

SME WEEKLY NEWS

(2 March 2020 – 7 March 2020)

Countries	Highlights
<p>MALAYSIA</p> <p>Malaysian SMEs face slowdown due to spread of coronavirus</p>	<p>SME in Malaysia are worried over the impact of novel coronavirus (2019-nCov) outbreak on their businesses. Small and Medium Enterprises Association (SAMENTA) Malaysia said some of its members had reported a slowdown in business, particularly those in the retail, tourism and distribution trade. SAMENTA is monitoring the situation closely and are in touch with various government agencies to identify issues that may crop up and to find ways to mitigate the impact to members. The association also called upon Malaysians not to spread unverified news on the virus, but only rely on the experts in the Health Ministry and the World Health Organisation for directions. SAMENTA's Policy and Government Relations chairman Datuk William Ng said called upon all SAMENTA members to remain vigilant, and to educate all their employees on the right preventive measures to minimise risk, without resorting to panic or over-reaction. There has been an increase in the number of coronavirus cases, with 34,887 confirmed to have contracted the deadly disease worldwide.</p> <p><i>(Source: News Straits Times, 7 March 2020)</i></p>
<p>LAOS</p> <p>600 use SME finance initiative</p>	<p>More than 600 businesses in Laos have received support from SMEs Access to Finance Project to develop their business and financial plans. The initiative uses an International Labour Organisation (ILO) tool called Laos In Business, which is being used in 11 provinces. Access to finance remains one of the key challenges for SMEs as many of their operators have limited business management skills, which is an obstacle to their sustainable growth and further job creation. Thus, the project aims to strengthen the capacity of SMEs to access finance. ILO said future SME programmes would focus on the need to continue supporting the existing Business Development Service (BDS) network and the SME Service Centre, as well as strengthen the link between SMEs and FIs at the practical level. Future SME support should prioritise the participants from this programme given that SMEs have already taken the first step by completing business plans. The organisation encouraged further dialogue between government, SMEs and commercial banks to resolve difficulties that continue to be faced when SMEs attempt to obtain financing. The ILO also encouraged use of the training tool they had developed jointly with the BDS network to allow for a standardised format for business and financial plans.</p> <p><i>(Source: Vientiane Times, 3 March 2020)</i></p>
<p>SINGAPORE</p> <p>Funding Societies, SGeBIZ partner to help under-served SMEs in Singapore</p>	<p>Funding Societies, Southeast Asia's leading SME digital financing platform, is collaborating with Singapore E-Business Pte Ltd (SGeBIZ) to provide quick financing solutions to local SME suppliers and their buyers. The platform offers a diverse range of loan products, which are now easily accessible by SME owners via SGeBIZ's e-procurement management system, EzyProcure, Singapore's first and leading B2B procure-to-pay platform. Funding Societies views this partnership as another way to lower the barrier of access to working capital for small businesses. Small businesses on SGeBIZ will now be able to access funds from Funding Societies to improve and match their cash cycles, giving them an opportunity to grow their business. SGeBIZ, a solutions firm with more than 1,000 clients under its belt in Singapore alone, recognises that SMEs face a multitude of complications in their supply chain with procurement and payments. Having helped replace outdated processes like manual ordering, goods receiving, inventory tracking, and reconciliation and documentation of invoices, it now aims to resolve a critical challenge that businesses sometimes encounter - cash flow.</p> <p><i>(Source: Digital News Asia, 2 March 2020)</i></p>

MYANMAR

Mother Finance, NearMe collaborate to expand fintech reach in Myanmar

Mother Finance, a licensed non-bank financial institution which provides small loans to customers via a mobile app, will be providing unsecured SME loans to NearMe with a maximum amount that can be borrowed is K500 lakh. NearMe is a mobile app which enables users to make a variety of payments and purchases such as taxes and public utilities as well as flight tickets, bus tickets and offer over 70 other products. Users typically pay by cash at the nearest convenience stores and other NearMe agents and partners. For Mother Finance, the deal represents an opportunity to expand its loan offerings to NearMe's SME network and collect valuable transaction data from its agents and partners within their network. Mother Finance has been offering collateral-free digital loans to individual, both employed and self-employed as well as SMEs on their mobile app platform. Currently, customers of Mother Finance can repay their loan through a total of more than 50,000 NearMe partner shops. Mother Finance introduced Myanmar's first-ever mobile app-based digital lending platform in July 2018. Since then, it has served over 60,000 registered users and has disbursed more than K3 billion.

(Source: Myanmar Times, 1 March 2020)