



Myanmar

Legal updates in relation to the COVID-19 outbreak (as of March 24, 2020)

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*This article is based on the information as of March 24, 2020.

Current status in Myanmar

Although novel coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) is spreading through many countries around the world, Myanmar did not have any confirmed cases of the virus until March 22, 2020. However, two cases were reported by the Myanmar Ministry of Health and Sports (MoHS) on 11:45 PM 23 March 2020. The President's office has formed a central committee and a national level central committee to prevent, control, and cure COVID-19. The MoHS is a focal ministry in Myanmar for taking measures against, and for prevention of, a COVID-19 outbreak and is issuing public announcements regarding updates on COVID-19 in Myanmar from time to time, including preventative measures and guidelines for medical staff. Based on information from the MoHS, there are 236 persons under investigation, two suspected cases, and two confirmed cases in Myanmar as of March 24, 2020. Detailed updates on COVID-19 in Myanmar, issued by the MoHS, can be accessed at the link below.

<http://mohs.gov.mm/Main/content/publication/2019-ncov>

Restrictions on foreign travelers

Prior to confirmed cases being reported, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) issued a notice regarding precautionary measures to be complied with by travelers from certain countries coming to Myanmar for prevention of COVID-19: 14-day quarantine and presentation of a medical certificate from health authorities in the relevant countries. After two confirmed cases were identified, MoFA issued a new notice on March 24, 2020 requiring all incoming travelers from all countries, including Myanmar nationals, to be subject to a 14-day facility quarantine upon arrival to Myanmar, and foreign nationals are further required to present laboratory evidence of negative COVID-19 test results issued no more than 72 hours prior to the date of boarding any airline heading

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to Myanmar starting from March 25, 2020. Diplomats and United Nations officials are also required to present laboratory results in the same manner as others and are subject to a 14-day home quarantine.

The Department of Immigration of the Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population of Myanmar also issued a notification of temporary ban on entry of foreign nationals with entry visas via all border checkpoints with neighboring countries starting on March 19, 2020. Foreign nationals are only permitted to enter Myanmar via the Yangon, Mandalay, and Nay Pyi Taw airports.

For the prevention of COVID-19, business places open to the public such as business towers, hotels, etc. are providing hand sanitizer and also checking for fever with thermometers before permitting persons to enter into buildings. Hand sanitizer is also provided on public transportation in Yangon, and basins are installed in some bus stops for the washing of hands. Many organizations and companies have also instructed their employees to work from home, whereas some large companies, including banks, have instructed their employees to work in shift arrangements in order to avoid mass gatherings in workplaces. The MoHS is also providing information to raise awareness in each state around the country to prevent an outbreak in Myanmar.

Impact of business

A number of factories in Myanmar are shutting down due to lack of raw materials and lack of order, and thousands of people are losing their jobs as a result. According to the local news, a senior official from the Ministry of Commerce said that Myanmar is losing about US\$16 million a day in border trade with China due to the outbreak of COVID-19. Based on Notification No. 1/2020 of the Ministry of Investment and Foreign Economic Relations (MoIFER), CMP businesses, hotel and tourism companies, and small and medium-sized enterprises are the sectors most affected by COVID-19; therefore, MoIFER is establishing K 100 billion in funds to provide loans to impacted businesses owned by Myanmar nationals. The Government is also shutting down all cinemas and places of public entertainment.

After confirmed cases being reported, supermarkets and shops, including drug stores, have been crowded with people due to panic buying across the country. Hand sanitizer, and masks including similar items are out of stock. Due to these circumstances, in Yangon, public places are no longer crowded and traffic is significantly lighter compared with a couple of days ago. Some international airlines have also temporarily suspended operations for a specified period.

In addition, thousands of migrant workers from Thailand are fleeing to Myanmar, and they are strongly instructed to undergo a 14-day quarantine. However, there are rumors and videos spreading via social media of some people running and avoiding inspection and 14-day quarantine. Due to these reactions and rumors, people are worried about COVID-19 being spread by those people.

Suggestions

Keeping current with updates on COVID-19 in Myanmar via the local news, including the MoHS website provided herein, and any other public sources is strongly encouraged. If required, it is advisable to contact the relevant ministries to ensure that investments are being dealt with and in order to remain aware of the status of office operations in such ministries. It is advisable to warn all employees to wash their hands often, to avoid crowded places, and to stay at home to prevent an outbreak of COVID-19. In the event that more confirmed cases are identified, it is likely that Myanmar government departments will become hesitant to hold physical meetings; as such, it would be difficult to visit relevant authorities, especially in Nay Pyi Taw, to have meetings to discuss potential investments.



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After experience staying in India and Vietnam, Mr. Imaizumi has been focusing on Myanmar-related works (including advisory regarding M&A/ JV and handling potential corporate disputes), benefiting from abundant experience in practice in such emerging countries. Since July 2019, he has acted as Vice Representative of N&A Yangon Office.



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