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Wednesday, 25 March 2020

People are requested not to panic, but to remain calm and follow the advice from the health authorities on COVID-19: State Counsellor

The following is the full text of the televised speech of State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, in her capacity as Chairperson of the National-Level Central Committee on Prevention, Control and Treatment of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), discussing the updated situation of the Coronavirus infection in Myanmar.

Citizens of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar,

I am presenting a report regarding the latest update about the Covid-19 disease for the information of the public.

Yesterday, we found two persons who tested positive for COVID-19. One of them was a man from Chin State who had returned from the United States, and another man was from Yangon who had returned from the UK. Both of them are being given medical treatment and we understand that they are “not in critical condition”.

We could estimate that there would be people with anxieties and fear as soon as news came out that two persons infected with COVID-19 have been found. I would like to make a plea to the public on behalf of our government, ‘don’t get into a panic’ about it, and follow the directives and announcements of the Ministry of Health and Sports and other government agencies regarding COVID-19 calmly and without any nervousness.

The World Health Organization has announced that COVID-19 can be controlled. Out of

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State Counsellor delivers the televised speech on Prevention, Control and Treatment of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). PHOTO: MNA

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Pyidaungsu Hluttaw

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw approves World Bank loan, grant for MoHS

THE second Pyidaungsu Hluttaw convened its 28th day meeting of 15th regular session yesterday, and the MPs discussed international loans and grants for development programmes of the country.

IDA-18 loan programme from World Bank

Deputy Minister for Health and Sports Dr Mya Lay Sein



Deputy Minister Dr Mya Lay Sein



Deputy Minister U Maung Maung Win



MP U Tin Maung Win



MP U Wha Tin. **PHOTOS: MNA**



MP U Aung Thaik



MP U Khin Cho



MP Daw Cho Cho



MP U Than Soe

sought an approval of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw to get US\$100 million loan and \$10 million grants from the International Development Association under the IDA-18 Replenishment of the World Bank for the Essential Health Services Access Project (EHSAP) of the ministry to continue implementing the projects of IDA-17.

She added that loans and

grants will be distributed to the areas which need financial assistance for healthcare programmes.

Deputy Minister for Planning, Finance and Industry U Khin Maung Win explained the role of his ministry in discussion, signing loan contracts, withdrawal of loans and monitoring implementation of projects after

the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw has approved the loan plan.

The Pyidaungsu Hluttaw approved the IDA-18 loan with 551 votes for and 1 against the motion with 1 abstention.

JICA loan for MoEE

The 10 representatives Pyidaungsu Hluttaw MPs discussed the motion to get Yen 7.339 billion

loan from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), which was sent by the President for the Ministry of Electricity and Energy.

IDA loan for MoEE

The 8 MPs then discussed the motion to get US\$350 million loan from the World Bank's IDA, which was sent by the President

for the Ministry of Electricity and Energy.

JICA loan for MoTC

The 8 MPs discussed the motion to get Yen 40.604 billion loan from the JICA, which was sent by the President for the Ministry of Transport and Communications.

EDCF loan for MoTC

The 7 MPs discussed the motion to get \$125 million loan from the Economic Development Cooperation Fund of South Korea, which was sent by the President for the Ministry of Transport and Communications.

The 29th day meeting of second Pyidaungsu Hluttaw will be held on 26 March.—Aung Ye Thwin, Aye Aye Thant.

(Translated by Aung Khin)

Surveillance and investigation of COVID-19

Updates at 8 pm, 24 March 2020

1. The Ministry of Health and Sports is closely monitoring and conducting surveillance on the Covid-19 at international gateways, at the public hospitals, community-based monitoring and private healthcare facilities.
2. In doing so, there are 23 persons under the investigation from 6 pm 23 March to 6 pm 24 March.
3. A total of 25 PUIs are being given medical treatments at the respective hospitals till 8 pm 24 March, and their laboratory results will be published in a real time.
4. A total of 92 persons who completed their prison terms in Thailand were transferred at the Myanmar-Thailand Friendship Bridge (2) in Tachilek Township of eastern Shan State. Among them, 11 persons were tested with high fever and they are being given medical treatments as the PUIs in Tachilek hospital. Their specimen will be sent to the National Health Laboratory in Yangon for laboratory tests. The remaining 81 persons are under the 14-day quarantine at Mogok Vipassana meditation centre in the township.
5. Family members and persons in close contact with the 36-year old confirmed patient in Tiddim Township, Chin State, are now under home quarantine and the locals in Katel village were advised to stay at their homes as much as possible. The doctor from PSI who gave medical treatments to the patient is now under hospital quarantine for laboratory tests.

People who had contacts with the patients since he arrived back to Myanmar are advised to report themselves to the nearest healthcare centres.

- The patient, together with his mother, left Washington on 13 March and arrived at Yangon International Airport by the British Airline via Doha Airport of Qatar on 15 March.
 - He stayed at Yadanarbon Road in Kalay Township from 15 to 17 March. He visited a gold shop on 15 March afternoon, and had pre-wedding photo taken at the Cherry Photo Studio on 16 March.
 - He took the Pyi Chit Thar bus line with 12 passengers from Kalay to Tiddim on 17 March.
 - He stayed overnight at Lwalbwa ward in Tiddim, and proceeded to Katel village by a car of AG Church on 18 March.
 - He began suffering fever on 19 March, and went to a PSI clinic in the village at 8 am.
 - The PSI doctor arranged to quarantine him at the new building of the Tiddim township hospital.
6. The ministry is conducting round-the-clock surveillance on Covid-19 in upward momentum. As the pandemic is spreading in 189 countries, people are suggested to strictly follow health awareness of the Ministry of Health and Sports on prevention of the disease.—MoHS (Translated by Aung Khin)

CBM reaffirms smooth services at banks in Covid-19 crisis

Following is the press release of the Central Bank of Myanmar.

1. It is found that people have withdrawn cash from banks than usual since 24 March.
2. The Central Bank of Myanmar has been supervising the banking services in efforts to operate the services smoothly, and have made plans to ensure that the banking services operate in any situation.
3. The Central Bank of Myanmar ordered all banks in the country on 13 March 2020 to make plans in efforts to continuously operate their services.
4. All banks will continue their daily services including cash withdrawal service during office hours on bank opening days.
5. To make the monetary services for public smooth, the Central Bank of Myanmar has allowed mobile banking services to operate taking in and take out services with much money than usual. Banks have been advised by the Central Bank of Myanmar to make arrangements for providing smooth services to the people to withdraw cash at their branches and Automated Teller Machine-ATM.

Central Bank of Myanmar

Govt's spokesperson denies 'false news' on 33 Covid-19 cases

DIRECTOR-General U Zaw Htay, the spokesperson of the Ministry of the Office of the State Counsellor, yesterday denied the false news on a social network page about 33 Covid-19 cases in Myanmar.

He insisted on his Facebook that there are only two confirmed cases in the country and referred to the official announcement of the Ministry of Health and Sports. The Director-General also requested not to disseminate unreliable information and to identify those who are creating false news. Myanmar has confirmed only two Covid-19 cases, and the patients are being quarantined for medical treatments.—Kay Tar (Translated by Aung Khin)

People are requested not to panic, but to remain calm and follow the advice from the health authorities on COVID-19: State Counsellor

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those infected by this disease the death rate is 4.4 per cent. Therefore, it is clear that it is a curable disease. Those who died from this disease were patients with chronic diseases, poor immune system or late treatment. So we wish

to suggest that those persons who are vulnerable to this disease need to take this matter seriously. What is most important is to get medical treatment early. As soon as a person gets symptoms, he should go to the nearest healthcare center immediately, without procrastination.

Just as in the saying “report early, know early, benefits everyone”, please inform the health centers what you need to tell them. At this time, all those who had contact with the two infected persons should report to the health center at the earliest. This is both for individual safety as well as the safety of the respective community. I heard that some residents in Tiddim Township are fleeing in panic out of grave concern. This type of behavior does not benefit anyone. In reality, if someone is infected with the virus, it will be carried in the body wherever this person goes. Please go to the health center in your village and get tested. Please get the necessary treatment.

Myanmar is welcoming back the influx of Myanmar nationals who were working in Thailand. They are advised to stay at home or a designated place in a responsible manner for home or facility quarantine for 14 days to prevent the spread of the disease. Those who have arrived back home should cooperate with a full sense of responsibility. Those who have arrived back in Myanmar should not go into hiding because of fear and concern. This is important. They should report their health conditions to the health centers by telephone

whether they have COVID-19 symptoms such as fever, cough and fatigue. Only then, could the respective health center provide free medical treatment. Those in 14-days home quarantine must follow the directives of the health departments without fail. By doing so, cases of infection could be detected immediately and early treatment could be given to them. It could also effectively prevent their family members and communities from becoming infected. By providing early treatments we can effectively reduce the death rate.

As soon as the news came out that two person infected with COVID-19 have been found, some people began buying foods, medicines and household items in panic. There is no likelihood that we will run out of stock. If you go into the crowd to buy these commodities, there is more likelihood that you will catch the disease. People are the key to prevent the spread of this virus; the ability of the people to remain calm plays a pivotal role.

I wish to inform that the government has to plans to shut down necessary public services, markets or commodity centres. It is also advised that only one person should go for buying, instead of going in groups and that only the quantity that is really needed should be bought.

Fake news are floating around that enterprises, factories, workshops will be closed; and that entry and exit points to townships and villages will be closed. Please do not get panicked by such news.

I hope you know the “Four wrongful paths”. A wrongful path is a path which is wrong. What pushes onto the wrongful path are: Intention, Hatred, Fear and Ignorance. It is important we should not be pushed onto the wrongful path with regard to the COVID-19 disease that other countries are facing.

Pushed on by Intention: do not participate in unlawful gatherings; hoarding of commodities and medicines and neglecting of healthcare instructions.

Pushed on by Hatred: do not spread false information and rumours which affects the peace and stability of communities.

Fear: Fear must not turn into panic buying and covering up symptoms of infection.

Ignorance: could result in negligence of official announcements and advice to prevent wrong doings.

I wish to request all of you not to follow the above mentioned “Four Wrongful paths”.

Don’t fall into the trap of **intention**. We can face against all the challenges with our hearts in close proximity despite social distancing.

Don’t bear **hatred**. Let us overcome all challenges with loving-kindness for each other.

Don’t get filled with **fear**. Let us meet our challenges by uniting the strength of the people and the strength of the nation.

Don’t be submerged in **ignorance**. Instead, people should study the official announcements; do not get onto false path by listening to rumours. We can overcome the Covid-19 problems with mindfulness, relentless effort and wisdom.

Based on responsibility, accountability and transparency which are the basic fundamentals needs of good governance, our government will release up-to-date information in real-time all information that the people need to know.

People are the key. Thank you.

(Translated by Aung Kin)

Union Minister U Soe Win discusses emergency loan for Covid-19

UNION Minister for Planning, Finance and Industry U Soe Win made a discussion at his office in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday with the Country Director of Asian Development Bank, Mr Newin Sinsiri, about possible emergency loans of ADB to purchase medicines and medical equipment to be used in measures for prevention and treatments of Covid-19

diseases in Myanmar. They also discussed the assistance of & ADB in easy purchasing process of these items.—
MNA

(Translated by Aung Khin)

Union Minister U Soe Win discusses with Mr Newin Sinsiri, Country Director of Asian Development Bank, in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**



Union Minister Dr Win Myat Aye attends the coordination meeting in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

MSWRR to draw project plan for COVID-19 prevention, control at IDP camps

MINISTRY of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement held a coordination meeting yesterday on drafting a project plan for prevention, control and treatment of the Coronavirus infection at the internally displaced persons-IDP camps.

Speaking at the meeting, the project plan is aimed at quickly responding to the possible COVID-19 infection at the IDP camps as the disease can spread rapidly. According to the statistics in January, 2020, there are 128 IDP camps with a total population of 184,333 in 24 townships in Kachin State, Kayin State, Shan State and Rakhine State. “Regarding the project, it is important to disseminate knowledge on prevention and control the Coronavirus infection not only to those living at

the IDP camps but also for those taking administrative duty at the camps,” said Dr Win Myat Aye.

The Union Minister also called on local and foreign volunteers from the humanitarian aid organizations to follow the advice of the health authorities.

He also stressed the need to be ready for providing quarantine services to the suspected patients and to provide health care services by the health workers from the Ministry of Health and Sports. The participants of the meeting also discussed management for receiving and distribution of sanitary things, medicines and medical equipment for preventing and control of the infectious disease at the IDP camps. — MNA

(Translated by Kyaw Zin Tun)



Union Minister Dr Win Myat Aye hands over K100 mln to Union Minister Dr Myint Htwe. PHOTO: MNA

Disaster management committee donates K100 mln for anti-Covid-19 measures

THE National Disaster Management Committee donated K100 million of its fund to the National-level Central Committee for COVID-19 Prevention, Control and Treatment yesterday.

Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Dr Win Myat Aye, the vice-chairman of disaster management committee, presented

the cash donation to Union Minister for Health and Sports Dr Myint Htwe, the secretary (2) of central committee.

Union Minister Dr Win Myat Aye explained the donation of public funds to the original donors who are now facing against the deadly viral disease.—MNA

(Translated by Aung Khin)

Japanese Govt funds upgrading Maungtaw Hospital, Medical services



Amb. Mr Maruyama and U Hla Min pose for photo after signing the project on upgrading Maungtaw Hospital. PHOTO: PHOE HTAUNG

UNDER the Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security Projects (GGP) by the Japanese government, the embassy of Japan signed an agreement yesterday to fund about US\$ 480,000 to upgrading the Maungtaw Hospital and providing medical equipment to it.

The signing ceremony was held at the Japanese embassy in Yangon yesterday, and the grant assistance was signed by Japanese Ambassador Mr Maruyama and Chairman of the Maungtaw People's Hospital Construction Supervising Committee U Hla Min.

The idea of the Project for Upgrading of Maungdaw People's Hospital was generated when Ambassador Mr Maruyama

visited Rakhine State and met with local people and returnees from Bangladesh.

At the meetings, the Japanese ambassador promised the people to provide assistance to upgrade the hospital with new building and to improve the medical services requested by the people.

Speaking at the event, U Hla Min expressed thanks for the project on behalf of the local people.

Thanks to the donation, the hospital would be upgraded from the 50-bed facility to a 100-bed hospital with modern medical equipment.

The project is targeted to complete in a year. — Nyunt Ko Ko,

(Translated by TTN)

ROK embassy hands over Covid-19 protective gear to Myanmar

THE Embassy of Republic of Korea handed over Covid-19 protective gear to Myanmar yesterday morning. Ambassador of ROK Mr Lee Sang-hwa explained the assistance, and presented the protective gear to Director General Dr Zaw Than Tun from the Department of Medical Research. The ambassador acknowledged the bilateral cooperation between the two countries.

He added that active cooperation of global countries could turn out effective measures against the Covid-19 pandemic, and the South Korea will help Myanmar in fighting against the disease. The donation items included one thousand units of anti-contamination and 50,000



Amb. Mr Lee Sang-hwa donates COVID-19 protective equipment to Dr Zaw Than Tun of Medical Research Department. PHOTO: NAY LIN

units of surgical glove from the Korea Foundation for International Healthcare (KOFIH), 10,000 units of surgical suits and 10,000 nurse caps from the KM

Heal Care, and 50,00 test kits of coronavirus disease from a Korean NGO Good Neighbours.— Min Thit (MNA)

(Translated by Aung Khin)

MRTV to broadcast Thingyan talk show programme

A talk show programme titled "Thangyan Yin Khone Than" will be broadcast on MRTV and social media during the Thingyan Festival when its celebrations are halted.

The Ministry of Information, in cooperation with the Myanmar Motion Picture Organization, the Myanmar Music Association, film producers, movie theatre owners, and officials from the Film Development Centre (FDC), organized the programme, which will include artists and experts who created the films about Myanmar Traditional Water Festival.

A talk show on 'Thagyan Moe Film' was recorded in the studio of Myanma Radio and Television (MRTV) in Yangon yesterday. U Zaw Myint from Yee Myint Film Production,

shooting manager Academy Zin Yaw Maung Maung, Actor Academy Nay Aung, and theme song singer U Than Myat Soe, who created the classic film, participated in the yesterday's programme.

They talked about the film

making process including purpose of making the film, preparation for shooting the film, and reason of selecting theme song.

The films depicting the Water Festival will be chosen for the talk shows.— Kyaw Swar (FDC)

(Translated by Kyaw Zin Tun)



Thingyan talk is being shot at the MRTV. PHOTO: MNA

Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Office of the President
Press Release 12/2020
15th Waning of Tabaung, 1381 ME
(23 March 2020)

Additional statistical bulletin on drug seizures, acting on information

- In order to prevent and eradicate the dangers of narcotic drugs and psychotropic drugs, the Office of the President has formed the **Drug Activity Special Complaint Department** on 26 June 2018 to systematically accept and respond to reports on drug abuses and other related cases from the general public.
- With orders from the Office of the President, the Drug Activity Special Complaint Department relayed information on reports on drug-related offences up to 21 March 2020 to the Ministry of Home Affairs to take action, as displayed below:

Sr	Nature of report	Details on seizure and legal action taken
1	Information received of Daw Naing Naing Aye who lives in Ohnbaung Village, Mogaung Township, Kachin State, distributing and selling illegal drugs.	On 17 March 2020, police searched the house of Daw Naing Naing Aye, 42, daughter of U Than Pe, who lives in Ohnbaung Village, Mogaung Township, and arrested her together with heroin. A case has been opened against them with NaMaSa (Pinbaw)MaYa(pa)6/2020 under Section 19(a) and 20(a) of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Law.
2	Information received of Thet Oo who lives in west Bugyi Village, Kanbalu Township, Sagaing Region, distributing and selling illegal drugs.	On 15 March 2020, police searched the house of Thet Oo, 55, son of U Ohn Maung, who lives in Bugyi Village, Kanbalu Township, and arrested him together with low quality opium. A case has been opened against her with NaMaSa (Zegon)MaYa(pa)3/2020 under Section 16(c) of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Law.
3	Information received of Win Hlaing who lives in Ahlaesu Village, Wuntho Township, Sagaing Region, distributing and selling illegal drugs.	On 16 March 2020, police searched the house of Win Hlaing, 48, son of U Chin Thaing, who lives in Ahlaesu Village, Wuntho Township, and arrested him together with heroin. A case has been opened against her with MaMaSa (Wuntho)MaYa(pa)40/2020 under Section 16(c) of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Law.
4	Information received of Ma Lae who lives in Laychunhmaw area, Linphar Village-Tract, Khamti Township, Sagaing Region, distributing and selling illegal drugs.	On 19 March 2020, police searched the house of Tu Nan, 42, son of U Hla Soe, who lives in Laychunhmaw area, Linphar Village-Tract, Khamti Township, and arrested him and Ma Lae, 37, daughter of U Kyin Htaung, and Phoe Hngo, (a) Aung Tun 36, son of U Naw New, together with '88/1' stimulant tablets and heroin. Acting on a tip-off, they bought the drugs from Aung Phyo, 22, son of U Soe Myint, who lives in the same area. A case has been opened against them with NaMaSa (Linphar)MaYa(pa)2/2020 under Section 19(a), 20(a) and 21 of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Law. Police continued search the house of Aung Phyo and arrested him together with heroin. A case has been opened against him with NaMaSa (Linphar)MaYa(pa)3/2020 under Section 16(c) of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Law.

5	Information received of Ma Myo Thandar Tun who lives in 10/South No 13 Ward, Thakayta Township, Yangon Region, distributing and selling illegal drugs.	On 16 March 2020, police searched the house of Myo Thandar Tun, 26, daughter of U Htein Lin, who lives in 10/South No 13 Ward, Thakayta Township, and arrested her together with 'WY' stimulant tablets. A case has been opened against her with NaMaSa (Thakayta)MaYa(pa)18/2020 under Section 19(a) of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Law.
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- Out of the information sent to the Drug Activity Special Complaint Department, so far a total of 1,032 cases have been opened files as of 21 March 2020. A total of 1,586 people, including 1,325 men and 261 women had been arrested with 7,833.2414 g of heroin, 1,347.42 g of ICE, 40,404.33886 g of opium, 665.27 g of low-quality opium, 53,252.76 g of speciosa powder, 12,097.32 g of speciosa, 2.5 liters of liquid speciosa, 514,968 stimulant tablets, 10311.67 g of marijuana, 0.1 liters of opium tincture, 520.28 g of opium blocks, 60 g of poppy seeds, 55.45 g of crushed stimulant tablet powder, 0.001 g of crushed ecstasy powder, 25 firearms, different kinds of 609 cartridges and one grenade. Efforts for fighting the drug trafficking has been stepped up and the department will report on further exposed cases.
- To seize further drugs and to arrest drugs dealers, people are urged to inform the Ministry of Home Affairs, region and state governments and to inform huge cases of drug trafficking and other suspicious cases directly to the **Drug Activity Special Complaint Department** of the Office of the President via following contact numbers:

Contacts:

Landline No. — 067-590200
Fax Phone No. — 067-590233
Email Address — antinarcotics@presidentoffice.gov.mm

Stimulant tablets seized in Kachin State

A combined team including anti-narcotic drug force inspected the motorcycle driven by Min Khant Sithu Kyaw accompanied by Lwin Moe on Mawhan-Nam-machihmaw road, in Mawhan Village, Mohnyin Township on 23 March, and seized 3,600 stimulant tablets from them.

Similarly, a combined team including Myanmar Police Force from Waingmaw Township searched a motorcycle driven by Ai Aung at the 13 kilometre inspection gate in Waingmaw Township, on 23 March and arrested him together with 1,800 stimulant tablets.

On that day morning, a combined team including anti-narcotic drug force searched the house of Thin Thin Nwe who lives in No 2/62, Wheykha Village, Phakant Township and arrested



Suspect Thin Thin Nwe seen together with seized stimulant tablets. **PHOTO: MPF**

her together with 10,200 stimulant tablets. Myanmar Police Force have opened lawsuits against them under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Law, according to Myanmar Police Force. — MNA

(Translated by TTN)

ACC prosecutes Danubyu Township Court's lawyer, clerk for bribery

THE Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) has opened a case against lawyer U Kaung Myat Htet Naing, and clerk Daw Tin Tin Shwe of Danubyu Township Court for getting bribes from his client in the court's Criminal Case No. 259/2018. The victim lodged a complaint against the lawyer and clerk to the Anti-Corruption Commission. The ACC investigated into the case and discovered that on the days of hearing the Criminal Case No. 259/2018, charged under Section 427 of Penal Code, from 1 to 5 April, U Kaung Myat Htet Naing performing his duty as a lawyer asked K 500,000 from his client. The ACC also found that

clerk Daw Tin Tin Shwe asked K 500,000 from the defendant on 4 April after she persuaded the victim to bribe the judge to obtain an acquittal.

Lawyer U Kaung Myat Htet Naing (No. 12199) who lives in Maha Bandula Street in No.8 Ward, Danubyu Town, and clerk Daw Tin Tin Shwe are charged with Section 57 of the same law for extorting money from the defendant. The cases have been opened in Danubyu Police Station, Ayeyawady Region, on 23 March according to the Anti-Corruption Commission. — MNA

(Translated by Kyaw Zin Tun)

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Sale of glazed earthenware mortars up in Pathein

SALE of the mortars, which are made of glazed earthenware, is booming in the No. 1 glazed earthenware industry in Pathein, Ayeyawady Region, according to the Pathein entrepreneurs.

Although the glazed earthenware industry has been manufacturing different kinds of items such as large pots, water pots, flower pots, vases, mortars, earthen pots, and earthen toys, the glazed earthenware mortars are highly demanded among others, said Daw Cho Thae, a glazed earthenware businesswoman.

“The glazed earthenware businesses are almost vanishing because people are using plastic products like plastic baskets, boxes, and containers instead. They are lighter, easy to move, no need to worry for breaking and more water capacity. So, people aren't using glazed earthenware now. There are little or no glazed earthenware craftsperson nowadays. However, people like to use glazed earthenware mortars although some are made of iron



A glazed earthenware workplace is seen in Pathein. PHOTO: MYINT HAN (PATHEIN-IPRD)

and stone in the market” she added.

Mortars made of iron are mostly used by traditional medicines manufacturers. Just a few people like to use stone mortars because it can spark off tiny fragments of stone. The glazed earthenware mortars are being used with the wooden pestles. The price of such mortars is K1,500 for large size, K1,000 for

medium size and K800 for small size. The mortars are selling well because of fair prices.

Although the raw materials of the products such as earth, bamboo, and wood are easily available in the region, the slimy powders to make glazed liquids can be purchased from Shwebo and Kyaukmyaung townships, according to the glazed earthenware businesspersons.

The glazed earthenware mortars and pestles are sold throughout the whole year. There were more than 30 glazed earthenware workplaces in 1990 in Pathein town. Now, there are only six remaining with four experts, according to Pathein glazed earthenware businesspersons. —Myint Han (Pathein-IPRD)

(Translated by Hay Mar)

Tourist arrivals in Myanmar drop by 13% in February 2020 amid Covid-19

TOURIST arrivals in Myanmar have dropped by 13 per cent in February 2020 because of the Covid-19 pandemic, according to the official figures released by the Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population.

Myanmar received a total of 240,211 tourists in February 2020. The number of tourists has declined by 127,522 in February, making a thirteen-percent decrease when compared with the same period last year. The number of tourists visiting Myanmar reached 366,733 in February 2019.

In February, a total of 98,044 tourists arrived in My-

anmar via the international airports, 142 tourists coming to the country via cruise liners while 130,159 tourists entering via the border entry points.

The number of tourists visiting Myanmar from North America, other Americans, West, and Asia have slid in February except East Europe, Africa, and the Middle East.

As the Covid-19 has spread across the globe in February and March, many travellers have cancelled their trips. Some airlines have also suspended operations and some countries have denied visas to foreign travellers who have vis-

ited countries where the virus is present.

Myanmar will start precautionary restrictions for travellers to prevent the spread of Covid-19 starting from 25 March 2020. All incoming Myanmar nationals will be subjected to a 14-day facility quarantine on arrival. All foreign nationals are required to present laboratory evidence of no Covid-19 issued no more than 72 hours before the date of travel as well as before boarding any airline destined to Myanmar. They will be subjected to a 14-day facility quarantine on arrival. All diplomats accredited to Myanmar and United Nations

officials working in Myanmar are also required to present laboratory evidence of absence of Covid-19 infection issued no more than 72 hours before the date of travel as well as before boarding any airline destined to Myanmar. They will be subjected to home quarantine for 14 days on their arrival in Myanmar, stated the announcement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Myanmar accepted 4.6 million tourists in 2015, 2.91 million in 2016, 3.44 million in 2017 and 3.55 million in 2018, 4.4 million in 2019, and 888,604 tourists in first two months of 2020. —Aye Cho (Translated by Hay Mar)

NRC broadcasts Covid-19 awareness programmes in ethnic languages

THE Covid-19 awareness programmes are airing on the National Races Channel of Myanmar Radio and Television (MRTV).

The programmes can be watched in 11 ethnic languages, including Kachin, Kayah, Sakaw Kayin, Poe Kayin (west), Poe Kayin (east), Chin (Laizo), Chin (Chow), Mon, Rakhine,

and Wa.

Daw Thin Thin Swe, the Deputy Director (National Races) of MRTV, said, “Covid-19 programmes are being broadcast in 11 ethnic languages from 6 am to 11 pm on regular airtime of NRC to raise awareness of the pandemic among our ethnic people.”

The MRTV is presenting

Covid-19 news in its national and regional news.

The MRTV is also broadcasting the awareness programmes in 17 ethnic languages, including Kachin, Kayah, Kayan, Gaekho, Gaebur, Chin (Laizo), Chin (Chow), Sakaw Kayin, Poe Kayin (west), Mon, Rakhine, Shan, Wa, Kokang, Pao, and Danu.

Daw Theinlar Soe, the Deputy Director (Broadcast) from the Myanmar Radio, said, “We broadcast how to use a facemask, wash hands, announcements of the Ministry of Health and Sports and updates of Covid-19 in ethnic languages.”—Kay Tar

(Translated by Aung Khin)

Write for us

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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.

Muse trading resumes 75% of rice, sugar exports to China



Workers carrying sacks of rice at the Botahtaung Jetty in Yangon. PHOTO: PHOE KHWAR

By Nyein Nyein

MYANMAR'S exports of rice, broken rice and sugar to China have recovered 75 per cent at Muse border, said Vice-Chair U Min Thein of Muse Rice Depot.

A cross-border trade channel through the Muse checkpoint has come to a near halt in early February in the light of Covid-19 concerns. Now, 75 per cent of trade has resumed, he continued.

"Seventy-five per cent of rice and sugar exports has begun again. Watermelon and muskmelon exports have also

returned to a normal condition", added U Min Thein.

At present, 40-60 trucks loaded with rice and broken rice are seen at Muse per day and then, they are sent to China. Additionally, about 20,000 bags of sugar are regularly exported again, according to Muse Rice Depot.

Meanwhile, China exports raw materials for the CMP garment factories with electric and electronic goods and construction materials coming into Myanmar.

"About 40-50 trucks of CMP raw materials are entering the

Muse crossing from China. Electric and electronic products and construction materials also flow into the checkpoint," U Min Thein said.

In the meantime, thousands of people are daily going in and out of the Muse crossing with border pass. There are four border checkpoints between Myanmar and neighbouring China. They are Muse and Chinshwehaw in Shan State and Kampaite and Lweje land borders in Kachin State. Muse is the major trading point among others in Myanmar.

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

Trade deficit widens, crosses \$1.27 bln as of 13 March

MYANMAR'S trade gap has increased over the past five months since October in the current financial year to more than US\$1.27 billion from \$789.7 million registered in the corresponding period of the 2018-2019FY, according to the data provided by the Ministry of Commerce.

Between 1 October and 13 March in the current fiscal, Myanmar's external trade increased to over \$17.89 billion from \$15.14 billion recorded in the year-ago period.

While exports were estimated at \$8.3 billion, imports were valued at \$9.58 billion. Compared to the previous

fiscal, exports showed an increase of \$1.13 billion, while imports climbed up by \$1.6 billion.

Myanmar exports agricultural goods, animal products, minerals, forest products, and finished industrial goods, while it imports capital products, intermediate goods, CMP raw materials, and consumer commodities.

The country's export sector relies more on the agricultural and manufacturing sectors. While export earnings from the CMP (cut, make, and pack) garment businesses are rising, the country's reliance on natural resources, such as

natural gas and jade, is becoming lesser.

The government is trying to cut the trade deficit by screening luxury import items and boosting exports.

Myanmar's trade deficit was pegged at \$1.14 billion in the 2018-2019 fiscal year, \$1.3 billion in the previous mini-budget period (April-September, 2018), \$3.9 billion in the 2017-2018FY, \$5.3 billion in the 2016-2017FY, and \$5.4 billion in the 2015-2016FY, according to the statistics released by the Central Statistical Organization. —Mon Mon

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

MRF reaffirms sufficient rice stock in domestic market

FALSE rumours on the rice market to panic the public has prompted the Myanmar Rice Federation (MRF) to notify again on 24 March that the federation has an adequate quantity of rice in the domestic market.

The federation asked its members to disseminate correct and genuine news that quality rice can be purchased at fair prices so as to calm down the concerns of the people. All rice dealers and depots should participate in this awareness campaign.

It also urged the rice millers and traders not to clear all the stockpiles they have and requested them to leave the proper quantity as reserve rice.

The federation is prioritizing domestic market stability and self-sufficiency in coordination with the related governmental departments and all the stakeholders engaged in the supply chain, including exporters, traders, depot owners, and millers, according to a press statement of MRF.

The MRF is monitoring the Covid-19 effects in the foreign and domestic markets and working together with stakeholders in the respective regions and states to govern the market. For export, the federation will call on the government to take systematic measures

together with the exporters.

At present, some people are panic-buying the food and consumer goods in preparations for the negative impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, some are worrying over a possible price hike in the domestic market in the wake of the coronavirus, said a market observer.

The government, as well as some associations, also have rice reserve schemes. At the present time, millers and companies are distributing rice at a fair price. This being so, people do not need to raise concerns over that and can contact the MRF, Myanmar Rice and Paddy Traders Association, Myanmar Rice Millers Association, and Bayintnaung, Wadan, Mandalay and Shwebo commodity depots when market problems occur.

During the Covid-19 outbreak, the federation has formed MRF Covid-19 Emergency Response Task Force according to contingency and service continuity plan so as to carry out the necessary matters via the following phones and emails – 012301128-29, 01218266-68 and admin@mrf.com.mm, sg@mrf.com.mm, umyintlwin.mas@gmail.com, htethetseine.mrf@gmail.com. —GNLM

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

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Not panic, but united in facing COVID-19 crisis

WITH the announcement that two Coronavirus infection cases were diagnosed yesterday, the COVID-19 global pandemic has entered Myanmar.

Once the two cases were confirmed by the health authorities around midnight on 23 March, some people rushed to 24-hour shopping malls and began panic buying, though the authorities had previously insisted that there are no prospects for shortages of food in our country.

The Union Government pledged that it has no plan to close public services, markets and trading centres.

Members of the public can possibly become infected with the COVID-19 virus if they throng in crowds to buy merchandise. People are advised to remain calm in the face of the COVID-19 crisis, as the infection is preventable and curable, according to the World Health Organization. Myanmar's people are the key to tackle the challenges brought on by the crisis.

The Union Government pledged that it has no plan to close public services, markets and trading centres. However, the people are advised to avoid hoarding and to send only one family member to the market to purchase goods.

We already anticipated that rumours related to the Coronavirus infection would emerge with the news of the nation's first infections.

Rumours that factories would close and towns would be locked down are spreading throughout the country. Due to these rumours, people are requested not to panic, but to remain calm and follow the advice from the health authorities about COVID-19.

To overcome this crisis, people are also requested to avoid harmful actions, such as panic buying, spreading rumours and neglecting the advice of the authorities.

Meanwhile, the regional administrative authorities and health authorities are enforcing home or facility quarantines for Myanmar migrant workers, especially those returning in crowds and passing through border gates from Thailand.

Those migrant workers who returned home are specially advised not to panic and to cooperate with the authorities in accepting the 14-day quarantine, remembering that their cooperation can ensure preventing the spread of the infection.

All in all, our country's response to the COVID-19 pandemic is in the hands of duty-conscious people and the authorities.

People are the key in preventing and delaying the spread of the virus, so that large numbers of the population are not sick at the same time.

So let's face the crisis together by following the sincere advice of the authorities and demonstrating our centuries-old concern for each member of society.

China-Myanmar Lancang-Mekong Cooperation enjoy Great Prospects

H.E. Mr. Chen Hai,
Chinese Ambassador in Myanmar



H.E. Mr. Chen Hai

Small Coffee Drives a Big Industry

When walking down the streets of Yangon, coffee lovers can always find nice places for having a cup of coffee, such as the Strand Hotel in a century-old building, the Shwe Pu Zun which is popular among Myanmar citizens and the chain coffeehouse Gloria Jean's which you can find almost everywhere. I recently discovered a new coffee shop Original in the Central Boulevard. This coffee shop, run by young Hong Kong entrepreneurs, aims to promote improved and authentic Burmese coffee. From the cultivation, picking, roasting of coffee beans to the making of pour-over coffee, the aroma and taste of a cup of coffee can tell the natural environment of the coffee producing area and the craftsmen's efforts for making quality coffee. At the moment when Arabica beans in northern Myanmar and Robusta beans in Irrawaddy Region touched my taste buds, an idea hit me: Given the chance, I must invite more friends to taste the coffee in Original so that they can also get to understand and fall in love with Burmese coffee.

As far as I know, Myanmar has been growing coffee for a long time, but the industrialization of Myanmar coffee and its emergence in the international market in only a matter of recent years. About 50,000 acres of coffee is cultivated in Myanmar, 80% of which is Arabica. They are mainly produced in Shan State, Chin State and Mandalay Region with an annual output of 1,200-15,000 tons. As Myanmar's coffee industry seeks development, a China-Myanmar project, namely Improvement

of Coffee Production and Coffee Quality in Mekong-Lancang Region under the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation (LMC) framework was launched in Myanmar in 2018. Based on the geographical endowment and development needs of coffee industry in Myanmar, we conducted 12,110 times of coffee picking, pruning and production trainings through cooperation and donated 12 pulpers, 12 small-lot coffee guidebooks and 113,300 coffee seedlings to farmers. The small-lot coffee project has created more opportunities for local socio-economic development and farmers' income increase. In the 2018-2019 fiscal year, Myanmar exported 1,119.4 tons of coffee beans to 31 countries and regions with an export value of nearly 2.65 million US dollars. Thailand, the United States and China ranked among the top three destinations for Myanmar's exported coffee beans. China has already become the fastest growing coffee consuming market in the world. It is believed that China and Myanmar are strengthening the promotion and innovation of high-quality coffee, sharing our experiences, connecting our markets and making use of our advantages, which is sure to help Myanmar's coffee industry achieve better and faster development.

The agricultural cooperation represented by coffee industry is an epitome of the LMC. LMC, initiated and promoted by China, aims at meeting the needs of people's livelihood development through small and medium-sized projects. China has set up a RMB10 billion yuan concessional loan, a US\$10 billion credit line and a US\$ 300 million LMC Special Fund to support cooperation. Over the past four years, the six countries have implemented more than 410 cooperation projects in the areas of connectivity, capacity cooperation, cross-border economy, water resources management, agricultural and rural development, poverty alleviation and cultural tourism. As a key country supported by the LMC Special Fund, Myanmar has received support for 51 projects over the past four years with a total funding of more than 16 million US dollars.

Small Projects with Big Prospects

In November 2014, Chinese Premier Li Keqiang proposed establishing the LMC mechanism while attending the 17th China-ASEAN Leaders' Meeting in Myanmar. In March 2016, leaders of China, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam

attended the 1st Lancang-Mekong Cooperation Leaders' Meeting in Sanya, Hainan Province and started the LMC in an all-round way. At present, the LMC has formed a "3 + 5 + X" framework, with political security, economy and sustainable development and social humanities as three pillars, giving priority to cooperation in promoting mutual connectivity, capacity, cross-border economy, water resources, agriculture and poverty reduction and integrating other fields according to the actual needs of the partner countries.

The agricultural cooperation represented by coffee industry is an epitome of the LMC. LMC, initiated and promoted by China, aims at meeting the needs of people's livelihood development through small and medium-sized projects. China has set up a RMB10 billion yuan concessional loan, a US\$10 billion credit line and a US\$ 300 million LMC Special Fund to support cooperation. Over the past four years, the six countries have implemented more than 410 cooperation projects in the areas of connectivity, capacity cooperation, cross-border economy, water resources management, agricultural and rural development, poverty alleviation and cultural tourism. As a key country supported by the LMC Special Fund, Myanmar has received support for 51 projects over the past four years with a total funding of more than 16 million US dollars.

Cooperation between China and Myanmar under the LMC mechanism is expanding from priority areas such as water resources management, agricultural development and poverty reduction to medical and health,

science, education and culture and capacity building. A number of landmark projects have been successfully implemented. "The Feasibility Study on Myanmar Wan Pong Port Improvement Project" and "Reconstruction and Upgrade Project of the Wan Pong Maritime Regional Division" have played an important role in improving Myanmar's law enforcement capacity and shipping level on the Mekong River. Agricultural projects such as "Breeding Elite Rice Varieties and Optimizing their cultivation in Myanmar", "Rural Development and Vegetable Cultivation Technology transfers in Mekong-Lancang Region", "Improvement of Quality Assurance Systems for Small and Medium sized Traditional Fish Product Processing Establishments in Myanmar", "Establishment of Sericulture Research and Development Center" have provided support for Myanmar's basic agricultural research and development. Cultural exchange projects such as the "Workshop on Heritage Sites Management in Lancang-Mekong Countries", "Lancang-Mekong Cultural Exchange Youth Camp", "Seminar on Innovation and Young Entrepreneurship for Regional Development" have raised the awareness of LMC among all the six countries along the Lancang-Mekong River, which is conducive to the inheritance of the history and culture of the Lancang-Mekong countries and promote the people-to-people bonds among these countries. In the past four years, all sectors in Myanmar are developing stronger sense and awareness of LMC. A cooperation structure with all-round cooperation and broad participation is taking shape, bringing

about new vitality to the development of relevant fields in Myanmar and tangible benefits to the people of Myanmar.

Practice has proved that LMC is rooted in traditional friendship and based on common interests of relevant countries. It conforms to the trend of the times and is welcomed by the people. Such cooperation can be firm and lasting. The three pillars of LMC are highly aligned with the three pillars of the ASEAN Community building, which is conducive to reducing the internal development gap in ASEAN and advancing the ASEAN integration process. Besides, it will help evolve a benign interaction between China and ASEAN, creating better prospects for regional cooperation.

New Age Calls for New Actions

Myanmar is not only where LMC was first initiated, but also the co-builder and contributor of "Lancang-Mekong Efficiency" featuring progress and results being delivered daily and monthly and a Lancang-Mekong culture of

equality, sincerity, mutual assistance and affinity. This year marks the 4th anniversary of LMC, and Myanmar is about to co-chair the LMC with China. I want to congratulate on this achievement.

At present, the international situation is complex and volatile with abnormal changes in the global financial and crude oil markets and the spreading of COVID-19 pneumonia globally. Uncertainties with the international political and economic prospects is presenting new challenges to the Lancang-Mekong countries in developing the region in a steady way. All countries should further enhance cooperation and overcome the difficulties together.

At the beginning of this year, Chinese President Xi Jinping paid a successful historic visit to Myanmar. China and Myanmar are jointly building a China-Myanmar community with a shared future and advancing the building of the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor, "a road of gold and silver" in the new era. China is willing to work with Myanmar to actively implement the consensus reached by the leaders of the two countries, coordinate the response to the pandemic and promote bilateral cooperation, go along with Myanmar to promote bilateral relations and make the LMC mechanism to achieve new progress, bring more benefits to the people in Myanmar and other regional countries build a community with a shared future among the Lancang-Mekong countries.

(The views expressed in this article are those of the author, the Chinese Ambassador to Myanmar)

Coronavirus: an enemy with many allies at home

OSLO (Norway)—Branded an "enemy against humanity" by the World Health Organization (WHO), the new coronavirus has unleashed warmongering rhetoric with world leaders declaring their own wars on the deadly disease.

The virus is predominantly transmitted by respiratory droplets, but also by physical contact with everyday objects, so the frontline is right under our noses.

From the elevator button to the toilet seat, here are a few of our everyday enemies in the time of coronavirus, and a few items that may have been wrongly accused.

Sworn enemies

"Any object or surface that has been touched or contaminated by a cough, a droplet or excretions can be infectious," says Amandine Gamble,

a researcher at the Lloyd-Smith Lab at the University of California.

According to a study published last week in the New England Journal of Medicine which Gamble contributed to, the new coronavirus can still be detected on plastic and stainless steel surfaces after two to three days, and up to 24 hours on cardboard.

The data was however obtained in laboratory conditions, and it is not known whether the quantity of virus that remains is enough to still be contagious.

"You have to mainly be wary of objects and surfaces that are likely to have been in contact with a large number of people, like cafe tables, the metal bars on public transport, door handles, elevator buttons and light switches in public places," she says.

"Since it's not possible to totally avoid touching these objects and surfaces (for example for people who live in apartment buildings, or

going grocery shopping), it's important to wash your hands and avoid touching your face so as not to infect yourself, and to cough into the crook of your arm and sneeze into a tissue to avoid contaminating others."

Brandon Brown, an epidemiologist at the University of California, says the big enemies are "the things we bring outside to inside".

"At the store, we might bring out our wallet after touching surfaces or other objects (that have been infected), then (we) take out cash, a card, our ID, so those can all be exposed," he says.

Possible enemies

COVID-19 may be transmitted through faeces, according to a study published in Nature on March 13 by Chinese researchers.

They detected traces of the virus in rectal swabs from children.

SEE PAGE-10

Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Office of the President
Order 9/2020
1st Waxing of Tagu 1381 ME
24 March 2020
Reassigned to perform original military duties

Deputy Minister for Home Affairs Major-General Aung Thu has been reassigned to perform his original military duties.

Sd/ Win Myint
President
Republic of the Union of Myanmar

Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Union Election Commission
Notification 74/2020
1st Waxing of Tagu, 1381 ME
24 March 2020
Permission to register as a political party

THE 88 Generation Brotherhood Party headquartered at room No. 101, building 10, Shwe Hninsi Street, Phase 1, Shwe Linban low-coast housing complex, Hlithaya Township, Yangon Region, has been permitted to register as a political party in accordance with Section 9 of the Political Parties Registration Law on 24 March 2020.

The registration number of the 88 Generation Brotherhood Party is 127.

(Hla Thein)
Chairman
Union Election Commission

Appointment of Ambassador agreed on

THE Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has agreed to the appointment of Mr. Pengiran Muhammad Husaini Bin Yang Amat Mulia Pengiran Penggawa Laila Bentara Istiadat Diraja Dalam Istana Pengiran Haji Alauddin as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Brunei Darussalam to the Republic of the Union of Myanmar in succession to Mr. Pehin Orang Kaya Seri Pahlawan Colonel (Rtd.) Dato Paduka Haji Abdu'r Rahmani bin Dato Paduka Haji Basir.

Mr. Pengiran Muhammad Husaini Bin Yang Amat Mulia Pengiran Penggawa Laila Bentara Istiadat Diraja Dalam Istana Pengiran Haji Alauddin joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Brunei in 1997 and has served at the Department of Multilateral Economics, the APEC National Secretariat, and Political Department.

From 2006 to 2009, he was posted as First Secretary and then as acting Minister-Counsellor at the Brunei Embassy in Yangon, Myanmar. At present, he is serving as the Director of Political Department-2 at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Brunei Darussalam.

He obtained an LL.B.(Hons)(Law) from the United Kingdom and a Master of International Public Policy (MIPP) from the Johns Hopkins University, the United States.

Mr. Pengiran Muhammad Husaini Bin Yang Amat Mulia Pengiran Penggawa Laila Bentara Istiadat Diraja Dalam Istana Pengiran Haji Alauddin is married and has four children.—MNA

Coronavirus: an enemy with many allies at home

FROM PAGE-9

“If faecal transmission is confirmed, then we’d have to be wary of toilets, which may seem counter-intuitive for a respiratory illness, but that has happened in the past” with the coronavirus at the heart of the SARS epidemic in 2002-2003, says Amandine Gamble.

“The recommendation in such cases would be to disinfect toilet seats often and especially to close the lid before flushing,

to avoid spreading infected droplets,” she says.

It is however still not known if the virus detected in the study is sufficiently intact to be infectious, which can only be confirmed by lab cultures.

Meanwhile, our trusty companion the cell phone may also be a Trojan horse.

“We are using our cell phones all day, whether we are in our home, at work..., in the store buying supplies, so there

is plenty of exposure,” says Brandon Brown.

But Francois Balloux, a professor of computational systems biology at University College London, disagrees.

Disinfect your cell phone? “It wouldn’t do any harm, but unless we share our phone with others, it is not obvious to me how disinfecting them could protect us, or limit the spread of COVID-19.”

False enemies

Our computer keyboards are exposed to our hands all the time, and could therefore be feared to be a breeding ground for the virus. They’re also made of plastic and have lots of little nooks and crevices.

But some researchers think their role in spreading the virus is small, or even non-existent, if the owner is the sole user and he or she washes hands immediately after arriving at home

or at work.

And tap water and cooked foods present absolutely no danger, stresses Brandon Brown.

“Tap water is prepared and cleaned centrally, and harmless when it comes to COVID-19,” he says.

“For food, if uncooked food that you purchase has the virus on it, once cooked, the virus will be killed.”—AFP

Britain urges public to respect coronavirus lockdown



Members of a family listen as Britain’s Prime Minister Boris Johnson makes a televised address to the nation from inside 10 Downing Street in London, with the latest instructions to stay at home to help contain the Covid-19 pandemic, from a house in Liverpool, north west England on 23 March 2020. **PHOTO: AFP**

LONDON (United Kingdom)—Britain’s leaders on Tuesday urged people to respect an unprecedented nationwide lockdown, saying that following advice to stay at home would stop people dying of coronavirus.

“Unless you stay at home, then the people you love most may die,” senior minister Michael Gove said in a round of broadcast interviews.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson late on Monday bowed to pressure to follow other European countries in shutting most shops and services, as the death toll reached 335.

Many streets were deserted on Tuesday morning, although reduced traffic still circulated in London and construction workers were allowed to stay on site.

Pictures on social media showed packed rush-hour trains on the London Underground “Tube” network, but this is partly as a result of a dramatic reduc-

tion in services.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said he spoke with London Mayor Sadiq Khan about running more trains to ensure key workers who must travel have “enough space to be safe”.

But Khan said on Twitter: “we cannot run more services than we currently are,” noting growing numbers of staff were off sick or self-isolating.

‘Penalised and punished’

Johnson’s orders mean people must stay inside except to buy essentials and take daily exercise.

“You must stay at home,” he told the country in a televised address, which broadcast industry analysts said was watched by 27 million people, calling the situation a “national emergency”.

But there were questions about how the new rules will be enforced.

The prime minister’s spokesman said police would use their

discretion in enforcing the lockdown, and focus on dispersing groups.

Fines for non-compliance would initially be set at £30 (\$35, 33 euros) but could rise “significantly,” and those who fail to pay “could be subject to criminal proceedings and a summary conviction”, he added.

But Britain’s police forces were thinly spread even before the outbreak, which has caused further shortages due to officers self-isolating.

Peter Fahy, the former head of police in Manchester, said clarification was needed, particularly on how to enforce a new rule banning gatherings of more than two people.

“Our police officers are already very stretched,” he told BBC television.

“It will require a huge amount of public support, public acceptance and public compliance.”—AFP ■

‘Asterix’ co-creator Albert Uderzo dies at 92

PARIS (France)—Albert Uderzo, the playful French illustrator behind the magic potion-swigging comic book hero Asterix the Gaul whose adventures fighting the Roman legions have enthralled readers of all ages around the world, died overnight aged 92, his family said Tuesday.

“Albert Uderzo died in his sleep at his home in Neuilly, after a heart attack that was not linked to the coronavirus. He had been extremely tired for the past several weeks,” his son-in-law Bernard de Choisy told AFP.

News of his death prompted an emotional outpouring from the generations of fans who have followed the adventures of Asterix and his robust sidekick Obelix in books translated into over 100 languages as well as films, toys and even a theme park.

“A true legend, the little Gaul is now part of the world’s



Albert Uderzo created the plucky Gaul Asterix with fellow Frenchman Rene Goscinny in 1959. **PHOTO: AFP**

literary and artistic heritage, and will long continue to embody the values of tolerance and resistance in his adventures,” said Arnaud Nourry, head of Uderzo’s publishing house Hachette Livre.

Uderzo created Asterix in 1959 with fellow Frenchman and writer Rene Goscinny, bringing them to life in the French-Belgian comics magazine *Pilote*.

With his winged helmet and formidable blond moustache, Asterix and Obelix -- who famously fell into the druid’s strength-giving potion as a baby -- became an irresistible symbol of a France defying outside forces to forge its own path.

The series has extended into 38 books, most recently “Asterix and the Chieftain’s Daughter” from last year, that have sold 380 million copies worldwide and been translated into some 110 languages and dialects, including Latin and Ancient Greek.

Nearly 1.6 million copies of “The Chieftain’s Daughter” were sold last year in France alone, putting it at the top of best-seller lists.—AFP ■

Africa's weak health systems face escalating virus peril

LAGOS (Nigeria) — Equipment shortages, scarce beds and poorly-paid doctors and nurses: Africa is finding that it has few means to protect itself as a feared coronavirus tsunami looms.

Earth's poorest continent has so far confirmed around 1,800 cases and 57 deaths — a tally that is low compared with Europe, the Middle East and Asia, but is now ratcheting up quickly as testing remains patchy.

In Nigeria, the region's most populous country, doctors complain that years of underfunding and neglect have debilitated the health system.

"No country is really prepared for this — even countries with very developed healthcare systems are crying out for help," Yusuf Tanko Sununu, the head of the health committee in Nigeria's lower house of parliament, told AFP.

"In a low-resource country like ours, the healthcare system is already facing serious problems."

While the government has been setting up more isolation wards and insists respirators are on its "shopping list" — it has not said how many machines there are and Sununu insists the capacity is "grossly inadequate".

"We need to move faster — but one major drawback is global travel restrictions mean the ability to get in equipment is seriously limited," he said.

Francis Faduyile, head of doctors' union the Nigerian Medical Association, complained that the majority of health facilities across the country do not even have clean running water.

His organisation has told medics to call off strike actions over unpaid wages after they staged a walkout in the capital Abuja last week — but he insists the government needs to do more to provide protective equipment.

"We don't have proper masks, or at least, we need to assess how many we have," he told AFP.

"We are doing our own back-

ground work and getting ready."

Intensive-care crisis

Figures for critical care facilities in Africa are hard to find and the World Health Organization (WHO) itself said last week it was still trying to assess the continent's capacity in this area.

The global body's Africa director Matshidiso Moeti said that intensive care beds were in "very short supply" and even countries with the most advanced systems like South Africa would struggle.

"They are recognising too that looking at the evolution in terms of the number of cases if the situation explodes in numbers, and large numbers of people have severe disease and are critically ill, this will indeed be a challenge," he said.

In many places the situation is already far more precarious.

A Kenyan health ministry official speaking on condition of anonymity told AFP that across the country of some 50 million there are no more than 100 intensive



Protection: A doctor gets suited up for visiting a quarantine ward at Kenyatta National Hospital in Nairobi. PHOTO: AFP

care units that "are operational at any given time".

In Cameroon, which has recorded over 50 infections, an aid worker said the country "has no capacity to deal with serious cases".

The central African nation — like many others in the region — is already facing armed conflicts that have displaced people into

care units that "are operational at any given time".

Like strife-torn Central African Republic and Somalia, both of which have recorded infections, it boasts less than one doctor for every 10,000 citizens.

"If the epidemic spreads then it is going to be serious," the aid worker said on condition of anonymity. — AFP ■

Spanish soldiers find bodies in retirement homes

MADRID (Spain) — Spanish soldiers deployed to help fight the new coronavirus outbreak have found elderly patients abandoned, and sometimes dead, at retirement homes, as an ice rink inside a Madrid shopping mall was turned into a temporary morgue to cope with a surge in cases.

The army has been charged with helping to disinfect retirement homes in Spain, one of the countries worst hit by the pandemic. Dozens of deaths from COVID-19 have been recorded at facilities across the country.

"We are going to be strict

and inflexible when dealing with the way old people are treated in these residences," Defence Minister Margarita Robles said in an interview with private television channel Telecinco.

"The army, during certain visits, found some old people completely abandoned, sometimes even dead in their beds," she added.

An investigation has been launched, the general prosecutor announced. The coronavirus death toll in Spain surged to 2,182 on Monday after 462 people died within 24 hours, according to health ministry figures. Mean-

while, the ice rink at the Palacio de Hielo, or Ice Palace, shopping centre in Madrid was turned into a temporary morgue to deal with a surge in deaths in the capital, a spokeswoman for Madrid city hall told AFP. Earlier, the city hall said the city's 14 public cemeteries would stop accepting more bodies because staff there did not have adequate protective gear.

The improvised morgue would start to be used "in the coming hours," the regional government of Madrid said.

"This is a temporary and exceptional measure which aims to mitigate the pain of the family members of the victims and the situation hospitals in Madrid are facing."

A nearby congress centre has been converted into a field hospital for coronavirus patients that will have a total of 5,500 beds.

The elderly are especially vulnerable in the global pandemic and officials around the world are increasingly calling for extreme measures to safeguard them.

Retirement homes are "an absolute priority for the government", Health Minister Salvador Illa told a press conference. — AFP ■



The ice rink at the Palacio de Hielo, or Ice Palace, shopping centre in Madrid was made into a morgue to deal with a surge in deaths in the capital. PHOTO: AFP

Combating COVID-19: Complete lockdown in West Bengal till 31 March

KOLKATA (India) — West Bengal has been put under complete lockdown from 5 pm today to 31 March, said Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Tuesday in the wake of COVID-19 pandemic.

"The entire West Bengal has been put under lockdown from 5 pm today till 31 March," said Chief Minister Banerjee at Nabanna during a press conference. She said that a 'Procheshta Scheme' has also been launched under which the people who have lost their income will get Rs 1,000. To get assistance under the scheme, the people need to apply from 15 April to 30 April.

"The government will be giving free ration to the poor for the next six months," she added.

Speaking about crowding outside grocery shops and

banks, Banerjee said that the people should maintain a distance between each other to avoid getting infected with the coronavirus.

She also appealed to the print media to distribute newspapers to the hawkers from their vehicle itself and "not keep the piles of newspapers on the road."

"The newspaper hawkers are also requested to not put up their stalls on the road," she said while adding that even the youths should avoid playing cricket on roads.

According to the data compiled by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), the total number of the infection-related death toll in the country rose to nine on Tuesday, while the total number of active cases has reached 482. — ANI ■

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Markets rally as Fed unveils 'game changer' support measures

LONDON (United Kingdom) — Equity markets and crude prices surged while the dollar sank Tuesday after the Federal Reserve unveiled an unprecedented bond-buying programme to support the US economy.

While much of the planet goes into lockdown, traders gave a massive thumbs up to the US central bank's pledge to essentially print cash in a move not seen since the global financial crisis more than a decade ago.

The Fed, which has already slashed interest rates to record lows, said it will buy unlimited amounts of Treasury debt and take steps to lend directly to small- and medium-sized firms hammered by restrictions across the country.

The plan failed to inspire US traders, with all three main indexes on Wall Street sliding, but equities in Asia rallied with Tokyo ending more than seven per cent higher.

The Nikkei was given extra lift by a Bank of Japan decision to embark on its own massive

bond-buying scheme.

Seoul was up more than eight per cent, Hong Kong, Sydney, Singapore and Taipei all rose more than four per cent, and Wellington lifted more than seven per cent. Shanghai and Mumbai added more than two per cent, Bangkok more than one per cent and Manila 0.7 per cent, though Jakarta fell almost one per cent.

In early trade, London jumped four per cent, Paris soared six per cent and Frankfurt climbed 4.5 per cent.

AxiCorp's Stephen Innes called the Fed's move "the most significant monetary experiment in the history of financial markets". "Asian investors like what they see from an all-in Fed, which is being viewed in a very impressive light for both Main and Wall Street, even as the US congress dithers," he added.

Edward Moya at OANDA said it was "a game changer".

Senate gridlock

But Innes pointed out that

US senators remain gridlocked, with Democrats on Monday again blocking a nearly \$2 trillion rescue package for the economy.

"The US senate should be drawing on the experience of its failure to act fast in the 2008 crisis," he said.

"Instead, it has yet again failed to act responsibly in the 2020 crisis. The proposed economic stimulus package is massive, but the longer the delay, the more colossal it will need to be to appease the markets."

And CMC Markets analyst Michael Hewson said the failure to get the bill through Congress "is sowing concern that US politicians simply don't get it when it comes to the people they claim to represent".

With an expected flood of dollars into financial markets, the greenback suffered a rare sell-off, having surged for the past few weeks.

It lost almost four per cent against the Australian dollar, three per cent against the New Zealand dollar and more than



While most of the planet goes into lockdown, traders gave a massive thumbs up to the US central bank's pledge to essentially print cash. **PHOTO: AFP**

one per cent to the South Korean won, Russian ruble and Turkish lira. It was also lower against its major peers, with the euro up more than one per cent.

The weaker dollar also helped lift crude, which has been hammered to multi-year lows by a crash in demand owing to the global lockdown as well as a price war between producers Saudi Arabia and Russia.

Moya warned that prices would likely fall again as global lockdown efforts hammer demand.

"Oil is only rallying because the Fed's unprecedented measures finally stopped the stronger dollar," he said.

"Crude prices will have wild swings, but no one is expecting the bottom to be already in place." — AFP ■

Toyota, NTT sign capital tie-up over "smart city" project

TOKYO — Toyota Motor Corp. and Nippon Telegraph and Telephone Corp., Japan's auto and telecommunications giants, formed a capital tie-up Tuesday to build energy-efficient "smart cities" where autonomous vehicles transport residents.

The two firms, which have been developing "connected cars" equipped with advanced telecommunication systems since 2017, deepened their partnership into mutual shareholdings, with each investing around 200 billion yen (\$1.8 billion) by purchasing each other's treasury stocks.

Toyota said it will start the smart city project at a 175-acre site at the foot of Mt. Fuji in Susono, Shizuoka Prefecture, after closing its plant there at the end of this year.

Toyota has said only fully autonomous, zero-emission vehicles are allowed to travel on main streets in the envisioned smart city where around 2,000 residents have in-home robotics to assist their daily lives.

NTT also said it will launch an internet-led smart city project at an NTT-related block in Shinagawa area in Tokyo's Mi-



Toyota Motor Corp. President Akio Toyoda (l) and Nippon Telegraph and Telephone Corp. President Jun Sawada shake hands following a press conference in Tokyo on 24 March, 2020. **PHOTO: KYODO NEWS**

nato Ward. Toyota President Akio Toyoda told a press conference Tuesday that the partnership with NTT which maintains the foundation of society with its digital technology was "indispensable if not inevitable."

"Toyota sees cars as not only a means of transport but something that can be more inclusive to cities," he said. Toyota has said its self-driving box-shaped e-Palette electric vehicles can

be used as convenience stores, movie theaters, restaurants or emergency shelters in such smart cities. "We need NTT's advanced technologies as vehicles become (more) connected and are equipped with software that needs to be updated," Toyoda said, expressing hope that launch of the 5G ultrafast networks would encourage car-related technological innovation. — Kyodo News ■

Moody's downgrades ONGC to Baa2 with negative outlook

SINGAPORE — Moody's Investors Service on Tuesday downgraded Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Ltd's (ONGC's) local and foreign currency issuer ratings to Baa2 from Baa1.

The outlook on all ratings remains negative. "Given the increasingly uncertain oil price environment, ONGC's depleted cash reserves and government guidelines that constrains state-owned enterprises' ability to lower dividends, ONGC's BCA and ratings are materially challenged at the previous rating level and its credit profile insufficient to remain above India's Baa2 sovereign rating," said Moody's Senior Vice President Vikas Halan.

The rating outlook is negative in line with the outlook on India's sovereign rating, he said.

"Further, the downgrade reflects our expectation that ONGC's credit metrics will weaken beyond the tolerance level for its ratings, if oil prices remain low for a prolonged period," said Halan.

There has been a significant deterioration in oil prices over the last month which could persist for most of 2020.

However, the company decided to pay an interim dividend of Rs 5 per share on 16 March, resulting in cash outflows of Rs 6,300 crore which has reduced its cash reserves.

ONGC had consolidated cash and cash equivalents of Rs 6,700 crore on 30 September last year.

Moody's said the rapid and widening spread of the coronavirus outbreak, deteriorating global economic outlook, falling oil prices, and asset price declines are creating a severe and extensive credit shock across many sectors, regions and markets.

The combined credit effects of these developments are unprecedented.

The oil and gas sector has been one of the sectors most significantly affected by the shock given its sensitivity to demand and oil prices. — ANI ■

China virus epicentre to open up as world locks down

BEIJING (China) — China announced Tuesday an end to travel curbs at the epicentre of the coronavirus pandemic, as governments around the world tightened lockdowns affecting 1.7 billion people in a desperate effort to slow the spread of the deadly disease.

Hubei, where the novel coronavirus emerged late last year, will allow healthy residents to leave the province from midnight, officials said, two months after they were ordered to stay indoors.

“We are celebrating



This photo taken on 23 March 2020 shows residents cheering as members of a medical assistance team from Chongqing depart after helping with the COVID-19 coronavirus recovery effort in Yunneng county, in Xiaogan city in China's central Hubei province. **PHOTO: AFP**

today,” a female doctor surnamed Wu told AFP.

“Every day, we saw the number of seriously ill patients decreasing, the situation improving, people being discharged from the hospital. The doctors and nurses are becoming more and more relaxed as the days go by. I am super happy!”

The relaxation of rules, which will not apply to the hardest-hit city of Wuhan until April 8, comes as Britain and New Zealand joined nations in Europe, the Middle East, North America

and Asia in declaring countrywide lockdowns in a bid to staunch the flow of new infections.

The extraordinary measures around the world continued to throw up horrifying tales; soldiers in Spain tasked with fighting the outbreak reported finding abandoned elderly people — some dead — at retirement homes. And on the deserted streets of New York, one psychologist who ventured out voiced fears over the long-term mental health of everyone affected.—AFP ■

Pandemic hits all 10 ASEAN members as Laos confirms first 2 cases

BANGKOK — Laos on Tuesday confirmed its first two cases of the new coronavirus, meaning the pandemic has now spread to all 10 members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

Deputy Health Minister Phouthone Meuangpak was quoted by local media as saying the two cases, both in the capital

Vientiane, are a 36-year-old female tour guide and a 28-year-old male hotel staff.

The woman was said to have guided European tourists while the man was likely infected when he attended a workshop in Bangkok. The two are being treated at hospital in Vientiane. In recent days, Laos has seen the return of thousands of Lao migrant

workers from Thailand where authorities have ordered a temporary shutdown of some workplaces, leaving many of them jobless. Many Lao also hastily returned home for the upcoming Lao New Year, scheduled for mid-April, before border checkpoints were closed Monday to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. Thailand,

with which Laos shares a 1,200-kilometer border, reported 106 more infection cases Tuesday, bringing the total to 827. Among Laos' other neighbors, China has 81,171 confirmed cases, Vietnam has at least 123 and Cambodia 87. The landlocked country also borders Myanmar, which reported its first two cases on Monday.—Kyodo News

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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
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Phone No: 2301185

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

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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.

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ICAEW: COVID-19 outbreak cuts South-East Asia's GDP growth forecast to 4.2% in 2020

ECONOMIC growth across the South-East Asia region is expected to slow to 4.2% in 2020, as the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak continues to weigh on tourism, disrupt regional supply chains and dampen household spending. This is according to the latest Economic Update: South-East Asia report from chartered accountancy body ICAEW. However, growth is expected to spring back to 5% in 2021, supported by accommodative macro policies and fiscal stimulus.

The adverse impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on China's economy is set to spill over significantly into the South East Asia (SEA) region through lower tourism flows, household spending and varying degrees of supply chain disruptions. As such, tourism- and export-dependent economies can expect the most impact. Thailand will be the worst hit amongst the SEA economies, while Viet Nam and Singapore will suffer from supply-side disruptions and travel bans. Myanmar's economy is also suffering from decreasing border trade with China.

On the other hand, the impact on Indonesia's growth is likely to be contained as the country is less reliant on tourism.

However, impacts on tourism and supply chains are expected to be short-lived. The US-China Phase One trade deal and a recovery in the global electronics cycle in the second half of



People wearing face masks take part in a motorcade as a public awareness campaign for the prevention of the spread of COVID-19 novel coronavirus in Hanoi Viet Nam on 23 March, 2020. PHOTO: AFP

the year bode well for the region's external outlook, with export and import momentum expected to improve significantly throughout the rest of the year. Loosening of monetary policy within the region and proactive boosts to fiscal spending should also offer additional support to domestic demand and partially ease the impact of the virus outbreak. Overall, GDP growth across the region is forecasted to fall to 4.2% in 2020, down from 4.5% in 2019, the slowest pace of growth since the 2008 global financial crisis.

"While the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak will be larger than that of SARS due to greater movement of people and interdependence of supply chains, we expect that most of the economic impact will be in the first quarter of 2020, and growth will recover in the second half of 2020," said Sian Fenner, ICAEW Economic Advisor & Oxford Economics Lead Asia Economist. "As such, we have downgraded our growth forecast for the region to 4.2% in 2020, although this should be followed by a rebound to 5% growth

in 2021." Accommodative macro policies to cushion economic slowdown from the outbreak against the backdrop of a deteriorating economic outlook, expansionary monetary policies and fiscal stimulus will help soften the impact of the virus outbreak.

Thailand, Malaysia and the Philippines have cut policy rates by 25 basis points each this year, with Indonesia likely to push for a further cut in Q1 2020. In Singapore, the Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS) may shift

to a zero-appreciation bias in its trade-weighted currency band in April. On the fiscal front, Singapore's introduction of a larger-than-expected fiscal relief package (1.2% of GDP) in its Budget 2020 will help its economy cope with the outbreak while Thailand and Malaysia have also recently followed suit.

Mark Billington, ICAEW Regional Director, Greater China and South-East Asia, said, "We remain cautious that if the outbreak is prolonged, longer-term expenditures could be affected,



People walk past a large screen showing the trading numbers on the Indonesia Stock Exchange (IDX) in Jakarta on March 9, 2020. Equity markets collapsed on 9 March as the rapidly spreading coronavirus fans fears for the global economy, while a crash in oil prices added to the panic with energy firms taking a hammering and wiping hundreds of billions off valuations. PHOTO: AFP



Members of Indonesian fire fighter spray disinfectant at the Hotel Indonesia roundabout in Jakarta on 22 March, 2020. PHOTO: AFP



Chinese medical experts on the COVID-19 novel coronavirus are greeted upon their arrival at Phnom Penh International Airport on 23 March, 2020. Chinese medical experts on the COVID-19 novel coronavirus arrived in Cambodia on 23 March to help local authorities deal with the virus. **PHOTO: AFP**



Workers in protective suits spray disinfectant, as a preventive measure against the spread of COVID-19 novel coronavirus, along the alleys of Chatuchak market in Bangkok on 23 March, 2020. **PHOTO: AFP**

slashing growth even further. At the moment, we expect the impact of COVID-19 to be high, but short-lived and cushioned by countries' efforts to boost domestic demand."

According to the report COVID-19 outbreak has caused Singapore to close its borders to visitors coming through China, Iran, northern Italy and South Korea, affecting tourism-related

decline that is only partially offset by weak service imports due to the close, bilateral ties it has with China. Private spending will also grow at a slower pace than initially estimated with dampened consumer and business sentiment.

Looking ahead, Singapore's Budget 2020, one of the largest budgets in history, will cushion its economy from continued negative economic impacts stemming from the COVID-19 outbreak. The government's fiscal relief package (1.2% of GDP) and SGD 6.4bn package to support frontline workers, businesses and households will help to bear wage costs. Fixed investments are also slated to grow at a healthy pace with the line-up of public megaprojects such as Changi Airport Terminal 5 and North-South Corridor in upcoming months.

All in all, against a short-lived but challenging external environment and the impact of the virus outbreak, Singapore's GDP is likely to slow to 1% in 2020.

The Thai economy ended 2019 on a weak note with its GDP growth slowing to 1.6%

year-on-year in Q4 2019, with growth weakening across the board. Coupled with headwinds from the COVID-19 outbreak and delays in government spending, Thailand is expected to be the most impacted amongst SEA economies. Thailand's tourism sector and household spending will be the most affected by the outbreak, especially in Q1 2020. In addition, a more muted but still negative impact on industrial production and goods exports following the disruption to supply chains and lower Chinese import demand will likely persist.

However, the country could expect a solid recovery in economic growth in H2 2020, supported by accommodative macro policies. To date, the Bank of Thailand has reduced its policy rate to a new low of 1% in February to counter inflation alongside other fiscal measures.

The Thai government is likely to announce further support to households and the tourism sector, with an additional stimulus package. Overall, Thailand's GDP growth is expected to slow to 1.9% in 2020, representing a slowdown in growth from 2.4% in 2019. —ICAEW ■■■

OPPO launches new 5G flagship Find X2 series in efforts to reinforce commitment global high-end markets

OPPO, on 6 March, 2020, launched its new flagship Find X2 series, the Find X2, Find X2 Pro and Find X2 Pro Automobili Lamborghini Edition, featuring a range of cutting-edge technologies that demonstrate OPPO's endeavors in flagship 5G smartphones. OPPO also unveiled OPPO 5G CPE Omni, a flagship 5G CPE device set to deliver huge 5G value for carriers and customers in various use cases.

In the meantime, OPPO announced new participants of the "OPPO 5G Landing Project", bringing on board 11 global carriers to accelerate the commercial rollout of 5G worldwide and provide amazing 5G experiences to global users.

Brian Shen, Vice President and President of Global Marketing of OPPO, said: "The launch of OPPO Find X2 series represents OPPO's ability and determination to go high-end. As 2020 marks the worldwide rollout of 5G, we hope to work with global partners to facilitate 5G adoption. Starting from meeting people's needs in their daily lives, we aim to provide a smart life to global users with multiple smart devices serving people's needs across different scenarios."

Flagship Find X2 series delivers premium experiences to fulfil high-end demands

As the latest offering in OPPO's innovative product and technology portfolio, the Find X2 series ships with OPPO's top-

notch 120Hz Ultra Vision Screen that sports 3K QHD+ resolution, 120Hz ultra high refresh rate and 240Hz touch sampling rate, allowing users to enjoy the ultimate display experience with enhanced smoothness.

In addition, the Find X2 Pro is equipped with OPPO's the most powerful and versatile Ultra Vision Camera System, with a combination of 48MP wide-angle lens, 48MP ultra-wide-angle camera, and 13MP periscope telephoto camera, providing a fully upgraded imaging experience. Based on the customized IMX689 sensor, Find X2 Pro also provides the industry's most advanced All Pixel Omni-Directional PDAF technology, which can achieve 100% pixel focusing. Find X2 Pro is also the first mobile phone to support 12bit photo capturing.

Following the previous collaboration between the Find X series and Lamborghini, OPPO launched the Find X2 Pro Automobili Lamborghini Edition, which, for the first time in the industry, adopted thermal absorption glass technology to provide a solid and smooth hand feel.

OPPO also announced the cooperation with British actor Eddie Redmayne as its global brand ambassador. Mr. Redmayne's deep devotion to the performing art and his courage to explore and break boundaries echoes with OPPO's relentless pursuit of the perfect synergy of aesthetic satisfaction and innovative technology. —GNLM ■



Find X2 Pro Automobili Lamborghini Edition. **PHOTO: SUPPLIED**



ed sectors heavily in Q1 2020. Additionally, Singapore's service exports will likely see a sharp

Tokyo Olympics postponed over coronavirus pandemic

TOKYO (Japan) — The 2020 Tokyo Olympics have been postponed to no later than the summer of 2021 because of the coronavirus pandemic sweeping the globe, the International Olympic Committee announced Tuesday.

The Games were scheduled for July 24-August 9, but after telephone discussions between IOC president Thomas Bach and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, a historic joint decision was taken to delay the Olympics — the first time that has been done in peacetime.

Abe said Bach was in “100 percent agreement” when Japan asked the IOC to push back the Games.

In a joint statement, the pair said that based on current World Health Organization information, the Tokyo Games “must be rescheduled to a date beyond 2020 but not later than summer 2021, to safeguard the health of the athletes, everybody involved in the Olympic Games and the international community”.

“The leaders agreed that the Olympic Games in Tokyo could



(L-R) Tokyo governor Yuriko Koike, IOC president Thomas Bach, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and organising committee chief Yoshiro Mori have been under pressure to postpone the Tokyo Olympics.

PHOTO: AFP

stand as a beacon of hope to the world during these troubled times and that the Olympic flame could become the light at the end of the tunnel in which the world finds itself at present.

“Therefore, it was agreed that the Olympic flame will stay

in Japan. It was also agreed that the Games will keep the name Olympic and Paralympic Games Tokyo 2020,” the statement concluded.

The Olympics, which has experienced boycotts, terrorist attacks and protests, but has been

held every four years since 1948, is the highest-profile event affected by the virus that has killed thousands and closed sports competitions worldwide.

Bach said the decision to postpone was “about protecting human life”.

Crowded calendar

Squeezing in the 16-day Games into what will already be a hugely crowded 2021 calendar is another major headache, with arguably the two biggest sports, swimming and athletics, due to hold their world championships that summer.

However, World Athletics has already said it was prepared to shift its world championships, scheduled for August 6-15 next year in Eugene, Oregon, to accommodate a rescheduled Games. “World Athletics welcomes the decision of the IOC and the Japanese Government to postpone the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games to 2021,” track and field’s global governing body said.

“It is what athletes want and we believe this decision will give all athletes, technical officials and volunteers some respite and certainty in these unprecedented and uncertain times.”

British sprinter Dina Asher-Smith, the world 200m champion, posted on Instagram: “#Tokyo2021, Same fire, new dates. Stay at home and stay safe everyone xxx.”—AFP ■

Myanmar National League postpones all matches

THE Myanmar National League announced that all of its football matches will be postponed from 24 March after the Ministry of Health and Sports had confirmed the first coronavirus cases in Myanmar on

late Monday.

According to the statement, a 36-year-old male Myanmar national with an American green card from Tiddim, Chin State, and a 26-year-old male Myanmar national from England,

tested positive for the coronavirus. The postponed dates and plans will be announced soon, according to the Myanmar National League’s social media page. — Kyaw Khin (Translated by Kyaw Zin Tun) ■



PHOTO: MNL



Lewis Hamilton is the reigning Formula One world champion.

PHOTO: AFP

Formula One ‘fully expect’ season to start with revised calendar

PARIS (France) — Formula One chairman Chase Carey on Monday said that he “fully expects” the 2020 season to start this summer with a revised calendar of “15-18 races” despite a raft of postponements due to the coronavirus pandemic.

The Azerbaijan Grand Prix earlier on Monday became the eighth race to be delayed due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

But Carey insisted that the season would go ahead, although admitted that it was still impossible to know exactly what the

schedule will look like.

“We and our partners fully expect the season to start at some point this summer, with a revised calendar of between 15-18 races,” Carey said in a statement.

“It is not possible to provide a more specific calendar now due to the fluidity of the current situation but we expect to gain clearer insights to the situation in each of our host countries, as well as the issues related to travel to these countries, in the coming month.”—AFP ■