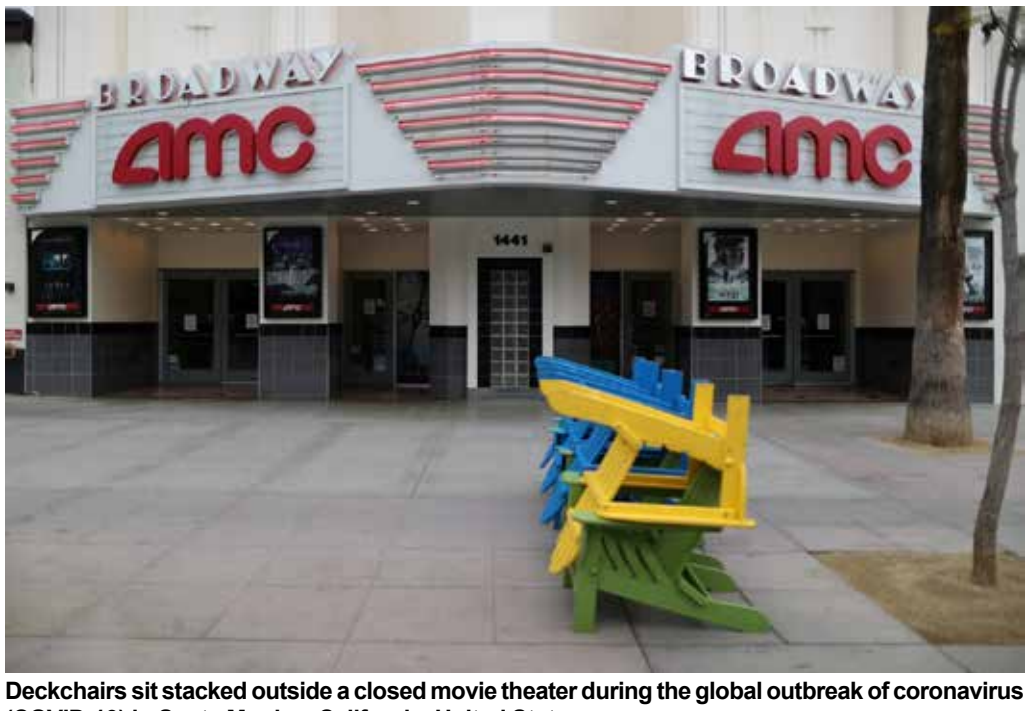
As the virus prevention work is strengthened and the resumption of work and study in some areas is postponed, people are spending much more time online. Podcast apps in China have seized the opportunity and launched virus-related content, highlighting the importance of disease prevention and control. Apart from inviting celebrities like Li to "talk" with users, Himalaya also set up an online medical and psychological counseling service.

Together with mainstream media organisations CCTV News, People's Daily and Guangming Daily, it broadcasts related news every day. Recently on the platform, the live newsroom of CCTV has got around 90 million clicks, and virus-related content totaled more than 100 million views early last month.

Another app named Qingting FM is also broadcasting professional advice for disease control and prevention. The audio guideline has collected around 5 million clicks.

This January, Lizhi became the first Chinese podcast app to be listed on Nasdaq, the US electronic share-trading marketplace.

America's small movie theaters fear coronavirus could mean their last picture show



Deckchairs sit stacked outside a closed movie theater during the global outbreak of coronavirus (COVID-19) in Santa Monica, California, United States.

LOS ANGELES (The Jakarta Post/ANN) -- Members of the Bagby family have operated movie theaters in small US towns for four generations. With the coronavirus outbreak forcing their 400 screens to go dark indefinitely, some of them worry that run could come to an end.

The family's Missouri-based company closed its 50 B&B Theatres locations in seven states this week and imposed its first layoffs ever, affecting 1,980 workers.

"We've been around since 1924," B&B chief executive Bob Bagby said in an interview. "We hope we can continue to be around, but we're a little scared right now."

The global coronavirus outbreak has put the biggest strain on movie theaters in the industry's 115-year history. Most theaters in the United States, and many around the world, are closed to help prevent the novel coronavirus from spreading.

Operators are unsure when they will be able to switch on the marquee lights again. Some voiced concern that they might not be able to reopen at all if the shutdown lingers for months. The theater business already was facing competition from streaming services such as Netflix Inc.

Website Deadline Hollywood estimated that US and Canadian box offices could lose $2 billion if theaters remained closed until the end of May, though it noted that some industry sources believe that could be recouped later in the year.

To help theaters stay solvent, the National Association of Theatre Owners on Wednesday urged the US Congress and the Trump administration to provide tax benefits and other emergency relief.

The industry employs more than 150,000 people in the United States, the group said, from ticket sellers to projectionists, concessions workers and cleaning crews.

Theater owners took pride in staying open during previous crises including World War II and after the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks and offering a respite from the world's troubles. Plus, the movie business typically remained healthy during economic downturns when people sought a relatively inexpensive form of entertainment.

"This is the first time we've ever had to face mass layoffs in our industry," said Brittanie Bagby, who serves as executive vice president at B&B Theatres alongside her sister Bobbie and brother Brock. "Our hearts are breaking."

While no movie tickets or concessions are being sold, operators still have bills to pay for rent, mortgages, utilities and other costs.

Mark O'Meara, owner of University Mall Theatres and Cinema Arts Theatres in Fairfax, Virginia, said he would try to negotiate new terms for rent payments with his landlord to help get through the coronavirus crisis.

"If this goes six months, I don't know if I can make it six months without any business," O'Meara said. "I'm hoping for a two- to three-month turnaround."

ທະນາຄານພົ້ງສະຫວັນ BANK
Phongsavanh BANK

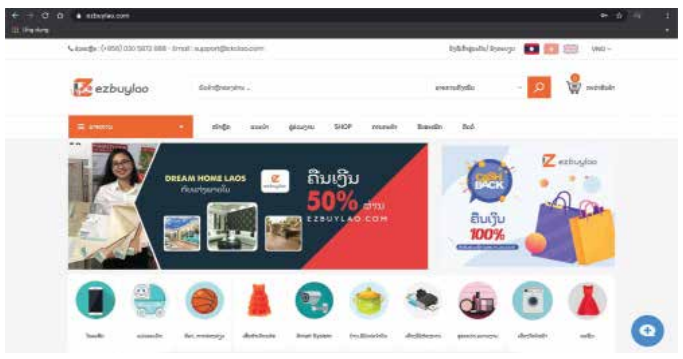
Business

Ezbuylao.com 'a trading bridge between Laos and Vietnam'

Advertorial Desk

As an online retailer and with e-commerce booming in many countries around the world, CKC Global Company is optimistic aboutbusiness opportunities in Laos.

Online trading is a bridge between enterprises of a country and businesses in other countries around the globe.



Home page of Ezbuylao.

There are giant e-commerce companies that have been successful in this online trading such as America's Amazon and China's Alibaba. Utilising a benefit-sharing model, the companies have brought benefits to customers around the globe.

Observing this business potential, CKC Global Company has introduced and utilised this economic benefit-sharing model into Laos by establishing its online e-commerce website 'Ezbuylao.com'.

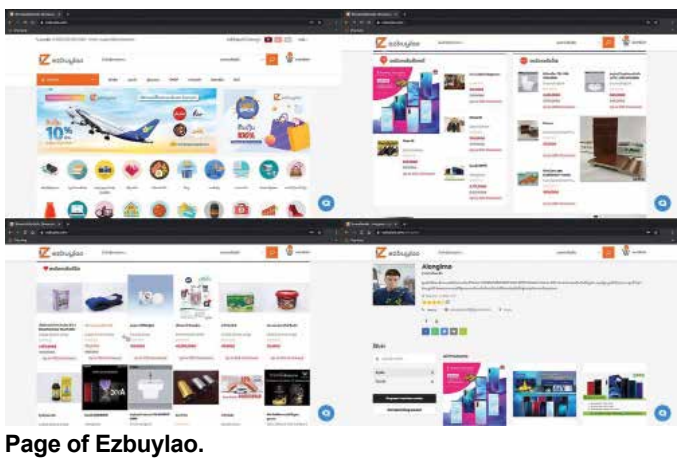
Established in 2007, the company - previously called CKC Vietnam - is now recognised by enterprises in Laos as a company with effective multi-branched services.

CKC Global has an advisory council whose members comprise leading Vietnamese specialists on policymaking, finance, and the economy to help formulate its strategies to ensure effective operations and the delivery of excellent services.

CKC has also been supported and highly valued by experts of Vietnam's State Banking Strategy Institute.

Having modern biotechnology of industry 4.0 capabilities has been a solid foundation for CKC Global. The technology is an important key for each enterprise to access the global market. For this reason, the website 'ezbuylao.com' of CKC has been developed and widely known in Laos. Dozens of foreign enterprises previously invested in this type of business in Laos, but they failed.

CKC Global is among the first initiating e-commerce or online commerce in Laos that utilisesthe economic benefit-sharing model with a policy toreturn money to consumers through a loyalty programme.



Page of Ezbuylao.

'Ezbuylao.com'is aninternational-standard e-commerce website. It offers an 'EZ' online wallet to facilitate cashless payments replacing cash transactions, which ensures security for customers.

Currently, 'Ezbuylao.com' is a leading e-commerce website in Laos because it has successfully changed Lao consumers'behaviour from cash payments to online cashless payments via biotechnology 4.0. Consequently, 'Ezbuylao.com' is a significant investment area of the CKC Global Company.

Businesses advertisers with 'Ezbuylao.com' have found it an effective channel to promote their brands and sell their products while customers purchasing goods via the website have enjoyed its convenient purchasing experience.



Ezbuylao staff.

More importantly, customers can earn points from various product categories on the website, which will be returned as cash as part of the loyalty scheme.

After 1 year of market research, Since 2017, CKC Global has officially introduced ezbuylao a system of price and benefit policies of businesses and individuals participating in the sharing economy model. CKC Global always keeps improving its technologies and services to meet the changing and growing needsof the Lao market.

After entering the Lao market three years ago, Ezbuylaohas contributed to the growing online trade in Laos, allowingenterprises to connect with customers.

Mrs LamphaiKhounphia, the operator of a spa business whose office is located in Sisattanak district, Vientiane described the benefits her company gained after advertising with the website.

"I have been (advertised business services) withEzbuylao for a long time. Ezbuylao has brought me good benefits," she said.

"Customers visiting us were pleased with our attention and convenient payment we offered through the online wallet 'EZ' of Ezbuylao."

"My business has accumulated points(through the loyalty scheme) that will be returned to us so we will have some funds for additional investment. When I shareEzbuylao to new customers, they like and trust it. This has reflected in the fact that Ezbuylao has contributed to and making the Lao market move lively."

A customer of Ezbuylao, Mr SoulaphonVongxaya shared his experience and delight, saying "I have learnt that Ezbuylaois an online e-commerce website bringing benefits to users. Its policy of returning money to customershas helped us to save."

"For example, we spent the money we gotto fill up our car. If there is no loyalty programme, we have to spend additional money."

The confidence and satisfaction displayed by enterprises and customers have been an inspiration of Ezbuylaoto improve its services further, bringing even greater benefits to the communitiy.



Staff of CKC Global Company.

Director of CKC Global, Mr Nguyen Ngoc Duy stated, "From 2020on, the company will continue to introduce several promotional policies to express our gratitude to the Ezbuylao community."

"In addition, CKC Global, with its technological strength, will continue to draw up a plans to improve its know-how further and invest in many areas such as health, education, real estate and so on …in Laos to enable Vietnamese enterprises and individual communities to access the Lao market faster."

"On the other hand, Lao enterprises also have the opportunity to expand their investment into Vietnam. We also plan to expand (our business) to the Myanmarese, Cambodian and Thai markets in the next three years."

In addition to the Ezbuylao website, CKC Global continues to havebusiness success with Laolott.com – an online lottery in Laos, and laoexpress.net.

With its business expansion model, CKC Global has demonstrated its desire to access international markets followingthe plan of the company's executives.

During the Business Network International (BNI) Conference Laos 2019, representatives of the CKC Global presented about the business model and vision of the company.

CKC Global's visionwas widely supported by its business partners and businesspeople at BNI Laos.

Currently, CKC Global's online trading website is also present in the Vietnamese market, and numerous enterprises there have joined.

In early April, the Ezbuylao online trading website will be officially launched in Vietnam.

In the near future, economic benefit-sharing model in general and online trading in particular will become a trading bridge between Lao and Vietnamese businesses. This will be an excellent opportunity for companies to work together to achieve shared development goals.



Executives and staff of CKC Global Company.

LAOVIET Bank
BRIDGE OF SUCCESS

Exchange Rate
as of March 23, 2020

Foreign Currencies		Buying	Selling
US Dollar	USD	8.919	8.937
Vietnamese Dong	VND	0,4005	0,4086
Thai Baht	THB	294,95	297,16
Euro	EUR	9.486	9.534
Renminbi Yuan	CNY	1.230	1.255

Hotline:1440 laovietbank.com.la LaoVietBank



Fuel prices drop despite concerns over a shortage of supply

Times Reporters



Premium grade petrol sells for 9,120 kip a litre in Vientiane, while regular grade petrol sells for 8,380 kip a litre and diesel for 7,740 kip a litre.

Fuel prices fell on Monday morning in line with the trends in the world market even though people are worried about a shortage of supplies after the Lao government began the strict inspection of imported goods due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

The Ministry of Industry and Commerce announced the cost of premium grade petrol will be lower by 600 kip a litre, regular petrol by 510 kip a litre, and diesel by 160 kip a litre.

Currently, petrol stations in Vientiane are selling premium grade petrol for 9,120 kip a litre. They are selling regular grade petrol for 8,380 kip a litre and diesel for 7,740 kip a litre.

In Borikhamxay province, premium grade petrol is going for 9,200 kip a litre, regular for 8,460 kip a litre, and diesel for 7,820 kip a litre.

In Khammuan and Savannakhet provinces, premium petrol is selling for 9,150 kip a litre, regular petrol for 8,430 kip a litre, and diesel for 7,770 kip a litre.

In Champassak province, the prices are 9,180 kip a litre for premium petrol, 8,440 kip for regular petrol, and 7,800 kip for diesel.

In Attapeu province, premium petrol is selling for 9,350 kip a litre, regular for 8,620 kip a litre, and diesel for 7,980 kip a litre.

In Xayaboury, premium petrol is selling for 9,370 kip a litre, regular petrol for 8,630 kip a litre, and diesel for 7,990 kip a litre.

In Oudomxay province, 9,600 kip a litre is the price for premium petrol. Regular petrol costs 8,860 kip and diesel costs 8,220 kip.

In Bokeo province, premium grade petrol costs 9,220 kip a litre while the price of regular petrol has been set at 8,480 kip a litre. Diesel is selling for 7,640 kip a litre.

In Luang Prabang province, diesel sells for 8,140 kip a litre, premium petrol for 9,520 kip, and regular petrol for 8,780 kip.

Despite the decline in the cost of fuel across the country, many people are worried that the prices could rise due to a possible shortage of oil supplies when the imports of products are gradually limited.

Stronger China-US economic cooperation urged to tackle global epidemic

CHINA (China Daily/ ANN) -- Greater China-US economic cooperation and ties are urgently needed to help the world face the impact of the novel coronavirus outbreak, according to latest major analyses.

The COVID-19 impact has hit global supply chains and demand in various sectors hard, which means the world's two largest economies must take the lead and work together to fight the pandemic, reduce its negative effects and aid economic recovery, analysts agreed in an online forum organised by major independent think tank Centre for China and Globalisation on March 19.

The outbreak that first hit Central China's Hubei province in the runup to the new year is being felt across the globe, with hot spots now including Europe and the United States, meaning that all countries must surmount their differences and overcome the crisis together, said think tank's vice-president Gao Zhikai, who moderated the forum.

The event, tapping the latest in advanced videoconferencing technology as part of anti-outbreak measures to limit physical contact, drew more than 560,000 participants and viewers worldwide.

For one, even as China has achieved significant results in its fight against the disease while the US is in a national emergency because of the pandemic, trade cooperation between the two must continue to help cope with any economic fallout, Gao said.

"China and the United States are the two largest economies in the world… managing their relations effectively, instead of pointing fingers and exerting pressure on one another, is of great concern to everyone," he said.

Cui Fan, a professor from the University of International Business and Economics in Beijing, said the countries must push ahead with negotiations to ease trade tensions to help stem any economic crisis that may arise from the pandemic.

"The outbreak in China currently seems to be under control, but it still faces challenges beyond that such as economic slowdown, disruptions in global supply chains and affected businesses," Cui said.

"China and the United States should now strengthen economic and trade dialogue and the implementation of existing agreements."

China and the US inked a phase-one trade deal in January, marking a high point in their nearly two years of trade tensions. Last month, China moved to halve tariffs on imports of a number of US products that followed recent tariff reduction decisions by the world's largest economy.

But even as economists began to hail the reciprocal moves to ease trade conflict between the two sides, latest warnings are increasingly calling for the world to brace for economic recession due to the pandemic.

During the online forum, Huo Jianguo, former head of the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation under the Ministry of Commerce, said that China looks set to resume its economic activity as it recovers from the outbreak, but the challenge is now overseas.

"Implementing what has been achieved effectively in the trade negotiations would be ideal … but that requires a lot of effort and proactive communication is key."

Sun Yongfu, former head of the European Affairs Department of the Ministry of Commerce, said that Chinese aid to Europe to fight COVID-19 has been significant, with more China-EU cooperation expected.

There should similar China-US cooperation in fighting the disease and supporting economic development during these tough times, he said.

"If we strengthen cooperation in science and technology, in fighting the pandemic, especially in terms of vaccines, research and development, and we can similarly support and cooperate with each other in trade, then we will survive together," Sun said. "I believe that China and the United States should also develop along the road of cooperation rather than that of mutual criticism."

As seen in medical supplies alone amid the outbreak, China's position in global industrial chains in the short and long term remains firm and significant, said Teng Jiangqun, director of the Department of American Studies at the China Institute of International Studies.

"So this also tells the policymakers in China and the United States that we must cooperate; and we must cooperate in the economy and trade, not talk about decoupling."

Xu Hongcai, deputy director of the economic policy committee at the China Association of Policy Science, said that channels for medical supplies, treatment and support must be increased and kept open.

More broadly, there must be high-level dialogue to help further lower trade barriers toward cooperation, he said.

"In terms of bilateral cooperation, especially trade, now is an opportunity. Not only must we create conditions to implement the first phase of economic and trade agreements, but we must also expand trade, especially with regard to cooperation in medical supplies and so on, including technical cooperation in vaccine research and development," Xu said.

"Expanding trade is important because the disruption of supply chains is particularly obvious in the early stages of the epidemic. We must reduce bilateral tariffs. We can be bolder and implement zero tariffs in subsequent stages. In many ways, we hope that the United States will take the initiative. We must promote bilateral economic and trade cooperation…in the face of the epidemic."

SBI announces emergency credit line for borrowers affected by COVID-19

NEW DELHI (The Stateman/ ANN) -- India's largest lender State Bank of India became the first bank to open an emergency credit line to meet any liquidity mismatch for its borrowers affected by COVID-19 pandemic.



Borrowers can maximum avail 10 percent of the existing fund based working capital limits, subject to a cap of Rs 200 crore.

In a three-page circular issued on Friday, the state-run bank directed its chief general managers that an additional liquidity facility Covid-19 Emergency Credit Line (CECL), will provide funds up to Rs 200 crore and will be available till June 30, 2020. The loan will be offered at an interest rate of 7.25 percent with a tenure of 12 months.

"With a view to provide some degree of relief to the borrowers whose operations are impacted by Covid-19, it is decided to make available additional liquidity credit facilities to the eligible borrowers by way of ad-hoc facilities — CECL to tide over the current crisis situation," the bank said in a circular to all branches.

The bank said the credit line is open for all standard accounts which have not been classified under the category of special mention accounts (SMA) 1 or 2 as on March 16, 2020 are eligible to avail this credit line.

Special Mention Accounts (SMA) was introduced to identify those accounts that have the potential to become an NPA/stressed asset. SMA-1 accounts are those where the overdue period is between 31 to 60 days. While in SMA -2 accounts overdue is between 61 to 90 days.

Additionally, existing SBI customers who have availed special loans under the category of MSME are also eligible for this facility.

Attention *Vientiane Times* subscribers



We at *Vientiane Times* would like to inform our subscribers that we now offer newspaper boxes for use in homes and offices. The boxes, each of which is equipped with a lock and key, help protect your paper from inclement weather. Those interested in obtaining a box should contact the *Vientiane Times* office or call us at: **Tel: 336042; Fax: 336041**

Domestic reforms key to attracting FDI

Times Reportes



Dr Phouphet Kyophilavong gives an interview to the Vientiane Times at the Faculty of Economics and Business Management. *--Photo Chanh*

The country's ability to attract Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) is directly dependent on domestic reforms, according to the associate professor and vice dean of the Faculty of Economics and Business Management at the National University of Laos.

A better environment for business and investment procedures are key conditions for wooing investors to Laos, which is developing integrated transportation systems, such as the Laos-China railway link that will be an important route to global markets in the future.

Speaking to *Vientiane Times*, Dr Phouphet Kyophilavong, recently said, "Even though we have opportunities, if we do not effectively carry out domestic reforms, we can miss them, especially in the services sector."

Developing transportation facilities in Laos, such as the Laos-China railway link that is part of the Belt and Road Initiative's infrastructure network, is expected to lead to positive benefits for Asean, including smaller countries such as Laos.

The infrastructure will convert Laos from a landlocked to a land-linked country and the country will also enjoy the low cost of logistics. FDI is expected to increase accordingly. This will be a good chance for investments.

The railway project will link Laos with the railway network in Asean member states and it is expected to facilitate the smoother transportation of goods from China and the Asean region to European Union states.

Dr Phouphet emphasised Laos must understand that many other countries also want similar foreign investments.

"A question is how do we attract FDI and foreign trade? I think we need to have more liberalisation to make sure it can provide a better environment and climate for trade and investments," he said.

He observed that Laos still has problems in the form of tariff barriers, customer procedures and many other things that affect the country's ease of doing business ranking.

The associate professor said that even Cambodia, which has had tough government officials since 2006, had changed very quickly and opened up its markets. "This can bring in a lot of foreign investors," he said.

Dr Phouphet said, "We should not think we do not care for the investors. We must care for good investors in this era.

"Laos also needs qualified investors and the government is doing its best to create a better investment environment."

The government is putting in place many mechanisms to facilitate businesses and investments, such as organising business forums to seek ways to remove barriers." These forums are a method to stimulate ministers to be more active," he said.

Electric bicycles in short supply as production, imports hampered by coronavirus

JAPAN (The Yomiuri Shimbun/ANN) Bicycles, especially electric models, are in short supply in Japan amid the spread of the new coronavirus.

Sluggish production in China, as well as imports from that country, are creating difficulties for retailers and manufacturers in the busy period ahead of the new fiscal and academic year.

"We have no idea when products will be delivered, and it's been like this for more than a month. There's not enough stock left, so if we can't give our customers a delivery date, we'll lose them," the 46-year-old owner of a bicycle shop in Setagaya Ward, Tokyo, said with a sigh, speaking of the situation facing relatively small shops.

Delivery has stopped of electric bicycles, which are a popular item, and the owner only had a few left in stock.

About 90percent of the bicycles sold in Japan are manufactured overseas — mostly in China, according to statistics compiled by the Economy, Trade and Industry Ministry and the Finance Ministry.

Japan also depends heavily on China for parts used in domestic production. Yamaha Motor Co., which makes electric bicycles and other items, puts motors and batteries made in Japan into frames and other parts imported from China.

As part of efforts to prevent the spread of infections with COVID-19, many factories in China have reduced their production and the distribution system is not fully functioning, delaying exports to Japan.

"Parts for some models are out of stock, and we have a backlog of orders," a Yamaha Motor official said.

Retailers are especially short of electric bicycles to carry young children, which usually come with back seats.

Panasonic Corp. says on its website that the production of some models has been affected by the coronavirus outbreak. As of Saturday, most of Panasonic's models of electric bicycles were out of stock on its online store.

Bicycles see their highest sales in March and April, in time for such events as children entering kindergarten and elementary and junior high schools. According to a 2019 survey by the Japan Bicycle Promotion Institute, based in Tokyo, more than 30 bicycles were sold per store in each of those months, nearly double that of other months.

The store in Setagaya Ward has been unable to keep up with customer demand, and as a result, sales have declined to less than half of what they normally would be at this time of the year.

"We have no choice but to focus on checking and repairing bikes for the time being," the owner said.

Authorities prohibit import, sale and use of COVID-19 rapid tests

Times Reportes

The Ministry of Health has ordered a ban on the import, sale and use of COVID-19 rapid tests for any purpose with the order covering individuals, entities and government and private health institutions.

The move from officials comes as the rapid tests can provide a false positive result and errors. Some people have been willing to purchase the product without certification from the specific disease control institutes.

The government, especially the Ministry of Health in cooperation with relevant sectors, is active in COVID-19 virus surveillance with no confirmed cases in Laos to date.

A rapid test is a cheap and quick analysis technique, but the equipment cannot guaranty the accuracy of virus diagnosis.

The government has allocated billions of kip to virus prevention and control. In addition, authorities have sourced assistance and support from the general public.

Many countries have also provided assistance, especially equipment needed for the prevention and control effort. Health authorities have intensified surveillance and tightened up scanning at ports of entry to prevent the virus from spreading into Laos.

Diagnostic equipment has been installed in provinces at greatest risk so that health authorities can promptly diagnose the presence of the virus.

Korean companies rev business engine amid ongoing coronavirus headwinds

S.KOREA (The Korea Herald/ANN) -- Even as foreign companies across the globe are increasingly suspending operations of production facilities and offices, South Korean firms are once again gearing up for full business operations.

Major Korean companies that had advised employees to work from home amid the spread of COVID-19 are now reopening offices as the situation in Europe and the US drastically worsens, hiking concerns of a global economic meltdown.

Despite reports of global facilities shutting down, and the commercial paper market essentially frozen, Korean conglomerates are implementing emergency business protocols.

Hyundai Motor and Kia Motors have halted operations at Alabama and Georgia plants in the US from Wednesday, while their Czech and Slovakian plants in Europe will close for two weeks starting Monday.

The automakers will resume normal operations Monday, halting their switch to telecommuting, which had been enforced from Feb. 27. Working hours will be flexible for staff to avoid contamination in public transport.

The automakers' COVID-19 task force team had been focusing on securing stable parts supply from China, but they have expanded to the Americas and Europe as of late.

Korea's biggest telecom service provider SK Telecom is also resuming workers' commutes from Monday, with exceptions granted for pregnant employees.

While retightening the work structure, Korean companies are also running a check of their cashable assets. Concerns are building up centering on the slowing flow of commercial paper and the corporate bond market.

Commercial paper rates had recently marked an abrupt uptick, showing signs of a slowing credit market. The Financial Services Commission had convened a meeting with domestic brokerages to review the internal market situation.

Asset managers at conglomerates are reportedly seeking to prepare for the worst, tapping in to gauge the commercial paper issuing conditions amid market tensions.

The Korean government had on Thursday said that it is planning to form a stabilisation fund for the bond market, which Minister of Economy and Finance Hong Nam-ki said will be in place until markets recover.

Among beneficiaries of the fund will be the aviation industry, which has arguably suffered the harshest economic blow from the pandemic. A group of airline firms have collectively requested the government stand surety for their corporate bonds.

Conglomerate leaders are encouraging their workers to stay focused.

Lee Jae-yong, vice chairman of Samsung Electronics, paid two visits to the operation front lines in the first two weeks of March. At the group's affiliate Samsung Display in Asan, South Chungcheong Province, on Thursday, he said, "We must not halt even for a moment. We need to have the foresight to look ahead post-crisis," as he oversaw the group's quantum-dot display manufacturing line.

Lee had also visited Samsung Electronics' Gumi plant in North Gyeongsang Province at the start of the month to oversee the smartphone production lines.

Samsung Electronics had never implemented group-wide telecommuting. Instead, it formed a COVID-19 task force whose responsibilities now not only cover ensuring worker safety, but also responding to needs at overseas plants.

Samsung Electronics' main business engine, semiconductors are in a sticky situation as partners in Europe and the US endure difficulties with manufacturing in the fast-spreading COVID-19 crisis, and as the company's home appliance plant in Slovakia will halt manufacturing for a week from Monday.

SK Holdings, the Korean conglomerate most actively enforcing a work-from-home culture, will bolster its emergency business mode. Chairman Chey Tae-won has reportedly called for an emergency gathering of subsidiary heads at the beginning of the week.

SK Innovation, a major SK subsidiary in charge of oil refining and electric vehicle battery production, is being lashed around by the plummeting global oil market and diminishing demand from global automakers.

The company had expanded telecommuting to the end of March, but key personnel are continuing to report to the office as per usual.

Semiconductor subsidiary SK hynix is not having its employees work from home due to characteristics of the semiconductor business which cannot be abruptly halted. The company is instead running a task force to respond to COVID-19 emergency situations.

The world's three largest semiconductor parts suppliers -- the US' Lamresearch and AMAT and the Netherland's ASML -- have begun to advise workers to stay at home. The combined market share of their global semiconductor parts market amounts to 50 percent, meaning their slowing business would cause a chain reaction on Samsung Electronics and SK hynix, who both pool supplies from them.

Feature

Ministry to advance human resources for national development

To salute the 65th anniversary (March 22, 1955 - March 22, 2020) of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party, Vientiane Times presents a series of stories to give readers a glimpse into this formidable political entity.

Feature Desk

The Ministry of Education and Sports will improve the quality of human resources to foster national socio-economic development and meet international educational standards.

On the occasion of the 65th anniversary of the founding day of the Party (March 22, 1955 – March 22, 2020) and the upcoming 11th Party Congress, the Minister of Education and Sports, Mrs Sengdeuane Lachanthaboun, said this week the most important factor for educational development is educating children and youngsters to become human resources that love the nation. This includes encouraging them to devote themselves to national development and matching the educational development of other countries in the region and around the world.

The ministry has implemented the five-year development plan for education and sports for 2016-20 and human resource development plan till 2025.

As part of the implement of these plans, district with school enrollment rates lower than 60 percent have been advised to cooperate with authorities from the district administration offices and villages to expand the pre-primary sections of primary schools. Parent of students and the community and village education committee need to improve the environment in rural areas.

For boosting primary school education, the Department of Education and Sports in the provinces, the capital and the districts are required to establish primary school groups to reduce the number of dropouts by encouraging students to continue their studies and complete primary schooling.

"The directors of schools must implement regulations to reasonably administer their institutions and to ensure students pass examinations," said Mrs Sengdeuane. "Reading skills, Lao literature writing and new basic mathematics methods must be upgraded. In addition, students with low grades should be trained during the three-month school holiday before the new term begins."



Mrs Sengdeuane Lachanthaboun. *--Photo Vixien*

Secondary schools need to create regulations to establish secondary school groups and their implementation manual. In addition, authorities in districts and villages are encouraged to support students to study till the secondary level.

For pedagogy training, the Ministry of Education and Sports will amend regulations to implement educational standards in provinces and districts.

This includes upgrading the quality of target teachers and conducting an assessment of knowledge capacity and ethics of teachers of primary and secondary schools.

Vocational training institutes need to expand their capacity for providing various forms of training. This includes advertising and introducing subjects for secondary students, revising the curriculum in line with the demands of socio-economic development. Short and long-term vocational training should also be promoted.

High diploma education institutes should join hands with national universities to develop a curriculum with good quality and in line with the development of education to regional and international standards.

In addition, it is necessary to create regulations to manage educational scholarships and to advertise foreign scholarships for upper secondary students and other target groups.

For sports-calisthenics, public sports will be promoted at the grassroots level. More competitions will be promoted to encourage students and youngsters to take up sports.

The National Olympics Committee will work with sports federations to manage, monitor, supervise and educate trainers, referees and sportsmen not to dope and to discourage fraudulent activities in football.

However, there are several challenges for education and sports. Over the past few years, the Ministry of Education and Sports has tried to lower the rate of school dropouts and student who cannot be promoted to higher classes in order to reach targets approved by the Assembly. In addition, the shortage of budget has led the government to reduce quota of people serving as voluntary teachers, who have worked for many years but cannot be provided government jobs.

However, the number of government teachers remain high, especially when compare to figures at the regional and international levels. The Ministry of Education and Sports has mobilised voluntary teachers to understand the policy of the Party-State. In 2020, the ministry got a quota of 1,070 for government civilian. Out of these, 1,040 will be applied for teachers.

For the development strategy plan till 2025, Mrs Sengdeuane said the Ministry of Education and Sports will implement several key strategies. These include improving the quality of regular education, constructing and developing labour skills in line with the demands for socio-economic growth, improving services and educational and sport management by developing the capacity of educational and sports administrator at all levels, and improving and developing sport and calisthenics so that players can participate in regional and international competitions.

--Readers can reach the author at xleukai@gmail.com.

UNITED NATIONS
LAO PDR

GREAT JOB OPPORTUNITIES!

with the United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office in Lao PDR

Are you experienced in facilitating communication strategy, advocacy, and programme communications and would like to work for the UN in Lao PDR?

1. **Development Coordination Officer, Programme Communications and Advocacy (Lao National)**
   Fixed Term Appointment – NOC Level (1-year contract with possibility of extension)
2. **National Communications Associate**
   Service Contract – SB3 Level (1-year contract with possibility of extension)

Are you a student/recent graduate interested in learning and gaining experience with the UN in Lao PDR?

3. **National Intern in Partnerships**
   Internship (6 months)
4. **National Intern in Communications**
   Internship (6 months)

To learn more and apply for one of these positions, go to bit.ly/Vacancies31March

All positions are based at the UN House in Vientiane.

Applicants are required to apply online by 31 March 2020.

The United Nations is committed to achieving diversity within its workforce, and encourages all qualified applicants, irrespective of gender, nationality, disabilities, sexual orientation, culture, religious and ethnic backgrounds to apply. All applications will be treated in the strictest confidence.

If you are unable to submit an application online due to technical problems, please contact one-un.la@one.un.org or call (856 21) 267 777 for technical support.

Lane Xang Avenue, P.O. Box 345 • Vientiane • Lao PDR • (856-21) 267 777 • RCO.la@one.un.org • www.la.one.un.org

ສະພາການຄ້າ ແລະ ອຸດສາຫະກຳ ແຫ່ງຊາດລາວ

Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Website: www.lncci.la, Email: info@lncci.la, Facebook: www.facebook.com/LNCCI
Tel: +856-21-453 312 fax:+856-21-452 580
Address: Km 5, Khaysone Road, P.O. Box 4596, Saysettha District, Vientiane.

It's time for action! it's time to end TB

Tuberculosis (TB) remains the world's deadliest infectious killer. Each day, over 4,000 people lose their lives to TB and close to 30,000 people fall ill with this preventable and curable disease.

World TB Day is observed on March 24 each year for commemoration to raise public awareness and understanding about tuberculosis and its devastating health, social and economic impact on people around the world.

This year is the 138th anniversary of the discovery of the TB bacillus. The theme of World TB Day 2020 is "It's time for action! It's time to end TB" – puts the accent on the urgency to act on the commitments made by global leaders to:

• Scale-up access to prevention and treatment

• Promote equitable, rights-based and people-centred TB response

• Ensure sufficient and sustainable financing including for research

• Promote an end to stigma and discrimination

• Build accountability

WHO Representative to Laos, Dr Mark Jacobs said "Ending TB will take high-level political commitment and continued investment in the Lao PDR's health system. It is therefore very appropriate on World TB Day that the government is reaffirming its commitment to ending TB, and WHO is reaffirming its determination to support them in this. Ending TB in Laos is both important and achievable."

Global TB response: Global efforts to combat TB have saved an estimated 58 million lives since the year 2,000. To accelerate the TB response in countries to reach targets – Heads of State came together and made firm commitments to end TB at the first-ever UN High Level Meeting in September 2018. The theme of the meeting was "United to end tuberculosis: an urgent global response to a global epidemic". The meeting endorsed an ambitious and powerful political declaration to accelerate progress towards End TB targets. Laos was represented at this key event by Mr Saleumxay Kommasith, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Associate Professor, Dr Phouthone Moungpak, Deputy Minister of Health.

Lao TB response: In 2018, Laos was estimated to have 12,000 TB cases and 2,500 deaths due to TB disease. The achievement made by the leadership of the Ministry of Health, National TB Programme with partners, was demonstrated in an increased number of TB patients diagnosed using a global standard diagnostic test (GeneXpert) and treatment (48 percent in 2017 to 57 percent in 2018 among estimated 12,000 TB patients).

More than 85 percent of diagnosed patients were cured and completed their treatment. However, around half of TB patients were not yet diagnosed and treated, meaning TB transmission is still on-going in the community. It is essential to advocate partners and everyone to ensure all suspect cases can access health facilities and receive treatment immediately.

Key information about TB;

Tuberculosis (TB) is an infectious disease caused by Mycobacterium tuberculosis or the tubercle bacillus, discovered by Robert Koch in 1882. TB can affect practically every organ in the body, but most commonly, it affects the lungs.

TB infection: The tubercle bacilli are spread from person to person through the respiratory route. Every time such a person coughs, many droplets filled with bacilli are released into the air. Other people can inhale these droplets. The bacilli will enter the respiratory tract and are carried to the lungs where they may cause infection.

TB symptom: Most people who become infected TB have no symptoms or evidence of illness in association with this infection. Patients report a prolonged cough (for two weeks or more), haemoptysis (blood in the sputum), weight loss, fever, night sweats, tiredness, chest pain, and dyspnoea (shortness of breath).

Risk of TB infection: TB occurs in all age groups, in both sexes and all socio-economic groups, but the old, poor, malnourished and those suffering from diseases that decrease the immune defences (such as AIDS) are more vulnerable.

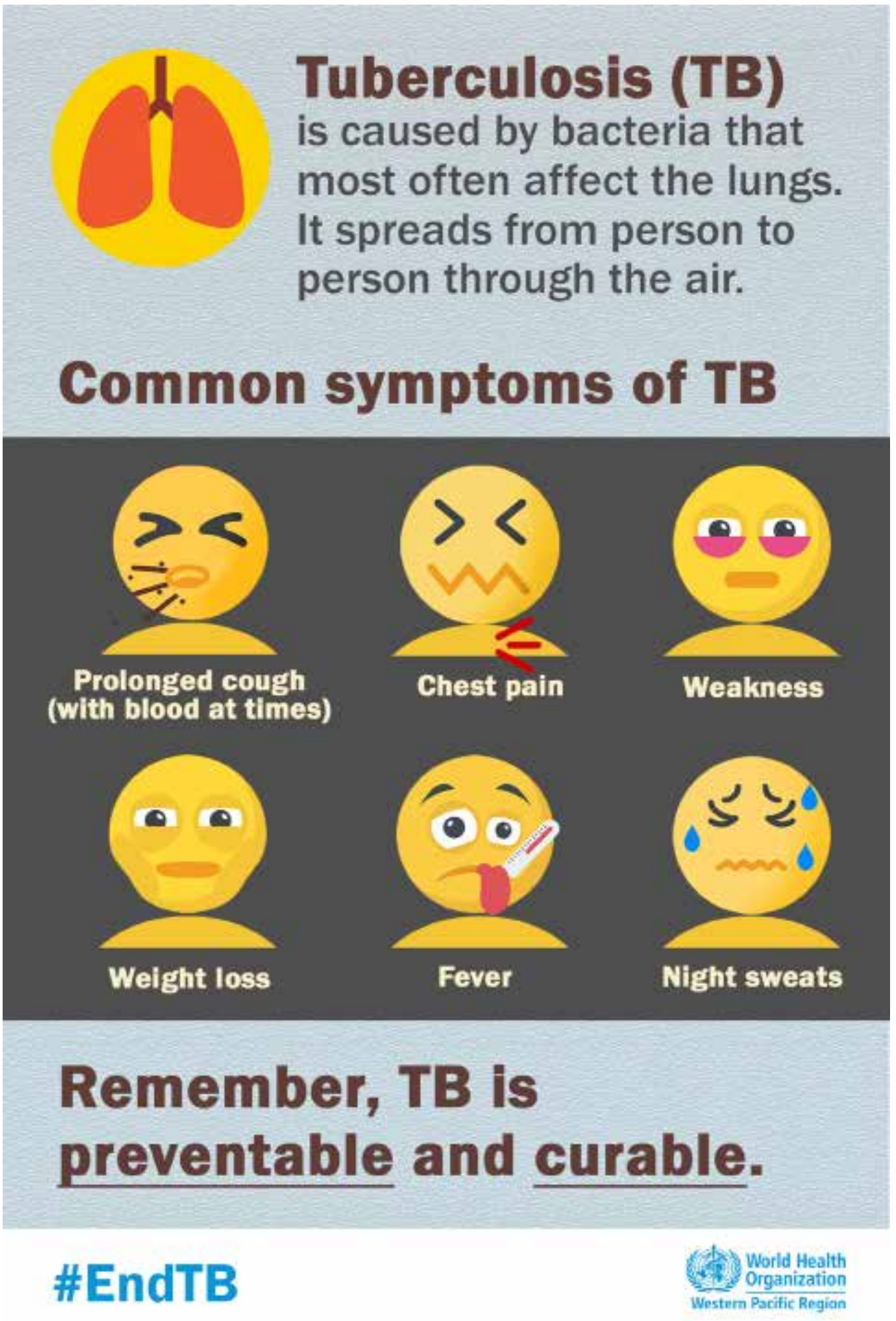
TB prevention: TB infection is very common. If you are infected, you are at risk of falling ill with active TB disease. TB preventive treatment can stop the infection from developing into disease and protect you and your community for years to come.

TB can be treated and cured: The diagnosis and treatment are free of charge; you can access health facilities nearest to your home.

There is a need to strengthen the policy towards universal health coverage for all TB patients to access prevention, diagnosis, treatment and care services with standard quality. Social protection and national health insurance are of importance to persuade health-seeking behaviours in the community.

World TB Day is an opportunity to shine a spotlight on the disease, the achievements towards the End TB, to raise public awareness, and to mobilise the political and social commitment to accelerate sustainable financing and other progress towards the Global and National End TB Strategies by 2020's targets.

Source: WHO



Congratulatory Message by His Excellency Saleumxay KOMMASITH Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Lao People's Democratic Republic On the occasion of the 4th Anniversary of Mekong-Lancang Cooperation Establishment

(23 March 2016 - 23 March 2020)

On the occasion of the 4th Anniversary of Mekong-Lancang Cooperation (MLC), which falls on 23rd March 2020, on behalf of the Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, I would like to convey my profound congratulations and salutations to all people of the MLC Member Countries, including the Lao PDR.

While the international community is facing both expanding opportunity and rising challenges, the Mekong-Lancang Cooperation has played an important role in strengthening multilateralism and mutual support for win-win cooperation in order to address regional and international challenges, thus contributing to shared future of prosperity for all. This year, the outbreak of COVID-19 has posed a broad impact to the regional and global socio-economic development as well as the people's livelihood and spirit. The leading role and the ability of China to comprehensively control over the outbreak in a timely manner provide confidence and strong support to the international community to win the battle against COVID-19.

Since the establishment of MLC in 2016, it has significantly contributed to deepening practical cooperation across the board, promoting mutual trust, advancing socio-economic development, broadening common interests and strengthening good-neighbourliness with a view to enhancing people's well-being, narrowing the development gap and supporting ASEAN Community building under the three pillars, namely (1) political and security, (2) economic and sustainable development, and (3) social, cultural and people to people exchanges and five key priority areas, comprising (1) connectivity, (2) production capacity, (3) cross-border economic cooperation, (4) water resources, and (5) agriculture and poverty reduction.

The Lao PDR, as the co-chair with the People's Republic of China on Mekong-Lancang Cooperation for the period of 2018-2020, pledges a strong commitment to continuing close cooperation with the MLC member countries in order to move forwards our cooperation to a higher level. In this connection, the Lao PDR had successfully hosted the 4th and the 5th MLC Foreign Ministers' Meetings in December 2018 in Luang Prabang and in February 2020 in Vientiane, respectively and is preparing for the upcoming 3rd MLC Leaders' Meeting to be held later this year in Vientiane, Lao PDR.

On this occasion, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to all Mekong Countries and China for the continued support, assistance and constructive engagement in accordance with the theme of Lao co-chairmanship: "Enhancing Partnership for Shared Prosperity". In conclusion, I wish the cooperative relations between and among MLC member countries be further strengthened and deepened, and people-to-people exchange and mutual understanding between and among the people of the Mekong countries and China be further enhanced.

Message by H.E. CHENG Manith, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Cambodia to Lao People's Democratic Republic on the occasion of 4th Anniversary of Mekong-Lancang Cooperation

23 March 2020, Vientiane

On the occasion of the 4th Anniversary of the Mekong-Lancang Cooperation (MLC), I would like to extend my warmest greetings and best wishes of happiness and prosperity to all people of member countries of the MLC.

Since its official launch in March 2016, the MLC have made significant progress and developed the new sub regional mechanism into a full-fledged cooperation scheme by building strong and fully operational multi layer working structure and implementing mechanism that would enable six member countries to move at a faster speed in the realization of the MLC goals to have a community of shared future, peace and prosperity.

Cambodia has actively participated in the MLC mechanism since its establishment and has made significant contributions to the MLC content and areas of cooperation. Samdech Techo Hun Sen, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia and H.E. Li Keqiang, Premier of the State Council of the People's Republic of China co-chaired successful 2nd Mekong-Lancang Cooperation Leaders' Meeting held on 10 January 2018 in Phnom Penh under the theme "Our River of Peace and Sustainable Development". At the meeting, the Leaders had adopted two important documents, namely (1) the Phnom Penh Declaration of the 2nd MLC Leaders' Meeting and (2) the Five Year Plan of Action of the MLC (2018-2022).

Taking this opportunity, I wish to extend my heartiest congratulations to the Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic and the Government of the People's Republic of China for the successful of 5th MLC Foreign Ministers Meeting on 20 February 2020 in Vientiane, Lao PDR and the positive outcomes achieved by the LMC in various fields over the past year. With the strong commitment of the Leaders of the Six member countries to effective implementation of the Plan of Action of the MLC (2018-2022), the MLC will further promote regional economic development, improve people's livelihood, protect environment, intensify people-to-people and cultural exchanges and so on. These benefits would contribute to supporting the ASEAN Community building and narrowing development gaps among ASEAN member countries.

Congratulatory Message from Ambassador of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam on the Occasion of the 4th Anniversary of the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation

On 20th February, 2020, the fifth Mekong - Lancang Cooperation Foreign Ministers' Meeting was successfully held in Vientiane, marking another achievement of the cooperation among six MLC countries.

Under Lao PDR's co-chaimanship, over the past 2 years, MLC has made significant progress in all areas of priority. The cooperation in water resources sector has been strengthened with the organisation of the first Ministerial Meeting of the Mekong – Lancang Water resources Cooperation and the signing of a MOU on cooperation between the MLC Water Resources Cooperation Center and the Secretariat of the Mekong River Commission. The establishment of the MLC Agriculture Cooperation Center and the MLC Youth Exchange Cooperation Center have further facilitated cooperation in agriculture and people-to-people exchange. Hundreds of MLC projects have been developed and implemented, helping member countries enhance regional connectivity, improve production capacity, facilitate coordination in natural resources management, build capacity in environmental protection and promote greater people-to-people exchange.

As for work program in 2020, the Ministers agreed to work together to strengthen the resilience of our economies and accelerate the implementation of the Action Plan for 2018-2020. Sectoral working group will speed up the development of action plans on connectivity and production capacity; foster partnership in addressing natural disasters, pandemics and other non-traditional securities; strengthen coordination in sustainable management and utilization of water resources and development of smart agriculture. Member countries will continue to improve the operational efficiency of the MLC Special Fund.

Now that, numerous already planned events, operations of the Mekong–Lancang cooperation mechanism have been postponed due to the swiff spreading covid-19. The member countries have had to focus on our shared fight against this dreadful pandemic. Consequently, the Mekong–Lancang mechanism should prioritize our coordination on combatting covid-19, and we have been doing well, not sufficent though.

However, we are confident in the future of the Mekong-Lancang Cooperation. We look forward to the success of the Third MLC Summit and are confident that with the commitment of all member countries, the MLC cooperation will further flourish, contributing to peace and prosperity of the region.

Congratulatory Message from H.E. Mr. JIANG Zaidong, Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to the Lao People's Democratic Republic on the Occasion of the 4th Anniversary of the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation

Here we have the annual LMC week again in March. Thanks to the promotion and efforts of the LMC countries, the LMC week is becoming a well known brand, which has strongly deepened understanding and friendship among our peoples, and is now an important platform raising the public awareness of LMC in the six countries and strengthening our commitment to development.

With the joint efforts of the Lancang-Mekong countries, the MLC has kept the momentum of rapid development with deepening practical cooperation across the board, growing political mutual trust among the six countries, broadening common interests and further strengthened good-neighborliness, and has become one of the most dynamic cooperation mechanisms in the sub-region. In the past four years, the LMC mechanism building has been continuously improved, the "3+5+X" cooperation framework we have identified has become increasingly diversified and the areas of cooperation have been continuously expanded. Following the project-oriented model, more than 20 big infrastructural projects are implemented in areas of connectivity, power station and grid, economic developing zone, etc., supported by the special loan from China. A number of people's livelihood improving programme such as Bright Action, Love Heart Journey, College Volunteer, Poverty Reduction Capacity Improving are carried out extensively. With the support of LMC Special Fund, the line agencies of six countries have applied and finished many practical projects and benefit our people's livelihood. LMC is now driven more by internal strength and moving from a period of rapid expansion to a period of all-round development. On the basis of implementing existing projects, we should plan together, strengthen connectivity in trade by linking LMC with the New International Land-Sea Trade Corridor, make greater efforts to build the Lancang-Mekong Economic Development Belt, work hand in hand in the areas such as water resources, public health, agriculture, non-traditional threats to security, promote coordinated development of the LMC with relevant regional and sub-regional cooperation mechanisms, and promote more fruitful outcomes of LMC.

Acting with a high sense of responsibility to people's health, with the personally direction of president Xi Jinping, the Chinese government has taken the most comprehensive and stringent prevention and control measures after the outbreak of the COVID-19. China's efforts to contain the new disease successfully bought time for the world, making great contribution, demonstrating the self-confidence of transparency and responsibility of China as a major country. This has been widely acclaimed by the WHO and the international community. Thanks to arduous endeavors, China has been witnessing a domestic trend in which the situation of epidemic prevention and control is making sustained progress and the order of life and production is being restored at an increasing pace.

President Xi Jinping also put great importance to the international cooperation against COVID-19. Facing the pandemic, no country can solve the problem without working with others. Lancang-Mekong countries are very close neighbors connected by mountains and rivers with future closely interconnected. The Chinese side would like to share information on the epidemic, strengthen exchanges and coordinate actions with its partners. A long-term view should be taken and efforts should be made to explore the establishment of a joint mechanism for dealing with major public health emergencies in order to improve the health and medical level of the people in the region. we believe this joint fight will not only strengthen the community of shared future of peace and prosperity among Lancang-Mekong Countries but also further advance the LMC. We will finally prevail over the pandemic and enhance the prosperity and stability of the region.

Congratulation Mssage from Myanmar Ambassador of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar to the Lao PDR, H.E. U Ko Ko Naing on the 4th Anniversary of the Estabishemnt of Mekong-Langcang Cooperation

It is my great honour to convey best wishes and warm felicitation to the governments and people of Mekong-Lancang member states on this auspicious day of the 4th Anniversary of the founding of the Mekong-Lancang Cooperation. On behalf of the government and people of Myanmar, I would like to congratulate our Co-chairs, China and Lao for their able and tireless efforts throughout this year for our cooperation.

Mekong-Lancang Cooperation is truly a concerted demonstration of will and aspiration of "a river's family" for a peaceful, prospered and developed Mekong region in the sustainable manner. Since its inception in 2016, Mekong-Lancang Cooperation has been transforming itself as brilliant, decisive and speedy cooperation with tangible result to foster peace, prosperity and sustainable development in the region.

In its four years' journey, MLC achieved recognition from our own peoples in term of practical benefit, and from the international community in terms of speed, efficiency and effectiveness.

I am pleased to highlight that all member countries benefitted from the Mekong-Lancang Cooperation Special Fund Projects granted by the China with three batches for the well-being of our peoples. I believe that the successful implementation and tangible results of these projects will definitely raise public awareness of our cooperation and serve as an impetus for our future cooperation activities under the MLC framework.

I view that priority cooperation areas embedded in Mekong-Lancang Cooperation has performed well under its institutional architecture and it is time to expedite further improvement of 3+5+X framework to maintain achieved momentum of delivering benefits to the peoples of Mekong.

I believe that Mekong-Lancang Cooperation bound by the cardinal principles especially of the consensus, equality, mutual benefits, respect for International law and national law of each member state will consolidate the existing traditional bonds of friendship to a higher level of amity among the member countries.

On this special day, I would like to reiterate Myanmar's commitment to contribute to the advancement of the Mekong-Lancang Cooperation framework and devote all our efforts to Strengthen our existing cooperation. I wish the success of Mekong-Lancang Cooperation in its collective efforts to promote peace and prosperity for all people in the region.

Congratulatory Message From H.E. Damrong Kraikruan Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Kingdom of Thailand to the Lao People's Democratic Republic on the Occasion of the 4th Anniversary of the Establishment of Mekong-Lancang Cooperation

Thailand wishes to extend her warmest wishes and congratulations on the occasion of the 4th Anniversary of the establishment of the Mekong - Lancang Cooperation (MLC).

As a strong advocate of multi-dimensional connectivity and the "Connecting the Connectivities" approach, Thailand is committed to working closely with the Mekong countries on aligning ACMECS with the MLC and other sub-regional cooperation frameworks. ACMECS' development partners play an important role in further promoting wider and deeper connectivity in the region.

Thailand, thus, looks forward to continuing the discussion on this and other issues, as well as ways forward at the upcoming 3rd MLC Leaders' Meeting including cooperation on water resources management with a view to materialising a community of shared future of peace, prosperity, and sustainability among MLC member countries.

Opinion

Streetwise

What do you think about the temporary closure of schools?

The Ministry of Education and Sports last week announced the temporary closure of schools across the country to prevent the spread of Covid-19. All state and private educational facilities, from pre-schools through to universities, will be closed until further notice. Vientiane Times asked some members of the public for their thoughts on this issue.

Visith Teppalath

Mr Khamngeun Vongmilerd, a teacher in Sisattanak district of Vientiane: Our school closed as soon as we heard about the announcement from the Ministry of Education and Sports. I think it's a very good way to prevent the spread of



the virus and to protect students because the Covid-19 outbreak is spreading rapidly in many countries around the world. In order to avoid the risk of infections, our school has switched over to an online teaching system. As a teacher, I regularly advise students about how to prevent the spread of Covid-19, and tell them everyone should take good care of their health, they should relax, use face masks, wash hands with soap or use sanitisers, and avoid crowded areas because they will be at risk of infection. Doing these things will help students to protect themselves from the virus. Of course, it's very important to be aware of this matter and make sure that we are safe.

Mr Pern Phanhtuluck, a teacher in Xaysathan district of Xayaboury province: For preventing the spread of Covid-19, I always advise students to wear face masks, avoid crowded events, regularly wash their hands, especially



before eating, and clean around the school and their houses. It's good that the government or the responsible ministry announced the temporary closure of schools. Closing schools during the worldwide outbreak of the virus will keep our students safe point. The closure can also help prevent infection or an outbreak. During the school closure, students should stay at home, and not go to high-risk areas, especially crowded places. They should avoid social events, try to keep themselves healthy by eating good food and relaxing. Making oneself healthy and strong will also protect them from the virus.

Ms Loy, a resident of Chanthabouly district of Vientiane: I agree with the decision of the authorities to close schools until the situation improves. I think it's the right way to prevent infections and protect our school children from risks. As we know, Covid-19 is very dangerous and it can infect anyone easily. Schools are always crowded



and if there is any infection, it will affect all the students or teachers at that school, as well as the families of the infected students. So, it is better to have a temporary closure until the situation is better than it is now. At home, parents should educate their children well about the dangers and effects of Covid-19 and how to avoid getting infected. Parents shouldn't take children to crowded places or crowded events. Some parents may worry about who will take care of the children when schools are closed as they have to work all day. However, they should find a way to tackle this issue, or if possible, the government or the responsible sector should find a solution to help the parents.

Mr Souksavanh Keopanya, a resident of Xaythany district of Vientiane: It isn't good that there is an outbreak in our neighbouring countries. Fortunately, there isn't report about infections in our country as yet. Everyone is worried about the situation. Before the announcement of the closure of schools, parents were worried that their children could get infected in the schools. Parents wanted the schools to be closed. Now, there is an announcement about the closure and parents are happy with it. We don't know if the virus will affect Laos, and it's better to prevent infections before they happen. The temporary closure of schools is a good way to protect our children. However, during this time, students should strictly control themselves to avoid risks. They should stay in and not go to crowded events or places. They should use their free time to study at home or do something useful for their families.

ADB

Invitation for Bids

Date:	24 March 2020
Brief Record Title:	ADB GD604-LAO: Water Supply and Sanitation Sector Project (Additional Financing)
Contract No. and Title:	NCB-Goods-02: Supply and Delivery of Household Class C Water Meters and Fittings for WSSP (Batch 3&4&5)
Deadline for Submission of Bids	24 April 2020 at 10:00 hours (local time)

1. The Lao People's Democratic Republic has received financing from the Asian Development Bank toward the cost of the Water Supply and Sanitation Sector Project and intends to apply part of the proceeds toward payments under the contract named above. Bidding is open to Bidders from eligible source countries of the ADB.
2. The Department of Water Supply of the Ministry of Public Works and Transport (MPWT) (the "Purchaser"), invites sealed bids from eligible Bidders for the supply and delivery of about 10,000 units of Household Class C Water Meters and Fittings for WSSP (Batch 3&4&5) in Lao PDR.
3. National Competitive Bidding will be conducted in accordance with Single-Stage: One-Envelope bidding procedure and is open to all bidders from eligible countries as described in the Bidding Document.
4. Only eligible Bidders with the following key qualifications should participate in this bidding:
   - Submitted audited balance sheets and income statements or other financial statements acceptable to the Purchaser, for the last three (3) years to demonstrate the current soundness of the Bidder's financial position.
   - Minimum average annual turnover of Lao Kip 3.1 billion, within the last three (3) years.
   - Access to liquid assets, unencumbered real assets, lines of credit, and other financial means (independent of any contractual advance payment) sufficient to meet the construction cash flow requirements of Lao Kip 1.2 billion for the contract and of the Bidder's other commitments. The figures must should be derived from audited balance sheets years and income statements or other financial statements for the last three (3) years, which shall form a part of the bid.
   - Participation in at least one (1) contract that has been successfully or satisfactorily completed within the last three (3) years as main supplier and that is similar to the proposed works, where the value of at least Lao Kip 1.6 billion.
   - All pending litigation shall be handled as received against the Bidder and as shall in total not represent more than 50 percent of the Bidder's assets.

   Specifications are thoroughly provided in the Bidding Documents.
5. Interested eligible Bidders may obtain further information and inspect Bidding Documents, at the address given below between 9:00 and 17:00 hours on any working.
6. To purchase the Bidding Documents in (English), interested eligible Bidders should:
   a) Visit the office of the Project Coordination Unit (PCU) at the address below and pay a non-refundable fee of Lao Kip 1,000,000 for each set upon the submission of a written application. The method of payment will be by cashier's check or in cash in favor of the: PCU.
      OR
   b) Request for delivery by sending a written application to the PCU at the address below. In this case and in addition to the sum in (a), the application must include a cashier's check in favor of the: Department of Water Supply, Ministry of Public Works and Transport, for the amount of Lao Kip 1,500,000 per set to cover the cost of a courier. No liability will be accepted for loss or late delivery.
7. Deliver bids:
   - to the address mentioned below
   - on or before the deadline: 24 April 2020 at 10:00 hours
   - Together with a Bid Securing Declaration.

   Electronic bidding will not be permitted. Late bids will be rejected. Bids will be publicly opened in the presence of the Bidders' designated representatives and anyone who chooses to attend at the address below at 10:00 hours on 24 April 2020.
8. The address referred to above is as follows:
   Mr. Vanhxaymeng Chithmanivanh
   Project Director,
   Project Coordination Unit
   Water Supply and Sanitation Sector Project (WSSP)
   Department of Water Supply (DWS)
   Ministry of Public Works and Transport (MPWT)
   Meeting Room, 4th Floor Public Works and Transport Institute,
   Dongpalane Road
   Vientiane Capital City
   Lao PDR
   Telephone: +856-21-416519, +856-21-453128
   Facsimile number: +856-21-415658, +856-21-263362
   Electronic mail address: wsspleo.4104@gmail.com

Asian Development Bank

Vientiane Times on CD-ROM

Issues of Vientiane Times from 1994 to March 2020 have been recorded on CD-ROM. Now available at Vientiane Times office. Phonpapao Village, Unit 32, Sisattanak district, Vientiane. P.O. Box: 5723, Tel: (856-21) 336042, 336048.
Fax: (856-21) 336041. Email: info@vientianetimes.la

East Asia mainstay in pandemic fight

CHINA (China Daily) -- The novel coronavirus outbreak was declared a global pandemic by the World Health Organization on March 11. This is the first time since the H1N1 swine flu outbreak in the United States in 2009 that the WHO has raised a health emergency to the highest level. And by Thursday, the virus had spread to more than 160 countries, infecting over 240,000 people and claiming more than 10,000 lives.

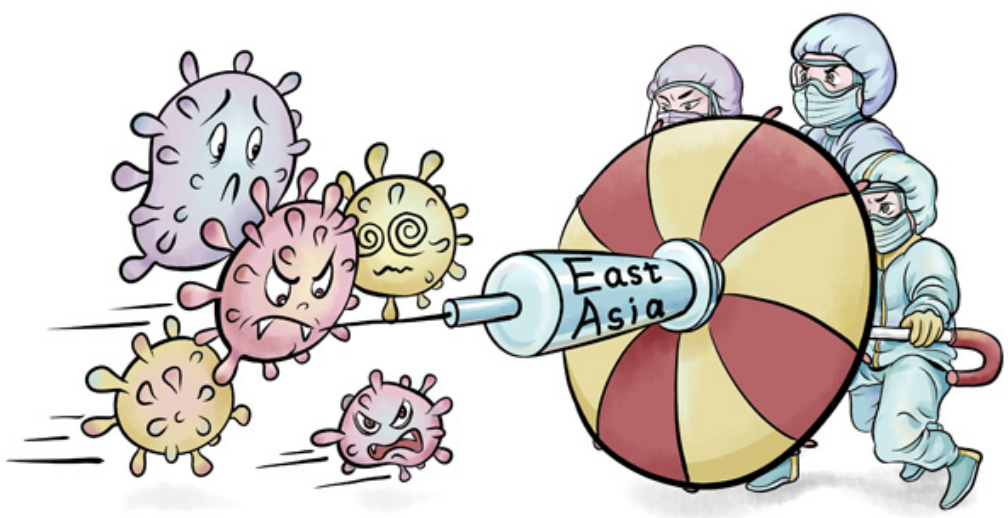
The role of East Asia in the fight against the pandemic is crucial. With the situations deteriorating in Europe, West Asia, and uncertainties looming large in the United States, where unfortunately some of politicians are fanning racism and xenophobia, the world is desperately looking for an anchor to remain stable. As a region on the front line of the battle against the virus, East Asia's actions and solidarity will have a huge impact on the course and outcome of the global fight against the disease.

China has passed its most difficult period. President Xi Jinping's recent visit to Wuhan, capital of Hubei province and the epicenter of the epidemic in China, was a turning point in China's arduous efforts to contain the spread of the disease. With the number of new infections continuing to decline in the country, China has crossed the peak period of the outbreak. As one of the top scientists in the US said China is now close to becoming a "green zone", free of the novel coronavirus.

Other East Asian nations also show positive signs

Positive signs are evident in other East Asian countries, too. The situation in the Republic of Korea is improving as confirmed new cases per day have plunged from 851 on March 3 to below 100 per day on Thursday. Japan has kept its contagion rate at a relatively low level. And Singapore, although hit early, has used its own containment strategy to control the spread of the virus.

The resolve and efficiency of East Asian countries, exhibited in their prevention and control measures, can be a lesson for the rest of the world how to contain the pandemic. In view of the large number of confirmed cases treated and discharged by the hospitals in East Asian countries, especially China, the battle against the novel coronavirus in East Asia constitutes a significant part of the whole picture.



A cartoon shows East Asia nations fighting the virus.

East Asia's fight against the disease is not only to save lives, but also to stop and reduce economic losses in an increasingly interdependent world. For every $10 billion reduction in China's manufacturing output, there is a corresponding reduction in production and sales, worth about $6.7 billion, outside China. This could result in a further slowdown of the world economy which is just emerging out of the 2008 global financial crisis.

Similar scenarios are unfolding in supply chains in East Asia and beyond. Once supply chains, for instance in the semiconductor industry, are interrupted in the ROK and Japan, tech giants such as Apple will be affected on the other side of the planet. This phenomenon is also true for China, Japan and the ROK, as the lockdown in Wuhan forced the production lines of Hyundai and Toyota to ground to a halt even in their own countries. It is only the tip of the iceberg of the close economic interconnectedness in today's globalized world.

Important to sustain global financial order

Notably, East Asia's fight against the coronavirus has had a preventive effect on the global financial order. This month has witnessed a historic stock market crash, partly sparked by panic the pandemic has created in the United States, which has affected the major economies around the world. Even after the Dow Jones Industrial Average slumped by more than 20 percent, worse than that during 2008 financial crisis, Wall Street experts warned it was not a good time to buy in. The global financial order needs to be sustained by strong actions to contain the pandemic, and East Asia is possibly the only region at this stage where the virus is being effectively contained.

Moreover, East Asia's initial victory over this non-traditional threat has its significance for the world's strategic stability in the medium term. It is not a coincidence that the stock market volatility has coincided with a recent steep fall in oil prices. Behind the price war led by oil producers, there is a fear of global deflation caused by the panic over the virus, which has substantively disturbed international markets.

In other words, the pandemic is having a negative ripple effect, economically and financially, on the current world order. Considering the deterioration in the macro environment due to the fierce major-power competition and the moral degeneration of US politicians, some of whom have called the novel coronavirus the "Chinese virus", a worse-case scenario cannot be ruled out. In a world of increasing complexity, though, East Asian countries are bound to maintain strategic stability to prevent the region and the world from sliding into a major crisis.

China, Japan, ROK should deepen mutual assistance

East Asian countries, especially China, Japan and the ROK, therefore, should urgently strengthen mutual assistance and cooperation, and resolutely curb the transmission of the virus in the region. Drawing from China's experience, Japan and the ROK need to attach equal importance to stopping the spread of the virus and resuming production. The former is to save lives and maintain social stability, while the latter is to help restore the economic dynamics by providing strong support logistically, financially and technologically. Both are indispensable for achieving total victory over the pandemic.

There is also a need to take more specific and effective measures. First, a multilateral coordination mechanism for disease prevention and control needs to be established, aimed at information sharing, visa management and customs clearance, to maintain the free movement of goods, capital and service in the region.

Second, industrial cooperation should be enhanced, especially among China, Japan and the ROK, through the East Asian government-business-university-research collaboration model in order to ensure the stability of transnational supply chains, exchanges of medical experiences and technologies, and to accelerate R&D in medicines and vaccines.

Third, it is important to promote righteous and rational behaviors and join forces with all stakeholders, in order to curb the pandemic. The international community cannot afford to waste valuable time and resources on stigmatization, as it would mean fighting a man-made virus along with a natural one.

Move to safeguard regional public health

The virus respects no borders, so every country and region is required to appropriately respond to it. Since the outbreak, East Asian countries have been making extraordinary joint efforts to safeguard public health both within their borders as well as in the region. After the Special ASEAN-China Foreign Ministers' Meeting on the coronavirus outbreak in February, the foreign ministers of China, Japan and ROK held a trilateral video conference on Friday. And it is expected that ASEAN member states, and China, Japan and the ROK will further enhance communication and coordination on fighting the pandemic.

A regional network for combating the virus is taking shape, which will influence the regional and global situations with the resolve, speed, and action of the East Asian countries and its peoples. The world is counting on such a network.



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

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

French food festival



Members of the public are invited to take part in the French food festival for 2020 called 'Good France'. The event will be held in various restaurants across Vientiane with unique French culinary skills on display.
When: March 23 to 29.
Where: At Bistrot 22, l'Adresse, La Signature, You na, l'Atmo and Paradice in Vientiane.

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

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

MCNV LEARN

Short Term Contract - Project Coordinator
Job Description

Introduction:
MCNV is a Dutch INGO with the mission to support development activities in S.E. Asia. In Lao PDR it undertakes integrated rural development activities with a particular focus on nutrition and mother and child healthcare and at a national level is supporting a health research activity in conjunction with Lao Public Health institute through a 5-year EU-funded LEARN Program, which started May 2015.

MCNV is currently recruiting for the position of PROECT COORDINATOR, based in Vientiane Capital, for the timeframe of April 1st – July 31rd.
The key responsibility of this role is to coordinate activities and support the LEARN Program Manager. The LEARN Program provides support to Lao Tropical and Public Health Institute and the University of Health Science and works in collaboration with the University of Public Health in Hanoi and Vrije University (VU) in Amsterdam. The coordinator will assist the LEARN Program Manager to complete the LEARN program.

Key Responsibilities:

- Support the LEARN Program Manager (PM) to ensure that the LEARN Program is implemented in an effective and efficient manner, in accordance with MCNV and EU policies and procedures
- With LEARN PM, monitor program progress, budget expenditure, agreements and reporting schedules, ensuring deliverables are submitted on time with appropriate feedback to partner organizations
- Support partners in implementation, for example facilitating research studies, editing project and financial reports, etc
- Implement the monitoring and evaluation framework to demonstrate the achievement of objectives
- Support the production of publicity materials and media for the LEARN program

Qualifications:

- Minimum Bachelor's degree in health sciences or social sciences, post-graduate degree preferred
- Relevant qualifications or skills in project coordination, organizational development, community development, project monitoring and evaluation and reporting
- Proven experience in coordinating the successful implementation of projects in Laos, working with INGOs and government agencies
- Proven financial management, analytical, numeracy and planning skills
- Experience in implementing M&E frameworks
- Good communication and interpersonal skills
- Written English proficiently at a minimal of college level

Please send applications (CV and cover letter) to kannika.keohavong@mcnv.la
The closing date for applications is March 25, 2020.

MCNV is an equal opportunities employer and offers a competitive benefits package.

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





VIP - City Tour Service
Model: Mercedes-Benz E 350
Pick Up from Airport –Hotel-Airport



For English, Lao call 020 55599209
For Chinese call 020 52244335

MANTHATURATH PRINTING PRESS
ໂຮງພິມ ມັນທາຕຸລາດ
Manthaturath Printing Press
B. Nongbouathong,
Sikhottabong district,
Vientiane Lao PDR
Tel: 217 243,
Moblie: 020 55516138

Vientiane Times Subscription 2020

1. **DOMESTIC SUBSCRIPTION (5 issues/week) and online fee**				
Regular price	66 issues (3 months)	297,000k	+200,000k ☐	497,000k ☐
	132 issues (6 months)	594,000k	+200,000k ☐	794,000k ☐
	264 issues (1 year)	1,188,000k	+200,000k ☐	1,388,000k ☐
Home Delivery (City Centre) Area: Thadeua Rd. Dongdok, Ban Tanmixay and Sikhay villages.	66 issues (3 months)	363,000k	+200,000k ☐	563,000k ☐
	132 issues (6 months)	726,000k	+200,000k ☐	926,000k ☐
	264 issues (1 year)	1,452,000k	+200,000k ☐	1,652,000k ☐
2. DOMESTIC SUBSCRIPTION FOR PROVINCES (5 issues/week), inclusive of postage cost				
Deliver to Provinces + online fee	132 issues (6 months)	1,320,000k	+200,000k ☐	1,520,000k ☐
	264 issues (1 year)	2,640,000k	+200,000k ☐	2,840,000k ☐
3. OVERSEAS SUBSCRIPTION (5 issues/week) and online fee				**Total + Online fee**
Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia	132 issues (6 months)	3,086,000k	+200,000k ☐	3,286,000k ☐
	264 issues (1 year)	6,171,000k	+200,000k ☐	6,371,000k ☐
Asia, Australia & New Zealand	132 issues (6 months)	3,927,000k	+200,000k ☐	4,127,000k ☐
	264 issues (1 year)	7,854,000k	+200,000k ☐	8,054,000k ☐
Europe (Including Russia)	132 issues (6 months)	4,488,000k	+200,000k ☐	4,688,000k ☐
	264 issues (1 year)	8,976,000k	+200,000k ☐	9,176,000k ☐
America and Canada	132 issues (6 months)	5,610,000k	+200,000k ☐	5,810,000k ☐
	264 issues (1 year)	11,220,000k	+200,000k ☐	11,420,000k ☐

4. ONLINE SUBSCRIPTION FEE
The website is updated four (4) times a day and every issue is published on our website in HTML and PDF

3 months (66 issues) 200,000 ☐	6 months (132 issues) 400,000 ☐	1 year (264 issues) 600,000 ☐

Please return this form with the following information to Vientiane Times

FULL NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

TEL: _____FAX:_____EMAIL:_____

FOR ONLINE: Name:_____PREFERRED PASSWORD_____

(Password not more then 8 characters)

Mail this completed form with your cheque to:

Vientiane Times, Kamphaengmeuang Rd, Phonpapao Village,
Unit 32 Sisattanak District, Vientiane Lao PDR
PO Box 5723. Tel: 021 336042, Fax: 021 336041
Website: www.vientianetimes.org.la
Email: info@vientianetimes.la

Payment in advance

Please request rates for other destinations at info@vientianetimes.la. Make your payment to Vientiane Times bank account at the **BCEL (US$) A/c 010110100989471001 or (kip) A/c 010110000989471001**

PNPC

XE-PIAN XE-NAMNOY POWER COMPANY LIMITED
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

How to access Vientiane Times products and services

1. **Paper Subscription**
   Paper subscription boasts a home delivery service in Vientiane, postage within Laos or internationally for minimum period of three months at selected prices. Additionally, our readers can purchase a copy of the Vientiane Times at minimarts and shops in Vientiane and from our branches in Luang Prabang, Champassak and Savannakhet provinces.
2. **Online Subscription**
   We offer two ways to read the Vientiane Times digitally. Subscribers can log on to our website, which is updated three times a day, or register for daily email updates. After you have paid a subscription fee, you will be sent a username and password which will give unlimited access to the content of the newspaper every day, including advertisements. You can also access back issues for up to seven days. Special discounts are given for longer subscriptions.
3. **Paper Advertisements**
   Advertisements in the Vientiane Times can reach hundreds of thousands of readers, including online subscribers, both within Laos and around the world. Sizes ranging from 1/20 to full page black-and-white and colour display ads are on offer at reasonable prices.
4. **Online Advertisements**
   Advertising via the Vientiane Times website will give your business international exposure. If you have your own website we are able to assist you by linking it with our web site, and your logo will be placed on our home page, www.vientianetimes.la/; www.vientianetimes.org.la/
5. **CDROM**
   Editions of the Vientiane Times from 1994 to the present are stored and available on CD/DVD-ROM at special prices. Enquire via the VT office from Monday to Friday during regular office hours.
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.

Vientiane Times Payment Online

Online subscribers who hold Visa and UnionPay cards can pay for services online via mobile apps and web applications of BCEL One.
Customers around the world are able to pay for newspaper and online news subscriptions, advertisements and other service fees with various methods. Make cheques payable to Vientiane Times office or transfer cash using card or online services via the Bank Pour le Commerce Exterieur Lao (BCEL) in either US dollars (a/c 010110100989471001) or Lao kip (a/c 010110000989471001).
If you have transferred your payment, please fax or email the receipt to the Vientiane Times address below.
Vientiane Times office, Phonpapao Village, Sisattanak District, P.O. Box: 5723 Vientiane, Lao PDR, Tel: (856-21) 336042, 336048, Fax: (856-21) 336041. Email: info@vientianetimes.la website: www.vientianetimes.la; www.vientianetimes.org.la

LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC
Peace Independence Democracy Unity and Prosperity

Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF)
Department of Rural Development and Cooperative (DRDC)
Reducing Rural Poverty and Malnutrition Project
Project ID No. P162565

REQUEST FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST
Payment Service Provider
Loan/credit #: 6374, Project No.: P162565

The Government of Lao PDR received an IDA credit from the World Bank (WB) to implement a program entitled "**Reducing Rural Poverty and Malnutrition Project (P162565)**. The Project Development Objective (PDO) is *to support the design and implementation of a nutrition-sensitive social assistance program to improve nutrition behaviors and enhance the convergence of nutrition-focused interventions.* The project will support the implementation of a nutrition-sensitive cash transfer program to address poverty and malnutrition in 12 districts in four northern provinces: Oudomxay, Phongsaly, Xiengkhuang, and Houaphan. It will provide a complementary package of incentives (cash transfers) aligned with social and behavior change communication (SBCC) to households in poor, rural areas, complementing other nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive sector investments. The Project is implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF). The Department of Rural Development and Cooperative (DRDC) within MAF has been designated by MAF as the main counterpart for implementing this project.

The project will rely on periodic delivery of cash to registered beneficiaries through independent payment providers. During the program enrollment process, the beneficiary families will register a grantee or a proxy who will receive the cash transfer. They will receive and manage the CCT program ID with photo, which can be used to identify beneficiary families and their grantee/proxies. Cash transfer amounts are set at LAK 140,000 per beneficiary family per month, which is about 14 percent of household consumption for the poor. The payment, except for the first one, is subject to the compliance to conditionalities (e.g. attendance to SBCC sessions), where the payment will be suspended to non-complied beneficiaries. When a payment was suspended by mistakes, the program will make retro-active payments.

The objective of this contract is to ensure the transparency, efficacy, and broader applicability of the payment system beyond this project. The payment system should be modern, reliable, cost-effective, and secure, to reduce the risk of delays, theft, fraud, error, corruption, etc.

The project is seeking for a Payment Service Provider(s) who can effectively provide electronic cash transfer[1] methods for the benefit of program beneficiaries in the project area, taking into consideration the financial inclusion policies of the Government of Laos for the beneficiaries. The fund transfer methods should entail electronic transfer solutions including into: bank accounts, wallet accounts or any other suitable type of store of value transactional account that can be uniquely associated with a beneficiary. Under some circumstances where the beneficiaries without having access to digital platform, cash delivery (direct payment of physical cash) is required to cover overall beneficiary population. To ensure coverage of whole beneficiaries in the pilot provinces, the Payment Service Provider may outsource or team up with other service providers with different business plans or ownership.

[1] A full cash transfer to beneficiaries mean that a) the client has an account and the provider has successfully credited the account with the correct amount within the stipulated time; b) notified the client that the credit is done; c) enabled cash-out for the client and d) client has acknowledged receipt of funds and ability to cash out.

Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF) now invites eligible Payment Service Providers ("PSPs") to indicate their interest in providing the services. The PSPs should be a reputable firm having proven experience in transferring cash to household level, ideally in the project areas. The shortlisting criteria for the PSPs eligible to apply for the assignment includes the following:

- Be a legal entity acceptable to Ministry of Finance, independent and able to comply with international standards on business consulting services;
- Having authorized to offer the service by Bank of Lao PDR and similar experiences as payment service provider
- Robust financials: defined by capital adequacy, plan and ability to make long term investments in technology, distribution
- Ability to enroll the maximum number of beneficiaries and provide access to a digital account in the most convenient manner to the beneficiary, into the program. RRPMP project will implement in 4 northern provinces of Laos: Phongsaly, Oudomxay, Xiengkhouang, and Huaphan, 12 districts including :
  - Phongsaly Province : May district, Khua district, Samphanh district, Boontai district
  - Oudomxai Province : La district, Namor district
  - Huanphanh Province : Huameuang district, Xamtay district, Kuane district, Sone district
  - Xiengkhouang province : Kham district, Nonghed district.

The attention of interested PSPs is drawn to paragraph 3.14 to 3.17 of the World Bank's Procurement Regulations, July 2016 revised November 2017 and August 2018 (for Regulations projects), setting forth the World Bank's policy on conflict of interest.
PSPs may associate with other firms in the form of a joint venture or a sub-consultancy to enhance their qualifications.
A Consultant will be selected in accordance with the Consultant's Qualification-Based Selection (CQS) method set out in the Procurement Regulations.

Further information including the Terms of Reference for the assignment can be obtained at the address below during office hours from 08:00 to 16:00 hours, from Monday to Friday (Standard Lao PDR time).

Expressions of interest must be delivered in a written form to the address below (in person, or by mail, or by e-mail) not later than April 24, 2020.

Mr Insone Saysombath, Project coordinator

Email: insonesaysombath@yahoo.com, Mobile: 020 59888199, Office: 021 222346
Cc: Mrs. Khamphout CHANTHAVONG, Project Procurement focal point

Email: phoutdrdc@gmail.com, Mobile: 020 2244 6660, Office: 021 222346
Address: Department of Rural Development and Cooporatives, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Ban Sibounheuang, Saysettha, inside the Prime Minister complex, Vientiane, Lao P.D.R

Sports



Soccer stars Wu Lei and Paulo Dybala (*bottom right*) and the NBA's Kevin Durant are among the highest-profile athletes to test positive for COVID-19. Team China and Espanyol striker Wu on Saturday said he is recovering from the infection with his family at their Spanish home.

A-list athletes not safe from harm

(China Daily) -- From NBA icon Kevin Durant to Chinese soccer international Wu Lei, the number of global sports stars being infected by COVID-19 continues to grow.

Thankfully, the athletes in question have so far displayed only mild symptoms or none at all. Fans, though, have begun to wonder if their sporting idols are more at risk from the virus than most, or if it could impact, or even end, their careers.

In general, medical experts expect a positive prognosis for sports stars.

"The majority of the infected athletes are young," Zhao Weiguo, a professor and expert in respiratory diseases at Chinese PLA General Hospital told new media platform SportBank.

"Most of the confirmed cases that suffered from heavy symptoms are people over 60 years old. The proportion of young people who have heavy symptoms is very low. It depends on the condition of an athlete's lungs. If his or her body has a positive reaction towards treatment, the athlete's career won't be affected.

"If the condition is heavy and the lungs recover slowly, the athlete will take a longer time to return. After evaluating the lungs, athletes can gradually start adaptive training."

Shandong Luneng's Belgian midfielder Marouane Fellaini, formerly of Manchester United, was on Sunday announced as the first Chinese Super League player to test positive for the virus.

Last Friday, the Chinese Fencing Association revealed that three of its athletes, who had been competing in Europe, were infected. It was the first time that confirmed cases were reported from a Chinese national team.

Sports fans' anxiety levels were raised again when the Chinese Football Association confirmed Wu's infection. The news shocked the Chinese soccer community, with related topics viewed over 570 million times within half a day on Weibo.

The 28-year-old Espanyol striker is so far the only Chinese international to test positive.

On Saturday, Wu attempted to reassure fans he is fine in a video posted on Weibo.

"As you all know, I indeed have tested positive for the novel coronavirus, and I'm self-quarantined at home," said a smiling Wu in a clear voice. "I'm in great condition now and all the symptoms have basically gone.

"I have run a series of tests on my lungs, including a CT scan, and the result turned out to be good. I really want to thank you all for your support and blessings.

"In the meantime, I hope all of you can pay special attention to the coronavirus. We still haven't completely beat the virus.

"Keep washing your hands and stay indoors. I believe we can win the battle against the coronavirus eventually. And I can't wait to return to the pitch."

Chinese outlet Red Star News reported that Wu had displayed typical coronavirus symptoms, including coughing, fever and chest pains. However, they were deemed mild enough for him not be hospitalised and remain quarantined at home with his family in Barcelona.

"I'll spend more time with my children and record their childhood. This is simply life, but never boring," said Wu in a blog post last week, accompanied by a video of him rolling around on the floor playing with his kids.

Risky business

It makes sense that professional athletes have stronger bodies and immune systems than most. However, pushing themselves to their physical limits can sometimes increase their vulnerability to virus infections.

"Intensive training and competition puts athletes' bodies under huge stress," Zhang Yimin, a professor at Beijing Sport University, was quoted by thepaper.cn.

"According to research, doing intensive sports for a prolonged period reduces people's immunity, which significantly increases the risk of being infected."

Competing in teams can, of course, aid the spread of the virus, particularly in contact sports, while locker-room interaction is also a risk factor.

Wu's club Espanyol is a case in point, with six players and staff at the La Liga club testing positive for the coronavirus. Like all major European soccer leagues, La Liga is suspended due to the pandemic.

The soccer world, however, is remaining resilient, reckons former China international Sun Jihai, who expects Wu to bounce back in style if and when the action does resume in Spain.

"This is a tough moment for Wu Lei. There can always be difficulties on your journey in a foreign league," former Manchester City defender Sun wrote on Weibo.

"You have to believe in yourself and get well as soon as possible. When the epidemic ends and La Liga restarts, you will soar again on the pitch.

"This is a tough moment for Europe. I want to send my best wishes to all my old friends of Manchester City and all the people who have suffered from the pandemic. Take care and be safe."

The Asian Football Confederation expressed its support for Wu, saying on Weibo: "Be patient and stay strong. We all stand behind you!"

Wu's former club Shanghai SIPG also sent best wishes to the man whose goals helped it lift the 2018 CSL crown.

IOC to finalise discussions on possible Tokyo 2020 postponement within four weeks, cancellation not on agenda

LAUSANNE (Xinhua) -- The Executive Board of the International Olympic Committee Sunday announced that the IOC will step up its scenario-planning for Tokyo 2020 and a detailed discussions including the scenario of postponement will be completed within four weeks.

"The IOC will, in full coordination and partnership with the Tokyo 2020 Organising Committee, the Japanese authorities and the Tokyo Metropolitan Government, start detailed discussions to complete its assessment of the rapid development of the worldwide health situation and its impact on the Olympic Games, including the scenario of postponement. The IOC is confident that it will have finalised these discussions within the next four weeks," the IOC said in a statement.

The IOC Executive Board emphasised that a cancellation of Tokyo 2020 would not solve any of the problems or help anybody. Therefore, cancellation is not on the agenda.

According to the statement, a number of critical venues needed for the Games could potentially not be available anymore. The situations with millions of nights already booked in hotels is extremely difficult to handle, and the international sports calendar for at least 33 Olympic sports would have to be adapted. These are just a few of many, many more challenges.

These scenarios relate to modifying existing operational plans for the Games to go ahead on 24 July 2020, and also for changes to the start date of the Games.

On the one hand, there are significant improvements in Japan where the people are warmly welcoming the Olympic flame. This could strengthen the IOC's confidence in the Japanese hosts that the IOC could, with certain safety restrictions, organise Olympic Games in the country whilst respecting its principle of safeguarding the health of everyone involved.

On the other hand, there is a dramatic increase in cases and new outbreaks of COVID-19 in different countries on different continents. This led the Executive Board to the conclusion that the IOC needs to take the next step in its scenario-planning.

After the Executive Board meeting, IOC President Thomas Bach wrote to the global athlete community to provide them with an explanation of the IOC's approach.

In the letter, Bach stated once more that safeguarding the health of everyone involved and contributing to contain the virus is the fundamental principle, and said: "Human lives take precedence over everything, including the staging of the Games. The IOC wants to be part of the solution. Therefore we have made it our leading principle to safeguard the health of everyone involved, and to contribute to containing the virus.

"I wish, and we all are working for this, that the hope so many athletes, NOCs and IFs from all five continents have expressed will be fulfilled: that at the end of this dark tunnel we are all going through together, not knowing how long it is, the Olympic flame will be a light at the end of this tunnel." he wrote.

KBO team cancels practice after player reports fever

South Korea (Yonhap/The Korea Herald) - A South Korean baseball club canceled its practice and closed its home stadium on Monday after a player reported a fever.

The Lotte Giants of the Korea Baseball Organization (KBO) said the unidentified player will be tested for the novel coronavirus later in the day, and the rest of the team will be self-isolated in their homes in the meantime.

The Giants, based in Busan, 450 kilometers southeast of Seoul, came home from their spring training in Australia last Tuesday.

They had three days off and returned to practice on Saturday.

The COVID-19 outbreak has forced the KBO to cancel all preseason games and delay the start of the regular season. It was supposed to start this Saturday, and now the league is hoping to get things going by mid-April. The KBO will meet with club representatives tomorrow to discuss scheduling.

There hasn't been a positive case yet among KBO players or employees, but a few teams have already survived some scares. The Kiwoom Heroes were forced to halt their training last Monday when a minor league player showed symptoms. The Doosan Bears also pressed pause after learning that their minor league team had been on the same flight home from Taiwan as the Kiwoom minor leaguer. He later tested negative.

The SK Wyverns and the NC Dinos also had to cancel their practices last Tuesday after an employee of the company in charge of their scoreboards tested positive for the virus. The teams returned to action later in the week after front office staffers who'd come in contact with the employee all tested negative.

