

COPENHAGEN, March 15 (Xinhua) -- Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen announced on Sunday a tripartite agreement to provide billions of DKK in aid to companies in Denmark to help prevent laying off employees during the current COVID-19 outbreak.

At a press conference on Sunday, Frederiksen revealed that the total number of COVID-19 infections in Denmark has risen to 864.

The new agreement, negotiated between the government and social partners representing employers and workers on Saturday, is an attempt to mitigate the worst consequences of the current COVID-19 outbreak, which is expected to have major financial impact.

"We must do everything we can to avoid throwing Denmark into an economic crisis as a result of the novel coronavirus. We must do everything we can to keep Danish business and employees as much out of the crisis as possible," said the prime minister.

In the new agreement, the government offers to cover 75 percent of an employee's monthly salary, up to a limit of 23,000 DKK (3,400 U.S. dollars) per month, with the remaining 25 percent paid by the company, when they are sent home due to the impact of the COVID-19 on the business.

For hourly workers, the wage compensation will be 90 percent of their salary, with a limit of 26,000 DDK (3,900 U.S. dollars) per month.

The new agreement further stipulates that companies are obliged to continue to pay full salary during the period and not fire any employee while retaining others to qualify for government help.

The scheme will be valid until June 9 with effect from March 9 but needs to be approved by the Parliament next week.