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Saturday, 14 March 2020

Republic of the Union of Myanmar Office of the President Appeal to the people

5th Waning of Tabaung, 1381 ME
(13th March 2020)

1. The World Health Organization (WHO) has declared Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-2019) as a pandemic on 11-3-2020 at 11:13 p.m, Myanmar standard time.
2. Therefore, the Committee for Prevention, Containment and Treatment of the 2019 Novel Coronavirus

(COVID-19) has been elevated and reorganized as a national level Central Committee on 13-3-2020.
3. As the respiratory disease COVID-19 can spread rapidly in crowded places, the public is requested not to hold public gatherings, ceremonies and festivals (in-

cluding the construction of pandals for the Myanmar traditional Thingyan festival), starting from today until April 30. Relevant departments have been informed and the suspension period will be extended if deemed necessary.

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State Counsellor delivers speech at Advancing HIV Prevention Agenda event in Nay Pyi Taw



State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi attends Advancing HIV Prevention Agenda event in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

STATE Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi delivered a speech at the event of Advancing HIV Prevention between

Myanmar and Thailand, held at 5:40 pm at the Hilton Hotel in Nay Pyi Taw. An exclusive meeting was held between the

State Counsellor and the Royal Princesses of Thailand before the event, at the same hotel. The State Counsellor and

the Royal Princesses of Thailand then attended the event of Advancing HIV Prevention Agenda between Myanmar

and Thailand. State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, speaking at the event, said:

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Pyidaungsu Hluttaw

Category (4) of Constitution amendment proposals falls short of required votes



Hluttaw representatives continues voting for constitutional amendment during 22nd-day meeting of the Second Pyidaungsu Hluttaw's 15th regular session yesterday. **PHOTO: HTAN PHONE**

HLUTTAW representatives continued the voting process on the constitutional amendment during the 22nd-day meeting of the Second Pyidaungsu Hluttaw's 15th regular session yesterday.

Twenty MPs had filed for leave, with 634 out of 654 MPs attending to vote on voting category (4), which contains 12 provisions related to Section 436-(a) of the Constitution.

Amending the constitution's provisions require a vote of more than 75 per cent of all the representatives of the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw. After the secret ballot, the Speaker announced that none of the proposals garnered the required number of votes for the amendment, and thus remain unchanged.

In detail, the proposal for re-

pealing Section 422 received 416 votes in favor; amending Section 423 received 418 votes, repealing Section 425 received 415 votes, repealing Section 426 received 415 votes, amending Section 427 received 416 votes, amending Section 427-(a) received 414 votes, amending Section 428 received 417 votes, amending Section 429 received 417 votes, repealing Section 431 received 414 votes, amending Section 432 received 416 votes, amending Section 436-(a) received 414 votes, and amending Section 436-(b) received 413 votes.

The Pyidaungsu Hluttaw will vote on category (1) of amending provisions to the Constitution on 16 March, 2020.—Aung Ye Thwin, Aye Aye Thant

(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Joint Bill Committee holds meeting

THE Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Joint Bill Committee held separate meetings over a bill, namely Myanmar Geoscience Council Bill that was sent back by President with recommendation and Myanmar Medical Council Law that was controversial between the two Hluttaws, at the meeting hall of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Building D in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

The meetings were attended by Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Deputy Speaker and Joint Bill Committee Chairman U Tun Aung (a) U Tun Tun Hein, the Joint

Bill Committee's Vice Chairmen, secretary, joint secretary and members and officials from Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health and Sports, Union Attorney-General Office and Pyidaungsu Hluttaw office.—MNA

(Translated by TTN)

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Joint Bill Committee holds the meeting in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**



Central Committee to establish Myanmar-China border economic cooperation zone holds 5th coord meeting



The fifth coordination meeting of the central committee on establishing Myanmar-China Border Economic Cooperation Zone being held in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

THE central committee on establishing Myanmar-China Border Economic Cooperation Zone held its fifth coordination meeting at the Ministry of Commerce in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

Speaking at the meeting, Union Minister for Commerce Dr Than Myint urged the participants of the meeting to discuss nominating eligible members for the joint coordination committee, joint-implementation committee and joint management committee between the two countries and to give suggestions for speeding up the implementation of tasks under the Memorandum of Understanding for the Muse-Shweli Border Economic Cooperation Zone.

Afterwards, Kachin State Chief Minister Dr Khet Aung,

in his capacity as the vice chairman of the central committee, reported on progress on establishing the Myitkyina Economic Zone, a trade zone located 13 km from Waingmaw, and Kampaikti Economic Development Zone.

Deputy Minister for Commerce U Aung Htoo, in his capacity as the Secretary of the central committee, reported on measures to be taken following the MoU signed between Myanmar and China on 18 January for border economic cooperation zone; Director General of the Department of Trade U Min Min on nomination for members of the bilateral joint committees.—MNA

(Translated by Kyaw Zin Lin)

State Counsellor, Royal Princesses of Thailand attend Advancing HIV Prevention Agenda event

FROM PAGE-1

I wish also to congratulate the Kingdom of Thailand for its remarkable progress in the fight against HIV- under the leadership of Her Royal Highness.

During my visit to King Chulalongkorn Memorial Hospital last year, I had the opportunity to bear witness to Thailand's HIV/AIDS response activities undertaken by the Thai Red Cross AIDS Research Centre.

I also recall the insightful discussions held on that occasion, when Her Royal Highness detailed a number of HIV/AIDS initiatives and described the various forms of health-care services being provided to HIV patients, helping to reduce the transmission of HIV from mother to child.

Both I and the people of Myanmar commend Her Royal Highness for her tireless dedication to the fight against HIV in our region, and for Her Royal Highness' role as Goodwill Ambassador for HIV Prevention for Asia and Pacific.

Today's event takes place following my meeting with HRH Princess in Bangkok last November and offers us an opportunity to explore ways and means by which we may enhance the already strong partnership between our two countries.

I would like to thank the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS which is leading and inspiring us all to realize our shared vision of zero new HIV infections, zero discrimination, and zero AIDS-related deaths. Thank you also for your support in organizing today's important event.

Our region is no stranger to HIV. Of the 37.9 million people living with HIV globally, 3.8 million reside in South-East Asia.

Thankfully, with popular support and political will, prevention programmes have achieved a 50 per cent decline in new infections and a 35 per cent decline in deaths.

Indeed, Asia and the Pacific boast some of the earliest successes in responding to the HIV epidemic, with major reductions witnessed in both Myanmar and Thailand.

Antiretroviral therapy medications are helping to control the spread of HIV, allowing many to live long and fruitful lives.



State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, Royal Princess Soamsawali Krom Muen Suddhanarinatha and Royal Princess Bajrakitiyabha observe the booth on HIV prevention programme of community-based organizations in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

However, more can, and must be, done to support key affected populations, including young people, to access services, as well as to reduce HIV-related stigma.

Myanmar launched our latest five-year HIV response plan in 2017—a plan which provides a road map for the optimization of investments through a 'fast track' approach with the goal of ending HIV as a public health

threat by 2030. The number of people dying of AIDS-related illnesses fall by a third since 2010.

Furthermore, Myanmar has reduced HIV prevalence amongst the general population to under 0.6 per cent, a decline from 0.94 per cent in 2000.

And yet, despite these important achievements in our fight against HIV, we cannot and will not be complacent.

In addition, Her Royal

Highness indicated Thailand's readiness to share with Myanmar many of the good practices and models implemented by the Thai AIDS Research Centre.

Myanmar has welcomed this kind offer and looks forward to strengthening bilateral and potential trilateral cooperation in the fight against HIV, including in such areas as the exchange of medical technology and experience with regard to preventing eradicating HIV.

I know that our Ministry of Health and Sports, in particular, has learned much from Thailand's experience.

With this week's labeling of the coronavirus (COVID-19) as a global pandemic we see how critical it is for us to prioritize cooperation and cross-border partnerships.

I believe that the close cooperation between Myanmar and Thailand in responding to HIV puts us in a stronger position to respond to emerging public health challenges.

I wish to conclude by thanking Her Royal Highness for coming here to share her experiences with us and for her dedication and commitment to HIV prevention within the Asia and Pacific region.

I wish this meeting great success.

Next, Royal Princess Bajrakitiyabha, on behalf of Royal Thailand Princess Soamsawali Krom Muen Suddhanarinatha, gave remarks on Thailand's successful accomplishment of the HIV prevention measures.

UNAIDS South-East Asian Director Mr Eamonn Murphy briefed on the PrEP programme, which will be carried out for drug addicts in Myanmar, and which would result in a good exemplary lesson within the region; Union Minister Dr Myint Htwe on Myanmar's gratitude towards Thailand's assistance in laboratory test for the COVID-19 as well as sharing of Thailand's significant achievement on the prevention of HIV transmission from mother to child, to Myanmar; and Honorary Patron Dr Praphan of Thai Red Cross Society on the Society's implementation of the community-based prevention measures in Thailand.

At the end of the event, the State Counsellor and the Royal Thailand Princesses looked around the HIV prevention booths displaying photos and posters, put up by the community-based organizations.

The Royal Thailand Princesses then gave a souvenir to the State Counsellor.

Present at the event were Union Minister U Kyaw Tin of the Ministry of International Cooperation, Union Minister Dr Myint Htwe and Deputy Minister Dr Mya Lay Sein of the Ministry of Health and Sports, permanent secretaries, directors-general and officials, Royal Princess Soamsawali Krom Muen Suddhanarinatha and Royal Princess Bajrakitiyabha, Royal Thailand delegation members, Ambassador Mrs Suphatra Srimaitreephithak of Thailand to Myanmar, and officials with the Thai Embassy in Myanmar.— MNA

(Translated by Aungthu Ya)

I believe that the close cooperation between Myanmar and Thailand in responding to HIV puts us in a stronger position to respond to emerging public health challenges.

threat by 2030.

This ambitious plan aims to ensure the 90-90-90 targets: 90 per cent of people living with HIV know their HIV status, 90 per cent of people who know their HIV-positive status can access treatment, and 90 per cent of people on treatment have suppressed viral loads—are met by 2020.

I am pleased to inform you that clear and tangible progress is being made in Myanmar.

Increased antiretroviral treatment coverage has seen

Highness indicated Thailand's readiness to share with Myanmar many of the good practices and models implemented by the Thai AIDS Research Centre.

Myanmar has welcomed this kind offer and looks forward to strengthening bilateral and potential trilateral cooperation in the fight against HIV, including in such areas as the exchange of medical technology and experience with regard to preventing eradicating HIV.

I know that our Ministry of Health and Sports, in particular,

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FROM PAGE-1

4. The Ministry of Health and Sports is actively reporting on news of patients under surveillance and suspected of COVID-19, and their lab test results to the public in real time. Currently, all lab tests have shown negative and there are no confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Myanmar as of 10 pm, 12-3-2020.

5. The public is respectfully requested to disregard the misinformation and rumours intended to cause panic, closely follow the regularly updated public service announcements issued in real time by the Ministry of Health and Sports, and immediately inform the nearest health departments through the nearest district, township, ward/village-tract administrators, if they find any suspected patients in their community.

MoHS holds COVID-19 meeting with affiliated organizations

THE Ministry of Health and Sports held a meeting yesterday to facilitate increased participation from affiliated organizations against COVID-19.

Union Minister Dr Myint Htwe first delivered a speech. He said this meeting aims to develop a better understanding of preparations to contain COVID-19 and to increase collaboration between the foreign embassies, UN agencies, donor organizations, NGOs and affiliated organizations through the representatives attending this meeting.

He said the ministry began preparing measures against the virus on 1 January after receiving news of its spread in China. He said the ministry has been preparing even before WHO announced the situation as a public health emergency of international concern.

The Union Minister said although there are no confirmed cases in Myanmar yet, the arrival of an infected person can quickly spread the virus across the coun-



Union Minister Dr Myint Htwe delivers the speech at the meeting on building partnership and increasing participation from affiliated organizations against COVID-19 yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

try. The ministry is dedicated to preventing a single citizen from being infected and for a zero mortality rate.

The Union Minister said they

are transparent about sharing information on the virus and have not withheld anything. He said the National Health Laboratory (Yangon) already has the neces-

sary equipment to conduct tests for the virus and have received assistance of primers, probes and reagents from Japan, Thailand and Singapore.

The Union Minister said the ministry regularly holds video conferences with other ministries and relevant departments across the states and regions concerning COVID-19 and to share different perspectives on the matter. He said they have formed groups with different purposes and tasks for COVID-19 across the nation as well.

He said cooperation is the key factor in combating the virus. He said they will document global and domestic events and responses to COVID-19 for future generations to study on. He said the documenting process and work processes should be taught at the University of Public Health (Yangon) and the University of Community Health (Magway).

Afterwards, government officials explained preparations to prevent, contain and treat COVID-19 and UN, NGO and embassy representatives discussed possible assistance and aid that can be provided. —MNA

(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)

Public Notification on COVID-19 (2 p.m., 13 March 2020)

(a) There are currently no confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Myanmar. The majority of patients, who have been tested, show no signs of severe symptoms and have been discharged from their hospitals.

(b) The Ministry of Health and Sports is emphasizing on protection and containment measures in the spirit of the motto, "Prevention is better than cure", and against the virus that could possibly enter the nation at any time. The ministry aims to prevent a

single citizen from contracting COVID-19 and for a zero-mortality rate.

(c) Large-scale public gatherings and events have highly potential to transmit viruses faster, and they are being limited as precautionary measures.

(d) People currently quarantined at designated locations are healthy individuals with no confirmed cases yet. They are quarantined so as to administer medical care if symptoms start to develop and to contain the spread of the virus.

(e) MoHS is strictly administering at international airports in order to prevent the virus from entering the nation. This virus has a rapid transmission rate and preventive measures are necessary.

(f) The public is urged to regularly check for updates and information concerning the virus on the ministry's Website (www.mohs.gov.mm) and its Facebook page (www.facebook.com/MinistryOfHealthAndSportsMyanmar).

(g) The public is formally requested to discontinue sharing rumours and misinformation. Severe legal action will be taken against those continuing to do so.

(h) The public is urged to remain calm and alert, and to closely follow guidelines issued by MoHS.

**Union Minister
Ministry of Health and Sports**

(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)

Royal Princess of Thailand arrives in Nay Pyi Taw

ROYAL Princess Soamsawali Krom Muen Suddhanarinatha and party arrived in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday to attend the Advancing the HIV Prevention Agenda between Myanmar and Thailand.

They were welcomed at the Nay Pyi Taw International Airport by Union Minister for Health and Sports Dr Myint Htwe, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs U Soe Han, Ambassador of Thai-

land Mrs Suphatra Srimaitree-phithak and officials.—MNA
(Translated by
Kyaw Zin Lin)

Royal Princess Soamsawali Krom Muen Suddhanarinatha being welcomed by Union Minister Dr Myint Htwe and officials in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**



Press conference at Presidential Palace touches on COVID-19 issues

THE Director-General of the Ministry of Office of the State Counsellor, U Zaw Htay, explained preparations for COVID-19 at a press conference in the Presidential Palace yesterday evening.

The following are excerpts of U Zaw Htay's responses to the press:

The World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a pandemic on 11 March and the State Counsellor called for an emergency meeting to address the matter the next day. The meeting focused on prevention, containment and treatment of the disease, its long-term negative consequences and the sectors it will impact. Details of the meeting are already made public in the news.

WHO has warned that the rate at which the virus spreads can increase in many countries. There are no confirmed cases in Myanmar, as of today. Nonetheless, the government

is making all necessary preparations against the virus amid the global outbreak. The President's Office has issued directives to Union-level institutions and ministries and state/regional governments.

The President's Office has also issued a request to the public concerning the virus. The public is advised to closely follow announcements and health guidelines, including those issued by the Minister of Health and Sports, and to remain calm.

WHO's risk assessment for the virus is 'Very High' and their recommendations to avoid large public gathering and to maintain personal hygiene have been disseminated by MoHS. The elderly are particularly at risk to the virus and they are advised to avoid public spaces, maintain a healthy diet and get enough sleep.

COVID-19 is still not present in Myanmar and there have been questions and doubts on that. The government and MoHS are

publishing true news. Myanmar was also relatively untouched during the SARS epidemic. The lifestyle and diet of Myanmar citizens are beneficial against the coronavirus.

Human to human transmission is the leading contribution to the spread of the virus in Western countries. Myanmar does not share the customs of greeting with handshakes, hugs or kisses that these countries have. It also does not have a high number of credit card users compared to other nations, as the person handling credit cards at the counter would be in close contact with hundred of different people in a day. This is avoided by Myanmar's predominant use of paper currency.

People rushed to stock up on food and necessities the other day, mostly panicking as a result of misinformation and disinformation concerning COVID-19. The President's Office announcement was issued to

address that. Businesses were told that the current pandemic is on a global scale and the governments, private sectors and citizens of other nations are working together to support their countries, and as such, businesses are urged not to exploit the situation for personal gain.

committee headed by the State Counsellor concerning the virus.

MoHS regularly issues necessary guidelines regarding COVID-19. There are many sources claiming to be authentic or citing other news sources with altered facts. The public is reminded to not believe something

The government and MoHS are publishing true news. Myanmar was also relatively untouched during the SARS epidemic. The lifestyle and diet of Myanmar citizens are beneficial against the coronavirus.

Myanmar plants more than enough rice and other crops to supply the nation that it can afford to export agricultural products to other nations. Thus, there is enough food for Myanmar within its own borders. The State currently has 15,000 tonnes of rice reserves. This will be combined with rice reserves of businesses to draw up action plans as necessary. Rice exports will be limited if required as well.

Severe legal action will be taken against businesses intending to make ill profits off of this situation, as well as those sharing fake news on social media and inciting unrest among the public.

Committees have been set up to address the potential effects of COVID-19 all over Myanmar. There is the committee jointly chaired by Union Ministers U Kyaw Tin and Dr Myint Htwe, as well as the national protection and containment

just because it is shared a lot, and to carefully scrutinize news sources for authenticity.

Next, U Zaw Htay answered to questions from the media. He responded to questions on the 'Victoria' toddler sexual assault case. He said those concerned are facing repercussions from relevant departments and the situation will be submitted to the President's Office. He said the case is still ongoing and the results will depend on the validity of evidence provided and on the plaintiff, victim and her family.

Going back to COVID-19, the Director-General said the decision on whether to close movie theaters in the current situation is up to the state/regional governments to choose. The President's Office has issued directives, and the state/regional governments and ministries will make decisions accordingly.—MNA (Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)



Director-General U Zaw Htay explains the preparations for COVID-19 at the press conference in the Presidential Palace in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

Information Ministry clarifies work agenda for 2020 general elections



Union Election Commission Chairperson U Hla Thein addresses the meeting on clarifying work agenda for general elections in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

THE Union Election Commission led by its Chairperson U Hla Thein and officials with the commission and the Ministry of Information led by Union Minister Dr Pe Myint, Deputy Minister U Aung Hla Tun and officials with the ministry met at the UEC office in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

At the meeting, UEC Chair U Hla Thein first said that the 2020 general elections will be

held per five norms prescribed. UEC would require a lot of cooperation from MoI for the pre-, during- and post-election periods. MoI needs to take a leading role in conducting civic and voter education tasks. MoI also needs to help print the ballots that will be used in the 2020 general elections. MoI should scrutinize the internal and external news media to gather news and informa-

tion on the elections day.

"UEC is cooperating with the Press Council to revise the electoral guideline and will issue it shortly. We're also collaborating with the Press Council and the Facebook Team to stop the circulation of false rumours and hate speeches on social media. Regarding civic and voter education, a UEC Facebook page will also be uploaded soon," added

the UEC chairperson.

Afterwards, Union Minister Dr Pe Myint briefed on the work already undertaken and the work agenda to be performed.

"We're planning to get the election awareness, education, and information programmes be broadcast and printed in the State-owned news media. Township Information and Public Relations Department (IPRD)

offices will be used as information centres to carry out civic and voter education," he said.

UEC members and the director-general then made additional discussions on the work programme raised by the MoI officials. After this, the Union Elections Commission Chair concluded the meeting.—MNA

(Translated by Aungthu Ya)

Myanmar resumes exports of aquatic products to China

MYANMAR has resumed exports of aquatic products to China via the Muse border gate and the sea route since the last week of February, according to the Myanmar Fisheries Federation (MFF). Exports of aquatic products to the neighboring country had been suspended due to the coronavirus outbreak.

Besides the dip in the dollar exchange rate, domestic fisheries production has been adversely affected by the volatility in the price of aquatic products, low demand, and traders offering low prices. Myanmar is ready to export fisheries products as usual if trade with China returns to normal, according to the MFF.

"The suspension of exports of Myanmar aquatic products has ended from the last week of February. Now, we've started to export a small volume of aquatic

products to China. The fisheries market will normalize if trade with China returns to normal conditions. But, we will have to give it time. Traders have been negatively impacted because of the suspension of Chinese demand and decrease in the dollar exchange rate. Now, we have started to export fisheries products to China, and the exports will depend on demand from China," said U Win Kyaing, general secretary of the MFF.

Fisheries production in Myanmar has been steady this year. Earlier, only the export of Myanmar aquatic products ran into difficulties because of China suspending demand. Now, every export sector is facing difficulties, like in other countries, because of the dip in the dollar exchange rate, according to the MFF. —Than Htaik

(Translated by Hay Mar)

Myanmar Rice Federation Announcement 01/2020

13 March, 2020

Press Release on Rice Market situation

1. World Health Organization-WHO declared Corona Virus (COVID-19) pandemic and the people are taking preventive measures and precautions and stockpiling food and necessary things.

2. In efforts to keep the rice market stable, the Myanmar Rice Federation is cooperating with the governmental departments concerned, private business stakeholders such as rice merchants, rice millers, distributors, traders and exporters giving priority to stability of local market and sufficiency of food in the country.

3. As the COVID-19 has been declared pandemic, the Myanmar Rice Federation, keeping on watch the daily situation in the world and reviewing the possible impacts on the local rice market, will make efforts to keep the local rice market stable and local rice sufficiency in cooperation with the traders, rice millers and organizations concerned in regions and states. To systematically manage the rice export, we will submit our suggestions to the State after negotiation with the exporters.

4. The Government and some organizations have stockpiled rice reserves. Anyone should not feel anxious at present as the traders and companies are selling the rice at a right price. If necessary or obstacles, anyone can contact the associations and brokerage agents mentioned in the Appendix.

Myanmar Rice Federation
Ph: 01-2301128 ~29, 01-218266~68
No. 29, Room 901-903, UMFCCI, 9th Floor,
Min Ye Kyaw Swar Road, Lanmadaw
Township, Yangon

Myanmar Rice Merchants Association
Ph: 09-5029692, 09-5123414
No. 100, Wardan Road, Concrete Highway,
Seikkan Township, Yangon
Myanmar Rice Millers Association
Ph: 01-216658~59
No. 29, Room No. 804, UMJFCCI, 8th Floor,
Min Ye Kyaw Swar Road, Lanmadaw Road,
Yangon

Wardan Commodity Centre
Ph: 09-5029692, 09-5123414
No. 100, Wardan Road, Concrete Highway,
Seikkan Township, Yangon

Bayintnaung Commodity Centre
Ph: 01-686147
Yuzana Road, Bayintnaung Brokerage,
No. 1 Ward, Kamayut Township, Yangon

Mandalay Commodity Centre
Ph: 09-2031047
Between 34th and 35th Streets, at the corner
of 85th and 86th Streets, Mandalay

Shwebo Commodity Centre
Ph: 09-2014879, 09-2100612
No.4 Ward, Shwebo, Sagaing Region

Myanmar Rice Federation

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MRF in talks with stakeholders in supply chain to ensure market stability, self-sufficiency

THE Myanmar Rice Federation (MRF) is prioritizing domestic market stability and self-sufficiency and working towards these goals by coordinating with government departments and stakeholders in the supply chain, including exporters, traders, depot owners, and millers, according to a press statement issued by the federation.

The MRF is monitoring the impact of COVID-19 in the foreign and domestic market, and working with stakeholders in the respective regions and states to govern the market. The federation will call on the government to take systematic measures on exports by involving exporters.

Due to a volatile dollar exchange rate in the local forex market, exporters have halted rice purchase, causing a slight slump in the domestic market.

“At present, some people

are panic-buying food and consumer goods in preparation for the possible negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, some are worrying over a possible price hike in the domestic market in wake of the coronavirus,” said a market observer.

The government, as well as some associations, have rice reserve schemes. At present, millers and companies are distributing rice at a fair price, according to the MRF. Therefore, people need not be concerned, it stated. The MRF, the Myanmar Rice and Paddy Traders Association, Myanmar Rice Millers Association, and Bayintnaung, Wadan, Mandalay and Shwebo commodity depots can be contacted for market-related problems, according to the statement issued by the federation. —GNLM (Translated by Ei Myat Mon)



Workers packaging sacks of rice at a warehouse in Yangon. PHOTO: THIN ZAR HLAING

Dollar exchange rate moves in volatile range; up K100 in three days

THE US dollar exchange rate bounced back to K1,420 on 13 March, propped up by the Central Bank of Myanmar's dollar purchase on 10 March. The exchange rate experienced volatility during the three-day period, moving up K100 post the central bank's move.

On 10 March, the Central Bank of Myanmar purchased \$9 million from private banks, helping the dollar exchange rate to climb above K1,400 on 12 March and touch K1,420 on

13 March, according to the local forex market.

In recent days, the US dollar weakened against the Kyat in the local currency market, tracking the weak sentiment in the global market amid the coronavirus outbreak, said money exchangers.

While the US dollar index touched 96 in the global market, the exchange rate slipped to K1,360 in the local forex market on 6 March and then continued to dip, reaching K1,355-1,320 on 9 March. The dollar gained after

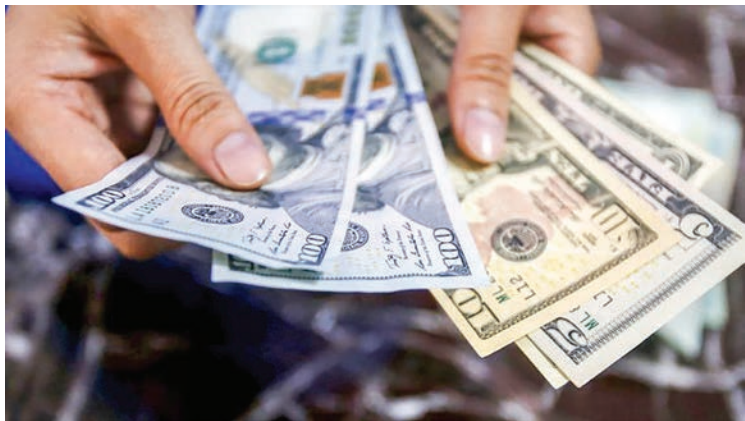
the CBM purchased dollars from private banks to govern the market. On 13 March, the CBM had set the reference exchange rate (weighted average market rate) at K1,398.6 per dollar.

In October last year, the dollar exchange rate had hit a high of K1,600. Thereafter, the dollar has been falling in the local currency market.

This year, the exchange rate moved in the range of K1,465-1,493 in January, and fell to a low of K1,436-1,465 in February.

On account of the slight gain in the dollar in the internal forex market, the domestic gold price climbed back to K1.2 million per tical (0.578 ounces, or 0.016 kilograms) on 12 March. The price had reached a record high of K1.3 million in early September, 2019. However, the rate dipped to K1.192 million per tical in the afternoon on 13 March.—Ko Htet

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)



YRIC clears 10 foreign projects worth \$21.98 mln; to create over 7,300 jobs

THE Yangon Region Investment Committee, at a meeting held on 13 March, approved 10 foreign projects with an estimated capital of US\$21.98 million.

The projects will create more than 7,300 jobs, according to the committee.

The manufacturing sector has attracted the most foreign investments in Yangon Region, with enterprises engaging in the production of pharmaceuticals, vehicles, container boxes, and garments on a Cutting, Making, and Packing (CMP) basis.

In the current fiscal year, the YRIC has approved 78 domestic and foreign projects in the manufacturing sector, which have pulled in an estimated \$146 million and K7.27 billion.

Investments in the regions are also flowing into the hotel and other services sectors. Till date, the region has received

investments from China, Singapore, Japan, Hong Kong, the Republic of Korea, Viet Nam, India, China (Taipei), Malaysia, the British Virgin Islands, and Seychelles.

According to statistics released by the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration (DICA), Yangon Region absorbs 60 per cent of all investments in Myanmar, Mandalay attracts 30 per cent, while the other regions and states receive only a small share of investments.

To simplify the verification of investment projects, the Myanmar Investment Law allows the region and state Investment Committees to grant permissions for local and foreign proposals, where the initial investment does not exceed K6 billion, or \$5 million.

(Translated by EMM)

MIC clears investments of \$91.46 mln from 25 foreign firms, K69.7 bln from 9 local cos

By Nyein Nyein

THE Myanmar Investment Commission (MIC), at a recent meeting, approved and endorsed investments of US\$91.46 million from 25 foreign enterprises along with nine domestic investment projects with estimated capitals

of K69.7 billion and \$19.34 million.

Four foreign businesses were given the go-ahead by the MIC and the proposals of 21 foreign enterprises were endorsed by the Investment Committees of Yangon, Ayeyawady, and Bago regions. The investments will flow into the hotel, livestock

and fisheries, manufacturing, and other services sectors. The projects are expected to create more than 14,000 jobs for local residents.

Meanwhile, the proposals of two domestic enterprises were approved by the MIC and seven projects were endorsed by the

Investment Committees of Yangon Region, Ayeyawady Region, Taninthayi State, Mon State, and Nay Pyi Taw. The domestic projects will be executed in the manufacturing, hotel, agriculture, and other services sectors, and create over 2,700 jobs.

To simplify the verification

of investment projects, the Myanmar Investment Law allows regional and state Investment Committees to endorse local and foreign proposals, where the initial investment does not exceed K6 billion, or \$5 million.

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

Spreading rumours, fake news on social media punishable under law

FALSE reports and rumours about the coronavirus outbreak have been doing the rounds on social media of late, creating fear and panic among the people.

On Thursday, a hoax voice message claiming the first case of COVID-19 had been confirmed at the Yangon General Hospital spread quickly on Facebook messenger. The message, recorded in a male voice, said the hospital's deputy medical superintendent had confirmed the coronavirus case.

Due to growing fears of the virus's spread, people have been flocking to buy necessities and food.

The Ministry of Health has warned the public that rumours circulating on COVID-19 cases in the province are all false, and that there are currently no confirmed cases of the virus in Myanmar.

People have been advised not to believe the rumours and fake information. Those spreading fake information and rumours on social media are violating the law. Those found spreading rumors intentionally to cause panic will be punished according to the law.

Rumours and misinformation spread fast when people are afraid.

With the World Health Organization declaring COVID-19 a pandemic on 11 March, the government yesterday announced the suspension of public gatherings, including the New Year water festival, until 30 April, adding

that if needed, the suspension period will be extended.

The WHO's announcement has called on countries, including Myanmar, to strengthen and speed up plans to respond to the virus, which include reducing long-term negative consequences as a result of the virus, increasing effectiveness of health regulations to prevent its spread, reducing negative effects on the national economy, other sectors, and potential losses, and disseminating health precautions and guidelines to the general public.

People must take note that there are no confirmed cases of COVID-19 in our country yet, and the government's measures are intended to check any coronavirus infection as the virus can spread rapidly in crowded places.

After declaring the COVID-19 a pandemic, the WHO has made six recommendations to the public to prevent the transmission of the virus: activate emergency response, organize public participation in disease control measures, identify cases and quarantine confirmed patients, conduct laboratory tests in suspected cases, and follow personal hygiene.

Instead of falling for fake news and rumors about the coronavirus, people have been advised to adhere to the general health guidelines and precautionary measures issued by the Ministry of Health and Sports.

Anyone found spreading fake information and rumours on social media about coronavirus in the country will be punished according to the online law.

Representative responded to the Special Rapporteur on Human Right

DURING the Interactive Dialogue with Ms. Yanghee Lee, Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Myanmar, held in the morning of 10 March 2020 at the on-going 43rd session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva, Permanent Representative of Myanmar U Kyaw Moe Tun made a rebuttal statement as a concerned country.

In his statement, he stressed that sustainable peace and sustainable development are the two sides of the same coin that is inevitable part of the path towards democracy and apprised the Council of the Government's utmost efforts, since taking office in 2016, in striving to realize all-round sustainable peace and development in the country despite various constraints.

He stated that Myanmar is the home of multi-ethnicity and multi-religion. Hence, concluding with ones' own narra-

tive without understanding the unique history and cultural background of all different communities will further create misunderstanding among different communities in the country, he continued.

Regarding the national reconciliation and peace process, he informed the Council of the positive result achieved at the 8th Joint Implementation Coordination Meeting on Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement held in January 2020 and of the 4th session of the Union Peace Conference-21st Century Pengloung scheduled to be held in the first 4 months of this year.

In the endeavour to achieve sustainable development, he highlighted a number of measures taken by the Government in balancing business development and protection of human rights for responsible investment, including Business and Human Right Initiatives conducted in cooperation with UNDP and pro-

motion of responsible business conduct cooperating with OECD and the Myanmar Centre for Responsible Business (MCRB).

Furthermore, he updated the Council on the status of several legal reforms taken place in the country, among others, including submission Bill on Prevention and Protection of Violence against Women to the Parliament.

He also added that proposed amendments of the 2008 Myanmar Constitution have been discussed heatedly at the Parliament since 25 February 2020. He said, "We are resolute for realizing our goal of a democratic federal union". "It needs time and space".

Speaking of the upcoming General Elections in later part of 2020, he informed the Council that measures have been taken in preparation of the elections, including cooperation with relevant stakeholders to tackle fake news and hate speech online and



Permanent Representative of Myanmar U Kyaw Moe Tun. PHOTO: MNA

offline. He also said to be mindful of the importance to strike the balance between the Right and Responsibility, so as between freedom of expression and hate speech.

Turning to the repatriation process, while sharing concern of the displaced person from Rakhine State, he mentioned that

more than 300 displaced persons returned to Rakhine State from Bangladesh on their own volition though no official repatriation has taken place. He, therefore, called for Bangladesh to strictly adhere to the bilateral agreements signed between the two countries. Moreover, he underscored some of the Government

efforts to create conducive environment for verified returnees in implementing quick impact projects under trilateral MoU with UNDP and UNHCR, and working with ASEAN.

He reiterated that the Special Rapporteurs must conduct its mandate in an impartial and objective manner in good faith in order to recommend for improving human rights situation of a country. Moreover, he said, "it is of paramount importance for Special Rapporteurs to listen to all sides of the stakeholders in a professional manner and to strictly adhere to the code of conduct".

He concluded by saying that as Myanmar steps towards another phase in its history for democracy, it is important to caution that non-constructive measures, retributive actions, ill-intention are the obstacles that will only lead to disunity and mistrust among different communities of the country.—MNA

Japan's Diet gives Abe power to declare emergency amid viral fears

JAPAN enacted a time-limited law revision on Friday, enabling Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, if he deems it necessary, to declare a state of emergency to cope with the spread of the new coronavirus.

After only three days of deliberations, parliament gave such authority to Abe, who has come under fire for being slow to act to contain COVID-19, the illness caused by the virus. The Tokyo Olympics are scheduled to start in just over four months.

The swift reworking of the legal framework is intended to prepare for a worst-case scenario but has still raised concerns that bolder preventive steps, once a state of emergency is declared, could infringe upon people's rights.

Latest global developments Olympic torch relay in Greece suspended

The Greek Olympic committee said Friday it will suspend the rest of the torch relay in that country for this summer's Tokyo games, due to concerns over the spread of the new coronavirus.

The decision was made a day after the Greek leg of the relay



Passengers travelling to India from Italy and South Korea will have to present a certificate of having tested negative for coronavirus. (AFP)

started following a lighting ceremony in ancient Olympia.

Borders close

The Czech Republic has joined the list of countries closing its borders. The measure applies equally to foreigners wanting to enter and well as Czechs who want to leave, from Monday.

Slovakia also closed its borders to all foreigners, except

for Poles.

Schools closed, gatherings banned

France, Belgium and Portugal joined the list of countries closing their schools.

All schools, creches and universities closed from Friday in Ireland.

Disney will close its giant theme parks in Florida, Califor-

nia and Paris this weekend until the end of March.

New York has banned gatherings of more than 500 people, including in Broadway theatres.

Latin America cuts off

Venezuela and Bolivia suspend flights to and from Europe for a month. Paraguay ends them until further notice, as does Peru. Argentina suspends for a month

flights from the most hard hit countries. Latin America's biggest Airline Latam, slashes its international flights by 30 percent for two months.

Spain virus toll jumps

Coronavirus infections in Spain soared to more than 4,200 on Friday, as the number of deaths rose by some 50 percent to 120, the health ministry said.

As of 1200 GMT, there were 4,209 cases in Spain, up from 3,004 on Thursday evening, when the number of deaths had stood at 84.

Ukraine reports first death

Ukraine said Friday it is closing its borders to foreign nationals for at least two weeks to prevent the spread of the novel coronavirus.

Roche's new and faster COVID-19 test

Swiss pharmaceutical giant Roche announced Friday it had received emergency approval from US regulators for a new and much faster test for diagnosing the deadly new coronavirus.

The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has given the green light to commercialise the SARS-CoV-2 Test to detect the virus that has sparked the global COVID-19 pandemic, Roche said in a statement.

White House infections possible

A senior Australian politician tested positive for the new coronavirus and entered hospital quarantine Friday, days after returning from Washington where he met Ivanka Trump and US Attorney General William Barr.

State of emergency declared

Bulgaria has become the latest European country to declare a state of emergency in response to the coronavirus crisis.

REFERENCES
Kyodo; AFP Updated News

Announcement

THE Central Bank of Myanmar released Directive No. 1/2020 on amending the interest rates on 12 March 2020.

The new interest rates, which are aimed at boosting the country's economy, will be effective from 16 March, 2020 instead of 1 April, 2020.

The Central Bank of Myanmar



Myanmar Daily Weather Report

(Issued at 7:00 pm Friday 13th March, 2020)

BAY INFERENCE: Weather is a few cloud over the Andaman Sea and Bay of Bengal.

FORECAST VALID UNTIL NOON OF THE 14th March, 2020: Weather will be partly cloudy in Upper Sagaing, Taninthayi Regions and Kachin State and generally fair in the remaining Regions and States.

STATE OF THE SEA: Sea will be slight to moderate in Myanmar waters. Wave height will be about (4-7) feet off and along Myanmar Coasts.

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Likelihood of isolated rain or thundershowers in Upper Sagaing and Taninthayi Regions, Kachin, Eastern Shan, Kayin and Mon States.

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 14th March, 2020: Generally fair weather.

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 14th March, 2020: Generally fair weather.

FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 14th March, 2020: Generally fair weather.

WEATHER OUTLOOK FOR WEEKEND: Weather will be generally fair in Nay Pyi Taw, Yangon and Mandalay Regions.

Invitation to young writers for Sunday Special

The Global New Light of Myanmar is accepting submissions of poetry, opinion, articles, essays and short stories from young people for its weekly Sunday Next Generation Platform. Interested candidates can send their work to the **Global New Light of Myanmar** at No. 150, Nga Htat Kyee Pagoda Road, Bahan Township, Yangon, in person, or by email to ce@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com with the following information: (1) Sector you wish to be included in (poetry, opinion, etc.), (2) Own name and (if different) your penname, (3) Your level of education, (4) Name of your School/College/University, (5) A written note of declaration that the submitted piece is your original work and has not been submitted to any other news or magazine publishing houses, (6) A color photo of the submitter, (7) Copy of your NRC card, (8) Contact information (email address, mobile number, etc.).— Editorial Department, The Global New Light of Myanmar

THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR
www.globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

ACTING CHIEF EDITOR

Aye Min Soe
dce@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

SENIOR EDITORIAL CONSULTANT

Kyaw Myaing

SENIOR EDITOR

Aungthu Ya

SENIOR TRANSLATORS

Zaw Htet Oo
Aung Khin

INTERNATIONAL NEWS EDITOR

Ye Htut Tin,
Aung Htein,
editor1@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

LOCAL NEWS EDITORS

Tun Tun Naing (Editor),
intlnews@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

TRANSLATORS

Hay Mar Tin Win,
Ei Myat Mon,
Kyaw Zin Lin,
Kyaw Zin Tun

REPORTER

Nyein Nyein Ei,
reporter1@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

PHOTOGRAPHER

Kyaw Zeya Win @ Phoe Khwar
Kyaw Zeya

COMPUTER TEAM

Thein Ngwe, Zaw Zaw Aung,
Hnin Pwint, Kay Khaing Win,
Sanda Hnin, Thein Htwe,
Nyi Lin Thu

EDITORIAL SECTION

(+95) (01)8604529,
Fax - (+95) (01) 8604305

CIRCULATION & DISTRIBUTION

San Lwin, (+95) (01) 8604532,
Hotline - 09 974424114

ADVERTISING & MARKETING

(+95) (01) 8604530,
Hotline - 09 974424848
marketing@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com
subscription@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

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gnlmdaily@gmail.com
www.globalnewlightofmyanmar.com
www.facebook.com/TheGNLM



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Due to limitation of space we are only able to publish "Letter to the Editor" that do not exceed 500 words. Should you submit a text longer than 500 words please be aware that your letter will be edited.

Over 900,000 sit for matriculation exam on third day

THERE are a total of 909,222 students sitting for the Mathematics subject at exam centres locally and abroad on the third day of the matriculation exam for 2020.

The number of exam centres totaled 1,999 with 15 locations overseas and 1,984 nationwide.

Out of 909,222 students sitting for their exams on the third day, 125 are taking their exam at hospitals. Meanwhile, 30 visually impaired persons, 22 hearing impaired persons, 170 physical disabilities persons, 189 prisoners, and 125 students from Myawady, Kayin State took their exam.—MNA

(Translated by TTN)



Students arrive at No 2 Basic Education High School, Minbu Township yesterday to sit for the matriculation exam. PHOTO: KYAW SOE WIN (MINBU)

Train schedules to change once air-spring train starts running on Myitkyina-Mandalay line

MYANMA Railways (MR) is set to start operating the new Korean air-spring train on the Myitkyina-Mandalay line from 21 March. Therefore, the existing train schedules will change slightly, according to the Myitkyina Railway Station.

"Starting 21 March, the Korean air-spring train will be operated between Mandalay and Myitkyina. The train will start at 1330 hrs. So, we need to fix the schedules of other trains running on the Mandalay-Myitkyina line from 21 March," said U Khin Thaw, manager of the Myitkyina Railway Station.

"At present, MR is operating five daily trains on the Myitkyina-Mandalay line. The local train leaves at 0445 hrs for Myitkyina-Nabalaka, the express at 0815 hrs, the mail train at 0845 hours, the China air-bag train at 1445 hrs, and the Mandalay train at 1600 hrs. From 21 March, MR will run the new Korean train with air-spring coaches on the

Myitkyina-Mandalay line. So, the current train timetables will have to change a little with the Chinese train with air-bag coaches leaving between 1030 hrs and 1245 hrs," he added.

The new Korean train with air-spring coaches will leave Myitkyina station at 1330 hrs daily and arrive at the Mandalay railway station at 0745 hrs. The train will stop at 7 stations on the Myitkyina-Mandalay line. The train will have one restaurant coach, ten upper class coaches, and one ordinary class coach with 40 chairs. Tickets for Myitkyina-Mandalay will be priced at K20,000 for upper class and K10,000 for ordinary class passengers. "MR will run the Korean air-spring train on the Myitkyina-Mandalay line. So, passengers will not be allowed to bring foods with strong odor inside the air-con coaches," according to the Myitkyina Railway Station.—Myo Myint Soe (IPRD) (Translated by Hay Mar)



PHOTO: MYO MYINT SOE (IPRD)

Comparison chart reflecting foreign tourist arrivals at international airports, sea ports and border checkpoints

Sr	Month	2018-2019 financial year			2019-2020 financial year		
		Tourist	Business	Total	Tourist	Business	Total
1	October	52647	21005	73652	91836	27590	119426
2	November	77498	21482	98980	115898	27488	143386
3	December	84474	19538	104012	127950	24967	152917
4	January	93125	18689	111814	123622	26032	149654
5	February	102016	24612	126628	46879	21948	68827
Total		407760	105326	513086	506185	128025	63421

Comparison chart reflecting foreign tourist arrivals at international airports, sea ports and border checkpoints

Sr	International airports and border checkpoints	February 2019		February 2020		Remark
		Tourist	Business	Tourist	business	
1.	Yangon Airport/ Sea Port	63775	17420	35231	13733	
2.	Mandalay Airport	26399	5724	5735	2400	
3.	Nay Pyi Taw Airport	385	383	172	114	
4.	Myeik Airport	0	0	0	0	
5.	Tachilek	7600	331	2361	114	
6.	Myawady	1731	636	1982	5441	
7.	Kawthoung	1460	74	807	60	
8.	Hteekhee	394	22	119	23	
9.	Tamu	264	20	462	37	
10.	Reedhorda	8	2	10	26	
Total		102016	24612	46879	21948	

North Korea poses greater threat with more ICBM tests, says US commander

WASHINGTON — A US commander has assessed that North Korea is likely to conduct more Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBM) tests, posing a greater threat to the United States.

Gen. Terrence O’Shaughnessy, United States commander of the Northern Command and North American Aerospace Defense Command, Gen. Terrence O’Shaughnessy has submitted his assessment to the House

Armed Services Subcommittee on Strategic Forces, that says, “North Korea’s recent engine testing suggests the regime may be ready to test a more advanced intercontinental ballistic missile that could pose a greater threat to the United States.” In 2017, after its first ICBM test, the leader of North Korea Kim Jong-Un declared the research and development phase of the country’s strategic weapons program complete and vowed to begin serial

production and deployment of these new systems.

North Korea has tested several new short-range missile systems and demonstrated advancing technologies that could eventually be incorporated into its strategic systems.

In December, Kim stated it was time to take offensive measures to ensure the country’s sovereignty and security and threatened to soon unveil a new strategic weapon. — ANI ■



North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has been pictured on multiple occasions without a coronavirus mask. PHOTO:AFP

Ardern says racist threat lingers after New Zealand mosque attack

WELLINGTON — New Zealand’s leader Jacinda Ardern admitted Friday there was “much more” her country could do to

tackle white supremacists a year after the Christchurch mosque massacres.

Ardern was widely praised

for her compassion towards the Muslim community after a lone gunman attacked two mosques on March 15 last year, killing 51 in New Zealand’s worst modern mass shooting.

But she said some in the South Pacific nation continued to espouse the views of the Australian attacker, a self-avowed white supremacist who targeted Muslims at Friday prayers.

“New Zealand is not free of those groups who define themselves as extremist white supremacists, those groups exist here,” she told reporters.

“The responsibility we have is to combat not only that existence, but the precursors to that

existence. There is much more that we can do,” she said.

Ardern, who was speaking ahead of a national memorial service on Sunday, said the best way to honour victims was to call out racism, bullying and discrimination. “People will feel safe when they feel supported,” she said.

“When they feel the community is looking after them and when they feel they are not facing discrimination or jibes in the street or comments that make them feel unsafe.”

Ardern said the March 15 attacks “fundamentally changed” New Zealand, she hoped for the better.— AFP ■



Jacinda Ardern was widely praised for her compassion towards the Muslim community after a lone gunman attacked two mosques last year. PHOTO:AFP

Pandemic shuts down Everest as Nepal suspends permits

KATHMANDU — Nepal on Friday barred climbers from all mountains — including Everest — over the coronavirus pandemic, in a major blow to its tourism industry.

The move could cost the Himalayan nation tens of millions of dollars in revenues drawn by the world’s biggest mountain, and expedition organisers said it would cause a financial disaster.

“The government has decided to suspend all spring expeditions and scrap permits for the time being. The decision can be reviewed after analysing the global scenario over the coming month,” tourism minister Yogesh Bhattarai told AFP, adding no more visas would be given on arrival for foreigners.

Nepal’s move came a day after China barred access from its side.

The country, still recovering from a major 2015 earthquake, was hoping to attract two million tourists for the first time in 2020.

“This is disappointing news for both our expedition leaders and our clients who have trained for months for this year’s climb,” said Lukas Furtenbach, head of US-based Furtenbach Adventures.

Every spring tents cities of hundreds of foreign climbers and support staff grows at the foot of Everest and other peaks.

All have to live in close quarters. As the air thins, breathing is already difficult at higher altitude — adding to medical risks if there is an outbreak of any kind among climbers.— AFP ■

S Korean nurses’ bandages become badges of honour

SEOUL — Across their foreheads, cheeks and noses, the nurses on the front line of South Korea’s struggle against the coronavirus outbreak wear bandages that have become badges of honour.

They apply the wrappings before each shift at the Keimyung University Daegu Dongsan Hospital, in the southern city at the centre of what has become the largest national outbreak outside China, where the virus first emerged.

The pads, plasters and tape protect their faces from painful sores that can develop from their protection suits as they tend to coronavirus patients for hours on end.

Teams of full-time and volunteer nurses operate at the hospital, one of the biggest in Daegu, and the bandages have come to represent their self-sacrificing efforts.

“I’m trying hard,” said nurse

Kim Eun-hee. They have been lauded for their efforts, with one poster on South Korea’s Naver portal telling them: “You guys are

truly heroes to me. I am infinitely grateful to you.”

Letters of support are also displayed at the hospital. “The

whole nation is behind you,” read one, from a well-wisher who sent thermometers and snacks.— AFP ■



The pads, plasters and tape protect the nurses’ faces from painful sores that can develop as they tend to coronavirus patients for hours on end. PHOTO:AFP

Foreigners, migration to blame for coronavirus spread

BUDAPEST — Hungary's nationalist Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said Friday that foreigners and migration are to blame for the appearance and spread of coronavirus in Hungary.

Asked during a radio interview why Hungary has closed its universities but not schools in response to the virus outbreak, Orbán said it was because "there are lots of foreigners there".

"Our experience is that primarily foreigners brought in the disease, and that it is spreading among foreigners," he said.

So far, Hungary has confirmed 19 cases of infections, nine of them Iranians (mostly university scholarship-holders), one British national, and the rest Hungarians. "It's no coincidence that the virus first showed up among Iranians," he said.

"We cannot separate the tens of thousands of foreign students (in Hungary) from the Hungarian students, that's why we thought it best to stop all visits to those institutions," he said.

In Hungarian-language mes-



Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said Friday that foreigners and migration are to blame for the appearance and spread of coronavirus in Hungary. **PHOTO: AFP**

sages posted on its Facebook page the government has warned Iranians of detention and deportation if they don't cooperate with disease control authorities.

Last week after the first infections were confirmed — two Iranian students — Budapest suspended the issuing of visas to Iranian citizens. Earlier March Hungary barred the doors indefinitely to its border camps for asylum-seekers as it said refugees

and migrants arriving there may have been in virus hotspot Iran.

Government officials and pro-Orbán media have also drawn a link between the virus outbreak and migration.

"We are fighting a two-front war; one front is called migration, and the other one belongs to the coronavirus, there is a logical connection between the two, as both spread with movement," Orbán said Friday.— AFP ■

Netanyahu, Gantz discuss creation of unity government to fight Covid-19

JERUSALEM — Prime Minister of Israel and Likud party leader Benjamin Netanyahu called his fellow rival and Blue and White party leader Benny Gantz on Thursday to discuss the possibility of a unity government to better fight the novel coronavirus.

Both the leaders discussed the possibility of setting up a coalition government given the current situation of the pandemic. However, it is not clear if the two

had come to a conclusion regarding the inclusion of the Joint List of Arab-majority parties, Times of Israel reported. But the leaders sought to put differences aside in order to fight the spread of the deadly virus which has crippled the economy.

The Health Ministry on Thursday announced that the number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 rose to 109.

Israel has had three elec-

tions in less than a year, with the latest vote last week yielded another deadlock, seeing both Netanyahu and Gantz short of a parliamentary majority.

Likud party sees the Joint List as out of bounds of Israeli politics, terming its members "terror supporters", citing their opposition to Zionism and anti-Israel stances by members of Balad, one of the party's factions.— ANI

Greece's first woman president vows to defend borders, rights, warns on virus

ATHENS — Greece's first woman president began her term on Friday with a pledge to protect the country's borders and defend human rights, whilst warning Greeks to follow health rules as the country grapples with over 100 coronavirus cases.

Katerina Sakellariopoulou, a 63-year-old former senior judge, said she would "walk together" with Greeks to create a "prosperous" and "cosmopolitan" future "that includes all of us."

The new head of the Greek state begins her five-year term in a terse standoff with neighbouring Turkey, which has allowed tens of thousands of refugees to mass at the border.

Sakellariopoulou said Greeks had to "repulse the aggression of those who make designs on our national sovereignty by making use of human pain."

The new president also insisted that Greece had a "humanitarian duty" to defend "defenceless and desperate people."

Heed virus warnings -

Greece has so far announced 117 cases of the coronavirus, one of whom died on Thursday after 10 days in hospital.

Three people are in intensive care and the government has shut down schools and universities, courts, cinemas, gyms and other indoor public gathering areas for two weeks in an effort to curb the outbreak.

Sakellariopoulou urged the public to follow health warnings "to avoid spreading panic" which could tear apart the health system and harm the economy.

Sakellariopoulou took a religious oath in parliament before Archbishop Ieronymos, head of the Orthodox Church of Greece.

She placed a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier — Greece's foremost military monument — before heading to the presidential mansion for a handover ceremony with outgoing president Prokoptis Pavlopoulos.— AFP ■



Greece's first woman President Katerina Sakellariopoulou vows to defend borders and rights but warns also of the need to tame the coronavirus crisis. **PHOTO: AFP**



The Iraqi military condemned the US strikes as a violation of national sovereignty that would lead only to more instability. **PHOTO: AFP**

Civilian among six dead in US strikes: Iraq military

BAGHDAD — US air strikes targeting pro-Iranian military factions in Iraq early Friday killed one civilian and five security personnel, the Iraqi military said in a preliminary toll.

Three of the dead were Iraqi soldiers and two were policemen, the military statement said, adding that 11 Iraqi fighters were also wounded, some of them critically.

The civilian was a cook working at an unfinished airport

outside the holy shrine city of Karbala, where another civilian was also wounded in the raids.

The airport's media head Ghazwan Issawi confirmed the cook's death to AFP and said the airport had also suffered material damage.

"Five missiles hit the administrative building at the airport and 18 cars were destroyed," Issawi told AFP.

"We are waiting for security forces to come and begin their

investigation," he said.

The volley of strikes, which began around 1:00 am (2200 GMT Thursday), hit five weapons storage facilities belonging to the Hashed al-Shaabi military network, according to the Pentagon.

It was in response to a rocket attack on an Iraqi base late Wednesday that killed two US military personnel and one British soldier, and which the US blamed on hardline Hashed factions.— AFP ■

Japan looks to downgrade key economic assessment amid virus outbreak

TOKYO — The government is considering downgrading its key assessment of the Japanese economy as the burgeoning coronavirus crisis has hit private consumption and corporate earnings, officials said Friday.

The downgrading in the government's assessment would be the first in three months. In February, the Cabinet Office said the economy "is recovering at a moderate pace, while increased weakness mainly among manufacturers is continuing, as exports remain in a weak tone."

The focus is on whether the upcoming March report will maintain the headline assessment of moderate recovery, which has been used since September 2013.

The spreading virus,



Japan's parliament enacts a time-limited legal change during a House of Councillors plenary session in Tokyo on 13 March, 2020, enabling Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, if he deems it necessary, to declare a state of emergency to cope with the spread of the new coronavirus. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

which originated in China, has led to cancellations of many events and slower activity in society with consumers increasingly reluc-

tant to going outside. Companies have also suffered supply chain disruptions and slowdown in the world economy, officials said.

In its past reports, the Cabinet Office employed various wording to describe a downturn. — Kyodo News ■

Barnier shows 'ambitious' draft UK deal to EU members

BRUSSELS — Chief EU negotiator Michel Barnier said on Friday that he had sent an "ambitious" first draft of what could be a new post-Brexit trade deal with Britain to EU capitals.

The European Union member states will now have to decide whether and how they want to modify Barnier's proposal, as he pursues his negotiations with London.

But even if the Brussels veteran's text finds favour with MEPs and the 27 capitals, there are provisions that are unlikely to be acceptable to Number 10.

The draft — obtained by AFP — would ensure Britain does not diverge far from EU state aid, environmental, labour and quality standards, while

trade will be overseen by a "Specialised Committee on the Level Playing Field."

Sovereign equals

But, in the case of any dispute over interpretation of EU law, the eventual deal's arbitration committee would have to defer "to the Court of Justice of the European Union to give a ruling on the question."

London has been adamant it will not sign up to any deal that gives the Luxembourg-based court jurisdiction over Britain.

If the draft is retained, the deal would also ensure both sides "authorise the fishing vessels of the other party to engage in fishing activities in its waters" according to agreed quotas.—AFP ■

European stocks, oil prices recover after rout

LONDON — European stocks and oil prices recovered Friday on US stimulus hopes, while Asian equities experienced wild swings, with traders closing out a week of carnage for world markets as the coronavirus pandemic fuels fears of a global recession.

After Wall Street's Dow index dived 10 per cent Thursday, its worst session since 1987, Sydney won 4.4 per cent and Tokyo tumbled 6.1 per cent.

Nearing the half-way mark in Europe, London surged 6.7 per cent, Frankfurt rallied 6.2 per cent, Paris soared 7.2 per cent, Milan won a massive 14.4 per cent and Madrid recovered 7.1 per cent.

Yet the gains were not enough to overturn a blood-bath Thursday, which saw leading European indices suffer their worst falls for decades.

The Paris CAC 40 dived more than 12 per cent Thursday to record its biggest one-day loss since the index was created at the end of 1987.

London's FTSE 100 and the Frankfurt DAX 30 indices meanwhile had their biggest one-day drops since the late 1980s, with losses of around 10-12 per cent.

By Friday, Europe's main stock markets were on average down about 15 per cent over the past week.

"After a wild week on the markets, hopes of a Fed stimulus package are boosting stocks," said Fiona Cincotta, analyst at City Index trading group.

"The turnaround comes as central banks from US to Australia pump liquidity in the financial markets and as investors become hopeful that US Democrats and Republicans could pass a stimulus package on Friday," Cincotta added.

Tokyo, which fell as much as 10 per cent at one point Friday, ended down 6.1 per cent, while Hong Kong shed 1.1-per cent lower having plunged around seven percent earlier in the session.—AFP ■

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V MCC KYOTO VOY. NO. (010S/011N)

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V MCC KYOTO VOY. NO. (010S/011N) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 14-3-2020 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of MITT/TMT where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

Damaged cargo will be surveyed daily from 8 am to 11:20 am and 12 noon to 4 pm to Claim's Day now declared as the third day after final discharge of cargo from the Vessel.

No claims against this vessel will be admitted after the Claims Day.

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S SEALAND MAERSK ASIA PTE LTD

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V PACITA VOY. NO. (065 N/S)

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V PACITA VOY. NO. (065 N/S) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 14-3-2020 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of HPT where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

Damaged cargo will be surveyed daily from 8 am to 11:20 am and 12 noon to 4 pm to Claim's Day now declared as the third day after final discharge of cargo from the Vessel.

No claims against this vessel will be admitted after the Claims Day.

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S NEW GOLDEN SEA LINES

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V MARITIME VICTORY

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V MARITIME VICTORY VOY. NO. (20001) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 14-3-2020 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of MKH where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

Damaged cargo will be surveyed daily from 8 am to 11:20 am and 12 noon to 4 pm to Claim's Day now declared as the third day after final discharge of cargo from the Vessel.

No claims against this vessel will be admitted after the Claims Day.

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S WILHELMSSEN SHIPS SERVICES PTE LTD.

Phone No: 2301928

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V HAN DE VOY. NO. (2010E)

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V HAN DE VOY. NO. (2010E) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 14-3-2020 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of MITT where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

Damaged cargo will be surveyed daily from 8 am to 11:20 am and 12 noon to 4 pm to Claim's Day now declared as the third day after final discharge of cargo from the Vessel.

No claims against this vessel will be admitted after the Claims Day.

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S HYUNDAI GLOVIS CO LTD (KOREA)

Phone No: 2301178



Gems trader doing assessment of gems stones by using the flash light.

Ruby and sapphire are same in ingredients. Ruby is red and sapphire, blue.

In Mogok, ruby is extracted in conventional ways. As industrial sector develops, extraction of ruby is undertaken by heavy machinery. As ruby exists in the soil mixed with stones, soil from the mines is panned in the water for extraction of ruby.

In the past, ruby was extracted from soil through four kinds of wells namely large lakes, hillside holes, narrow holes and four-wall holes. In fact, miners from various types of gem mines face dangers such as landslides and suffocation due to lack of oxygen in deep holes for their lives in work process on a daily basis.

Currently, soil is dredged from the wells with the use of heavy machinery to pan it in the water so as to search pieces of ruby. As white stones containing sulphur can bear pieces of ruby, many miners in Mogok crush the stones by small ham-

mer to search pieces of ruby.

In mining the ruby wells, owner of the well, businessperson and well master worked in concert to enjoy profit-sharing process. At present, businesspersons excavate the mines in the allotted plots within the set period with the use of heavy machinery by paying taxes to the State.

Grinding pieces of precious stones

As the excavated pieces of ruby are uncut one, these pieces are grinded for having beautiful positions and lightings. Uncut ruby pieces are grinded by hand. As such, techniques of grinding pieces of ruby are of great importance in the jewellery arena.

Bad skills in grinding the pieces of stone can degrade the value of precious stones. Gem industries in Mogok are being operated with three major work processes—mining, grinding and trading.

Mogok Ruby

By Maung Tha (Archaeology)

INTERNATIONAL gems markets recognize that pieces of ruby extracted from Myanmar are the best quality and the most significant around the world.

Some volumes of ruby can be excavated in India, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Sri Lanka as well as Myanmar, Thailand and Cambodia in Southeast Asian region.

Mogok and Kyatpyin are inclusive of Mogok Ruby Land. Mogok region mainly produces ruby, sapphire, olivine and quartz from gneiss and crystal lime stones. The area of producing Mogok ruby covers 1,916 square miles of land in Mogok, Momeik, Tagaung and Thabeikkyin.

Gemmology

The gemmology focusing on studying precious gems comprises branches of subject to study igneous rocks, sedimentary rocks and metamorphic rocks.

The stones with three characteristics of beauty, existence and rareness are identified as gems. Starting from about 8th century BC, evaluation of gems such as ruby, diamond and sapphire depended on clearness, colours in harmony, faultless, utility and large size.

Currently, U Maung Thin, a sapphire entrepreneur in Mogok, explained that value of a piece of gem can be assessed through five Cs—country, clearness, carat, cutting and colour. The piece of gems with five aforesaid points will get good prices.

Mineral ruby

Ruby is an oxide mineral with 9 Mohs scale of hardness. Mohs scale of hardness for diamond is 10, and jade, 7. Density of ruby is 4 and diamond 3.5.



Mogok Sapphire.

The uncut pieces of ruby must be cleaned in water and then dried. The uncut piece of ruby must be stuck with heated lime-wax and softly pushed on the bronze plaque by hand in order to create necessary shapes. The bronze plaque called Seinhmat is in rectangular shaped iron block. The piece of ruby must be interlarded by clamp to grind it in a patient manner. Stone grinder master decides how to create shapes of an uncut stone.

The shaped stone piece is polished at the polishing machine. In so doing, the piece of stone had to be interlarded by buffalo clamp in the past. Now, buffalo clamps are substituted with metal clamps. Merchants trade grinded, shaped and polished precious stones.

Gems trading mall

Not only pieces of ruby but sapphire pieces extracted from Mogok are traded at the mall. The mall is centre of trading pieces of uncut gems and grinded pieces. The mall is bustle and bustle with gem merchants, most of whom are Shan ethnics and resident Gurkhas.

Ward gem malls are located near gem mines. Those from the gems land trade pieces of gems from the morning to noon on a daily basis. Thaphanpin Ward gem mall is crowded with young females and males. They

are ready to show pieces of gems on trays with the use of a special torch light each. Anyone set the prices of precious stones but they trade these pieces at deserved prices as they decide. That is why some of them face loss in trading.

In the afternoon, those merchants move to the gems mall in urban area of Mogok. As such, the gems mall is always thronged with traders.

In trading ruby and sapphire pieces on the ruby land, sometimes imitative gem pieces were found, said a gem merchant. As technologies are having advancement in all sectors, skilled persons can make imitative precious stones like genuine ones. Hence, gem merchants operate their businesses based on their own experiences.

Mogok ruby land

Mogok which produces

the best quality of ruby pieces across the world is 128 miles from Mandalay. Travellers have easy access to Mogok along Mandalay-Madaya-Kyatpyin-Mogok road and Mandalay-PyinOoLwin-Mogok road. The road from Madaya to Mogok passes hilly parts and carved ones while the route from PyinOoLwin to Mogok is smooth.

Mogok is 30 miles long from the east to the west and 14.12 miles long from the south to the north. The town is located 3,858 feet higher than the sea level. A celebration to mark the 800th founding anniversary of Mogok took place around Myole Lake.

Mogok is surrounded by 6,733 feet high Kyayni Hill in the east, 5,345 feet high Pintku Hill in the west, 5,606 feet high Htinshu Hill in the north and 7,544 feet high Taungme Hill in the south. So, Mogok is in a shape of pan among hills.

Soil of Mogok is home to

ruby, sapphire, red stone, alexandrite, topaz, rubellite, felspar, olivine, green jasper and tourmaline.

Mogok was founded in 579 Myanmar era. Its title derived from Meinkut—Mein means town and Kut, curving. So, Mogok means a town established in curved valley.

The majority of local people are engaging in mining and agriculture as well as livestock breeding on a commercial scale. Mogok mainly produces precious stones including ruby and sapphire and tea.

There are seven eminent pagodas, 218 temples and 46 stupas, 307 monasteries and four nunneries in Mogok Township. Of them, PhaungdawU, Chanthagyi, Maha Muni, Shwegugyi, Daw Nang Kyi Hill, Pintku Hill and Kyaukpyatthad Pagoda are the most significant in Mogok Township. So also, there are 75 Christian re-

ligious buildings, three Islamic buildings, 35 Hindu temples and eight Chinese Buddhist temples.

As Mogok due to precious ruby has been famous since the town was established 800 years ago, Mogok ruby has been valued not only by Myanmar but also by the world. Although local people extracted pieces of ruby on a manageable scale for their livelihoods in the past, use of heavy machinery in mining process reduced job opportunities of local miners in the plots.

The National Museum of Natural History in Washington D.C. in the United States of America showcases the largest piece of ruby throughout the world weighing 23.1 carats. The ruby was decorated with platinum on which pieces of diamond are filled. Such a piece of ruby was excavated in Mogok in 1930. Philanthropic businessperson Peter Burke donated the ruby to the museum.

As the ruby land produces quality pieces of precious stones till today, prestige of ruby from Mogok will be long lasting with prestige throughout the world in the future.

Translated by Than Tun Aung
Reference:
Basic Gemmology
(Dr. U Thein)
Gemmological Dictionary
(Kyeethe Nyunt Naing)



Polishing machine.



Crystal lime stones



Panoramic scenery of Mogok town viewing from a hilltop pagoda.

MNL, football tourneys to be played in closed stadiums due to COVID-19

FOOTBALL matches of the Myanmar National League and other tourneys will be played within closed stadiums, according to the executive member meeting of the Myanmar Football Federation held yesterday.

The football matches will be held behind closed doors at the stadiums, without fans, till 30 April due to the global spread of the coronavirus disease.

According to the decision taken at the MFF meeting, foreign players of the Myanmar National League will be allowed to go back home, but they won't be permitted to enter Myanmar again until the COVID-19 threat subsides.

The Myanmar Football Federation is connecting with the FIFA and Asian Football Confederation to officially release detailed facts and fixtures of



Boys bring out the football flag before a Myanmar National League 2020 match. PHOTO: MNL

the Myanmar National Football matches for the World Cup and Asian Cup qualifiers, according to the MFF meeting.

The World Health Organiza-

tion has declared the COVID-19 disease as a pandemic. Though Myanmar has not been affected by the virus, the government of the Republic of the Union of

Myanmar has advised citizens against holding crowded parties or ceremonies until 30 April to prevent the spread of the disease. —Lynn Thit (Tgi) ■

English Premier League suspended until April 4

LONDON — The English Premier League suspended all fixtures until April 4 on Friday after Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta and Chelsea winger Callum Hudson-Odoi tested positive for coronavirus.

"Following a meeting of shareholders today, it was unanimously decided to suspend the Premier League with the intention of returning on 4 April, subject to medical advice and conditions at the time," the Premier League said in a statement.

Everton also announced their entire first-team squad and coaching staff have been told to self-isolate after a player reported symptoms consistent with COVID-19.

Leicester City had three players go into self-isolation on Thursday and Bournemouth said goalkeeper Artur Boruc and four staff members were also self-isolating.

"Above all, we wish Mikel Arteta and Callum Hudson-Odoi speedy recoveries, and everyone else affected by COVID-19," said Premier League Chief Executive Richard Masters.

"In this unprecedented situation, we are working closely with our clubs, Government, The FA and EFL and can reassure everyone the health and welfare of players, staff and supporters are our priority."

The English Football League, which heads up the three divisions below the Premier League, and Women's Super League will also be suspended until April 3.

England's two friendly matches at home to Italy and Denmark later this month have been postponed. —AFP ■

Myanmar U-21 football squad training in Yangon

THE Myanmar National U-21 football team is currently camped at the Youth Training Centre of the Thuwunna Stadium in Yangon, according to the

Myanmar Football Federation. Twenty-five players, led by head coach Velizar Popov, will train at the centre till 20 March, said officials.

The training camp started on 11 March.

The U-21 squad comprises goalkeepers Zin Nyi Nyi Aung, Tun Nanda Oo, and Aung Ko

Latt; defenders Ye Lin Htet, Zwe Htet Min, Zwe Khant Min, Thet Paing Htwe, Soe Moe Kyaw, Kyaw Phyto Wai, Thet Hein Soe, Hein Htet Sithu, Wai Lin Aung, and Ant Maw Oo; midfielders Hein Htet Aung, Zaw Moon Aung, Aung Zeyya Phyto, Myo Min Phyto, Htet Lin Lin, and Min Myat Soe; and strikers Pyae Sone Naing, Win Naing Tun, Thant Zin Myiint, Lwan Moe Oo, Ye Yint Aung, and Khin Kyaw Oo.

Under coach Velizar Popov, the Myanmar youth team is also preparing for the 2021 South East Asian Games and upcoming international tourneys, according to the Myanmar Football Federation.

Team Myanmar won the bronze medal at the men's football competition of the 2019 South East Asian Games. —Lynn Thit (Tgi) ■



The Myanmar U-21 football team train at the Youth Training Centre of the Thuwunna Stadium in Yangon. PHOTO: MFF

Ayeyawady United leading U-21 Myanmar National League

THE Ayeyawady United U-21 team is currently leading the 2020 edition of the U-21 Myanmar National League, with a no-loss record in Week-9 of the tourney.

Of the 8 matches it has played, Ayeyawady has won sev-

en and conceded to one draw to secure 22 points.

Shan United is next with one point less than Ayeyawady, with seven wins and two losses in nine matches played.

Meanwhile, Myawady FC is

in the third place with the same points, but with a goal difference with Shan United.

Yadanarbon FC is in the fourth place with 20 points from six wins, three draws, and one loss. The ISPE team is fifth on

the standing table with 19 points from six wins, one draw, and two losses.

Chin Land FC is in the sixth place with five wins, one draw, and three losses, and Yangon United is in the seventh place

with four wins, three draws, and two losses. There are 90 teams competing in the tourney, and Mawyawadi FC is currently at the bottom with 1 point from no wins and one draw result. —Lynn Thit (Tgi) ■