



**INFORMATION AND ANALYTICAL DEPARTMENT OF THE  
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF  
INDEPENDENT STATES**

**ON MEASURES TO COUNTER  
CORONAVIRUS IN THE CIS COUNTRIES**

INFORMATION BULLETIN

NO. 4 (17–23 APRIL 2020)



Minsk, 2020

<b>CIS Executive Committee .....</b>	<b>6</b>
Coordination Council on the Problems of Sanitary Protection of the Territory of CIS Member States from the Importation and Spread of Particularly Dangerous Infectious Diseases holds extraordinary meeting .....	6
<b>Republic of Azerbaijan.....</b>	<b>8</b>
President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev: we put the interests of our citizens above all else.....	8
Phase Two of Quarantine Begins in Azerbaijan .....	8
The number of people who have recovered from COVID-19 in Azerbaijan is twice the number of new cases .....	8
Ministry of Economy of Azerbaijan unveils details of tax benefits provided in response to coronavirus.....	9
<b>Republic of Armenia.....</b>	<b>9</b>
Nikol Pashinyan explains the gradual lifting of quarantine in Armenia.....	9
Some restrictions introduced in Armenia due to the state of emergency are to be lifted this week	10
Government of Armenia allocates 25 million US dollars to help population.....	10
Another Armenian city isolated because of coronavirus .....	10
Health Minister describes plan to eliminate COVID-19 in the country .....	11
Armenia to lift ban on movement around the country .....	11
<b>Republic of Belarus.....</b>	<b>12</b>
Alexander Lukashenko confident in the Belarusian response to coronavirus .....	12
Ministry of Health of the Republic of Belarus: COVID-19 morbidity should start to decline in the coming three or four weeks.....	12
Over 5 million Belarusian roubles and 79 000 euros credited to charity accounts of the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Belarus to finance the response to COVID-19.....	12
Belarusian trade unions demand extra measures to protect workers .....	13
Mobile operators in Belarus to support health professionals.....	13
Internship programmes for doctors on how to provide medical assistance to COVID-19 patients developed in Belarus.....	13
Temperature-taking robot at Minsk National Airport.....	14
Alexander Lukashenko holds meeting to discuss priority measures to ensure the sustainable functioning of the economy and social system during the pandemic .....	14
<b>Republic of Kazakhstan .....</b>	<b>15</b>
Kazakhstan plans to relax quarantine measures.....	15
Kazakhstan’s enterprises return to regular operations .....	15
Minister of Health of Kazakhstan: lockdown may be extended .....	16
Russia gives Kazakhstan 38 000 units of chemicals for COVID-19 tests.....	17
<b>Republic of Kyrgyzstan .....</b>	<b>17</b>
Ministry of Health of the Kyrgyz Republic: every person will be able to get tested for COVID-19 .....	17
Kyrgyzstan launches service for supporting the work of medics .....	18

Those in need in Kyrgyzstan to be given food packages.....	18
Ministry of Health of the Kyrgyz Republic notes success in fight against COVID-19.....	18
Disinfection tunnel installed on Bishkek–Naryn–Torugart highway .....	19
Ministry of Emergency Situations of the Kyrgyz Republic: observation facilities with a capacity of 12,000 ha set up throughout the country .....	19
<b>Republic of Moldova.....</b>	<b>19</b>
Igor Dodon explains how country will emerge from the crisis.....	19
Moldova’s Prime Minister holds Emergency Management Center meeting.....	19
<b>Russian Federation .....</b>	<b>20</b>
<i>Rospotrebnadzor</i> holds consultations with CIS countries on their response to COVID-19.....	20
Russian researchers say COVID-19 antibody test is ready.....	20
Russia donates coronavirus test kits to Uzbekistan .....	21
Moscow Mayor Sergey Sobyanin offers money to donors with COVID-19 antibodies .....	21
President Putin urges experts to take all possible coronavirus development scenarios into account .....	21
Mikhail Mishustin signs resolution to extend migrants’ visas due to coronavirus.....	22
Control measures and self-isolation regime in Moscow to last until 1 May.....	22
Muscovites with symptoms of acute respiratory viral infection to be placed in mandatory self-isolation.....	22
<i>Rospotrebnadzor</i> donates approximately 200 000 COVID-19 test kits to CIS countries .....	23
New rules for travelling around Moscow come into force .....	23
Digital permits to be introduced in 21 regions of Russia.....	23
Russian schoolchildren to receive free food packages during self-isolation .....	23
<b>Republic of Tajikistan .....</b>	<b>24</b>
Coronavirus prevention classes held in Dushanbe schools and universities .....	24
President of Tajikistan calls for action during coronavirus pandemic.....	24
Tajik authorities take active steps to prevent the coronavirus epidemic in the country .....	25
Tajikistan sends all coronavirus tests to the WHO .....	25
<b>Turkmenistan .....</b>	<b>25</b>
UN representatives meet Turkmenistan authorities to discuss essential cooperation.....	25
President of Turkmenistan discusses measures to counter the coronavirus pandemic with UN Secretary-General.....	26
<b>Republic of Uzbekistan.....</b>	<b>27</b>
Uzbekistan to purchase 2300 ventilators and medical equipment for \$30 million.....	27
Uzbekistan gives 5 million medical masks to Russia in aid .....	27
Quarantine measures in Uzbekistan extended until 10 May.....	27
President of Uzbekistan Mirziyoyev orders gradual easing of quarantine restrictions in several regions.....	27
80% of self-employed people in Uzbekistan exempt from tax during the quarantine.....	28

Schoolchildren in Uzbekistan to finish year at home .....	28
Daily number of recovered patients exceeds new cases in Uzbekistan .....	29
Uzbekistan to provide lonely elderly people with free food and protective equipment .....	29
President of Uzbekistan holds meeting on COVID-19 response.....	29
Uzbekistan launches online clinic in test mode .....	31
Cost of treating coronavirus patients announced in Uzbekistan .....	32
<b>Ukraine.....</b>	<b>32</b>
“Help is Near” online platform launched in Ukraine during lockdown .....	32
COVID-19 epidemic in Ukraine to peak in early May .....	32
Ukraine plans to ease quarantine .....	33
Quarantine measures in Ukraine extended until 11 May .....	33

## **CIS Executive Committee**

### **Coordination Council on the Problems of Sanitary Protection of the Territory of CIS Member States from the Importation and Spread of Particularly Dangerous Infectious Diseases holds extraordinary meeting**

*21 April, Press Service of the CIS Executive Committee*

On 21 April 2020, the Coordination Council on the Problems of Sanitary Protection of the Territory of CIS Member States from the Importation and Spread of Particularly Dangerous Infectious Diseases held an extraordinary meeting at the Russian Antiplague Scientific Research Institute “Microbe” of the Russian Federal Service for Surveillance on Consumer Rights Protection and Human Wellbeing (*Rospotrebnadzor*).

The video conference meeting was attended by members of the Coordination Council, permanent plenipotentiary representatives and diplomatic officials from CIS member states, experts from Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and the WHO Regional Office for Europe, as well as representatives of the CIS Executive Committee. The participants shared best practices and the latest information on their response to the novel coronavirus infection. They also discussed the current situation caused by COVID-19 in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and the world at large.

It was noted that since the previous meeting of the Coordination Council a month ago the epidemiological situation had grown worse both globally and in the CIS member states. The number of affected countries has risen from 150 to 182. The total number of cases worldwide has exceeded 2 500 000, and the number of deaths has reached 172 117.

The participants pointed out that experts from CIS member states maintained close cooperation, sharing their national experience of response to COVID-19. They also highlighted the uniting role of the World Health Organization in response to the pandemic and stressed the importance of interaction among experts from CIS member states and the WHO Regional Office for Europe in order to stop the spread of the virus at both the global and regional levels.

Work on the draft Agreement on the Cooperation of CIS Member States in the Prevention of and Response to Public Health Emergencies, the draft Regulation on the Exchange of Information about Public Health Emergencies between CIS Member States, and the draft Regulation on the Basic Organization of CIS Member States for the Monitoring of, Early Warning on, and Joint Response to Public Health Emergencies is still relevant.

The Members of the Coordination Council noted the positive results of the joint work to establish and implement the International Health Regulations (2005) in order to strengthen the methodological, technological and material capabilities, as well as the human resource potential and regulatory framework in support of a comprehensive set of measures aimed at the prevention, monitoring, early detection, verification and control of public health emergencies of international concern.

In the current situation, the CIS member states are making use of the opportunity to provide remote advice to patients who are seriously ill with the coronavirus and share information on the development of tests to detect COVID-19. This work involves comprehensive humanitarian cooperation, as well as national guidance for healthcare professionals, which includes online training modules that are publicly available for medical staff from the Commonwealth of Independent States.

The representatives of the CIS member states also thanked the Russian Federation for the practical and methodological assistance it has provided as part of the response to COVID-19 and mentioned that the mobile laboratory vehicles donated by the Russian Federation were being used to test for the coronavirus.

During the meeting, experts from the WHO Regional Office for Europe noted that the CIS member states were taking all necessary measures to respond to the novel coronavirus infection. This is expected to help contain the spread of the disease in the Commonwealth of Independent States.

Experts from CIS member states rely on the long-held tradition of cooperation and are determined to continue to work closely to prevent the spread of the novel coronavirus infection.

The next video conference meeting of the Coordination Council is scheduled for May 2020 to discuss the status of COVID-19 pandemic and the results of response measures taken in the CIS member states.

## **Republic of Azerbaijan**

### **President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev: we put the interests of our citizens above all else**

*20 April, Trend*

President Aliyev charged the heads of several ministries with additional social missions during a recent video conference call.

The head of state stressed that public health, social welfare and reasonable economic growth given the current situation are on top of the government's list of priorities in the context of the ongoing pandemic.

According to the President, the quarantine has to be lifted gradually in order to largely preserve the potential for economic activity, which is undoubtedly important for future economic growth and, therefore, for the social protection of the population. It was noted that steps were needed to prepare for the post-quarantine life of the country.

President Aliyev mentioned the need to provide the thousands of unemployed people with opportunities for work. "This year, 90 000 jobs will have to be created. This is another area that needs very close control," he said, pointing out that initially there was no control at all.

### **Phase Two of Quarantine Begins in Azerbaijan**

*21 April, Sputnik*

On 18 April, the Emergency Response Team under the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan took the decision to extend the special quarantine regime in Azerbaijan starting from Monday 20 April.

The quarantine was extended to midnight on 4 May 2020.

The extension of the special quarantine regime means that resolutions to suspend classes at all educational institutions and close the country's borders with Georgia and Iran will remain in force.

Social isolation was introduced in Azerbaijan on 14 March, while the special quarantine regime was established from 24 March to 20 April. People over 65 years of age are not allowed to leave their homes. Access to and from Baku, Sumgayit and the Absheron District is prohibited, and all inter-district and inter-city passenger transport has been suspended.

Officials, employees and representatives of a number of agencies, enterprises and facilities are allowed to travel if they can produce a staff pass or a certificate issued by their employer. Everyone else is requested to stay at their place of residence.

People are only allowed to leave the house for specific purposes: to receive urgent medical care or treatment as part of a regular rehabilitation programme; to buy food, medicines and other essential items or to go to the bank or post office; or to attend the funeral of a close relative.

However, before going out, people are requested to text 8103 (free of charge) to obtain permission to leave. People may leave home without sending a text message if they have been summoned to court or to a law enforcement office, but in this case they are required to have the summons on their person to produce it if stopped by the police.

### **The number of people who have recovered from COVID-19 in Azerbaijan is twice the number of new cases**

*21 April, Sputnik*

In a communique published on 20 April, the Emergency Response Team under the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan reported that a total of 38 new cases of coronavirus had been confirmed in Azerbaijan over the previous 24 hours, with 79 people having recovered and been discharged from hospital.

According to the latest available data, a total of 1436 people have been diagnosed with COVID-19 in Azerbaijan in the course of the pandemic. Of those, 791 patients have successfully recovered, while 19 people have died of complications.

Currently, 626 patients are receiving treatment in specialized hospitals. According to their doctors, 16 are in critical condition, 23 are moderately ill, while all the others are stable.

## **Ministry of Economy of Azerbaijan unveils details of tax benefits provided in response to coronavirus**

*23 April, Azerbaijan 24*

A package of proposals to provide tax benefits and tax holidays to businesses operating in industries affected by the pandemic was announced in accordance with the Action Plan approved by a government decree dated 4 April 2020.

The list of industries affected by the pandemic includes inter-city and inter-district transportation of passengers, and the hospitality sector. Other examples include businesses that provide domestic services, entertainment and recreation complexes, cinemas and museums. Educational institutions, child psychology centres and other training facilities are also considered to have been affected by the pandemic. The draft law provides for the full exemption of affected industries from property and land tax, as well as for a 75% reduction in income tax throughout 2020. Special benefits will be granted alongside such exemptions, taking the existing tax regimes in certain industries into account.

## **Republic of Armenia**

### **Nikol Pashinyan explains the gradual lifting of quarantine in Armenia**

*18 April, Sputnik*

Coronavirus will not disappear until there is a vaccine. Given this, the strategy of response to the pandemic is mostly about keeping the number of new cases under control. This was the message conveyed by Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan in a video address to the public on Friday.

According to Pashinyan, it is impossible to stay in quarantine and keep the state of emergency forever. Progressive adaptation to the coronavirus and a step-by-step lifting of the state of emergency are priority tasks for the country.

“In practice, this means that we will gradually allow the resumption of work in a range of industries. However, we expect employers to introduce special preventive measures to contain the pandemic. If this does not happen, we will have to tighten things up again,” said Pashinyan.

Starting from 17 April, all businesses are to have plans to prevent the spread of coronavirus in their premises and facilities. The Prime Minister has called upon everyone to treat the situation with the utmost responsibility, do their best not to get infected or pass the virus on to others, and observe social distance and the basic rules of hygiene. He believes that people must adopt new behaviours due to the pandemic.

Pashinyan added that the measures taken by the government in response to the pandemic have already yielded results. Yet, people should remain vigilant and exercise even more caution. “If we do so, little by little we will return to our normal lives starting from as early as 14 May. If not, if we do not observe



the new rules of coexistence, then the virus may spread even more and result in a humanitarian catastrophe,” the Prime Minister said.

On 13 April, the government of Armenia decided to extend the state of emergency by an additional 30 days: from 5.00pm on 14 April to 5.00pm on 14 May.

### **Some restrictions introduced in Armenia due to the state of emergency are to be lifted this week**

*20 April, Sputnik*

Assistant to the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia Nairi Sargsyan announced at a press conference on Monday that a number of the restrictions introduced in the country due to the state of emergency would be lifted.

Before that, a number of businesses were allowed to continue operations, construction work resumed, and restrictions on the mass media were lifted.

“We are planning to relax some of the restrictions so that we can gradually start to resume our normal way of life. A number of countries have adopted the same strategy. This week, the Commandant’s office will draw up a list of restrictions that will be lifted. Some businesses may be allowed to resume operations,” said Sargsyan.

Restrictions may be lifted from shops selling household goods and other non-food items, as well as from some enterprises and beauty salons.

The government has extended the state of emergency introduced on 16 March in response to the spread of coronavirus by one an additional month, until 14 May.

### **Government of Armenia allocates 25 million US dollars to help population**

*20 April, Mir24*

Over 25 million US dollars have been allocated by the government of Armenia to support its people. Another crisis response programme is currently under consideration.

The Armenian government is getting ready to present its 14<sup>th</sup> crisis response programme, this time targeting students of public and private higher education institutions. Students in Armenia typically take part-time jobs in the service sector, including restaurants, to help them through university. These industries are currently down, which has prompted the government to find a way to help young people. Straight-A students will be given the opportunity to take a zero-interest loan to cover tuition fees.

“All our programmes are based on motivation: those who get top marks should not have to drop out because they cannot pay for their studies. All the other students will be able to take a loan at a 5% interest rate. We are going to present the final version of the 14<sup>th</sup> programme before the end of the week,” said Nairi Sargsyan, Assistant to the Prime Minister.

### **Another Armenian city isolated because of coronavirus**

*20 April, Novosti-Armenia*

Deputy Prime Minister of Armenia Tigran Avinyan and Commandant for the duration of the state of emergency has ordered several restrictions in the city of Vardenis, Gegharkunik Province.

“Introduction of a special regime of access and egress: people and vehicles shall not be allowed into and out of the city, except for the purpose of supplying essential goods, items, food, medicines and fuel,” states the order. Only those residing in the city or those entitled to reside there shall be allowed into Vardenis up until 8.00am on 22 April. The National Security Service of the Republic of Armenia and the police are to install special checkpoints to inspect vehicles coming into the city.

The order will become effective as soon as it is published and will remain in force until 11.59 pm on 28 April.

The city of Maralik, the village of Dzorakap in the Shirak Province, and the village of Norashen in the Ararat Province have all been isolated already.

## **Health Minister describes plan to eliminate COVID-19 in the country**

*22 April, Sputnik*

Coronavirus may disappear entirely if the number of cases in the country decreases, all patients recover, and no one else becomes infected. However, this is the best-case scenario. It is wholly unrealistic and should not be expected, at least not in the foreseeable future, according to Minister of Health of the Republic of Armenia Arsen Torosyan.

“Basically, we are observing a stable growth in the number of cases. This is good, as this is not the sharp increase we saw starting from 1 March,” said Torosyan.

He added that the Ministry of Health faced the task of reducing the rate of growth in the number of cases. However, there is little chance of coronavirus leaving the country for good in the near future. As for taking the situation under control, the Minister stressed that it was a complex issue. Daily growth rates and the number of patients receiving treatment have to be taken into account and compared to the existing capacity.

According to Torosyan, the number of patients or cases in itself is far less important than the readiness of the country to handle each of them. “We need to keep the number of cases under a certain number, beyond which the situation will get out of control,” said Torosyan. The Minister gave examples of countries that treat patients with mild symptoms at home. Armenia is still far from that and Torosyan believes the country should try hard to avoid such situation. He said people should exercise caution, keep social distance and observe the rules of hygiene even after the state of emergency is lifted.

Currently, 1700 beds in hospitals and 300 or 400 beds in hotels have been allocated for coronavirus patients. If the number of cases exceeds 2100, they will have to be treated at home.

## **Armenia to lift ban on movement around the country**

*23 April, Interfax*

Deputy Prime Minister Health of the Republic of Armenia has announced that the authorities are set to lift the ban on movement between provinces that had been introduced to prevent the spread of coronavirus.

“The restrictions on movement between provinces have been lifted, and checkpoints (between provinces) have been removed. Instead, we will concentrate on enforcing other bans. Restrictions on movement of people on public transportation remain in force,” Avinyan wrote on his Facebook page on Thursday.

Additionally, some industries have been allowed to resume operations, including printing, production

of stone and metal structures, wholesale and retail trade and auto repair shops.

## **Republic of Belarus**

### **Alexander Lukashenko confident in the Belarusian response to coronavirus**

*20 April, Belta*

Belarus has adopted the correct tactics to respond to COVID-19, according to the country's president, Alexander Lukashenko, who declared this during his visit to Annunciation Church in Malye Lyady, Smolevichi District, for Easter celebrations.

The President is convinced that the Belarusian people will come through these difficult times successfully. He mentioned that pneumonia, which has become the talk of the town, is just one of a range of diseases that are no less dangerous. "There are many people suffering from cardiovascular diseases, cancer, diabetes and obesity," said Lukashenko.

The President said that the mortality rate among those with pneumonia caused by coronavirus is actually very low. It kills people whose health is already fragile because of many other diseases. He thus called upon older people, especially those with chronic diseases, to seek medical assistance immediately as soon as they notice the first symptoms instead of trying to self-medicate.

### **Ministry of Health of the Republic of Belarus: COVID-19 morbidity should start to decline in the coming three or four weeks**

*20 April, Belta*

COVID-19 morbidity should start to decline in the coming three or four weeks, according to Deputy Minister and Chief State Sanitary Doctor of Belarus Natalia Zhukova.

"It's not a matter of two or three weeks and the problem will go away. The epidemic will still be there. However, I would like to point out that the situation is under control. There are grounds to believe that morbidity should go down within the next three to four weeks," said Zhukova. She explained that the Ministry of Health was tracing cases of respiratory infections and was therefore able to draw such a conclusion.

"A decrease in the number of patients with respiratory infections across Belarus gives us grounds to assume that COVID-19 morbidity will also stabilize or even start falling," she pointed out. According to Zhukova, efforts are being directed towards confining focal points of infection. "Each case of coronavirus is considered as a focal point, and contacts are routinely traced. This how we can break the chain of transmission. This is a necessary condition to contain an epidemic," she said.

### **Over 5 million Belarusian roubles and 79 000 euros credited to charity accounts of the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Belarus to finance the response to COVID-19**

*20 April, Belta*

As of 17 April, a total of 5 339 326.07 Belarusian roubles and 79 011 euros had been credited to charity accounts of the Republican Centre for Medical Response of the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Belarus to finance the response to the spread of COVID-19. A total of 348 legal entities have donated 4 249 628.81 Belarusian roubles, while individuals have added 1 089 697.26 Belarusian roubles. Eleven individuals and two legal entities have donated money in Euros.

Belmedtekhnik Unitary Enterprise received over 1 million Belarusian roubles to purchase, among other

things, 5000 masks, 20 000 Pripjat A aerosol half-masks, 100 000 medical overalls and 4000 dental face shields. The Republican Research and Practice Center for Epidemiology and Microbiology provided 2000 COVID-19 test kits. Servolux Agro Closed Joint-Stock Company donated 50 000 KN95 protective masks worth a total of 161 500 Belarusian roubles, which were then distributed to republican research and practice centres and medical facilities in the city of Minsk and several provinces.

In addition, the Ministry of Health presented a report on the distribution of humanitarian supplies received from Uzbekistan and stored at the warehouses of Belmedtekhnik Unitary Enterprise. In particular, supplies were sent to 27 republican health facilities. Those received a total of 54 000 medical masks, 1000 pairs of protective disposable gloves, 28 rolls of medical gauze (1 thousand metres each), 5000 bottles of antiseptic spray and 526.6 litres of medical alcohol. Humanitarian supplies were also distributed among medical facilities in seven regions of the country and five government entities that are not part of the healthcare system.

## **Belarusian trade unions demand extra measures to protect workers**

*21 April, Belta*

Trade unions and employers are taking measures to prevent the spread of coronavirus among employees in the commercial and public sectors, according to the press service at the Federation of Trade Unions of Belarus.

Compliance with hygiene standards is monitored more closely, and working hours are being adjusted to avoid crowds. In addition, special attention is paid to protecting high-risk groups, including pregnant women.

In addition, trade union committees at several enterprises have come forward with the proposal to use employers' vehicles to take employees to their workplaces.

Much is being done to reorganize catering at work. Some enterprises have amended working hours and lunchbreaks to avoid crowds of workers. Some have decided to provide hot meals in lunchboxes or takeaway lunches from their own canteens.

## **Mobile operators in Belarus to support health professionals**

*21 April, Belta*

Mobile operators in Belarus have joined an initiative to support health professionals engaged in the response to COVID-19. In order to ensure effective communication, healthcare workers are now able to be in touch and online at no extra cost.

A1 will provide unlimited calls and 500 free smartphones. These communication tools are to be used in hotspots of the virus, such as intensive care units, infection wards, ambulances, and COVID-19 testing laboratories.

The mobile operator Life has already offered unlimited calls and internet that can be shared with other devices to Belarusian health professionals, regardless of their tariff plans.

MTS is going to provide medical staff using corporate tariffs with unlimited internet connection and 3000 minutes of calls to any phone network within the country. Extra benefits will be available from early May to the end of the summer. In addition, the company is planning to donate 100 tablets to be used by health workers.

## **Internship programmes for doctors on how to provide medical assistance to COVID-19**

## **patients developed in Belarus**

*22 April, Belta*

The Belarusian Medical Academy for Postgraduate Education has developed workplace internship programmes for doctors of any specialization. The programmes, entitled “Providing Medical Assistance to COVID-19 Patients,” are available on the Academy’s website. They include a theoretical component and relevant video guidance on how to put on personal protective equipment, how to wash one’s hands properly, collect swabs, etc.

The Belarusian State Medical University has set up a web portal to provide support and advice to health professionals in connection with COVID-19. Doctors may obtain advice from leading experts in the treatment of communicable diseases, anaesthesiology, intensive care medicine, diagnostics, etc.

Additionally, medical educational institutions and specialized republican research and practice centres have set up temporary centres working around the clock to provide advice remotely and facilitate video conferences with faculty, researchers and other consultants.

## **Temperature-taking robot at Minsk National Airport**

*23 April, Belta*

International Intelligent Machines Co., Ltd., a resident at the China–Belarus Great Stone Industrial Park, has provided the Ministry of Health of Belarus with an IIM Ego robot for remote temperature monitoring. The robot will be used at Minsk National Airport to take the temperatures of arriving passengers. China–Belarus Joint-Stock Closed Company “Industrial Park Development Company” has donated an LED screen to display information processed by the robot.

IIM Ego robots were used in China during the coronavirus epidemic. The appliance is supplied with guaranteed installation and further maintenance.

## **Alexander Lukashenko holds meeting to discuss priority measures to ensure the sustainable functioning of the economy and social system during the pandemic**

*23 April, website of the President of the Republic of Belarus*

On 23 April, President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko held a meeting to discuss priority measures aimed at ensuring the sustainable functioning of the economy and social system during the current global epidemiological situation. The meeting, which took place at the Palace of Independence, was attended by all of Belarus’ top officials.

President Lukashenko mentioned that the world had changed beyond recognition in these four short months. “The entire global economy is under the pressure of a problem that no one has found a solution to – the so-called pandemic. It is clear that this affects our country, too,” he said. Lukashenko pointed out that, as an exporting country, Belarus was not immune to such processes and could not reduce their impact on its economy and the usual way of life.

According to Lukashenko, all the necessary resources have been engaged in the fight against the novel coronavirus infection in an amount that is proportionate to the existing threat. “Our reaction is adequate, but not exaggerated,” he said. He declared that Belarus was not going to wave aside the guidance provided by the World Health Organization, but would act as appropriate.

The President added that Belarus had significantly boosted the capacity of its health facilities and domestic manufacturers of medicines and medical supplies. He believes that the important thing is to not overload the health system and that Belarus is coping at the moment. “COVID-19 morbidity is

important, but what matters even more to us right now is the number of pneumonia cases, because pneumonia can be aggravated by COVID-19, and this happens quite often. That is why the Ministry of Health, the entire healthcare system, thousands of medical professionals have to focus their efforts on managing patients with pneumonia. And we must not forget that there are other diseases, as well,” he said.

President Lukashenko is confident that the country will cope with coronavirus. What is more, the problem, in his opinion, is getting more and more political.

The participants in the meeting reported that there almost 310 000 people work in the healthcare industry, and that there are around 100 000 beds in hospitals. Testing labs are working around the clock to detect cases. The availability of test kits varies across regions, some have enough to last 25 days. Moreover, test kits are also produced domestically and are adequate in terms of quality, according to the head of state.

“If the situation gets worse (and I do not rule out this scenario, I am too worried to ignore even the tiniest signs), we will use our reserves, of which we have got enough,” said President Lukashenko. “The entire executive chain of command, all officials have to be engaged in managing the pandemic, not to mention the healthcare system. I want all regional authorities to be on top of the situation so that they can respond accordingly and support the healthcare system.”

## **Republic of Kazakhstan**

### **Kazakhstan plans to relax quarantine measures**

*21 April, Mir24*

Prime Minister of Kazakhstan Askar Mamin announced at a meeting of the government that the authorities planned to gradually relax the lockdown imposed in Nur-Sultan and Almaty due to the coronavirus. Several enterprises will also resume operations.

“Depending on the epidemiological situation, we will continue to gradually lift the restrictive measures, allowing other enterprises and business entities to resume operations. The same will be done in other regions,” Mamin said at the government meeting.

The quarantine measures in Nur-Sultan and Almaty have been relaxed since April 20. A number of industrial enterprises that comply with sanitary norms will resume operations in several sectors, including construction and some services. According to Mamin, relaxing the lockdown is only possible if epidemiological safety guidelines are followed to the letter.

### **Kazakhstan’s enterprises return to regular operations**

*22 April, Mir24*

Some enterprises in Nur-Sultan and Almaty, primarily those working in industrial manufacturing, construction and some service industries, have resumed operations. The cities are coming back to life, but safety measures have not been abandoned.

A month of stoppage did serious damage to many of Kazakhstan’s enterprises. Nevertheless, the relaxation of lockdown measures has meant that more than 230 000 people have gone back to work in the capital and in Almaty. Construction companies, foundries and manufacturers of asphalt and equipment have reopened.

Kindergartens, schools, bars and cinemas will remain closed until the lockdown is over. Even though

Kazakhstan's epidemiological situation is under control, new cases are reported every day. The coronavirus peak still lies ahead.

## **Minister of Health of Kazakhstan: lockdown may be extended**

*22 April, Tengrinews*

Speaking live on Instagram, Minister of Health of the Republic of Kazakhstan Elzhan Birtanov described the coronavirus situation in the country.

“... Epidemiologically, we are concerned about the growth. The number of coronavirus cases is growing at an average of 8%, which suggests that the situation is neither improving nor stabilizing. Our goal is to get below 5%, and then below 1%. Then we can say the epidemic is on the downward turn. The number of new patients should be less than the number of patients discharged from hospitals. Thus far, the epidemic is at its peak. We said it would happen in mid-April, and we were right. This is related to the infection spreading separately in each locality.

Last week, the growth in cases in Nur-Sultan and Almaty oscillated between 5 and 15%. Most cases are related to testing closed communities, which account for 80% of new cases in Almaty and approximately 50–60% of new cases in Nur-Sultan. These are what we call planned screenings. According to the latest data, 589 medical personnel have been infected. Under the lockdown, they are the most vulnerable population group.

... An epidemic generates great demand for protective gear, a demand that is dozens of times greater than under normal circumstances. The planet does not have the requisite manufacturing capacities. Provisionally speaking, we are manufacturing 300 000 masks a day, while at the peak of the epidemic, we will need 2–3 million a day. No matter how much we would like to buy them, no matter how much we are prepared to pay, the masks are simply not there. Every country has banned the export of masks. So, we have started making them ourselves, just like other countries.

China has opened up now. We have ordered hazmat suits, and we are hoping that the first plane will fly them in tomorrow. This is where we are trying to help the regions. However, all the lists and calculations are made by chief physicians. It's not easy for us right now, we're being quite honest about this.

Talks are ongoing, and we have been flying in certain commodities. The whole world is in the same boat here. I would like to draw your attention to the fact that funding is not the problem – the problem is logistics.

The Ministry of Health of Kazakhstan has allocated 16 978 000 000 tenge, payable in three instalments, to combat the coronavirus.

... In March, about 20,000 coronavirus frontline medics received extra payments. The lists are compiled by chief physicians and submitted to the *akimats*. The lists are then approved by akimat commissions, which include members of the public. We have transferred money to hospitals, and hospitals, in turn, made payments.

... We will observe the greatest number of cases, as well as the rise, peak and fall, over the three months from March to May. That is not to say that no cases will be reported beyond May. Some will get infected, and the virus will spread. Our task is to learn to live with it. Coronavirus is highly contagious. It can result in grave complications in some population groups. Therefore, once we have suppressed the epidemic and achieved a drop in the number of cases, we must learn to live with it, so that we don't have to live in lockdown permanently.

We expect approximately 3500 to have been reported by the end of May. Some cases will be reported after this as well, although it is difficult to say how many. Japan and Singapore have experienced

relapses. It is hard to make an exact prediction for Kazakhstan right now. Until people learn to communicate safely, governments will have to impose harsh measures. This takes time. Perhaps the lockdown will be extended. We think that, right now, May is still a period of danger.

At the moment, we are talking about two cities where strict lockdown measures have been eased, the spread of the infection among the public at large has been minimized, and we only register detectability, hidden hotbeds. Other regions, however, are only entering their respective peaks.

Today, each region and city is isolated; essentially, everyone will have to have the disease to some degree. The efficiency of lockdown measures will determine the number of coronavirus patients. When the regions and cities, through the lockdown measures, have reached the scissors syndrome, when the number of recovered patients exceeds the number of new cases, then we can think about gradually easing the lockdown and controlling the infection. Therefore, there are measures in individual cities, and there are country-wide measures. It is too early to talk about the latter, since measures should be relaxed in a uniform manner throughout the country.

... Now we are talking about two cities where the strictest lockdown measures have been left behind. There is still the question of whether kindergartens should reopen. It is hard to say. Most likely, they will open earlier in Almaty and Nur-Sultan than in other regions, but it is not going to happen before mid-May. We will decide individually depending on the situation in each specific region.

Our tasks remain unchanged. The first is to prevent the spread of the virus, buy time and be prepared. We were as ready as we could have expected to have been. The second task is to slow down the pace of the epidemic. We think that we have been successful on this front, and now the task is to gain control over the spread of the disease. Either way, we need to ensure an adequate level of safety. I call upon the citizens of Kazakhstan to stay at home.”

## **Russia gives Kazakhstan 38 000 units of chemicals for COVID-19 tests**

*22 April, Mir24*

According to the Mir24 TV channel, the Embassy of the Republic of Kazakhstan in Moscow has reported that Moscow has provided Kazakhstan with 38 000 units of chemicals for coronavirus tests.

The reagents will be delivered to Kazakhstan by bus, in strict compliance with sanitary safety and transportation rules. This is the third shipment of chemicals delivered with the Embassy’s aid.

## **Republic of Kyrgyzstan**

### **Ministry of Health of the Kyrgyz Republic: every person will be able to get tested for COVID-19**

*20 April, Kabar News Agency*

Deputy Minister of Health of the Kyrgyz Republic Nurbolot Usenbayev said at a news briefing that, starting 21 April, everyone will be able to get tested for COVID-19.

“Today or tomorrow, a private laboratory of the Bonetsky network will start testing. A laboratory was opened today in conjunction with the state laboratory of the Republican Center of Quarantine and Especially Dangerous Infections. In just a few days from now, anyone will be able to go there and get PCR-tested,” Usenbayev said.

He says that the test will cost over 2000 som per person.



## **Kyrgyzstan launches service for supporting the work of medics**

*20 April, Kabar News Agency*

The press service of the State Committee of Information Technologies and Communications (SCITC) of the Republic of Kyrgyzstan reports that the staff of the IT headquarters at the SCITC, acting upon instructions from the Republican Headquarters for the Prevention of the Spread of Coronavirus, have launched a service to support the work of medics.

The press service reports that this digital solution makes it possible promptly, remotely and directly inform the Republican Committee about existing problems and difficulties in the work of medical staff, including the provision of individual protective gear and other needs. The service will also allow medics to ask questions. It is available at [med.tunduk.kg](http://med.tunduk.kg).

Through the service, medical professionals can submit a request for individual protective gear, medical products, equipment and medications. They can also inform the Republican Headquarters about existing problems and difficulties in their work (permits, food, wages, etc.).

The service also gives medical staff the option to ask the Republican Committee any questions they might have for the Republican Committee. The resource will also make it possible to collect up-to-date information in order for the appropriate measures to be taken.

## **Those in need in Kyrgyzstan to be given food packages**

*21 April, Mir24*

Food has been delivered to people in need in Kyrgyzstan. Approximately 50,000 families in Bishkek and the Chuy Region have been given food aid. Another 50,000 food packages will have been distributed by the end of the week.

Packages containing cereals and vegetables are prepared daily in all cities and villages where a state of emergency has been declared. The list includes approximately 360,000 people in need throughout the country – primarily people who work in shopping centres, on markets or in non-food enterprises. The Ministry of Labour and Social Development compiled a list of vulnerable families a week ago so that the aid would target the most needy.

“We know exactly who needs aid during the lockdown. Primary breadwinners are in particularly dire straits, as are those who work in the service industry. We need to focus on providing aid in the form of food. Compared to other states, our capacities may be limited, but we will have enough to support our people in these difficult times,” said President of the Republic of Kyrgyzstan Sooronbay Jeenbekov. He also added that several large enterprises have resumed operations, such as the engineering and pressing plants in Bishkek.

## **Ministry of Health of the Kyrgyz Republic notes success in fight against COVID-19**

*22 April, Kabar News Agency*

Chief State Sanitary Doctor and Deputy Minister of Health of the Kyrgyz Republic Nurbolot Usenbayev has announced that the number of people who have recovered from COVID-19 is growing daily, while the number of new cases is falling. According to his data, 41.5% of the country’s COVID patients have recovered. He also reported that 682 people are under observation. In addition, 8538 people have been in contact with confirmed COVID-19 patients, with 2037 having been in close contact (category I) and 6501 having other types of contact (category II).

## **Disinfection tunnel installed on Bishkek–Naryn–Torugart highway**

*22 April, Kabar News Agency*

At the instructions of Minister of Emergency Situations Zamirbek Askarov, the local Ministry Division for the Kochkor District has installed a disinfection tunnel at the 210<sup>th</sup> kilometre of the Bishkek–Naryn–Torugart highway. The tunnel is intended to prevent the spread of coronavirus in the Naryn Region.

As of 21 April, disinfected areas in Kyrgyzstan totalled 212,789 square metres, including 95,545 square metres of indoor facilities and 117,263 square metres of outdoor areas. A total of 195 emergency relief staff are involved in the work. Disinfection is conducted at facilities that attract the largest numbers of people, such as shops, banks, markets, pharmacies, etc. The work continues.

## **Ministry of Emergency Situations of the Kyrgyz Republic: observation facilities with a capacity of 12,000 ha set up throughout the country**

*23 April, AKIpress*

At a governmental briefing, Minister of Emergency Situations Zamirbek Askarov reported that observation facilities with a total capacity of 12,000 persons had been set up throughout Kyrgyzstan. He also said that the Ministry was preparing observation facilities for Kyrgyzstan citizens arriving from abroad, providing them with food and requisite amenities.

During the epidemic, the state provided food free of charge to 35,617 people.

## **Republic of Moldova**

### **Igor Dodon explains how country will emerge from the crisis**

*17 April, Sputnik*

On Friday, President Igor Dodon said that some economic activities may be resumed as early as the end of April, but only provided the positive dynamics regarding the spread of COVID-19 continue in the weeks to come.

“We will emerge from this difficult situation in the fight against coronavirus, but it will happen in several stages,” Dodon said. According to the President, if the positive dynamics in terms of the spread of COVID-19 persist, then the decision may be made as early as the end of next week to ease the restrictive measures. In particular, some economic entities may be allowed to resume operations.

The next stage that is preliminarily expected to take place on 15 May involves lifting the state of emergency. Stage three involves opening educational institutions, while the final stage (allowing mass events to take place) will begin once all the risks are gone. According to Dodon, work will soon start on a plan for emerging from the crisis.

### **Moldova’s Prime Minister holds Emergency Management Center meeting**

*21 April, Moldpres*

At an online meeting of the Unified Emergency Management Center, Prime Minister Ion Chicu listened to reports of heads of the authorities and governmental institutions who have been tasked with managing the epidemiological situation.

Minister of Internal Affairs Pavel Voicu reported that police officers and Carabinieri are responsible for enforcing compliance with the self-isolation regime: over 16 100 people who have had contact with coronavirus patients, and a further 39 700 people under observation. The police, alongside the military, are tasked with making sure the residents of the Soroca municipality, Ștefan Vodă and Glodeni, as well as those in Carahasani and Talmaza (in the Ștefan Vodă district) comply with the lockdown rules. The village of Brînzeni has also been placed under lockdown.

Police continue to patrol residential areas and public places and enforce social distancing and compliance with the “essential travel only” requirement.

Minister of Health, Labour and Social Protection Viorica Dumbrăveanu said that 11 962 people had been tested for the coronavirus in the Republic of Moldova, with 2548 cases being confirmed. A total of 478 patients have recovered from COVID-19, and 67 deaths have been reported.

## **Russian Federation**

### ***Rospotrebnadzor* holds consultations with CIS countries on their response to COVID-19**

*17 April, Rospotrebnadzor website*

The Russian Federal Service for Surveillance on Consumer Rights Protection and Human Wellbeing (*Rospotrebnadzor*) held a video conference call for experts from Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan to discuss the prevention of and response to the novel coronavirus infection (COVID-19).

The online event was attended by approximately 40 professionals from healthcare bodies, research centres and virological laboratories from partner countries.

*Rospotrebnadzor* and its affiliated think tanks shared their experience in organizing epidemiological surveillance in Russia during the novel coronavirus epidemic and developing laboratory testing for COVID-19 diagnostics. Russian experts told their counterparts about the existing practices in terms of testing arrangements, contact tracing, and the use of cutting-edge software to monitor the epidemiological situation in the country. They also answered questions from their partners.

### **Russian researchers say COVID-19 antibody test is ready**

*18 April, CentralAsia*

Russian researches have finished developing a test system for detecting immunity. Grigory Efimov, Head of Transplantation Immunology Laboratory at the National Hematology Research Center, who took part in the experiment, announced the news on his Facebook page.

According to Efimov, the next stage is to perform clinical trials at independent laboratories. If the results prove successful, then undergo registration procedure will begin – this process has recently been simplified, as Efimov pointed out.

“The test allows us to not only detect people who have recovered from the disease, but also select those with higher concentration of antibodies. Their blood plasma may be used to treat patients in serious condition. We see that most of our donors have a sufficiently high antibody titre, and we hope that, as long as it is maintained, they will stay protected from reinfection,” he wrote.

### **Russia donates coronavirus test kits to Uzbekistan**

*18 April, Podrobno.uz*

“In order to help Uzbekistan in the current situation, Russia has provided the country with free test kits to detect the virus. The kits were manufactured by Vector Research Centre of the Russian Federal Service for Surveillance on Consumer Rights Protection and Human Wellbeing (*Rospotrebnadzor*),” said Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation Spokesperson Maria Zakharova, during her regular briefing in Moscow on Friday.

According to Zakharova, representatives of the State Inspectorate for the Sanitary and Epidemiological Wellbeing of the Population of the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Uzbekistan were invited to attend meetings of the Council of Heads of Authorized Bodies in the Field of Sanitary and Epidemiological Welfare of the Population of the Eurasian Economic Union Member States, which were held via video conference calls on 27 January, 10 February, 2 March, 16 March and 30 March of this year to discuss the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19).

### **Moscow Mayor Sergey Sobyenin offers money to donors with COVID-19 antibodies**

*20 April, Mir24*

Mayor of Moscow Sergey Sobyenin has signed a resolution stating that blood donors who have recovered from COVID-19 and acquired an immunity to the virus will be paid 1250 roubles per 150 millilitres of plasma they donate, with those who donate 600 millilitres getting 5000 roubles.

Doctors say that patients feel better after they get a transfusion of plasma containing COVID-19 antibodies and that there are no side effects. Those willing to donate blood will be checked for counter-indications, chronic diseases, HIV and hepatitis B and type C. They may donate 300 to 600 millilitres of blood at a time.

### **President Putin urges experts to take all possible coronavirus development scenarios into account**

*20 April, Mir24*

Russia has still not reached its peak in terms of the number of coronavirus cases. The most important thing now is to do everything we can to flatten the curve as much as possible, and this requires proactive measures. That was the message that President of Russia Vladimir Putin tried to convey when he met with the government to discuss the epidemiological situation.

“In general, we are managing to solve the tasks of the first stage of countering the epidemic, namely, slowing down its spread. However, we must by no means take things calmly. According to specialists [...], the peak of morbidity is still ahead of us. And now we must do everything to flatten the peak when the highest number of new cases is recorded. Now work is underway in all areas, including an additional specialized bed stock that will be deployed in all the regions by the end of this week or the beginning of next week. Let me repeat, we are considering all possible scenarios in our preparations,” the President said.

He also demanded that regional best practices of response to coronavirus be effectively introduced throughout the country.

### **Mikhail Mishustin signs resolution to extend migrants' visas due to coronavirus**

*20 April, Mir24*

Prime Minister of the Russian Federation Mikhail Mishustin signed a resolution allowing foreigners to extend their migrant visas an indefinite number of times for as long as the coronavirus pandemic persists. The document is available on the country's official legal information portal. According to the resolution, visas can be extended for a maximum of 90 days.

On Saturday 18 April, President Vladimir Putin signed a decree to extend temporary stays of foreign nationals in Russia until 15 June.

### **Control measures and self-isolation regime in Moscow to last until 1 May**

*20 April, Mir24*

Mayor of Moscow Sergei Sobyenin declared at a meeting with President Vladimir Putin on the sanitary and epidemiological situation that the existing control measures and self-isolation regime in Moscow would last until 1 May.

“The decision was taken to extend the rather tough restrictions and access control until 1 May. Starting this Wednesday, we will be automatically checking digital passes and compliance with the transport quarantine regime on underground and over-ground public transportation, as well and personal cars,” said Sobyenin.

He stressed that these measures seemed quite adequate at this stage, adding that the next two weeks should make it clear how to move forward.

### **Muscovites with symptoms of acute respiratory viral infection to be placed in mandatory self-isolation**

*21 April, Mir24*

Muscovites with symptoms of acute respiratory viral infection (ARVI) and other acute respiratory conditions will be placed in mandatory self-isolation. A decree signed by Moscow mayor Sergei Sobyenin allows for their geolocation to be tracked.

“Effective from 22 April, citizens with suspected novel coronavirus infection (2019-nCoV) and citizens with symptoms of acute respiratory viral infection and other acute respiratory conditions shall observe self-isolation (isolation) at home on the same conditions as those with confirmed novel coronavirus infection (2019-nCoV),” the document reads.

Compliance with self-isolation requirements will be controlled using technologies for monitoring the position of a person in a certain geolocation, according to the decree. At the same time, these people will be allowed to leave their homes in order to seek medical care, provided they have obtained a digital pass.

**Rospotrebnadzor donates approximately 200 000 COVID-19 test kits to CIS countries**

22 April, TASS

The Russian Federal Service for Surveillance on Consumer Rights Protection and Human Wellbeing (*Rospotrebnadzor*) has donated approximately 200 000 COVID-19 test kits to CIS member states. This was announced on Tuesday 21 April by the organization's press service. Rospotrebnadzor officials believe that the epidemiological situation in CIS member states is still challenging, but stable. These countries have thus far been able to cope to the spread of coronavirus, partly thanks to the assistance provided by Russia, according to Rospotrebnadzor.

**New rules for travelling around Moscow come into force**

22 April, Mir24

About 53 000 people are currently infected in Russia. With Moscow having the biggest number of cases, the government has introduced new rules for moving around the city. From now on, permits for travelling around the Russian capital will be checked automatically.

By decree of Mayor Sergey Sobyenin, from 22 April to 1 May, Muscovites will be able to move around the city using Troika or Strelka cards, Moscow social cards or universal fare cards. However, they will first need to tie the card to their digital pass. Otherwise the subway turnstile or the ground transport validator simply will not work. Another condition is that you need to tie the travel card number to your digital pass at least five hours before your trip.

Those who plan to travel using their own cars or transport provided by their employer need to tie the vehicle's license number to their digital pass, or they will face a fine of 5000 roubles. Starting today, fines will be issued automatically based on traffic camera information.

The sale of one-time travel cards on buses and trams and in the subway has also been suspended until 1 May. In keeping with the regime introduced earlier, riding in a taxi is possible if you have a digital pass with a QR code.

**Digital permits to be introduced in 21 regions of Russia**

23 April, TASS

Twenty-one regions of Russia will join the federal digital permit platform. Under the system, organizations that are allowed to operate during the lockdown will be able to submit a list of their employees using the public services portal. After the information is verified, digital permits will be sent to the employees' personal accounts or email addresses.

One-time passes can be obtained through the Gosuslugi Stop Coronavirus application, where you can specify the reason for travel and indicate your destination and vehicle details.

The regime will be deployed in the Tula, Kostroma, Tambov, Vladimir, Yaroslavl, Oryol and Belgorod regions first. Starting next week, another 14 regions – in Siberia, the Volga Region, the Far East and the North Caucasus – will be connected to the platform.

The system has been successfully tested in the Moscow Region, with 400 000 permits issued daily.

**Russian schoolchildren to receive free food packages during self-isolation**

23 April, Mir24

Schoolchildren in Russia are being given food packages instead of school meals during the current forced vacations. Particular attention is paid to low-income and large families.

During the self-isolation period, everyone who was entitled to free meals at school will receive food packages. There are more than such 130 children in Nekrasov School No. 4 in Yaroslavl. “The rations are pretty good. They include sugar, rice, buckwheat, sunflower oil, tea and cookies – all products with a long shelf life,” the school principal Ms. Lapotnikova said.

All these are included in the recommended list of products for school meals and come from trusted suppliers. Children from large and low-income families, as well as children with disabilities and those who have lost one of their parents can apply for such aid in any Russian region. The approximate cost of the package is almost 1000 roubles, which is quite a lot for many families. The director personally called the parents to the school. A package distribution schedule was drawn up, ensuring that people would come to the school one at a time, every half an hour, so as not to violate the social distancing rules. The schedule and the list of products are posted in parents’ chat rooms and on school websites.

Tens of thousands of families throughout Russia will receive packages until the end of the self-isolation regime. In Moscow and Moscow Region, a month’s worth of products is issued at a time.

## **Republic of Tajikistan**

### **Coronavirus prevention classes held in Dushanbe schools and universities**

*17 April, Sputnik*

A series of classes on how to prevent coronavirus was held in schools and higher educational institutions of Tajikistan, according to the press service of the Committee of Emergency Situations and Civil Defense (CoES) and the Ministry of Health of the Republic.

CoES Committee employees took special equipment with them when they visited schools to show instructional videos, talk about the coronavirus and hand out leaflets.

CoES medical staff also showed students how to use hand sanitizer and explained other personal hygiene rules.

Representatives of the Union of Young Doctors also visited Dushanbe schools, passing on similar advice and talking to students of all ages about the preventive measures taken to protect communities against the coronavirus.

In addition, a seminar on the contribution of the youth to the prevention of coronavirus was held for young people, members of public organizations and volunteers at the Tajik Agrarian University named Shirinsho Shotemur.

### **President of Tajikistan calls for action during coronavirus pandemic**

*20 April, Sputnik*

Speaking at the first session of the upper house of parliament, President of Tajikistan Emomali Rahmon said that the coronavirus pandemic had brought additional complications to the current uneasy situation in the world. “This disease, like a monstrous chimera, has inflicted heavy damage on big and small countries alike, including those that boast a high level of technological development,” the president said.

Rahmon noted that the Government of Tajikistan and its various agencies had begun to take all necessary measures from the very beginning of the coronavirus outbreak.

The head of the republic stressed that, despite the absence of recorded coronavirus cases in the country, its people could not “be complacent and sit idly by.”

Rahmon instructed the government to make sure the country’s medical institutions were provided with all the necessary materials and that all regions of Tajikistan had a sufficient food supply.

### **Tajik authorities take active steps to prevent the coronavirus epidemic in the country**

*22 April, Sputnik*

The Government of Tajikistan has allocated additional funds for the purchase of protective equipment, medicines, equipment and basic necessities.

Russia, for its part, has sent Tajikistan a cargo with two tonnes’ worth of medicines and medical instruments. The Russian side has also provided several batches of COVID-19 testing kits.

China, together with several foreign organizations, has delivered 56 varieties of protective equipment, decontaminants and laboratory equipment (non-contact thermometers, protective masks, hygiene products, eye shields, protective clothing, disposable gloves, shoe covers, waterproof socks and disposable gowns) for coronavirus prevention. These are intended for persons quarantined in medical institutions and health centres.

The Ministry of Health and Social Protection has provided 5.8 million somoni to purchase pharmaceutical, protective and decontaminating substances for coronavirus prevention. At the same time, more than a million somoni was allocated at the instructions of President of Tajikistan Emomali Rahmon for the purchase of protective masks.

By order of the Government of Tajikistan, 14 domestic manufacturing companies are engaged in the production of disposable masks and protective clothing. In addition, ten domestic manufacturing companies are producing antiseptic solutions and detergents to meet the demand of medical institutions and the general public.

### **Tajikistan sends all coronavirus tests to the WHO**

*23 April, Regnum*

A total of 2317 tests for coronavirus were carried out in Tajikistan on 16 April 2020, including 440 were repeat tests. All the results were negative, the press service of the Ministry of Health and Social Protection of Tajikistan reported.

According to the WHO Regional Office for Europe representative in Tajikistan, Galina Perfilieva, the medical staff conducting coronavirus testing have taken the necessary training courses abroad and the laboratories comply with international standards. She also noted that all the tests they had conducted had been sent both to the Ministry of Health of Tajikistan and to the World Health Organization.

## **Turkmenistan**

### **UN representatives meet Turkmenistan authorities to discuss essential cooperation**

*22 April, website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan*

On 21 April 2020, the first meeting of the Joint Working Group between the Government of Turkmenistan and the United Nations on the socioeconomic impact of COVID-19 took place at the UN Representative Office in Turkmenistan. The meeting was attended by representatives of the UN



and its units, as well as representatives of several <sup>26</sup>ministries and departments of Turkmenistan.

During the session, the parties exchanged views on urgent issues on the international agenda and on stepping up cooperation between the Government of Turkmenistan and the UN on a number of key areas of national economy. A preliminary analysis of the possible socioeconomic impact of infectious diseases worldwide was presented and discussed, as well as the measures taken by Turkmenistan at the government level to reduce the negative impact of the global crisis caused by the novel virus pandemic. The participants of the meeting also discussed the joint measures being taken to soften the social and economic impact of the pandemic on at-risk groups, as well as the assistance provided by the UN agencies in Turkmenistan to implement these measures.

## **President of Turkmenistan discusses measures to counter the coronavirus pandemic with UN Secretary-General**

*23 April, Turkmenportal*

On 22 April, Secretary-General of the United Nations António Guterres got in touch with President of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow by telephone to discuss the current state and prospects of bilateral cooperation, including through specialized UN entities which have solid experience in implementing joint programmes and projects with Turkmenistan. In this context, the theme of the coronavirus pandemic was raised, being a cause of concern worldwide.

As the Turkmen leader noted, humanity is currently facing a new and extremely serious challenge that has swept across the world and changed the way we live. In this regard, the role of the United Nations as the only universal international structure capable of consolidating the efforts of the entire world community in the fight against the emerging threat is in demand more than ever.

In the current context, the call for a global ceasefire in response to the coronavirus pandemic, which the Secretary-General addressed to the peoples of the world on 23 March this year, is particularly relevant. Turkmenistan fully supports this initiative, considering it in a broad context as a call for unity between countries, uniting their efforts in the fight against the challenges and threats of our time.

Berdimuhamedow briefly highlighted the experience of Turkmenistan in working with the countries of the region and other neighbouring states to counter the spread of infectious diseases. For example, coordinated actions are being carried out together with Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan to ensure effective sanitary and quarantine measures at the common borders.

During this difficult period, the countries of the region are providing humanitarian support to each other. For example, Turkmenistan has sent humanitarian aid to neighbouring Iran and is continuing its work to implement economic and social projects in Afghanistan. President Berdimuhamedow also noted that Turkmenistan had implemented a range of measures alongside Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan to facilitate the stay of nationals of these countries in each other's territories.

Turkmenistan is aware of the importance of preventive measures and other actions aimed at combating coronavirus and is conducting work in this area on a systematic basis. In this context, Berdimuhamedow expressed his deep gratitude to the UN Secretary-General for the initiative he put forward on 30 March to develop national COVID-19 preparedness and response plans. The government of Turkmenistan is working with the Resident Coordinator of the United Nations in Turkmenistan and UN country agencies to finalize such a national plan, which will be presented for review in the very near future.

The President of Turkmenistan said he was confident that the fight against the pandemic should be accompanied by the search for new forms and methods of work that allow all countries to maintain the normal functioning of both national financial and economic systems and the global economy as a whole. To do this, it is necessary to ensure a high level of consolidation in the international community and develop and implement new models of interaction between countries, regions and continents. The

United Nations should play a key coordinating <sup>27</sup>role in this process, Berdimuhamedow continued. Turkmenistan is ready to provide its experience and capabilities to solve the task of restoring the world economy under the auspices of the UN.

## **Republic of Uzbekistan**

### **Uzbekistan to purchase 2300 ventilators and medical equipment for \$30 million**

*18 April, CentralAsia*

On 17 April, President Shavkat Mirziyoyev announced during a meeting on strengthening the fight against the coronavirus pandemic that the Ministry of Health had been tasked with purchasing 2300 ventilators and other equipment worth \$30 million, which will be provided by the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank. The country also plans to raise \$700 million to support entrepreneurship, rescuing small and medium-sized businesses during the pandemic.

Earlier, at the end of March, President Mirziyoyev ordered the purchase of 300 000 rapid tests and 500 ventilators.

### **Uzbekistan gives 5 million medical masks to Russia in aid**

*19 April, RIA Novosti, Podrobno.uz*

The first batch of humanitarian aid sent by Uzbekistan to Russia as part of the fight against coronavirus arrived on Saturday at Sheremetyevo Airport. Representatives of the Embassy of Uzbekistan and the Ministry of Economic Development of the Russian Federation met the plane at the airport. A total of 5 million masks, as well as medical gauze, will be given to Russia.

The humanitarian aid received from Uzbekistan will be sent primarily to those who work on the front lines of the pandemic, Deputy Prime Minister of the Russian Federation Alexei Overchuk said.

### **Quarantine measures in Uzbekistan extended until 10 May**

*18 April, Gazeta.uz*

The restrictive measures (quarantine) introduced by the Special Republican Commission until 20 April, as well as an enhanced procedure to counter the spread of coronavirus infection, have been extended until 10 May, according to the commission's message.

“The comprehensive measures taken to combat coronavirus in the country and, most importantly, the conscientious transition of our citizens to the ‘self-isolation regime’ and their adoption of social distancing practices has allowed us to control the spread of infection,” the message says. The extension of the restrictions aims at “maintaining the effectiveness of the quarantine measures.”

From 30 March to 20 April, a restriction was placed on driving cars in Tashkent, Nukus and regional centres, as well as between regions. A self-isolation regime was introduced in these cities on 1 April, and it was made mandatory on 5 April. Starting 6 April, people living in Tashkent, Nukus and regional administrative centres are also prohibited from using motor scooters and bicycles.

### **President of Uzbekistan Mirziyoyev orders gradual easing of quarantine restrictions in several regions**

President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev instructed the Special Republican Commission for the preparation of a program of measures to prevent the spread of coronavirus to gradually ease quarantine restrictions in areas, regions and cities that have reported no new cases of coronavirus or are showing an improvement in the epidemiological situation.

During a video conference on 20 April, Mirziyoyev said that, in order to resume operations, facilities would have to be in strict compliance with sanitary and hygienic rules. They will be able to continue all types of construction work subject to full observance of the quarantine regime.

“Instructions were given to improve the quality of construction, accelerate the implementation of the rating system for industry enterprises and the electronic tender system,” the presidential press service said.

During the quarantine period, 1.5 trillion soms were allocated from the Anti-Crisis Fund for the construction of mechanical, electrical and plumbing infrastructure, including 500 billion soms for 55 water supply projects and 1 trillion soms for 1547 road construction projects. The President stressed the importance of speeding up the process of identifying contractors and starting construction works as soon as possible.

A mechanism will be introduced in the country whereby the State Fund for Support of Business Development will partially compensate private contractors for interest on loans, and provide a guarantee for up to 50% of the loan amount.

It was also noted that the new procedure for mortgages should be extended from 15 to 20 years and the upper limit for mortgage amount should be increased in line with market requirements.

## **80% of self-employed people in Uzbekistan exempt from tax during the quarantine**

21 April, *Podrobno.uz*

80% of self-employed people in Uzbekistan are exempt from tax during the quarantine. The State Tax Committee (STC) recommends applying for a suspension of taxes online, without leaving home.

Several mitigating measures have been introduced for the duration of the quarantine: the deadlines for the payment of a number of taxes have been extended; the right to deferrals and instalment plans has been granted; tax rates have been reduced; and interest and penalties have been suspended.

The fixed part of personal income tax and social tax has also been suspended for self-employed people for the duration of the lockdown. To receive this benefit, entrepreneurs must simply notify the tax authorities that they have temporarily suspended their activities.

The STC has made it possible to go through the whole procedure in one click using the [my.soliq.uz](https://my.soliq.uz) portal. Applicants do not need to submit a certificate of state registration. The committee recommends that entrepreneurs use this online scheme instead of visiting the tax authorities or public service centres in person. Since the beginning of April, approximately 2400 taxpayers have taken advantage of the service, saving a total of 1.1 billion soms.

In total, 198 969 individual entrepreneurs out of 247 286 registered in the republic have temporarily suspended their operations.

## **Schoolchildren in Uzbekistan to finish year at home**

Uzbekistan schoolchildren will have to finish the academic year remotely due to the COVID-19 pandemic, according to the official Telegram channel of the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Uzbekistan. The decision was made by the Special Republican Commission for the preparation of a program of measures to prevent the spread of coronavirus.

The 2019/20 school year will be completed as part of the ongoing television project Online-maktab (Online School). Teachers and educators involved in the organization of distance learning will continue to work remotely and receive their full salaries.

School and university students in Uzbekistan were sent on vacation and transferred to distance learning in mid-March, after the first case of COVID-19 was discovered in Tashkent.

### **Daily number of recovered patients exceeds new cases in Uzbekistan**

22 April, *Podrobno.uz*

The number of people recovering per day has surpassed the number of new cases in Uzbekistan, according to the Ministry of Public Health of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

“On 21 April, 51 new cases of coronavirus were recorded, with 96 people having recovered from the illness,” the Ministry said.

According to experts, the fastest way for Uzbekistan to reach a plateau in coronavirus incidence is to have more days like these – when the number of recovered patients is higher than the number of new cases.

However, this needs to happen at least four or five days in a row. Only after reaching such a plateau will it be possible for the country to think about lifting the quarantine.

### **Uzbekistan to provide lonely elderly people with free food and protective equipment**

22 April, *Podrobno.uz*

Lonely elderly people who need nursing care will be provided with hygiene products free of charge, according to a decision of the Special Republican Commission.

“During the lockdown, lonely elderly people and people with disabilities in need of nursing care will be provided with a monthly package of basic foodstuffs and hygiene products (15 types) along with sets of hygiene items at the expense of local budgets,” the decision says.

The hygiene products provided include: disposable sterile masks (10 pcs); disposable sterile gloves (10 pcs); antiseptic products (2 pcs of 250 ml) and antibacterial soap (2 pcs, 0.1 kg each).

### **President of Uzbekistan holds meeting on COVID-19 response**

23 April, *Podrobno.uz*

On 22 April, President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev held a video conference call where he spoke about the work to counter coronavirus that is being carried out in the country.

The key points of his speech are summarized below.

### *On lifting the quarantine*

In regions that are already free of the virus, operations are gradually being resumed at industrial enterprises, construction sites, farms and clusters, with strict observance of sanitary and epidemiological standards.

Of course, we will not stop fighting the coronavirus pandemic for a single moment. It is an extremely important issue concerning the health and life of our population.

At the same time, we must immediately address such urgent issues as guaranteeing food and other necessary products for our 34 million people, preventing a decrease in incomes, and supporting those in need.

This requires the leading spheres and sectors of our economy to be operating in a stable manner. A number of complex problems have to be solved simultaneously.

### *On the difficult situation in the country*

The volumes of goods and services have been significantly reduced at 196 000 enterprises as a result of quarantine. This has led to a natural increase in the number of unemployed people. Tax revenues for the 20 days of April also indicate a negative trend. In particular, a number of regions saw revenues decrease by 30–40%, with some districts and cities facing a revenue drop of more than 50%.

At present, 13 000 public catering enterprises, 45 000 trade enterprises, 19 000 service companies and 7000 transport enterprises have stopped operations or lost a significant part of their revenue. Under quarantine, it is possible to normalize the activity of at least 70% of these enterprises by arranging the delivery of food and goods and organizing mobile trade and services. At the same time, it seems possible to resume payment receipt, insurance and microcredit services with strict observance of quarantine rules.

Based on this, the Special Republican Commission has been instructed to create favourable conditions for businesses that provide delivery services.

### *Focus on the self-employed*

The practice of issuing temporary labour certificates to self-employed persons began last September, but it has not yielded the desired results. In this regard, the President noted the need to create a convenient and simple legal system to support and legalize the activities of self-employed people.

Self-employed citizens are currently allowed to engage in 85 types of activity. At the meeting, the President requested that this list be expanded to allow all types of entrepreneurial activity not prohibited by law. A notification-based self-employment registration mechanism will be introduced.

Many young people today provide design, translation, programming, advertising, tutoring and other services from their own home via the internet. These professionals, freelancers, face a number of obstacles when opening a bank account remotely and accepting payments, which leads to a twofold or threefold increase in their costs. In this regard, officials were instructed to devise various benefits and preferences for these categories of people to encourage younger people to acquire the skills for carrying out intellectual work on the internet and introduce popular foreign payment systems in the country.

### *Steps taken*

In such difficult conditions, the government is taking a number of steps. In particular, two regulations were adopted a month ago that increase the number of families with children who are entitled to benefits and material assistance by 60 000 (from 595 000 to 655 000). At the same time, the

government has extended the terms of repayment<sup>31</sup> on consumer loans in the amount of 3.26 trillion soms.

During the quarantine period, the Employment Promotion Fund and the Public Works Fund have provided employment to 141 800 citizens, who collectively have received wages in the amount of 43 225 million soms. At the same time, sponsorship coordination centres have distributed food and sanitary products to 219 000 families.

However, we cannot stop at this. The situation is changing every day, meaning that additional measures to ensure that people are in employment and that disadvantaged families receive social protection are needed, Mirziyoyev noted.

*What next?*

Entrepreneurs and farmers should help poor families farm their household plots, set aside plots in their lands for re-cultivating crops, and promote home-based work. The state will provide tax deferrals or instalment plans or loans for people who carry out such work.

To ensure that these measures are implemented in an effective manner, an operational headquarters will be set up under the Ministry of Economic Development and Poverty Reduction and the State Tax Committee to coordinate the activities of ministries and hokimiyats (local administrations).

The President requested that an exhaustive list be compiled of citizens who have been left without work and are in need of assistance, by district and city, so that targeted efforts can be made as part of the “Compassion and Support” nationwide movement. He also noted the need to get people who were unemployed before the lockdown and depended on daily earnings began back to work. To this end, the President stated that 14 000 new jobs could be created through the organization of agricultural cooperatives and home greenhouses. The task was set to provide seasonal work to 110 000 people and public work opportunities to 167 000 people.

In addition, 52 000 jobs could be generated through the creation of orchards, vineyards and greenhouses on 26 000 hectares of land, as well as 785 000 jobs in the silk industry and 75 000 jobs in construction and infrastructure.

The President noted that these tasks had to be implemented properly and stressed the importance of getting people back to work and ensuring their satisfaction.

Uzbekistan is rich in handicraft traditions and has huge potential in this area. Today it feeds more than 25 000 artisans or, if we count the students too, about 80 000 families. At the meeting, instructions were given to organize remote learning courses, involve youth and women in crafts and popularize the experience of craftspeople through television.

## **Uzbekistan launches online clinic in test mode**

*23 April, Podrobno.uz*

A digital clinic under the name of “Ask a Doctor” has been launched in Uzbekistan, providing services in Uzbek and Russian. In order to use this service, you need to go to [www.askdoctor.uz](http://www.askdoctor.uz), register, enter your contact details and confirm your phone number. Next, choose the doctor you have been referred to and the means of communication: chat, audio or video.

“You can upload scans of questionnaires or extracts of your medical records, that is, information that will help the doctor prepare recommendations. After the consultation, you will receive a text message notifying you that the recommendation is ready and can be downloaded from your account on the website. This appointment is purely advisory in nature, in line with the concept of the project – an

online consultation service. A remote doctor cannot<sup>32</sup> take a sample for analysis, take your temperature, or measure your blood pressure or heart rate,” a ministry representative said.

The service is available for every citizen of Uzbekistan and is completely free during the quarantine period.

The platform is designed in such a way that it does not require any special software to be installed and is accessible from any device that has a web browser, such as a smartphone, tablet, laptop or desktop computer.

All the consultants are highly qualified doctors selected by the Ministry of Health as part of a special procedure. Moreover, doctors who have the technical means to provide consultations from home will soon be able to do so.

The site also offers articles, recommendations and a medical encyclopaedia that may help you find answers to your questions before scheduling an online consultation with a doctor.

## **Cost of treating coronavirus patients announced in Uzbekistan**

*23 April, CentralAsia*

Treating a single patient with coronavirus in Uzbekistan costs 32 million soms (approximately 3100 US dollars). If the patient is in intensive care and in a critical condition, the expenses double, increasing to 64 million soms (approximately 6200 US dollars), according to Minister of Public Health of the Republic of Uzbekistan Alisher Shadmanov.

According to the minister, quarantining a person for 14 days costs the state 2.4 million soms (approximately 235 US dollars). In addition, a 14-day rehabilitation period for each patient who has recovered from coronavirus costs a further 2.8 million soms (275 US dollars).

The Minister added that the country’s medical institutions currently have 16 000 beds for infected patients and a supply of medicines for 20 000 patients.

## **Ukraine**

### **“Help is Near” online platform launched in Ukraine during lockdown**

*17 April, Azertac*

The Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine has launched an online information platform called “Help is Near” to aid vulnerable groups during the quarantine period.

The new social project should create conditions for attracting charitable and other non-governmental organizations, businesspeople and volunteers to help people in need, in particular elderly people and people with disabilities who living alone and single-parent families with children under 14 years of age.

The online platform will be used to post information on the existing need for assistance and reports on its provision on a daily basis.

## **COVID-19 epidemic in Ukraine to peak in early May**

*20 April, Interfax-Ukraine*

The Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine expects the incidence of COVID-19 in Ukraine to peak in early May, after which it plans to start introducing anti-crisis measures to support the economy.

According to the press service of the President of Ukraine, this was communicated to President Volodymyr Zelensky by Prime Minister Denys Shmygal on Monday at their regular meeting on overcoming the coronavirus epidemic.

Payments to doctors and medical personnel, who are now involved in the fight against the spread of the disease, were discussed in detail during the meeting. Additional payments will be disbursed at the end of April, when doctors are to receive their basic salaries.

## **Ukraine plans to ease quarantine**

*21 April, RBC Ukraine*

The Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine plans to extend the quarantine introduced to prevent the spread of coronavirus, although some of the measures in place will be eased, Prime Minister of Ukraine Denys Shmygal said in an interview with RBC Ukraine.

Shmygal said that, according to the calculations of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, two peaks of incidence are expected: one around the end of April and another one between 3 and 8 May.

According to Shmygal, the quarantine will be extended based on these calculations, but there are also plans to ease restrictions in two or three areas as early as this week.

Earlier, the Prime Minister said that the Cabinet of Ministers would start implementing anti-crisis measures to support the economy after the country passes the peak of coronavirus disease.

## **Quarantine measures in Ukraine extended until 11 May**

*22 April, Interfax-Ukraine*

The Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine has extended the current quarantine measures in the country until 11 May.

The decision was made at a government meeting Wednesday.

“When making the decision, we relied on a simulation prepared by analysts from the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine and data from the Ministry of Health, which indicate that peak incidence may occur in early May,” Prime Minister Denys Shmygal wrote on his Facebook page.

At the same time, he noted that the government had a clear quarantine exit plan, which consists of five stages. “The starting point of this plan is what we call Day K. In order for Day K to be launched, two conditions must be met. First, the percentage of cases detected in the country should remain stable or fluctuate within 5% for 10 days. Second, hospitals should be less than 50% filled with patients with COVID-19,” he added.

The Prime Minister noted that, according to the government’s calculations, “Day K” should arrive on 12 May.

“There are a number of important tasks that we are still working on – gradually increasing the number of tests, providing hospitals and doctors with better supplies, introducing an e-control system for people in self-isolation as an alternative to observation, and developing new social standards. The latter means, first of all, wearing personal protective equipment, maintaining social distance and constantly disinfecting,” Shmygal said.