



Special ASEAN Summit and APT Summit on COVID-19



KT/April 15

Prime Minister Hun Sen attended a Special ASEAN Summit and Special ASEAN Plus Three Summit on the impact of COVID-19 online on April 14.

The ASEAN Heads of State/Government met for the first time via video conference under the Vietnamese Chairmanship for 2020 to discuss on how ASEAN could work collectively to address the COVID-19 pandemic and the socio-economic impacts that it has brought about the region.

The Leaders underscored the need to strengthen regional solidarity and cooperation in the fight against COVID-19 in the spirit of a cohesive and responsive ASEAN community and expressed their commitment to keep ASEAN markets open for trade and investment.



They supported the reallocating of the existing available funds and encourage technical and financial support from ASEAN's partners to facilitate cooperation against COVID-19, including the proposed establishment of the COVID-19 ASEAN Response Fund in order to address the shortage of medical supplies, support the research and development of medicines and vaccines, and prepare for emergency responses in the future.

Just like other ASEAN member states who have responded to the pandemic, Cambodia has taken strict, firm and rigorous measures on three different fronts: preventing imported cases into Cambodia; preventing local transmission within Cambodia; and COVID-19 infected patients.

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Cambodia Shows Excellent Record with Recovery Rate for COVID-19, 86% Discharged



KT/April 20

Out of 122 reported cases of COVID-19 with one relapse for failing to follow social distancing orders, Cambodia shows remarkable ability to control the pandemic with its own calculated measures.

In addition, despite its limitations in public health care, it has shown remarkable ability to treat 105 out of the 122 victims and successfully got the affected patients discharged.

Up to the morning of April 20, only 15 remain hospitalised for the treatment.

The 107 recovered cases included 1 Chinese, 5 British, 2 Americans, 1 Belgian, 38 French, 1 Canadian, 12 Malaysians, 2 Indonesians, 1 Vietnamese and 44 Cambodians.

Quarantine measure will continue to be in place, along with flight bans from six countries, the United States, Germany, France, Italy, Spain and Iran.

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Two Virus Aid Apps Launched

PPP/April 15

The Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications has put in motion two phone applications to further assist in the fight against the spread of COVID-19. The applications enable callers to phone 1250 free of charge in addition to calling 115 to acquire reliable information on whether they might have the virus.

The ministry said the applications included OpenTraceKH, which is used to look for individuals who had previously come into contact with those who tested positive for COVID-19.

The Bluetooth-based programme can track down relationships in communities and create a record of individuals who had previously come into contact with each other.

Another phone application is dubbed 'Self Quarantine' and is meant to identify and report the medical conditions of individuals who are subject to quarantine.

If a caller suspects himself or herself of having COVID-19, the system enables relevant officials including the Ministry of Health to intervene and arrive at the location immediately and locate other people via Bluetooth. •

Ministry Programme to Identify Families in Need, Give Allowance

PPP/April 16

Ministries of Interior; Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation, and Planning signed a joint agreement to implement a cash allowance programme for pregnant women and children under two years.

The new programme aims to assist malnourished children from poorer families and will enhance the physical and mental wellbeing of both children and mothers who enroll.

Each commune and district administration would be given a tablet to help implement the programme and identify poor families in their communities.

Minister of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation Vong Soth said in response to nutritional problems of pregnant woman, breastfeeding mothers and children, the government started the cash allowance programme on June 1, last year, in line with the National Social Protection Policy Framework for 2016-2025. The programme requires recipients to receive health care services at public health bases for pregnancy care during and after delivery.

For pregnant women and children under two years to have access to the programme, they have to register their names at any commune or district.

After registering names under the programme, recipients have to follow health check conditions to receive cash allowances in stages.

The first stage is 40,000 riel (about USD10) for each pregnancy check, which can be done four times before delivery. The second stage is 200,000 riel (about USD50) once during delivery. In the third stage, they will receive 40,000 riel (about USD10) for 10 miscellaneous health services, including health checks three times after delivery and administering vaccines for children under two years. •

Down Under's Aid for Kingdom in Virus Response



KT/April 17

As the world tackles the COVID-19 pandemic, Australian Ambassador Pablo Kang spoke on what his country is doing to assist the Kingdom.

The ambassador said one of Australia's flagship programmes is called "Australia Aid" for which we have spent approximately \$150 million on over the past decade. While normally we distribute funding to various sectors, such as education, agriculture, infrastructure and even demining, we are now refocusing our aid effort towards the nation's COVID-19 response.

In terms of policies, we are letting the Cambodian government take the lead and will instead work very closely with the Ministry of Finance, as of course, they control the budget, and the Ministry of Health along with other key ministries to ensure that policies funded are what is needed.

He said we are also the largest funding partner of a programme called "Health Equity and Quality Improvement Project" run by the World Bank and the Cambodian government that pools funds from different donors to improve both the delivery and also the governance system of Cambodia's health sector. This provides funding to 1,300 health facilities that provide free access to health care for the poorest two million in the country.

In addition, we are supporting the building of two provincial hospitals, another 45 health centres and providing 20 ambulances that have been requested by the Ministry of Health.

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UNESCO Launches Hackathon for COVID-19 Solutions

PPP/ April 14

UNESCO, in partnership with IBM and SAP, has launched the CodeTheCurve hackathon platform to support young innovators, data scientists and designers across the world to develop digital solutions to counter the COVID-19 pandemic.

UNESCO's Programme Officer said CodeTheCurve is a global, virtual hackathon for students, educators, teachers, and the research community to build tech skills, the entrepreneurial spirit, and professional competencies to build digital creativity and cooperation to mobilise the world.

The platform encourages innovators in Cambodia to join by enabling them to build tech skills, the entrepreneurial spirit and professional competencies with a lens on digital creativity and cooperation.

CodeTheCurve aims to inspire youth with new skills in a virtual, immersive environment in collaboration with other students, experts, and mentors while creating deployable solutions and digital prototypes prepared by citizen developers, data scientists, and innovators with youth at the centre.

The initiative counters the pandemic by engaging young developers, designers and data scientists to come up with digital solutions to explore an innovative learning paradigm by focusing mainly on access to learning, information and data management, and present and future post-pandemic social and health issues. •

Energy Lab's Stimulus Plan for Clean Energy Investment



KT/April 17

Energy Lab has suggested two immediate "stimulus suggestions" to support clean energy investment easily.

The first one recommends that factories should be allowed to install rooftop solar panels to access the off-peak energy tariff, with the second suggesting the finalisation of Cambodia's first wind farm PPA (at the same or slightly lower c/kWh price negotiated for the recently approved coal-fired projects).

Prime Minister Hun Sen promised in February to give tax breaks to garment factories hit by supply chain disruptions caused through the Coronavirus epidemic and higher tariffs after the European Union (EU) withdrew trade preferences over human rights.

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Special ASEAN Summit...

Cambodia has also established a National Committee to Combat COVID-19, a joint command in leading, introducing and implementing measures to fight against COVID-19. In addition, Cambodia has decided to cancel the celebration of the Khmer New Year, and imposed a one-week ban on inter-provincial movements of people.

The PM stressed the need for support among ASEAN member states, including the sharing of resources, techniques, medical equipment and supplies.

During his speech at the Special ASEAN Plus Three Summit, the Prime Minister also thanked China and Japan for their assistance to Cambodia in fighting the coronavirus. He also called for closer cooperation among relevant institutions within the ASEAN Plus Framework to share experiences and to look at the possibility of using the existing ASEAN Plus Three Cooperation Fund, which has been used in strengthening East Asia Cooperation, including the health sector, to support efforts to fight the virus.

He said ASEAN must establish a common mechanism to promote the sharing of medical techniques, experiences and knowledge about this disease, with an aim to protect, prevent, diagnose, treat and monitor, especially the vulnerable groups of people such as the elderly and frontline medical doctors who are directly battling the disease.

During the Special ASEAN Summit, the grouping's leaders warned of the crippling economic cost of the coronavirus, calling for trade routes to reopen to protect jobs and food supplies, as well as the stockpiling of medical equipment.

To reduce economic risks, the PM called for closer coordination and dialogue to identify joint measures that can avoid severe impacts on production chains, economic activities and trade in the region and requested an urgent discussion to find joint solutions under the cooperation framework within APT. •

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Down Under's Aid...

Ambassador Kang added one programme we are planning is how to provide cash transfers to people who are in dire need of funds because they are either out of work or just can't afford basic goods and services anymore. So there is a system called "IDPoor" in Cambodia that Australia and Germany have previously funded. It has already identified the neediest and most vulnerable households in Cambodia.

So using this already established infrastructure we hope to be able to directly inject cash that can be accessed instantly and from remote locations. •

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Energy Lab's Stimulus...

Energy Minister Suy Sem said the ministry's priority was the development of electricity sources to improve production capacity, transmission, distribution and connection. He said the ministry has been working to ensure that Cambodia's electricity supply remained stable and meets growing demand.

Overall, the ministry aims for more than 14,000 of the country's villages to have access to some source of electricity by next year and at least 90% of households to have access to grid-quality electricity by 2030.

Meanwhile, four coal-fired power projects have been approved by the National Assembly and Senate, including the 700mW plant in Koh Kong and 265mW plant in Odour Meanchey.

Currently, there is about 30mW of rooftop solar power in Cambodia. The majority is generated from Chip Mong Insee Cement factory's 10mW solar system, followed by Kampot Cement Company with its own 7mW set-up. •

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Cambodia Shows Excellent...

Cambodia effectively remains under de-facto lock down with very few flights coming in and any passengers coming into Cambodia by any route, air, sea land or water ways, will have to be sent directly to 14 days' quarantine except those with diplomatic passports and with special visas or have valid documentations which will enable them to leave the airport but be quarantined elsewhere.

All foreigners must have a medical certificate issued no more than 72 hours prior to date of travel stating that they have not tested positive for Covid-19 and have proof of insurance policy with minimum medical coverage of \$50,000.

The 14 days mandatory quarantine for workers who had returned to the provinces despite the travel restrictions is necessary, as the pandemic and cluster infections possibilities are still of concern and thus, vigilance and surveillance is critical. •