



# برونى دارالسلام Brunei Darussalam

## Brunei Darussalam newsletter

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### Special ASEAN Summit: ASEAN solidarity needed, facing COVID-19



His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah ibni Al-Marhum Sultan Haji Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Sa'adul Khairi Waddien, Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam joining video conferencing for the Special ASEAN Summit on COVID-19 that began with the opening speech of His Excellency Nguyen Xuan Phuc, the Prime Minister of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, as the Chair of ASEAN for 2020.

**BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN, April 14** – His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah ibni Al-Marhum Sultan Haji Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Sa'adul Khairi Waddien, Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam joined a video conference for the Special ASEAN Summit and Special ASEAN Plus Three Summit on COVID-19. The video conference took place at Baitul Mesyuarah, Istana Nurul Iman.

The Special ASEAN Summit was held in the morning and began with the opening speech of His Excellency Nguyen Xuan Phuc, the Prime Minister of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, as the Chair of ASEAN for 2020.

At the Special ASEAN Summit, His Majesty the Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam in a *titah* (royal speech) stated that further ASEAN Solidarity is needed in

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### Appreciate frontliners, special allowance given

**BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN, April 13** – His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah ibni Al-Marhum Sultan Haji Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Sa'adul Khairi Waddien, Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam understands the burden carried by the frontliners.

"If some people feel bored staying at home, (these frontliners) are checking the clock to see when they can return to their families. At home, their children are waiting and miss them," His Majesty said in a special royal speech

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# Special ASEAN Summit: ASEAN solidarity needed, facing COVID-19



His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah ibni Al-Marhum Sultan Haji Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Sa'adul Khairi Waddien, Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam joining video conferences for the Special ASEAN Plus Three Summit on COVID-19 together with other ASEAN Leaders and Dialogue Partners; the People's Republic of China, Japan and the Republic of Korea.

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facing unprecedented challenges brought by COVID-19. Complementing each other's efforts as well as sharing information, experiences and measures taken are essential to strengthen ASEAN's coordination in order to control the spread of the pandemic in the region. Equally important, stated His Majesty, is managing public information to avoid panic and counter false news.

On the socio-economic front, His Majesty also touched on the measures implemented in Brunei Darussalam, which include preparations for more resilience in facing the changing economic landscape post-COVID-19.

During this challenging time, His Majesty said, it is imperative for ASEAN to work together to keep economic activities alive and also learn from this crisis to be better prepared for future health emergencies. Enhanced cooperation across all Community Pillars is necessary to strengthen ASEAN's resilience.

To this end, His Majesty highlighted the urgency for accelerating intra-ASEAN trade in preparing the region for post-COVID-19 recovery.

In the Summit, leaders were presented with a report from the Chairman of the ASEAN Coordinating Council on ASEAN efforts in handling the COVID-19 by His Excellency Pham Binh Minh, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam.

ASEAN leaders also approved several recommendations to address the COVID-19 Pandemic, which include establishing the COVID-19 ASEAN Response Fund; developing harmonised guidelines for response to public health emergencies; enhancing communication and cooperation to address fake news; minimising the economic impact of COVID-19; continued social protection; and developing a post-pandemic recovery plan.

## Special ASEAN Plus Three Summit: Enhancing collective resilience to future emergencies

**BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN, April 14** – The ASEAN leaders and Plus Three countries; the People's Republic of China, Japan and the Republic of Korea was resumed in the afternoon.

The Special Summit began with the opening speech of His Excellency Nguyen Xuan Phuc, the Prime Minister of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, as the Chair of the ASEAN Plus Three. This was followed by speeches from His Excellency Moon Jae-in, President of the Republic of Korea (as Coordinator for the Plus Three countries); His Excellency Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan; and His Excellency Li Keqiang, Premier of the State Council of the People's Republic of China.

In the Special ASEAN Plus Three Summit, His Majesty the Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam expressed the importance of close collaboration between ASEAN and the Plus Three countries in response to the global health emergency. His Majesty welcomed efforts and expertise provided by the Dialogue Partners, stating that continued cooperation on response efforts would ensure a coordinated approach in containing the pandemic domestically, as well as preventing its spread in the region.

His Majesty also underscored the need to address the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19, recommending focusing work on ensuring the uninterrupted flow of essential goods and services to safeguard the people's security and livelihoods.

Apart from supporting ASEAN integration, His Majesty called for ASEAN and the Plus Three countries to develop regional trade and investment opportunities towards enhancing collective resilience for future emergencies, therefore accelerating economic growth and recovery post-COVID-19.



His Majesty Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam joining video conferencing for the Special ASEAN Summit on COVID-19 together with other ASEAN leaders.

During the Summit, leaders of the Plus Three countries shared information and their respective experiences as well as initiatives in containing the spread of the disease; public awareness initiatives; and treatments for patients who were infected by the COVID-19 disease.

The Special Summit issued a Joint Declaration and Statement.

## Appreciate frontliners, special allowance given

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due to COVID-19 at Istana Nurul Iman.

“This is just the emotional aspect of being a frontliner, and it does not state the risks they are facing. They are only equipped with Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) as a shield, and the rest, only prayers can be given to them,” said His Majesty.

To appreciate their services, His Majesty the Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam believes that it is befitting that special allowance of \$400 per month is given, especially to doctors, nurses, paramedics, ambulance drivers, volunteers, cleaners, security guards and all those working with the Ministry of Health (MoH), especially at Raja Isteri Pengiran Anak Saleha (RIPAS) Hospital, National Isolation Centre (NIC) in Tutong and also government-designated quarantine centres.

The special monthly allowance comes into effect in March 2020 and will continue until the end of the COVID-19 pandemic in the country.

As a community, Bruneians, said His Majesty had shown its commendable caring attitude by rendering assistance to facilitate the Ministry of Health (MoH) in the fight against COVID-19.

Thus, His Majesty added, the establishment of the COVID-19 Relief Fund will be used for medical supplies in fighting the virus.

His Majesty extended his appreciation to all parties, including individuals in helping the government to tackle the current challenges, especially to the frontliners, including volunteers who have been working day and night to attend to COVID-19 patients and those under quarantine.

His Majesty also extended his gratitude to the Royal Brunei Police Force, Royal Brunei Armed Forces, National Disaster Management Centre, cabin crew and pilots of Royal Brunei Airlines, management and staff of Brunei Shell Joint Venture, Government-Linked Companies, Foreign Direct Investors, telecommunications providers, private companies and other government agencies for their support to the government.

Meanwhile, the groups whose income are affected by the pandemic such as *tamu* (market) traders, taxi drivers and water-taxi drivers will also be given assistance that will be coordinated by the Brunei Islamic Religious Council (MUIB) of the



His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah ibni Al-Marhum Sultan Haji Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Sa'adul Khairi Waddien, Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam during the *titah*.

Ministry of Religious Affairs (MoRA).

As a mark of sympathy in the current situation, His Majesty urged landlords to consider reducing the burden of the tenants whose businesses have been affected, by waiving or reducing the rents during the crisis.

“If this can be done, it is inevitably a charity that will bring bounties in return,” added His Majesty

Earlier in the *titah*, His Majesty understood that many traders, including micro, small and medium enterprises or entrepreneur, are also affected by COVID-19.

Therefore, His Majesty's government through the Ministry of Finance and Economy in collaboration with related institutions, including Autoriti Monetari Brunei Darussalam (AMBD) has introduced several Economic Stimulus Packages to support those affected.

For the sake of welfare, His Majesty has also asked the relevant ministries to cooperate in establishing the National Welfare System (SKN) that will be launched in July.

“I am aware that even before or after the spread of COVID-19, many in the community still need assistance from the government. InshaAllah, this new system will make it easier for them to make their applications to the government,” His Majesty added.

His Majesty also outlined some of the many measures that the government has

undertaken since the first COVID-19 case in Brunei on March 9, and thankfully, we can deal it with patience and integration.

“However, with great sadness, a patient has returned to the mercy of Allah, may his soul be placed with the believers”.

“To address the coronavirus outbreak, a National Virology Reference Laboratory is being constructed as a response of the Government of His Majesty the Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam to boost and speed up testing capacity,” said His Majesty.

The government also invested in Artificial Intelligence for a more systematic healthcare implementation.

His Majesty stressed the importance of being responsible and adhering to rules and regulations. In light of a recent case where a group of people were caught gathering in a party at a hotel room which was also the location of a self-isolation facility.

“I hope the authorities will take stern action in this case and let it be a lesson for all,” said His Majesty.

Through this opportunity, His Majesty proposes Muslims in the country to read *Surah Yaasin* apart from other verses from the Al-Quran as there are many benefits and pray that COVID-19 will leave us and the country.

Before concluding the *titah*, His Majesty prayed to Allah the Almighty for protection against COVID-19.

# COVID-19 does not disrupt Muslims from fasting

**BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN, April 24** – Ramadan this year, is different from the previous Ramadan in terms of its atmosphere.

“Few months before Ramadan, we were shocked by the COVID-19 outbreak, leading to discomfort and even fear,” His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah ibni Al-Marhum Sultan Haji Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Sa'adul Khairi Waddien, Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam said in a *titah* (royal speech) in welcoming the month of Ramadan 1441 Hijrah/2020 Masihi.

This is not just felt in Brunei, in fact everywhere around the world. For a while, we are forced to postpone our presence in mosques, *suraus* and religious halls to perform the Friday prayers and congregational prayers. This is all done to prevent the risk of COVID-19 infection.

“However, with Allah the Almighty's will, the virus is seen to have been contained effectively. This, I believe, is because of the nation's concerted prevention measures and prayers that are practised,” said His Majesty the Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam.

The holy month of Ramadan is when Muslims typically glorify mosques, *suraus* and religious halls with the mass *Sunnat Tarawih* prayers.

But, His Majesty said if the situation is still not permitting for gatherings, there are still other ways to perform *Sunnat Tarawih* prayers with families at home.

“The same thing can be done for the *Tadarus* Al-Quran, we still have other ways of performing religious acts at home with families. We are not short of ways to perform them to seize bounties of the holy month,” said His Majesty.

Ramadan only comes once a year. One particular evening in Ramadan, called the 'Al-Qadar', is better than a thousand months, which means that worship during this time will allow us to attain bounties of more than a thousand months.

His Majesty reminded us that we should be determined to seize them. His Majesty also stressed that COVID-19 should not disrupt Muslims from fasting if they are healthy.

Following Ramadan, the month of Syawal will be the month to rejoice during Hari Raya Aidilfitri which is usually celebrated with joy. However, with Allah's provision has made it different this year as Aidilfitri prayers will be forced to be cancelled and the tradition of visiting is forbidden.

“We should be patient in facing this situation by considering all that happens has its wisdom from Allah the Almighty. Apart from patience, we are also obliged to make efforts in any methods,



His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah ibni Al-Marhum Sultan Haji Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Sa'adul Khairi Waddien, Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam delivers a *titah*.

such as taking precautionary measures,” His Majesty added.

As Muslims, His Majesty said we have our advantages, which is the encouragement of prayers when facing calamities.

Therefore, His Majesty called on all of us to do it together, especially in the holy month of Ramadan where the prayers of those who are fasting are powerful.

“Touching on the prayer, I remember *Qunut Nazilah* is read in the Friday prayers. It has been few Fridays since we could not perform Friday prayers which means that *Qunut Nazilah* cannot be read,” said His Majesty.

It should be continued despite us not being able to perform the Friday prayers amid the closure of mosques. His Majesty urged that it should also be carried out at home, whether in a congregation with families or individually during the daily prayers.

His Majesty added that the *Qunut Nazilah* could be read according to our abilities such as during the Subuh or Maghrib prayers, without it being read in all daily prayer times.

What is important for it to be read continuously, while waiting for mosques, *suraus* and religious halls to reopen.

His Majesty urged the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MoRA) to take the lead in providing a simple *Qunut* prayer guide for public use.

His Majesty also urged Muslims in Brunei and around the world to seize opportunities in the holy month by intensifying prayers so we can be freed of the dangers of the COVID-19 pandemic.

## MATM supports development of post COVID-19 Crisis Recovery Plan

**BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN, April 29** - The ASEAN Tourism Ministers held a Special Meeting of the ASEAN Tourism Ministers (MATM) on COVID-19 through video conference. Representing on behalf of Brunei Darussalam was Yang Berhormat Dato Seri Setia Awang Haji Ali bin Apong, Minister of Primary Resources and Tourism.

The Special MATM was chaired by His Excellency Dr. Thong Khon, Minister of Tourism, Kingdom of Cambodia and present was His Excellency Dato Lim Jock Hoi, ASEAN Secretary-

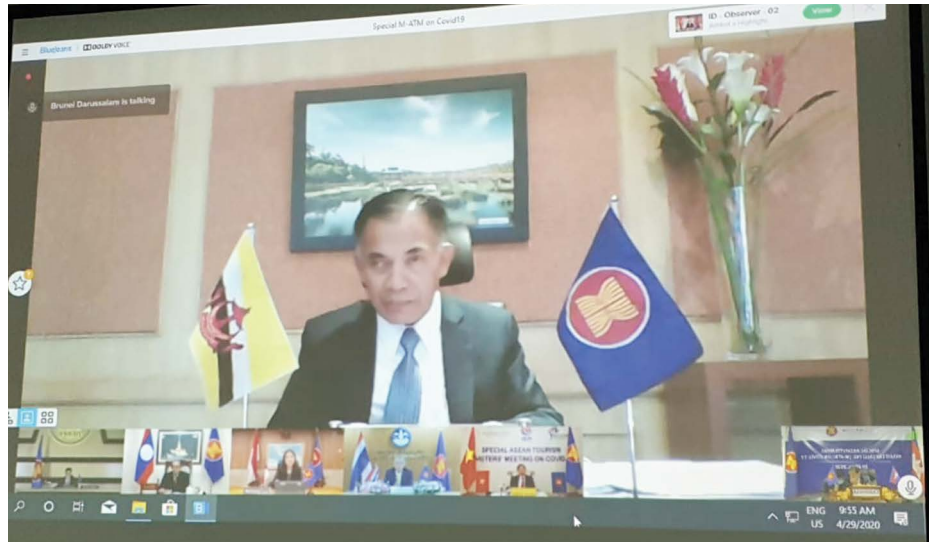
General as well as ASEAN Tourism Ministers.

In delivering his remarks, the Minister emphasised on His Majesty's speech in the recent Special ASEAN Summit on Coronavirus Diseases 2019 (COVID-19) that there is a need for ASEAN solidarity in facing the unprecedented challenges brought by COVID-19, complementing each other's efforts, as well as sharing information, experiences and measures taken are essential in strengthening ASEAN's coordination, in order to

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# MATM supports development of post COVID-19 Crisis Recovery Plan

Yang Berhormat Dato Seri Setia Awang Haji Ali bin Apong, Minister of Primary Resources and Tourism attending the special meeting of the ASEAN Tourism Ministers (MATM) on COVID-19 via video conference; and ASEAN Tourism Ministers during the video conference.



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control the spread of the pandemic in the region.

The Minister further urged Heads of National Tourist Organisation (NTOs) to explore creative and innovative ways to adapt to the new norms in the tourism sector, review the current and future strategies by maximising the use of digital technology in order for the sector to remain relevant and sustainable in the future.

The Special MATM ended with a joint statement by the ASEAN Tourism Ministers on strengthening cooperation to revitalise ASEAN tourism.

In the joint statement, the ASEAN Tourism Ministers stressed the need for a strengthened ASEAN coordination mechanism to collectively overcome surging challenges to

the tourism sector that had impacted the travel and tourism businesses to a halt, leading to high unemployment and furlough rates, and adversely affecting the livelihood of many communities in the midst.

The ASEAN Tourism Ministers also agreed on several covenant including to mitigate the impact on the outbreak with united effort including supporting the development and implementation of a post COVID-19 Crisis Recovery Plan such as building up ASEAN tourism capabilities, engaging with industry stakeholders to instil business and consumer confidence, exploring creative and innovative solutions to stimulate the tourism sector, ensuring the top of mind recall of the region in marketing efforts and joint tourism promotion programmes to advance ASEAN as a single tourism destination.



# Special Video Conference enhances cooperation in response to COVID-19

**BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN, April 8** – ASEAN Health Ministers Meeting (AHMM) and ASEAN Plus Three Health Ministers Meeting (APTHMM) held a Special Video Conference to have a strategic discussion about the directions and areas of healthcare in ASEAN to address the COVID-19 pandemic and to share updated information on action to curb the spread of the disease and get consensus in enhancing cooperation and coordination for strengthening national and regional responses to curb COVID-19.

Representing on behalf of Brunei Darussalam was Yang Berhormat Dato Seri Setia Dr. Awang Haji Md. Isham bin Haji Jaafar, Minister of Health.

The Special Video Conference was officiated by His Excellency Lieutenant General (Rtd) Terawan Agus Putranto, MD, PhD, Minister of Health of the Republic of Indonesia, as the chairman of AHMM with a focus in enhancing cooperation on coronavirus disease (COVID-19) response.

The Minister of Health in his statement at the Special Video Conference of AHMM shared Brunei Darussalam's experience in curbing the spread of COVID-19 through a whole-of-nation response based on two fundamental principles.

First, Brunei Darussalam aims to reduce morbidity and mortality through early detection by finging, testing, isolate and treat every case, and trace every contact. Brunei Darussalam has scaled up testing services, converting a sports complex into a dedicated 24-hour sampling centre, implemented sampling in primary health care centres in the community, and opened a new Molecular Diagnostic Unit for Respiratory Viruses.

Secondly, limit the spread of disease to reduce the surge on the healthcare system by using a combination of travel restrictions and other social distancing measures such as using digital technology to support remote learning and remote working and have rolled out a public communication campaign to encourage personal hygiene and appropriate



Yang Berhormat Dato Seri Setia Dr. Haji Mohd. Isham bin Haji Jaafar, Minister of Health and senior officials at the Ministry of Health during the Special Video Conference.

distancing during this time.

The Minister also shared Ministry of Health's continuous effort by investing in healthcare, preparing for additional capacity in our system with the opening of an extension of National Isolation Centre equipped with critical care beds and ICU capable beds.

The Minister then encouraged that at this crucial time, ASEAN solidarity and a regional response is needed and ensure that the free exchange of knowledge, ideas, and best practices continue.

Regional initiatives in data sharing and clinical and public health research collaboration should be enhanced and the outcomes disseminated in order to support ASEAN Member States who need support.

Apart from that, ASEAN needs to start planning for how as a region, de-escalate, in a safe and phased approach, and should not rush to lift restrictions too quickly, with the understanding that this may require a country-by-country approach to this issue.

The Minister added that there would come a day when we defeat this pandemic and will have to adjust to a new regular life. This will not be without cost to health systems and economies.

The Special Video Conference was followed by ASEAN Plus Three Health Ministers Meeting Special Video Conference co-chaired by the Minister of Health of the Republic of Indonesia and His Excellency Katsunobu Kato, Minister of Health, Labor and Welfare of Japan.

Dr. Haji Zulaidi bin Haji Abdul Latif, Deputy Permanent Secretary (Professional) at the Ministry of Health attended the

APTHMM on behalf of the Minister of Health.

At the APTHMM, the Deputy Permanent Secretary (Professional), Ministry of Health outlined the importance of imposing restrictive measures to contain or mitigate the threat of COVID-19. These measures are justified in preventing our healthcare system from being overwhelmed.

At the same time, however, this should not prevent or delay us from attaining essential medicines, medical supplies and medical equipment such as personal protective equipment, hand sanitizers, and disinfectants, despite having to spend much money.

Dr. Haji Zulaidi elaborated on some ways APTHMM Members can further advance the cooperation, include a whole-of-government approach to ease logistical activities that concern the supply, production and transportation of medical supplies and equipment; effective leverage on the regional networking that already exists, through working closely with other Dialogue and Development Partners, and other regional and global entities notably with our WHO regional offices in sharing information in sourcing medical supplies and equipment for procurement; and look into existing mechanisms, and manage as well as utilise various funding sources to obtain medical supplies and equipment for COVID-19, according to the needs or requirement of each country.

The Special Video Conference of AHMM and APTHMM concluded with the agreement to issue a Joint Statement of AHMM and APTHMM in enhancing cooperation on COVID-19 response.

# Health Ministers' Virtual Meeting Combat COVID-19



Yang Berhormat Dato Seri Setia Dr. Awang Haji Md. Isham bin Haji Jaafar, Minister of Health during the Virtual Meeting of Health Ministers in World Health Organization, Western Pacific Region to Stand in Solidarity to Combat COVID-19.

**BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN, April 8** – The Virtual Meeting of Health Ministers in World Health Organization, Western Pacific Region to Stand in Solidarity to Combat COVID-19 through a video conference, at the Ministry of Health was represented by Yang Berhormat Dato Seri Setia Dr. Awang Haji Md. Isham bin Haji Jaafar, Minister of Health.

The video conference was officiated by Dr. Takeshi Kasai, WHO Regional Director for the Western Pacific. Also delivering a high-level message was Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General; The Honourable Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama, Prime Minister and Minister for iTaukei Affairs and Sugar Industry of the Republic of Fiji; His Excellency Lee Hsien Loong, Prime Minister of the Republic of Singapore; His Excellency Nguyen Xuan Phuc, Prime Minister of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam; and Dr. Shin Young-soo, Director-General's Special Envoy for COVID-19 Preparedness and Response of the WHO and Regional Director Emeritus.

The Minister of Health at the Virtual Meeting shared the tracing of the first COVID-19 case in Brunei Darussalam was carried out by the Ministry of Health with the cooperation of the IHR National Focal Point, Malaysia. Both parties have worked closely in tracing the COVID-19 cluster among the *Tabligh* or religious mass gathering that has affected several countries in the region.

The Minister said that the experience of joining the Joint External Evaluation (JEE) from WHO last year assists in Brunei Darussalam's preparation measures in combating COVID-19. This includes the Whole of Government response operation for handling early cases of COVID-19; health staff operation in the frontline; police and military assistance operation in contact

tracing; provide specific quarantine areas through the assistance of the National Disaster Management Centre; enhance laboratory capabilities with the establishment of the Molecular Diagnostic Unit for Respiratory Viruses; and receive assistance from the society in together curbing the spread of COVID-19, either in the form of donations, volunteering works and other services.

The Minister of Health also shared the analysis on COVID-19 cases in Brunei Darussalam, where 30 per cent of the cases does not show any symptoms and continue to remain asymptomatic throughout the infection period until they recovered.

Detailed investigation on the cases revealed that there is a possibility of silent transmission cases among COVID-19 patients, and this has doubled the ministry's efforts in conducting COVID-19 tests among suspects and those who are asymptomatic.

In this regard, the Minister of Health suggested the WHO to review the existing technical guideline to ensure that each country truly prioritises tracing, isolation, tests and treatment for each case to stop the COVID-19 infection chain.

The Minister also suggested the WHO to pioneer in identifying exit strategy to avoid the risk of a resurgence, apart from safely allowing life returning to normal in stages.

The Minister then requested the WHO to pioneer a process to decide specific criteria to lift restrictions gradually, apart from taking into account mental health, emotion, social and spiritual aspects for every individual and the society that requires recovery.



# The latest situation on COVID-19



Yang Berhormat Dato Seri Setia Dr. Awang Haji Mohd Isham bin Haji Jaafar, Minister of Health at the media conference.



The tracking bracelet named iMSafe for remote monitoring and detection of people placed under the Quarantine Order in the country.

**BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN, April 30** - As of April, Brunei Darussalam still retains a total of 138 cases of COVID-19, of which during this month, two new cases of COVID-19 infections were confirmed.

The total number of cases recovered is 124 individuals. This brings the number of active cases still being treated at the National Isolation Centre to 13 cases, where two are still in critical condition, and both require heart/lung machine (ECMO) and respiratory assistance. Meanwhile, the rest are in a stable condition.

The matter was shared by Yang Berhormat Dato Seri Setia Dr. Awang Haji Mohd Isham bin Haji Jaafar, Minister of Health at the media conference on the country's latest COVID-19 situation held at Dewan Al-Afiah, Ministry of Health.

Currently, 66 individuals are currently undergoing quarantine in accordance with the Infectious Diseases Act, Chapter 204, and a total of 2,509 individuals have completed their quarantine.

The Minister informed that the total number of laboratory tests conducted since January 2020 is 13,580 tests.

With regard to the cases that have recovered but found to be positive again during follow-up examination, the Ministry of Health would like to inform that the total number of such cases as of today to 22 individuals, of which six are still undergoing further examination and testing. Meanwhile, one case has been allowed

to return home.

As of April 29, the Ministry of Health revealed a total of 4,310 random COVID-19 tests for surveillance purposes were conducted among foreign workers and those present for treatment at health centres. The results were all negative.

Following the cases that have recovered but found to be positive again, the Ministry of Health has changed its Standard Operating Procedure with the duration of the quarantine extended from seven days to two weeks to monitor them.

The Ministry of Health has also introduced a new method for remote monitoring and detection of people placed under the Quarantine Order in the country.

The new method is the tracking bracelets named iMSafe, which is connected to the 'IOTS' real-time monitoring and tracking system to monitor the movement and presence of the iMSafe bracelet.

This iMSafe system will not only enable the Ministry of Health and the Royal Brunei Police Force to monitor and track down those who are placed under the Quarantine Order, it will also assist in the public's compliance, especially with iMSafe wristband users following the Quarantine Order.

To date, Brunei Darussalam has a relatively high rate of recovered cases, of which more than 90 per cent have been confirmed.

## Government initiatives help businesses

**BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN, April 21** – Following the announcement of temporary closures of several marketplaces (*tamu*) in Tutong and Seria as one of the precautionary measures to contain the outbreak of COVID-19 in the country, the Ministry of Finance and Economy (MoFE) in collaboration with the Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA), Ghanim International Corporation Sdn Bhd and Darussalam Enterprise (DARE) is introducing the 'Buy Local Produce' campaign.



Yang Berhormat Dato Seri Setia Dr. Awang Haji Mohd. Amin Liew bin Abdullah, Minister at the Prime Minister's Office and Minister of Finance and Economy II during the press conference at the Al-Afiah Hall, Ministry of Health.

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# Government initiatives help businesses

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This was announced by Yang Berhormat Dato Seri Setia Dr. Awang Haji Mohd Amin Liew bin Abdullah, Minister at the Prime Minister’s Office and Minister of Finance and Economy II at the press conference on the latest situation of COVID-19 infection in Brunei Darussalam which was held at the Al-`Afiah Hall, Ministry of Health.

The main objective of the ‘Buy Local Produce’ campaign is to ensure the income of local farmers and market vendors will not be severely affected by the temporary closures. This initiative will also help to stabilise the prices of agricultural produce such as vegetables and fruits; while promoting continuity in agricultural farming locally.

Through this initiative, Ghanim and DARE will assist local farmers and market vendors in marketing and selling their local produce, which is typically sold in the marketplaces, to local buyers such as supermarkets, restaurants and the public.

Apart from that, the MoFE in cooperation with the MoHA, DARE and Bank Islam Brunei Darussalam (BIBD) introduced a virtual market platform – Community for Brunei to help micro, small

and medium enterprises (MSMEs) impacted by the current COVID-19.

The objective is to provide a platform that will help MSMEs sell their goods in the virtual market, and for the public to buy virtually and make payments digitally via debit or credit cards.

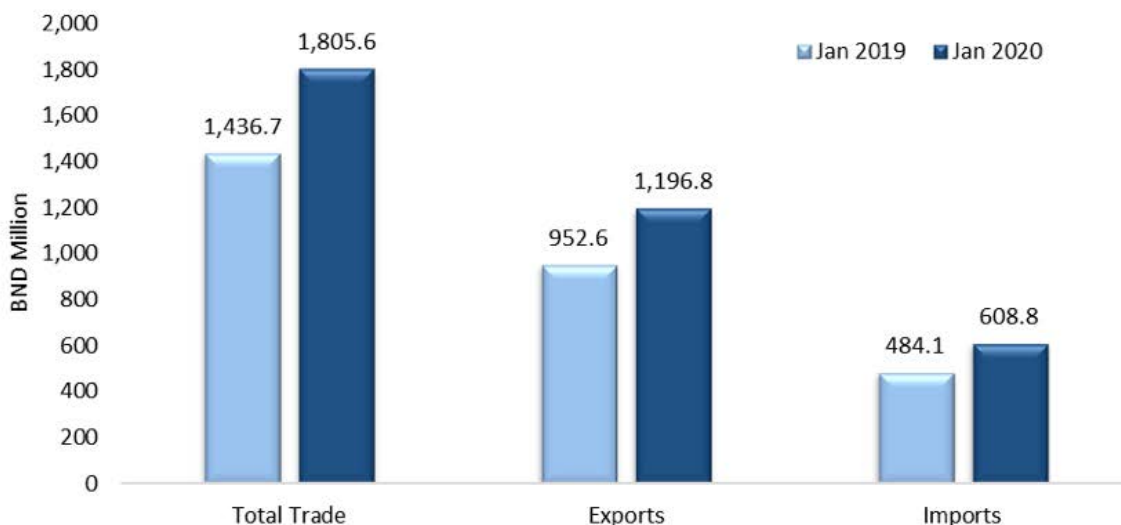
There are two projects launched under the Community for Brunei – the Community for COVID project was launched on April 17, and the Community for Ramadan will be launched on April 25 corresponding to 1 Ramadan 1441 Hijrah.

The Community for COVID project will inform the public of identified frontliner needs such as food and beverages and other necessities that will be shared through the website for the public to select the necessities they wish to donate and send to frontliners at Health Centres in all four districts.

Meanwhile, touching on the Community for Ramadan project, it provides the public with a chance to still experience the atmosphere of the *Gerai Ramadan* (stalls) via online even without the physical *Gerai Ramadan* being held this year.

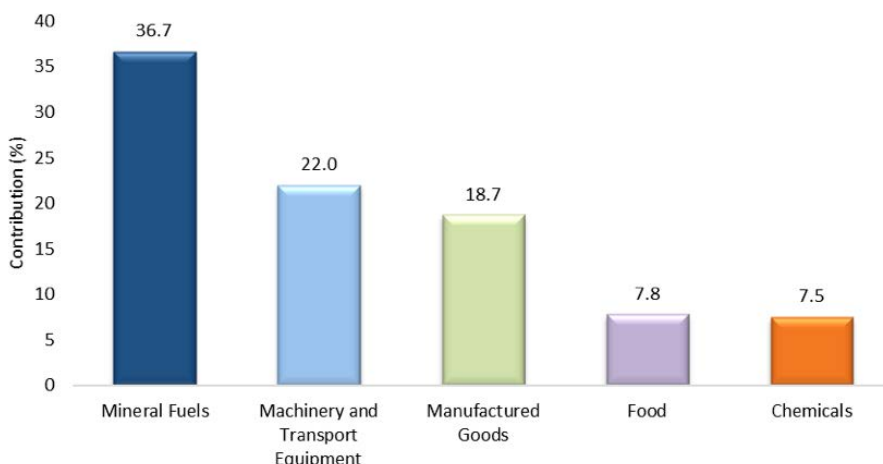
## Brunei Darussalam’s trade increased by 25.7%

Brunei Darussalam's Trade Performance



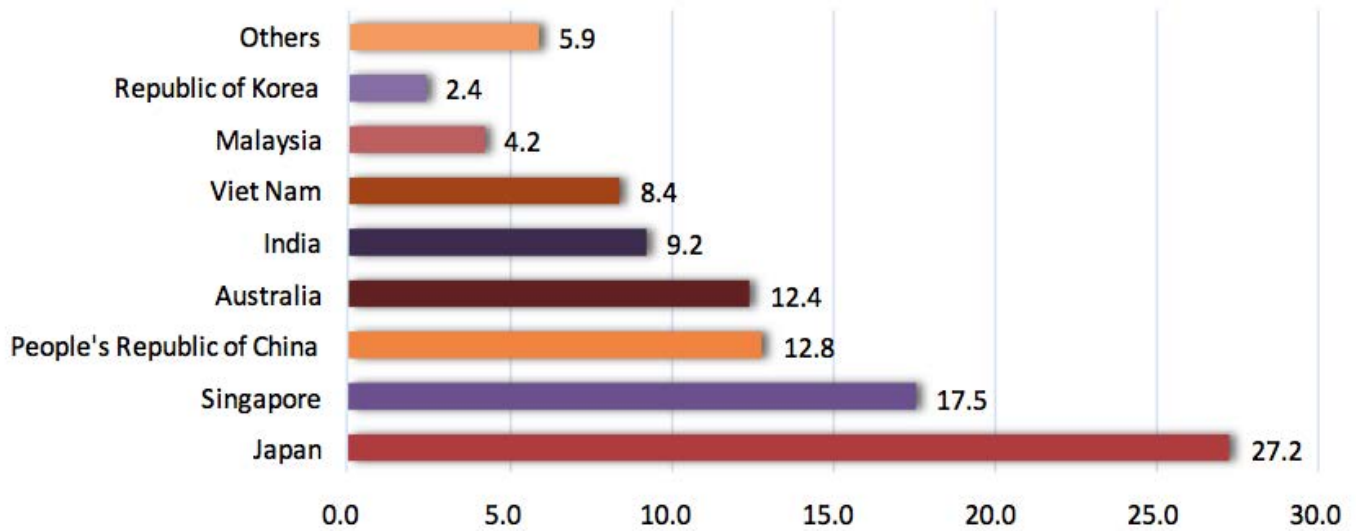
**BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN, April 8** - Brunei Darussalam’s total trade valued at \$1,805.6 million, an increase by 25.7 per cent from \$1,436.7 million during the same month last year. This takes into account exports of petroleum and gas products as an outcome of downstream activities. Meanwhile, for month-to-month changes, total trade for January 2020 decreased by 29.8 per cent compared to December 2019.

Five Main Import Commodities



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## Share of Exports by Trading Partners



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Exports rose by 25.6 per cent year-on-year to \$1,196.8 million compared to \$952.6 million in January 2019. This was due to the increase in mineral fuels exports by 23.2 per cent year-on-year, contributed by the exports of petroleum and gas products of which the major commodity was Automotive Diesel Fuels with a total from the downstream activities.

The main export market in January 2020 was Japan (27.2 per cent) followed by Singapore (17.5 per cent) and the People's Republic of China (12.8 per cent).

In terms of commodity exports, Mineral Fuels represents the major contributor with 87.5 per cent followed by Chemicals (11.6 per cent) and Manufactured Goods (0.5 per cent).

Total imports increased by 25.8 per cent year-on-year to \$608.8 million. The five main import commodities were Mineral Fuels (36.7 per cent), followed by Machinery and Transport Equipment (22.0 per cent), Manufactured Goods (18.7 per cent), Food (7.8 per cent) and Chemicals (7.5 per cent).

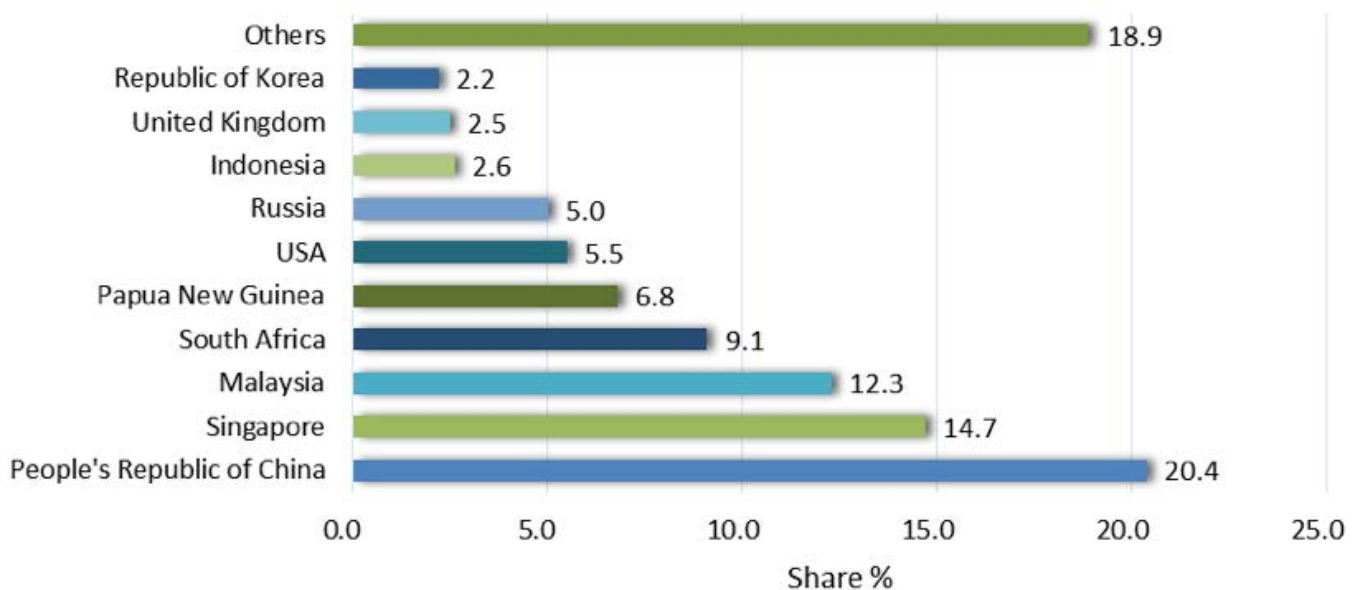
By End Use category, imports of

Intermediate Goods comprised of 65.2 per cent of the total imports followed by Capital Goods (27.9 per cent) and Consumption Goods (6.9 per cent).

For imports by trading partners, the highest share was from the People's Republic of China (20.4 per cent), followed by Singapore (14.7 per cent) and Malaysia (12.3 per cent).

The International Merchandise Trade Statistics (IMTS) for Brunei Darussalam adopts the General System for recording trade statistics, which covers imports, domestic exports, and re-exports.

## Share of Imports by Trading Partners



# CPI February 2020 increased by 1.4%

**BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN, April 9** – The Consumer Price Index (CPI) in February 2020 increased by 1.4 per cent year-on-year compared to February 2019. Prices of Food and Non-Alcoholic Beverages increased by 1.0 per cent. Meanwhile, Non-Food prices increased by 1.5 per cent.

The CPI increase was largely attributed to increases in the prices and costs of Miscellaneous Goods and Services (11.4 per cent); Restaurants and Hotels (5.0 per cent); and Food and Non-Alcoholic Beverages (1.0 per cent). However, this was moderated by the decrease in price of Transport (3.1 per cent) and Housing, Water, Electricity, Gas and Other Fuels (1.6 per cent).

Prices of Miscellaneous Goods and Services increase mainly due to a rise in prices of insurance. Meanwhile, the increase in the prices of Restaurant and Hotels was due to increase in price of catering services. The increase in Food and Non-Alcoholic Beverages was due to a rise in prices of vegetables.

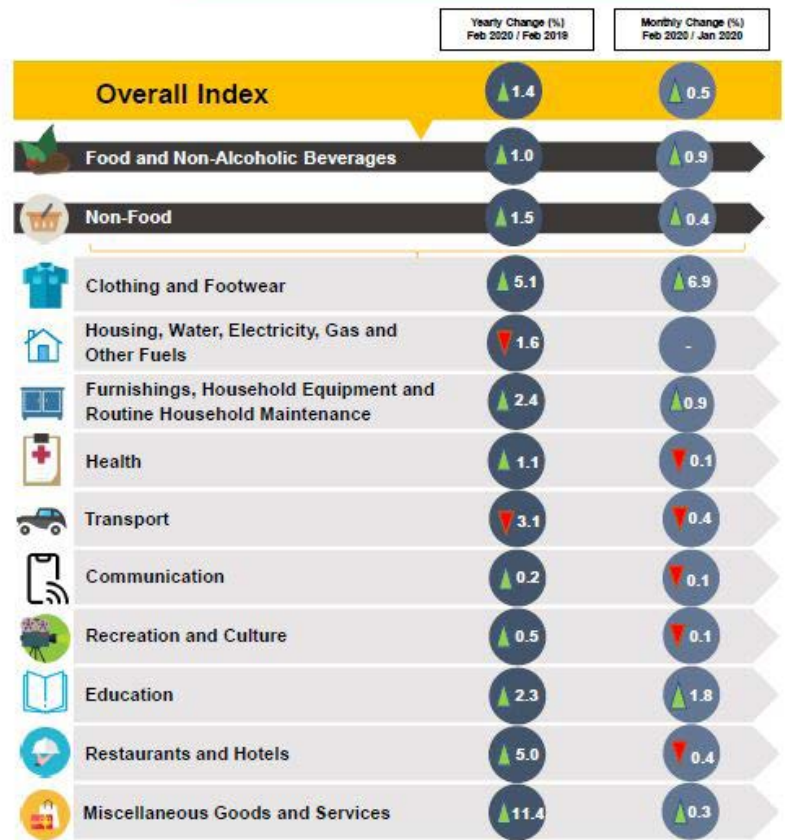
On a month-on-month basis, the CPI in February 2020 increased by 0.5 per cent compared to January 2020. The Food and Non-Alcoholic Beverages Index and the Non-Food Index have both increased by 0.9 per cent and 0.4 per cent, respectively.

The CPI is a measure of price changes of goods and services paid by the consumer in a specified period and compiled on a monthly basis. The list of goods and services in the CPI is based on the average expenditure per household from the Household Expenditure Survey (HES).

## CONSUMER PRICE INDEX (CPI) FEBRUARY 2020



CPI measures the changes in prices of a fixed basket of goods and services purchased by the majority of household in Brunei Darussalam.



Source: Department of Economic Planning and Statistics, Ministry of Finance and Economy

## UTB – Huawei set up ICT Academy

**BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN, April 10** - Universiti Teknologi Brunei (UTB) and Huawei Technologies (B) Sendirian Berhad (ICT) solutions provider joined forces to set up an ICT Academy in Brunei as part of Huawei’s global initiative to support ICT skills development.

UTB will be the first university in the country to become a part of the ICT Academy that has a global presence in 72 countries.

Professor Dr. Dayang Hajah Zohrah binti Haji Sulaiman, Vice-Chancellor of UTB and Awang Zhangjianwei, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Huawei Brunei signed the agreement to cultivate ICT talents among the students and to prepare them to be future-ready for ICT developments.

The partnership places a strong emphasis on increasing the number of ICT professionals in the Sultanate through



University of Brunei Technology (UTB) and Huawei Technologies (B) Sendirian Berhad (ICT) merged to establish an ICT Academy in Brunei Darussalam as part of Huawei’s global initiative for support the development of ICT skills.

joint research, education and training programmes. This enables the two parties to set up a platform for technical collaborations.

Under the agreement, the not-for-profit academy entitled Huawei Authorized Information and Network Academy (Huawei Academy), allows UTB to deliver

Huawei Certification training to their students primarily.

This partnership creates a bridge between academia and industry in nurturing ICT talent and equipping students with ICT skills that are necessary for employment

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and cultivate a future workforce to fill the global ICT skills gap.

The Huawei Academy will provide UTB students with hands-on experience and industry certification in networking technologies and security by embedding the industry-standard training in the existing curriculum. Students will also be able to download a personal copy of Huawei's Enterprise Network Simulation Platform (eNSP) networking simulator. This essential learning tool will help enhance their professional skills and also the opportunity to experience Huawei's enterprise network equipment.

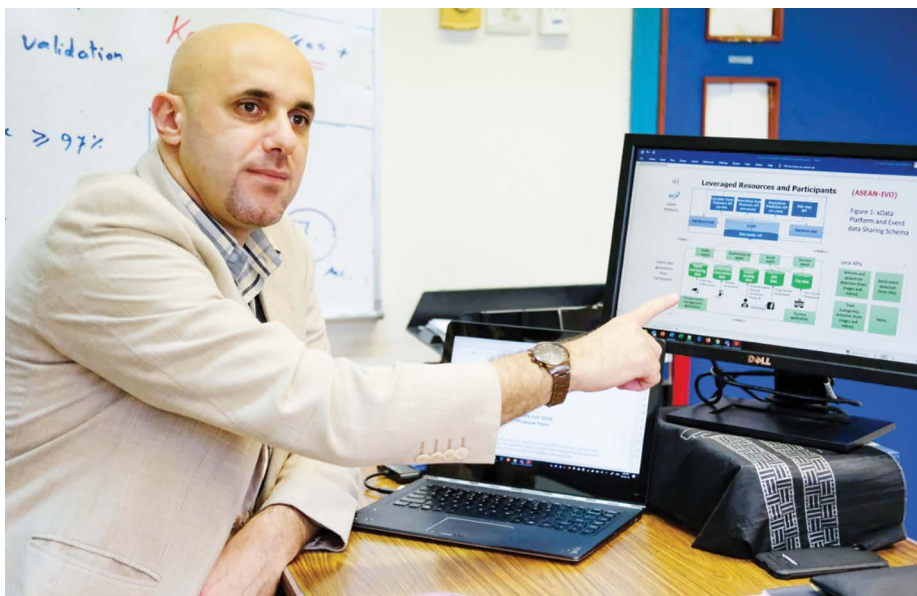
At the initial stage, UTB through the Huawei Academy will be offering training for Routing and Switching (R&S) Certification leading to the certification for the Huawei Certified ICT Expert (HCIE-R&S). The academy will be equipped with IP network equipment and products donated by Huawei.

With the establishment of this academy, UTB through the School of Computing and Informatics (SCI) will be able to expand a range of technical skills and knowledge that can be provided to the students as well as members of the public.

This can also help SCI further to develop its research and development activities

with Huawei and achieve the university's mission for industry-relevant capabilities, towards the fulfilment of Brunei Vision 2035 and Brunei's Digital Economy Master Plan.

Huawei is currently cooperating with over 938 universities to open Huawei ICT academies around the world, with about 332 in China. In 2019, more than 28,939 students were certified. Total certification since programme inception has surpassed 55,852. Under the HAINA programme, Huawei also runs a global annual 'Huawei ICT Competition' for students, allowing local country winners to visit China for the finals and compete with students from across the globe.



## UTB, Research Partner develop smart-city applications

**Dr. Asem Kasem, Assistant Professor from the School of Computing and Informatics (SCI) explains the project.**

**TUNGKU LINK, April 14** - Universiti Teknologi Brunei (UTB) under the Digital and Creativity research thrust along with other four international research groups have secured project funding worth USD80,000 from ASEAN ICT Virtual Organisation (ASEAN IVO), a consortium of research institutions in ASEAN and Japan, for their project proposal entitled 'Reusable, Sharable, and Transferable Smart Data Platform for Collaborative Development of Data Driven Smart Cities'.

The research groups comprised of UTB; Da Lat University, Viet Nam; National University of Singapore; Isabela State University, Philippines; and National Institute of Information and Communications Technology (NICT), Japan as the Project Leader. The awarded project starts from April 1, 2020 until March 31, 2022.

Representing UTB as the lead researcher is Dr. Asem Kasem, Assistant Professor from the School of Computing and Informatics (SCI) along with its associate members Dr. Wida Susanty binti Haji Suhaili, Assistant Professor; and Dayang Effa Nabilla binti Aziz, a PhD student from

SCI.

The project aims to develop smart-city applications that are evolving around environmental-awareness in ASEAN countries collaboratively using a reusable, sharable and transferable smart data platform, namely xData which was initially developed by NICT. It helps to promote collaborative prediction and counter-measure of social risks caused by environmental disasters in ASEAN countries.

The researchers will be organising international workshops to facilitate knowledge transfer, discuss and determine future sharing and collaboration standards, enable applications development and enhance the architecture of the xData platform.

The new applications will be built by each research group to create, share, transfer and customise predictive modelling with local data on the testbed effectively.

The proposed applications include Smart Environmental Tourism and Sustainability Mobility by Da Lat city

and Da Lat University, Vietnam; Smart Outdoor Activities by National University of Singapore, Singapore; Smart Dengue EW System by Isabela State University at Cauayan Campus, Philippines; and Transboundary Air-Pollution Forecasting by UTB.

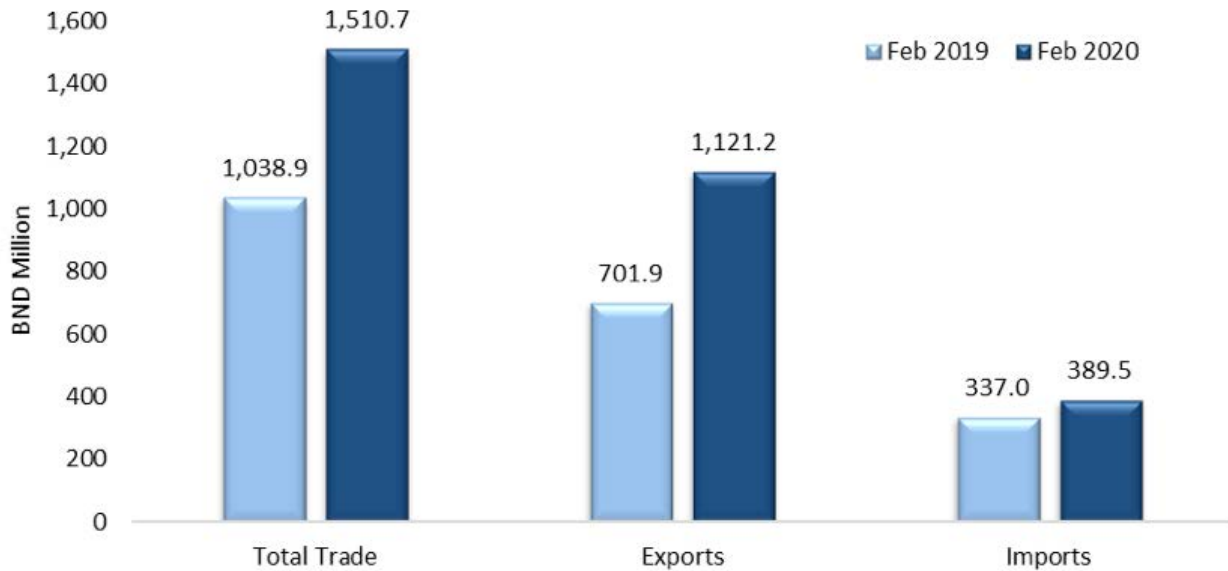
The UTB project will focus on forecasting haze and transboundary air pollution, which encourages the trans-border disaster research, and helps decision-makers in the government to plan for public health advice for example closure of schools in the event of predicted prolonged dangerous levels of haze.

Each of these applications by itself offers some aspect of social impact that improves the services/life quality of people in the cities where they will be deployed. The collaborative work on these applications will lead to faster development and more accurate modeling through sharing and reusing of resources, methods, models, and/or data. The success in implementing these applications using a shared platform will make it easier in the future to combine all of them into one smart city.

## Total trade increased by 45.4%

**BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN, April 29** - Brunei Darussalam's total trade valued at \$1,510.7 million, an increase of 45.4 per cent from \$1,038.9 million during the same month last year. Meanwhile, for month-to-month changes, total trade for February decreased by 16.3 per cent compared to January.

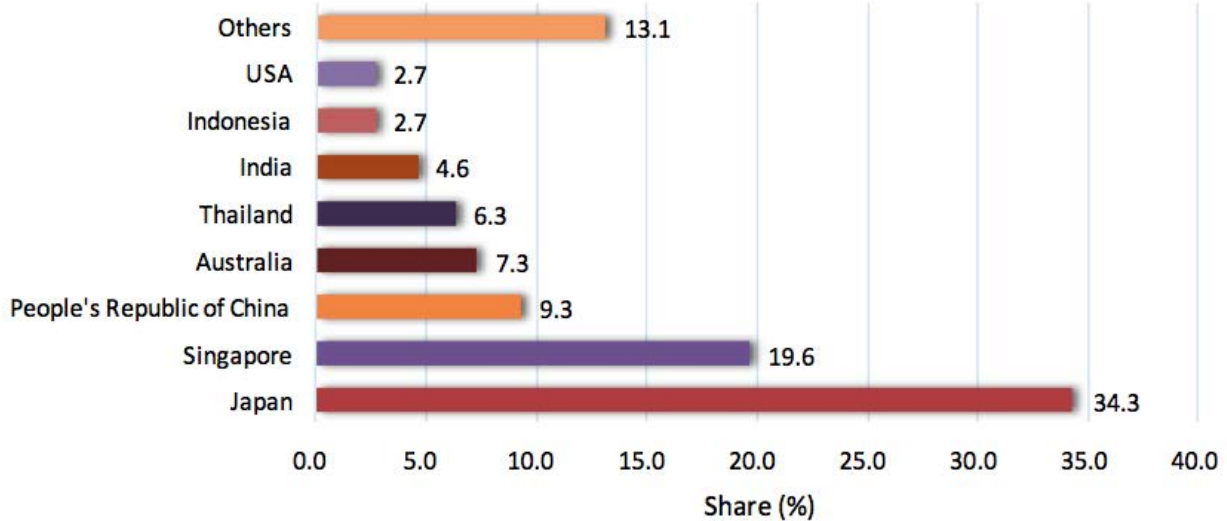
### Brunei Darussalam's Trade Performance



Exports rose by 59.7 per cent year-on-year to \$1,121.2 million compared to \$701.9 million in February 2019. This was due to the increase in mineral fuels exports by 47.3 per cent year-on-year mainly contributed by the exports of liquefied natural gas (LNG) and petroleum and gas products of which the major commodity was 'Other motor spirit, of other RON, unleaded' from the downstream activities.

The primary export market for Brunei Darussalam in February was Japan (34.3 per cent) followed by Singapore (19.6 per cent) and the People's Republic of China (9.3 per cent).

### Share of Exports by Trading Partners

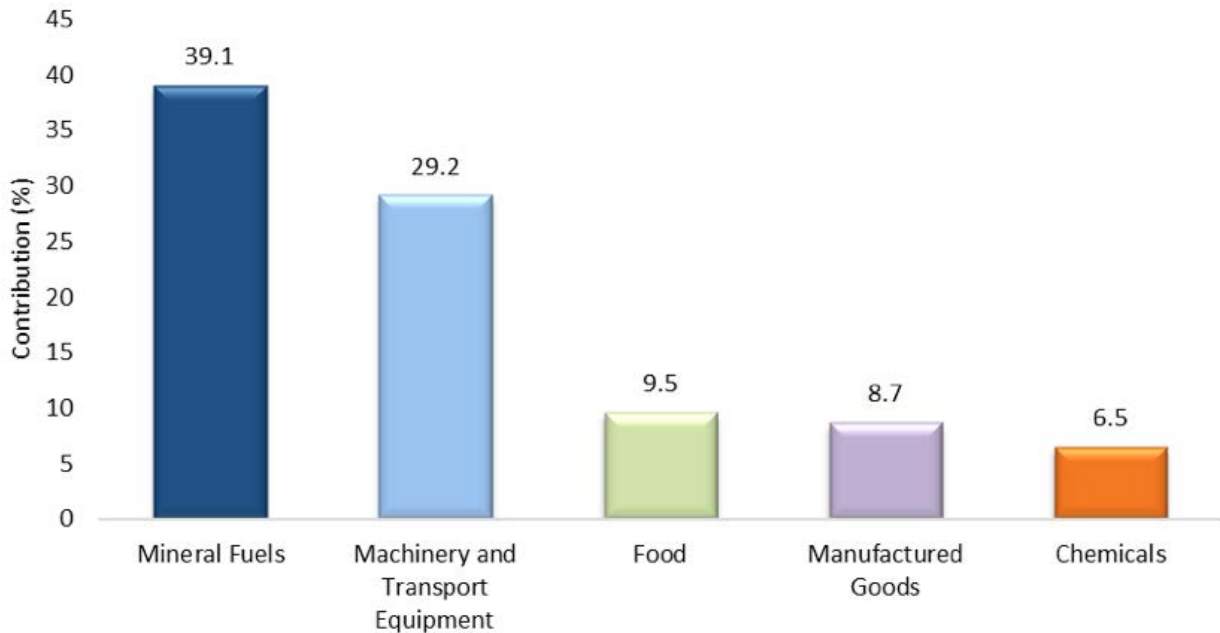


In terms of commodity exports, Mineral Fuels represents the major contributor with 86.6 per cent followed by Chemicals (12.4 per cent) and Machinery and Transport Equipment (0.6 per cent).

Meanwhile, total imports increased by 15.6 per cent year-on-year to \$389.5 million driven by imports of mineral fuels in line with the downstream activities.

The five primary import commodities were Mineral Fuels (39.1 per cent), followed by Machinery and Transport Equipment (29.2 per cent), Food (9.5 per cent), Manufactured Goods (8.7 per cent) and Chemicals (6.5 per cent).

## Five Main Import Commodities



By End Use category, imports of Intermediate Goods comprised of 61.3 per cent of the total imports followed by Capital Goods (32.5 per cent) and Consumption Goods (6.2 per cent).

For imports by trading partners, the highest share was from the United Arab Emirates (24.3 per cent), followed by Malaysia (19.9 per cent) and Singapore (13.5 per cent).

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## Share of Imports by Trading Partners

