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- “MIFER said the World Bank informed that it would make available US 14 Billion to support member countries’ efforts to meet the challenge of COVID-19. Then, World Bank said US 50 million would be available for Myanmar under IDA credit Fast Track Facility and that World Bank teams were currently evaluating the possible impact on Myanmar’s economy.”
- “China will provide US\$6.78million (K9.45 billion) to Myanmar for 22 projects under the Mekong-Lancang cooperation initiative, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced on Monday.”



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Financial and Business



Myanmar Central Bank Cuts Interest Rates Another 1% to Aid Economy

25 Mar 2020

YANGON—The Central Bank of Myanmar (CBM) has dropped interest rates by an additional 1 percent as the country's economy has slowed due to the COVID-19 global pandemic.

CBM announced a 0.5 percent reduction in interest rates on March 12, saying it was needed to support the country's economy. However, business people have criticized the move, saying it wouldn't be enough to help the country's declining economy.

In its latest move, the bank said on Tuesday that it will reduce its interest rate from 9.5 percent to 8.5 percent, effective on April 1, in the hope of spurring economic growth.

According to the latest directive, the minimum bank deposit rate will be lowered from 7.5 percent to 6.5 percent, while the maximum lending rate will be lowered from 12.5 to 11.5 percent for collateralized loans and from 15.5 percent to 14.5 for non-collateralized loans.

CBM announced in February that it was considering reducing interest rates but said it will proceed with caution due to inflation concerns.

Myanmar's economy is declining significantly as the clothing, tourism and manufacturing industries are suffering from the coronavirus outbreak, according to the Union of Myanmar

Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (UMFCCI).

The Tourism Ministry said tourist arrivals to Myanmar are likely to drop 50 percent this year due to the outbreak. The Union of Myanmar Travel Association told The Irrawaddy that a total of \$800,000 worth of travel bookings have been cancelled since late January due to the travel restrictions.

Last week, the Myanmar government announced an initial stimulus package to cushion the country's economy against the impact of COVID-19. The package includes 100 billion kyats (nearly US\$70 million) worth of loans, postponed deadlines for tax payments and tax exemptions for garment, manufacturing, hotel and tourism businesses as well as small and medium-sized enterprises owned by local business people.

The fund will provide loans at an interest rate of only 1 percent for a period of one year. The rate and the period will be reviewed later after the economic impact of the virus outbreak can be assessed, the government said.

Source: The Irrawaddy

<https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/myanmar-central-bank-cuts-interest-rates-another-1-aid-economy.html>





Myanmar banks to be sufficiently capitalised for COVID-19

26 Mar 2020

Myanmar banks will continue to provide daily services including cash withdrawals during office hours. The banks have been advised by the Central Bank of Myanmar (CBM) to ensure there is sufficient cash at their branches and ATMs across the country at all times.

The move comes after a surge in cash withdrawals since March 24, when the first two positive cases of COVID-19 were reported in the country.

The CBM first sent instruction to local banks to make plans for sufficient cash on March 13.

"The CBM is urging people not to panic and that banks have already been instructed to prepare for more withdrawals as a result of COVID-19. All the banks are under the supervision of the CBM and we have sufficient cash to ensure smooth withdrawals," said U Pe Myint, adviser to Co-operative Bank (CB Bank).

The CBM has also raised transaction limits for mobile banking service providers. In accordance with directions from the CBM, Wave Money will double its transaction limit of over-the-counter money transfers from K500,000 to K1 million with immediate effect and last until April 30.

The move is expected to facilitate a reduction in cash handling and physical exchange of

currency.

In February, Wave Money said it facilitated transfers of over K850 billion and expects that to exceed K1 trillion this month.

Source: Myanmar Times
<https://www.mmtimes.com/news/banks-be-sufficiently-capitalised-covid-19.html>

World Bank, ADB to assist in Myanmar's efforts to deal with COVID-19's effects

25 Mar 2020

U Thaung Tun, Union Minister for Investment and Foreign Economic Relations (MIFER) and Chair of Working Committee to Address the Possible Impacts of COVID-19 on the Country's Economy had separately met with Gevorg Sargsyan, Acting Country Director of the World Bank Myanmar and Newin Sinsiri, Asian Development Bank (ADB) Country Director, March 23, Nay Pyi Taw, the Ministry released. MIFER released that U Thaung Tun, the Chair of Working Committee to Address the Possible Impacts of COVID-19 on the Country's Economy discussed with the World Bank to cooperate between the Committee and the World Bank to respond the impacts of COVID-19 on the country's economy.

Also, U Thaung Tun and ADB discussed that ADB assistance to economic fallout from COVID 19.

MIFER said the World Bank informed that it would make available US 14 Billion to support member countries' efforts to meet the challenge of COVID-19. Then, World Bank said US 50 million would be available for Myanmar under IDA credit Fast Track Facility and that World Bank teams were currently evaluating the possible impact on Myanmar's economy.

Then, Asian Development Bank informed that would allocate US\$ 6.5 billion assistance package for Developing Member Countries of ADB.

ADB coordinates with the Ministry of Health and Sports to provide loans and grants to use in the Myanmar's efforts to prevent and control COVID-19.

Also, U Thaung Tun, the Chair of Working Committee to Address the Possible Impacts of COVID-19 on the Country's Economy and ADB discussed the allocation of US\$ 1 million under the GMS Health Security Project Fund.

Source: Myanmar Times
<https://www.mmtimes.com/news/world-bank-adb-assist-myanmars-efforts-deal-covid-19s-effects.html>



Pandemic to slow Myanmar's growth drastically: analyst

27 Mar 2020

A report released by Fitch Solutions Country Risk and Industry Research on Mondays says that the analyst company expects Myanmar's economy to slow radically in the current fiscal year (FY2019/20 October to September).

The report said that Fitch Solutions is slashing its FY2019/20 real GDP growth forecast to 3.6 percent, from 6.3pc previously.

"With the Covid-19 pandemic being likely to send the world into recession, we believe that the risks have now extended from purely being a supply shock to also a demand shock. While fiscal and monetary stimulus announced by the government will help to soften the blow for businesses, we do not expect the measures to have a material positive impact on growth over the near term, given extreme economic uncertainty associated with the evolving global pandemic," the report stated.

Fitch Solutions says it expects private consumption growth will come under heavy pressure from weaker purchasing power from the Myanmar populace due to reduced income, if not a loss of employment, and also a contraction in tourist arrivals. China's lockdown in January and February has caused severe supply chain disruptions across the region. For Myanmar, a

shortage of inputs such as cloth at its garment factories has resulted in factory closures across the country, which has since resulted in layoffs in the garment sector.

Up to 90pc of the cloth processed in these factories are sourced from China, with the remainder being imported from Indonesia, South Korea, and Vietnam. According to local news reports, even at factories that are still operating, workers have seen up to a 30pc drop in their monthly wages as factory owners have cut back on overtime. Given that the garment industry employs an estimated half a million workers, weaker incomes in this area is expected to curtail private consumption over the coming months.

Myanmar's tourist arrivals are also set for a serious contraction in FY2019/20. At the height of the COVID-19 outbreak in China in February, the Myanmar government suspended the issuance of visa-on-arrival and also ordered local tour operators to suspend travel services for Chinese visitors.

Source: Myanmar Times
<https://www.mmtimes.com/news/pandemic-slow-myansmars-growth-drastically-analyst.html>

Myanmar's stock market cracks open door to foreigners

24 Mar 2020

YANGON — Foreign investors were allowed into Myanmar's fledgling stock market on Monday, stoking hopes that the infusion of international funds will breathe new life into the country's economy.

"Myanmar's economic reforms have taken longer than imagined, but they're definitely advancing," said Hideki Matsushita, a Japanese national who heads a local investment company. Matsushita has applied to open a local brokerage account, required for noncitizens if they want to invest.

The Southeast Asian country with a population of about 55 million boasts a solid economic growth rate in the 6-7% range. The market opening "will be the spark for Myanmar to gain notice from international investors," Matsushita said.

Following the acceptance of foreign investment in the retail and wholesale sectors in May 2018 and the issuance of licenses to foreign insurance companies in November 2019, the government, led by State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi, aims to attract foreign capital and accelerate modernization of Myanmar's economy.

An inflow of international investment funds would also likely boost corporate transparency in Myanmar. "[Attracting foreign investors is] good for disclosure and good for bringing capital into

Myanmar," Vicky Bowman, director of the Myanmar Centre for Responsible Business, told the Nikkei Asian Review. "Foreign money is looking for a well-run, transparent company."

The new rules permit foreign residents and non-residents alike to open an account at domestic brokerages. Through these channels, participants can engage in online investing.

Before opening a brokerage account, prospective investors must open an account at a bank specializing in holding investment funds. Face-to-face identity verification means investors must visit Myanmar for at least a few days.

Just five companies are listed on the Yangon Stock Exchange, with only three open to international investors. Among the three, First Private Bank sells shares only to foreign financial institutions with prior approval.

The other two are open to retail investors, but one of them, First Myanmar Investment, carries a foreign investment cap of 2%. The other, special-economic zone operator Myanmar Thilawa SEZ Holdings, has a 5% limit.

Source: Nikkei Asian Review
<https://asia.nikkei.com/Business/Markets/Myanmar-s-stock-market-cracks-open-door-to-foreigners>

Infrastructure



Suzuki to build new plant in Myanmar

23 Mar 2020

Suzuki Thilawa Motor Co Ltd, Suzuki Motor Corp's subsidiary for assembly and sales of automobiles in Myanmar, will construct a new automobile plant that will conduct welding, painting, and assembly of automobiles, Suzuki Motor announced on Monday.

Suzuki Thilawa is currently assembling vehicles from semi knocked down (SKD) kits where partially assembled parts of a product are put together.

The Japanese automaker says it plans to upgrade its operations in Myanmar to assembling completely knocked down (CKD) vehicles from completely non-assembled parts.

Suzuki says the work will involve painting, welding and final assembly of vehicles, which is why the new facility is required.

The company will spend an estimated ¥12 billion (K150 trillion) to build the facility which is expected to start operations by September next year. The plant, which will also be located in the Thilawa Special Economic Zone southeast of Yangon, is projected to have an annual production capacity of 40,000 units.

With the construction of the new plant, Suzuki says it will be better placed to meet the growing needs of the automobile market in Myanmar.

Suzuki has a long history in Myanmar, dating back to 1998 with the establishment of a local joint venture that started production of motorcycles and automobiles in 1999. The company currently has two plants in Myanmar sited in the South Dagon Industrial Zone and Thilawa Special Economic Zone that produce four models – the Carry small truck, Ciaz compact sedan, Ertiga MPV, and Swift sub compact.

The company says, in 2019 it produced 13,300 units (a 125 percent rise year-on-year) and sold 13,206 units (a 128 percent rise year-on-year) and had a market share of 60.3 percent in Myanmar.

Source: Myanmar Times
<https://www.mmtimes.com/news/suzuki-build-new-plant-myanmar.html>





YRTA exempts daily management funds from YBS companies

28 Mar 2020

YBS companies are exempted to contribute the management fund to YRTA for more than one month starting from 27 March to 30 April, said YRTA Managing Director U Aung Nyi Nyi Maw.

YBS buses that are operating for the convenience of the commuters to travel in the Yangon region are allowed not to pay K4,000 per bus per day for the YRTA management fund for more than one month. A total of 4,500 YBS buses are operating daily in the Yangon region.

"By doing so, YRTA can support YBS buses in one way or another," he added.

YBS companies must report to the Yangon Region Transport Authority (YRTA) on their daily process such as applying for waivers and recording the routes as usual. Moreover, YRTA is making efforts to solve the problems facing by YBS buses under the supervision of the Yangon Region Government if it's hard for them to overcome them, he noted.

Currently, YRTA is cooperating with YBS companies to prevent the Covid-19 pandemic according to the guidelines and instructions issued by the Ministry of Health and Sports. YBS companies are operating their buses daily as usual mainly for the convenience of the passengers.

In response to the Covid-19, YBS companies and the public are cooperating in such activities as promotion of health awareness campaign by putting stickers, distributing pamphlets, and keeping hand sanitizers on the buses, installing basins and placing soaps, and ensuring systematic disposal of garbage near the bus stations and railway stations.

Although some government departments and business places, which are usually busy with the people, have already been temporarily suspended to avert the Covid-19 threat, public transportation like YBS buses are operating regularly, said Managing Director Ko Tayoutlay of Power Eleven Company.

"We hear some people complaining of the suspension of crowded places because of Covid-19. How about people who can easily be infected with this virus from the congested YBS buses or crowded places? Our commuters have nothing but to rely upon public transportation like YBS buses.

Source: The Global New Light of Myanmar
<https://www.globalnewlightofmyanmar.com/yrt-exempts-daily-management-funds-from-ybs-companies/>



Myanmar govt considering renewables: energy minister

26 Mar 2020

The National League for Democracy-led government says it is now considering a number of renewable energy proposals.

The Minister of Electricity and Energy U Win Khaing announced the decision after a meeting of the National Renewable Energy Committee this week.

He said proposals being considered include 61 solar power projects totalling 5746.37 megawatts in eight regions and states, seven wind power projects (1163MW) in four regions, and six biomass projects (200MW) in four regions and states.

The meeting touched on the incorporation of solar power generation in agriculture and fisheries schemes and other proposals such as hydropower plants, the minister said. He added the meeting also discussed the pricing for renewables.

The government is reviewing the projects based on their location, technology, design, installed capacity, proximity to the nearest sub-station and the national grid, and their social and environmental impacts, U Win Khaing said. The government seeks to promote renewables as part of its energy mix plan.

The NLD government's energy policy and the

record of the Ministry of Electricity and Energy (MOEE) have come under increasing scrutiny as the dry season has kicked in and there are fears of power cuts. MOEE is now rushing ahead five emergency power projects with consortia led by Hong Kong-listed VPower and China Energy Engineering Corp. Myanmar's power generation capacity of about 3100 MW for the dry season is around one third short of demand and the gap is growing by 15-17 percent annually. MOEE has not signed off any major power project over the last four years, apart from Sembcorp's Myingyan plant, which was finalised by the previous administration under U Thein Sein.

Renewables, particularly solar power, have attracted more investor interest as the cost of generating electricity from panels has become more affordable than gas-fired plants with the increase in electricity tariffs last July.

Myanmar is making progress in electrification. 34pc of the population had access to the national grid in 2016, a figure which rose to 50pc last December. The government aims to secure 100pc electrification by 2030.

Source: Myanmar News
<https://www.mmtimes.com/news/govt-considering-renewables-energy-minister.html>





Fuel prices continue falling in Myanmar

26 Mar 2020

As world oil prices have plunged due to the coronavirus outbreak in January causing a supply glut as the demand slows and Russia and Saudi Arabia are set to raise production to grab a greater share of the market and fuel price has decreased by about K400 per litre since the start of the year.

According to Denko Trading Co Ltd, one of the leading fuel retailers in Myanmar, fuel prices per litre in January were K940 for Octane 92, K1050 for 95, K1090 for premium diesel and K970 for regular diesel. On Monday, the prices were K490 for Octane 92, K635 for 95, K575 for premium diesel and K560 for regular diesel.

"The price of fuel has been falling for more than a month now and some resellers have been buying more, up to 15 barrels a day, to keep since the prices are low," said a pump attendant at a Denko petrol station on Strand Road in Mandalay.

"It has been more than one month that the fuel prices are falling. Currently, the price of Octane per liter is still K510 for a few days. People buy about 15 barrels a day. They buy as the prices are falling," said a staff from DENKO fuel station on Strand Road.

"Oil prices are expected to continue dropping,

making petrol and diesel cheaper so I don't think people will continue to buy excessively as they wait for prices to get even lower," said the secretary of Fuel Oil Importers and Distributors Association of Mandalay.

The retail prices of fuel in Mandalay Region on March 23 were K510 for Octane 92, K665 for 95, K595 for premium diesel and K580 for normal diesel.

Source: Myanmar Times
<https://www.mmtimes.com/news/fuel-prices-continue-falling.html>



Myanmar-China border trade zone to be developed in Kachin's Kan Paik Ti

23 Mar 2020

The Kachin State government this month signed an MOU with Myanmar Hein Investment Development Co to develop a border trade zone at Kan Paik Ti township in Waingmaw, Kachin State, which is near the Myanmar- China border. Myanmar Hein Investment is a 30:70 joint venture established by ethnic Kachin-owned Kan Paik Ti Development Company Limited and Yunnan Htein Yin Trade Company Limited.

The project is now under regional parliamentary-level approval. The aim is to create job opportunities for local residents, promote bilateral trade and combat illegal trade, said U Wai Lin, Regional Minister for Finance, Revenue, Planning and Economics.

When complete, the Kan Paik Ti border trade area will become a major part of the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor (CMEC).

The project location is about 85 miles from Myitkyina and bordering Teng Chong of Yunnan province in China. "Major upgrade works are needed so that Kan Paik Ti can become a main trade gate in Kachin," U Wai Lin said.

Myanmar Hein Investment Development Company will build infrastructure across 75 acres of land for a development cost of US\$22.4million (K33.6 billion). This will include civil servant

housing, rest areas for travelers, parking lots and public toilets in the initial phase, while electricity and water supply will be implemented in the second phase.

The area will also include a Southeast Asia cultural market, goods exchange and logistics area as well as warehouses and shops.

Kan Paik Ti is currently a small trading hub for exporting bananas, watermelons, corn, chili, rubber, rice, iron and ores. Imports include chemical fertilizers, paper, iron rods, motorbikes, textiles, tyres, plastics, cement and pipes.

According to the state government, total trade at Kan Paik Ti amounted to US\$296 million in fiscal 2018-19. After the upgrade, the area will be able to handle larger volumes of goods.

After the upgrade, additional departments will be set up at the trade zone, including the Food and Drugs Administration Department to inspect food,

Source: Myanmar Times

<https://www.mmtimes.com/news/myanmar-china-border-trade-zone-be-developed-kachins-kan-paik-ti.html>





Mandalay closes 41 markets, Dawei shuts down beaches

28 Mar 2020

Mandalay city ordered the shutdown of 41 big markets, and Dawei city in Tanintharyi region closed its famed beaches as Myanmar's bid to prevent a COVID-19 outbreak leveled-up on Saturday.

U Kyaw San Myint, a member of the Mandalay City Development Committee, said the closure of 41 big markets starts on Saturday evening.

All the vendors in the affected markets agreed to shut down, he said, as the second largest city in Myanmar steps up the fight against the pneumonia-like disease that has spread to 177 countries.

"All the shops will be closed except those selling food and pharmaceuticals," he said. "Some have their concerns. Some have left their belongings." U Kyaw San Myint, however, said that vendors could sell goods from their homes.

He said that in the event of an emergency, the city development committee would cooperate with the local rice merchants' association to facilitate access to the grains, which is the staple food in the country.

The former royal capital, located along the bank of the Irrawaddy River in northern Myanmar, has an estimated population of over 1.2 million, according to the 2014 government census.

One of the eight confirmed cases in the country, a 33-year-old Myanmar man who is an American citizen, resides in Chan Mya Tharsi township in Mandalay. He arrived in Myanmar on March 19 and developed symptoms of the disease, including fever, coughing, and tiredness, four days later. Authorities quarantined him at Kandawnadi Hospital.

Tanintharyi Region has no confirmed COVID-19 case, but the regional government ordered the closure of all the seven beaches in Dawei city, to prevent people from staying in crowded areas.

U Ho Pin, the regional minister for the Ministry of Development Affairs and Social Affairs, said the beaches would be closed until April 30.

"Dawei has temporarily closed eight of its most visited tourist destinations," he said. "It is closed to protect the people from the virus because these are crowded places."

Of the eight confirmed cases in Myanmar, seven patients have history of recent travel from the COVID-19 infected countries, United Kingdom, United States, Australia, and Singapore.

Source: Myanmar Times

<https://www.mmtimes.com/news/mandalay-closes-41-markets-dawei-shuts-down-beaches.html>



Turning off the tap, while tapping into inclusive institutions

23 Mar 2020

In Myanmar, limited groundwater resources must be used wisely to safeguard the livelihoods of thousands during the climate crisis.

As we mark World Water Day, experts and communities alike will be sharing messages on water scarcity under climate change, emphasizing the need to use this precious resource judiciously. 'Don't take more than you need,' they'll advise. 'Turn off the tap when you're done,' they'll warn. But imagine if your water source just kept on running, and if you had no reason to believe the supply would stop.

This is the situation for some 300,000 farmers in Myanmar's Central Dry Zone, who rely on a particular hydrological phenomenon that makes groundwater continuously flow up through thousands of shallow wells. Until recently, the resource seemed endless. However, putting a plug in such free-flowing wells just 25 percent of the time could save about 22.5 million m³ of groundwater every year in the Ayeyarwady river basin. That's enough water to produce 6,000 tons of rice and feed more than 40,000 people.

In a climate change era, it almost goes without saying that it is time to put a stop to the water waste. But the solution is not as obvious as one might think.

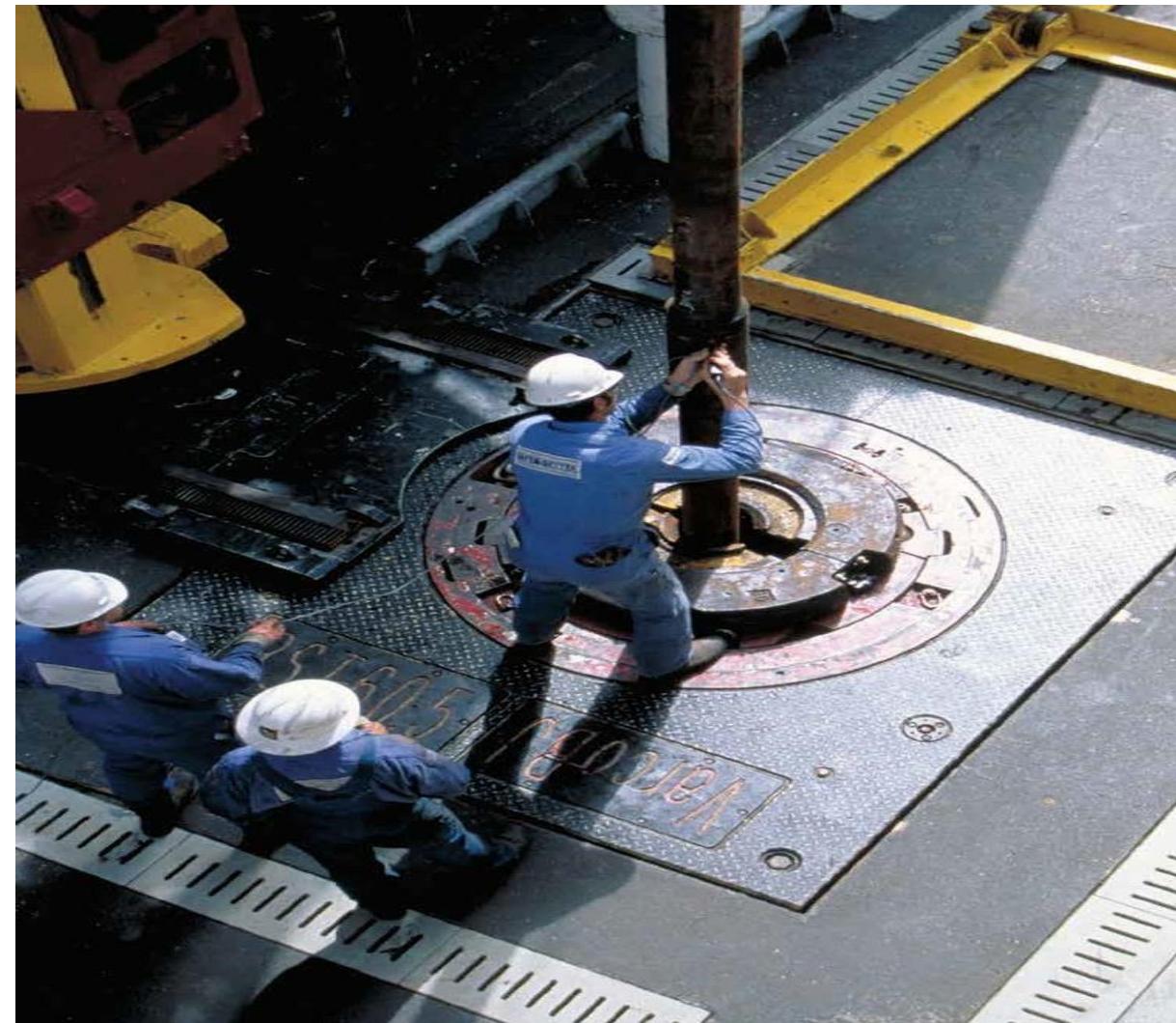
Groundwater under pressure

To find the best way to limit the free flow of groundwater, a new three-year project brings together the International Water Management Institute (IWMI), the Myanmar Irrigation and Water Utilization Management Department; Aqua Rock Konsultants; CSIRO Land and Water; and the Myanmar Institute for Integrated Development, to understand groundwater usage in this part of the Central Dry Zone. This project is funded by the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR).

The area is known for its sparse rainfall and long dry season. To access water for irrigation and other uses, farmers here drill shallow wells and tap into shared groundwater reservoirs. A particular characteristic of these reservoirs, so-called artesian aquifers, is that the pressure within them causes the water to flow to the surface naturally, meaning that farmers and other water users do not need to spend money on equipment and fuel to pump the water up to the surface.

Source: Mizzima

<http://mizzima.com/article/turning-tap-while-tapping-inclusive-institutions>





Experts speak out on water and climate change

23 Mar 2020

Participants in a round table dialogue urge Myanmar to speed up preparations for the impacts of climate change on access to clean water.

Like many countries, Myanmar is vulnerable to climate change. Ahead of World Water Day 2020, WaterAid Myanmar hosted a round table dialogue bringing together experts from various fields to discuss what needs to be done to prepare the country for the impact of climate change on its water supplies.

During the dialogue held at Sule Shangri-La on March 17 in partnership with The Myanmar Times, these experts discussed what steps the country needs to take to accelerate its preparations to mitigate challenges related to clean water access in the context of climate change. "Water and Climate Change: What experts are thinking" was attended by representatives of national level committees, UN agencies, local and international organisations, social organisations and the private sector.

World Water Day has been celebrated annually on March 22 since 1993. This year, experts highlighted how to better use water resources, how climate change affects water supplies and how this in turn puts an additional burden on

women.

Here are comments from experts who joined the March 17 discussion:

Water is life. Climate change impacts water resources. Climate change is much more than an environmental or scientific problem. It is a major development concern and a fundamental issue of social justice. Myanmar is one of the countries most vulnerable to climate change.

Debates about climate change have focused on scientific and technical solutions. Although these are necessary, these are not enough. We need to solve the water issues under climate change with hydro-informatic tools.

Women are at the forefront of climate change mitigation and adaptation activities. Only through supreme efforts of political will and solidarity among all state and non-state actors, can we reduce the negative impact and achieve the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) in Myanmar.

Source: Myanmar Times

<https://www.mmtimes.com/news/experts-speak-out-water-and-climate-change.html>

FDA suspends three drinking-water firms, shuts one in Yangon

27 Mar 2020

The Yangon Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has suspended three drinking-water companies for failing to follow regulations and shut down one for operating without a license in January, a senior official said Thursday.

U Min Wun, director of the FDA for Yangon Region, said the agency regularly checks drinking-water companies to protect the public health.

"We urge the public to choose drinking water approved by the FDA," he said. "People should only buy drinking water that provides information such as signatures, addresses and production numbers."

During random checks of 22 water companies in Yangon in January, Yangon's FDA team discovered one unlicensed company and three that violated regulations.

The agency immediately suspends the operations of factories that fail to follow the agency's prescribed manufacturing processes.

"We have a manpower shortage, so some water companies are still operating without licenses," said Daw Khin Chi, deputy director general of the Department of the FDA.

Daw Khin Chi urged people to immediately notify the department about any suspicious drinking-

water companies.

"We will take action. Our teams carry out surprise inspections at drinking water plants in four Yangon townships every month," she said.

Last year, the Yangon FDA team conducted random inspections of 153 water companies, of which 131 had permits, and 22 did not. Among those with permits, 80 were not following the agency's guidelines.

The FDA has approved about 500 water companies in the region.

Source: Myanmar Times

<https://www.mmtimes.com/news/fda-suspends-three-drinking-water-firms-shuts-one.html>



China provides \$6.7m for 22 projects in Myanmar

26 Mar 2020

China will provide US\$6.78million (K9.45 billion) to Myanmar for 22 projects under the Mekong-Lancang cooperation initiative, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced on Monday.

The Mekong-Lancang Cooperation Special Fund is a cooperation mechanism set up by China that involves Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam with the aim of promoting cooperation in the areas of political, security, and economic and social development.

The signing ceremony for 22 projects under 10 ministries in Myanmar was held at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on March 23, 2020. The projects cover sectors such as agriculture, water resources, education, society and culture, research, information and technology, rule of law, human resource and investment, said the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in its announcement.

The Mekong-Lancang initiative, established in 2016, aims to reduce the development gap and promote sustainable development in the Mekong region and was first proposed by Chinese Prime Minister Mr Li Keqiang at the ASEAN-China Summit held in Myanmar in 2014. Myanmar received US\$2.4million for 10 projects from the Mekong-Lancang Special Fund 2017 and US\$7.2million for 19 projects from Mekong-

Lancang Special Fund 2018.

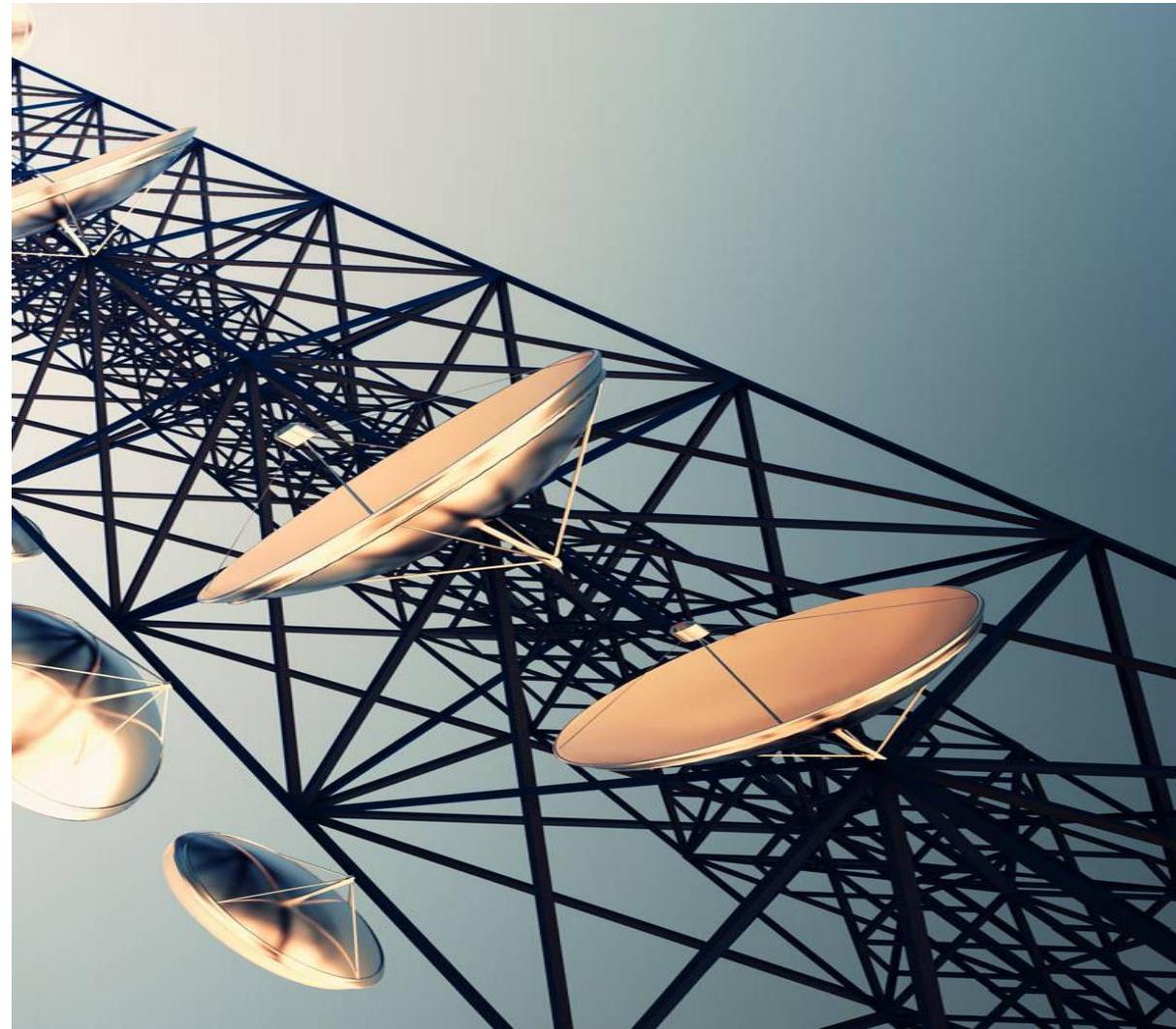
Of the latest tranche of funding, about US\$5 million will be spent on 12 projects related to agriculture, farming, and rural development. The departments under the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation will use the funds to improve connectivity, production capacity cooperation, cross-border economic cooperation, water resources, agriculture, and poverty reduction.

While the early focus of the initiative was on agriculture, it was later expanded to cover education, culture and health in the Mekong region.

The Mekong-Lanchan Cooperation Programme involves the People's Republic of China and five countries of the Mekong region – Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam, and aims to bring about cooperation in political, security, economic, and social development issues in the member countries. China initially put in US\$400 million for the implementation of the development projects, and the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation is currently acting as the focal point of the initiative in Myanmar.

Source: Myanmar Times

<https://www.mmtimes.com/news/china-provides-us67-million-22-projects-myanmar.html>





JICA continues to support Myanmar: new chief

25 Mar 2020

The Japanese development agency will continue to support Myanmar's infrastructure and economic development, its new chief said.

The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) will continue to promote private investment, infrastructure development, education and human resource development in Myanmar, said Sakakura Noriji, the new Chief Representative at JICA Myanmar.

The agency signed loan agreements totalling 120.9 billion yen (US\$110 million) with Myanmar in January for four projects.

"These four projects will improve and maintain the system and facilities for electricity, water and other urban environments in Yangon, and develop basic infrastructure to support economic activities such as electricity, roads, and water supply in rural areas as well," Mr Noriji said.

They intend to improve the quality of life of the people of Myanmar, he added.

The loan agreements signed include the Yangon Sewerage System Development Project (45.9 billion yen), Yangon Urban Development Project (24.085 billion yen), Urban Area Power Distribution Improvement Project (12.288 billion yen) and Regional Infrastructure Improvement Project (38.642 billion yen).

For the Regional Infrastructure Improvement Project, Mr Noriji said JICA had selected five areas - Rakhine State, Chin State, Kayin State, Mon State and Tanintharyi Region. The project will develop the rural infrastructures in these five states and regions, covering roads, bridges, water supply, agriculture and irrigation.

In addition, the agency also inked an agreement with the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation to work together on an agricultural crop value chain project, covering crops such as spinach, pumpkins, tomatoes, carrots and broccoli. The project aims to increase the income of farmers and targets Hmawbi township, Yangon Region and Kalaw township, Shan State. It will be launched in July this year and will last until 2024.

Source: Myanmar Times
<https://www.mmtimes.com/news/jica-continues-support-myanmar-new-chief.html>

Operators split as Telenor rejects govt order to block 'fake news' sites

27 Mar 2020

Digital rights groups and journalists have criticised a recent government order to block more than 50 sites accused of spreading fake news, including prominent Rakhine-based media organisations – an instruction that mobile operator Telenor has defied, saying it has "no legal basis".

Mobile operator Telenor has rejected a government order to block around 50 "fake news" sites, including prominent ethnic media outlets such as Development Media Group and Narinjara.

The country's three other operators – state-owned MPT, Ooredoo of Qatar and military-aligned Mytel – appeared to have at least partially complied with the order to block news sites. Frontier was unable to access some of the sites on March 26 but implementation was not consistent and some of the restrictions appeared to have been rolled back this morning, particularly on Ooredoo's network.

All operators also appear to have blocked access to around 150 sites allegedly containing explicit content, including child sexual abuse, also on the instructions of the government.

A Telenor spokesperson said the Ministry of Transport and Communications issued a

directive to the company on March 19 and 20 to block a total of 207 websites under section 77 of the Telecommunications Law, which allows the government to direct licence-holders to block sites in "emergency situations".

Telenor began blocking 154 of the sites at 11pm on March 23, the spokesperson said, but refused to block 53 that the government had described as disseminating "fake news".

"Telenor Myanmar has not complied with the request to block sites in the category of 'fake news' as it has not been able to establish sufficient legal basis for this part of the request. Telenor Myanmar believes in open communication and regrets if any inconvenience is caused to the customers," the spokesperson said.

A senior government official confirmed to Frontier that it had ordered the operators to block explicit and fake news websites.

"Fake news and disinformation can easily undermine the stability of the state."

Source: Frontier Myanmar
<https://frontiermyanmar.net/en/operators-split-as-telenor-rejects-govt-order-to-block-fake-news-sites>

Policy and Regulation



Myanmar Orders Half of Govt Employees to Stay Home Over COVID-19

26 Mar 2020

YANGON—The Myanmar government has ordered half of its employees to stay at home as the country has confirmed its first three cases of coronavirus, but told the employees to be ready to report to work if it needed.

The Myanmar President Office said in a statement Wednesday that all government staff, from Union to region and state-level, must follow the latest order to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19.

The president's office said the order would go into effect on Thursday.

During the break, 50 percent of government employees must stay at their homes or in government housing and be ready to report for duty. The employees are not allowed to travel or move to other places without informing the relevant departments. They have to report to authorities if there are suspected COVID-19 patients in their area or if the employees suspect they may be carrying the disease, the President Office said.

The Irrawaddy has learned that health care treatment providers, including doctors and nurses, who are assigned to government hospitals across the country are not included in the order to stay home.

The President Office said that all government employees must cooperate with coronavirus-related instructions from the Ministry of Health and Sports (MOHS) and must cooperate with health officials if there is a need to conduct testing.

The President Office also said employees must reduce the number of people visiting their homes.

Myanmar has confirmed three COVID-19 cases so far: a 36-year-old man in Chin State who arrived from the US and two 26-year-old men in Yangon who both returned from the United Kingdom. All are Myanmar citizens.

This week, state and regional governments formed COVID-19 prevention working groups.

Health Minister U Myint Htwe said on Wednesday that the ministry has plans in place to ensure hospitals in states and regions can obtain up-to-date COVID-19 treatment information.

Source: The Irrawaddy

<https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/myanmar-orders-half-govt-employees-stay-home-covid-19.html>



29 March 2020



Myanmar Speaker Rejects Call to Summon Military-Majority Security Council to Address COVID-19

25 Mar 2020

Naypyitaw — Myanmar's Union Parliament Speaker T Khun Myat has rejected a Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) lawmaker's urgent proposal to summon the military-majority National Defence and Security Council (NDSC) following the first reported cases of COVID-19 in Myanmar.

"I presented the urgent proposal to hold discussions at the NDSC so that effective preventive measures can be taken at the national level," USDP lawmaker U Thaung Aye told reporters.

According to parliamentary procedures, a lawmaker must seek the approval of the Union Parliament speaker to bring forward an urgent proposal to the legislature.

The USDP lawmaker submitted the proposal on Tuesday after the Ministry of Health and Sports reported that two men, who had returned from the US and UK, had tested positive for COVID-19.

U Thaung Aye stressed the need for close coordination at the NDSC to prevent an outbreak as thousands of migrant workers and students were returning from overseas.

"The Union Parliament speaker replied that the government is handling the issue, and convening

the NDSC is under the authority of the president. The Parliament, therefore, need not make the decision," U Thaung Aye told *The Irrawaddy*. The speaker also rejected U Thaung Aye's urgent proposal on March 17 which urged the government to design emergency plans for a possible COVID-19 outbreak.

The plans, according to U Thaung Aye, would include preparing quarantine centers, medicine and medical equipment to treat COVID-19 patients in case of an outbreak.

Ministry of Health and Sports reported a third COVID-19 case on Tuesday night. More than 200 people are being kept in quarantine.

The global coronavirus death toll, according to official figures, topped 18,000 by Wednesday noon.

Source: *The Irrawaddy*

<https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/myanmar-speaker-rejects-call-summon-military-majority-security-council-address-covid-19.html>

Myanmar needs strong policies to deal with virus impact: economists

27 Mar 2020

Due to the spread of COVID-19, global production and trade has ground to a halt and every country in the world is now bracing for deep recession and even deflation, economists say.

"Production has stopped because there is no longer any demand. Global deflation is looking more likely and this will be a challenge even for the most powerful countries. Myanmar needs to make big preparations to manage the economic fallout," said U Pe Myint, a financial analyst.

After reporting three positive cases of COVID-19, local businesses are preparing for the possibility of shutting down. At least 20 garment manufacturing factories and many more tour operators and event organisers have already closed shop, while the government has ordered cinemas and schools to close as well as disallowed public events and social gatherings.

"As this is a public health issue, we might shut down our businesses, which will result in financial losses. We need sound government policies to reduce these losses," said U Nay Lin Zin, who owns a local trading business.

The government has taken monetary and fiscal measures to ease the pressure on the economy so far.

On March 25, after the first few cases of COVID-19 were announced, the Central Bank of Myanmar (CBM) slashed interest rates by an additional 1 percent, taking total rate cuts this month to 1.5pc. It first announced a 0.5pc rate cut on March 13.

Starting from April 1, bank deposit rates in Myanmar will be reduced a minimum of 6.5pc, while lending rates will not exceed 11.5pc for collateralised loans and 14.5pc for other unsecured loans, according to the CBM.

The government also committed K100 billion in funds at special rates to shore up the neediest sectors of the local economy, namely garment manufacturing, hotels and tourism and SMEs. The Myanmar Tourism Entrepreneurs Association has also requested a loan of K50 billion for the sector.

"This is not a loan for business expansion but to continue operations as a going concern. Unlike normal loans, document requirements should be lowered and red tape reduced to facilitate the transfer of funds to those who need them,"

Source: *Myanmar Times*

<https://www.mmtimes.com/news/strong-policies-needed-deal-virus-impact-economists.html>

29 March 2020



The Virus Is Coming to Myanmar, but the Pain Has Already Begun

27 Mar 2020

HLAING THARYAR, Myanmar — When he was 12, Ko Naing Lin survived a cyclone that killed his father, a small-town doctor, and at least 130,000 others in the Irrawaddy Delta of Myanmar. A life of lazy soccer games, plentiful fish curry and reprimands to finish his homework — “Now, or else what will become of you?” — ended.

Today, Mr. Naing Lin’s life is being overturned again, this time by the coronavirus. It is not — yet — a matter of a spreading outbreak in Myanmar, whose health care system is on life support. The country, which borders China, has only five confirmed cases of the virus, all announced this week.

Instead, a suspension of Chinese imports is threatening the livelihoods of the roughly one in five people in Myanmar who work in the bag, shoe and garment industries. Dozens of factories have already closed, including Mr. Naing Lin’s. In addition, factory owners, most of whom are Chinese citizens, are using the chaotic situation to shunt unionized workers aside, labor activists said.

For hundreds of millions around the world like Mr. Naing Lin, who struggle to keep their heads above the poverty line, the economic impact of

the coronavirus has so far been more shattering than the virus itself.

These vulnerable populations have no social safety net, no health insurance, no retirement accounts. In the thatched shack where Mr. Naing Lin lives with his mother and younger brother, there is no refrigerator to stock with quarantine provisions, only a pile of sweet potatoes and some cooking oil.

“There is no hope of getting a new job,” said Mr. Naing Lin, 24.

Then he broadened his judgment. “There is no hope,” he said.

After his father’s death 12 years ago left the family without its breadwinner, Mr. Naing Lin started lifting 55-pound bags of cement on the night shift, earning barely enough to feed the family once or twice a day.

At age 13, he began working as a school janitor. The students slumped in their seats didn’t notice the slight shadow behind them, desperate to learn even as he mopped, swept and dusted.

Source: The New York Times
<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/27/world/asia/coronavirus-myanmar-jobs-china.html>

Myanmar eases visa rules for in-country foreign employees

24 Mar 2020

Myanmar has eased visa extension rules for foreigners based in the country in response to growing travel restrictions and flight cancellations.

The Directorate of Investment and Company Administration (DICA) announced that foreigners can now apply for new visas and stay permits until up to five days of expiry of their existing visas. This change will remain in effect until further notice.

The move is to alleviate travel uncertainty caused by the coronavirus pandemic, DICA said. “DICA’s announcement should make it a bit easier for expats to apply for new visas and stay permits in Myanmar, reducing the risk to be quarantined upon return to Myanmar if a foreigner leaves the country to apply for a visa abroad,” commented Fabian Lorenz, a lawyer with Luther Law Firm in Yangon who expects the new rules to ease uncertainty among the expatriate community.

Previously such applications had to be submitted 21 days before the expiry of current visas.

In light of the COVID-19 outbreak, many countries have closed their borders and airports to travellers, while airlines have cancelled flights. Bangkok, the most active regional air hub for

Myanmar, has enforced tough restrictions on foreign passengers. Singapore no longer allows short-term visitors to enter or transit through the city state, while Hong Kong’s Cathay Dragon has halted flights between the city and Yangon for April and May.

This makes it increasingly difficult for foreign employees working in Myanmar to renew their visas abroad. Failure to renew their visas risks placing them in an illegal situation.

At the same time Myanmar is expanding the list of countries placed under temporary restrictive measures. Travellers from the US, Switzerland, the UK, the Netherlands, Austria, Belgium, Norway, Sweden and Denmark will be subjected to a 14-day quarantine upon arrival, while visas on arrival and e-visa for all nationals are suspended until April 30.

Myanmar has reported no confirmed cases of the virus so far but only fewer than 200 people have been tested out of a population of 53 million. The country closed land borders to all foreigners on March 18.

Source: Myanmar Times
<https://www.mmtimes.com/news/myanmar-eases-visa-rules-country-foreign-employees.html>

29 March 2020

Tender Opportunities

Tender Opportunities in Myanmar

No	Organisation	Title	Publication Date	Closing Date
1	Asian Development Bank	Impact Evaluation of the Climate-Friendly Agribusiness Value Chains Sector Project - Impact Evaluation (48409-005)	06-Mar-2020	03-Apr-2020
2	Asian Development Bank	Climate-Friendly Agribusiness Value Chains Sector Project - CS-09 Capacity Building and Climate Smart Agriculture Training Consultants (48409-003)	19-Feb-2020	20-Apr-2020
3	Asian Development Bank	Climate-Friendly Agribusiness Value Chains Sector Project - CS-02 Feasibility Studies and Detailed Design Consultants (FSDDC) (48409-003)	25-Feb-2020	25-Apr-2020
4	Ministry of Electricity and Energy	National Electrification Project (NEP) – Installation of Distribution Lines and Transformers for Ayeyarwady, Mon and Bago (West)	06 Mar 2020	06 Apr 2020
5	Yangon City Development Committee	Request for Expression Of Interest -South East Asia Disaster Risk Management Project	19 Mar 2020	08 Apr 2020
6	Yangon City Development Committee	Invitation for Prequalification Greater Yangon Water Supply Improvement Project Phase 2	17 Mar 2020	04 May 2020

Source: World Bank Group, Asian Development Bank, Consult Myanmar

29 March 2020

MIC Permitted Projects

MIC Permitted Projects – Meeting (4/2020)

No	Name of Company	Type of Investment	Form of Investment
1	HDDES Natural Products (Myanmar) Limited	Processing and sales of value added agricultural products	Joint venture
2	Bel Ga Myanmar Limited	Broiler chick parent stock farm	Wholly foreign-owned
3	Dongfeng Motor Corporation Limited	Assembling, manufacturing, and sales of motor vehicles	Wholly Myanmar-owned
4	MCV Terminal Limited	Construction of LNG terminal, providing services of FSU berthing, regasification of LNG power plant	Joint venture
5	Proficient Education Company Limited	Special education services	Joint venture
6	Zwe Ka Bin Land & Cable Car Development Company Limited	Cable car services	Wholly Myanmar-owned

Source: DICA

29 March 2020

Upcoming Events

Upcoming Events

No	Date	Location	Name of Event	Sector	Focus Points
1	04-05 Apr 2020	Yangon	Global Summit of Sustainable Development	Business Services	"Global Summit of Sustainable Development will pursue the vision of the global Rise movement to promote the re-emergence of the Tamils as respectable global people by cultivating the culture of collaboration among multi-stakeholders towards achieving mutual and inclusive growth."
2	27-28 Apr 2020	Yangon	Myanmar Insurance Summit	Banking & Finance	"The theme of the conference will be Ushering In the New Growth Wave to give a quick synoptic overview of the potential in Myanmar while highlighting the power of strategic alliance and partnership to serve the needs of the growing market for protection."
3	12-14 May 2020	Yangon	AAPG/EAGE Myanmar Oil & Gas Conference	Power and Energy	"AAPG/EAGE Myanmar Oil & Gas Conference will provide the opportunity to understand the significant progress made over the last 16 months and network and share experiences with colleagues. It will cover areas like Regional Geology & Tectonic Evolution, Depositional Systems From Source to Sink, Petroleum Systems and Plays, Risk reduction/management, and Innovation and Emerging Technologies."
4	20-21 May 2020	Yangon	Myanmar Power Development Summit	Power and Energy	"With a population of around 60 million, Myanmar ranks the lowest in terms of electrification rate in the ASEAN countries as less than 40% of its populations have access to electricity. The MPDS is going to invite around 200 senior representatives from government, power producers and utilities, investors, banks, law firms and suppliers to discuss the latest development of Myanmar power industry and share insights into its future prospects in an quickly evolving global energy mix."

Source: 10times.com, go-Myanmar.com

29 March 2020

PwC Myanmar

PwC Myanmar helps organisations and individuals **create the value** they're looking for. Our firm comprises of **highly qualified local professionals with years of international experience**, supported by domain experts from PwC Singapore; a combination that brings you in-depth, on-the-ground knowledge base while tapping on PwC's global reach and expertise. We are committed to helping organisations adapt their commercial interests successfully, transform and develop their operations, solve their business issues, and identify as well as maximise the opportunities they seek.

With the opening of our firm in Yangon on **6 November 2012**, PwC Myanmar is a member firm of the PwC Network - comprising of a network of firms (with each being a separate legal entity) in **157 countries with more than 276,000 people**, who are dedicated to working together, providing quality services to clients throughout the world.

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- IFRS/Financial reporting advisory
- Joint venture & strategic alliance
- IT risk and security
- Post-deal integration
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- Mergers and acquisitions – financial Advisor
- Market entry advisory & market studies
- Stock market listing preparation
- Project assurance
- Pre-deal re-organisation
- Valuations advisory

Our Thought Leadership in Myanmar



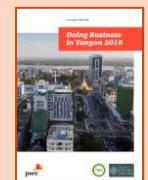
Tax Updates



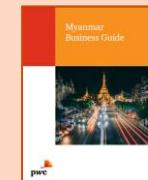
IFRS 16 New Leasing Standard



Transforming Yangon the Heart of Myanmar



Doing Business in Yangon



Myanmar Business Guide



Fitting together the pieces of the infrastructure puzzle

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