

NATIONAL

Message of Senior General Min Aung Hlaing on 75th anniversary Diamond Jubilee of Armed Forces Day

PAGE-4

NATIONAL

Returnees from Thailand can face action unless reporting to authorities under disaster law

PAGE-3

THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

Vol. VI, No. 345, 4th Waxing of Tagu 1381 ME

www.globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

Friday, 27 March 2020

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw approves JICA, IDA, EDCF loans on final day of 15th regular session

PYIDAUNGSU HLUTTAW held its 29th meeting on the final day of 15th regular session, where international loans for the electricity, energy, transport and communications sectors were approved.

Speaker U T Khun Myat informed the Hluttaw has recorded that the Traffic Safety and Vehicle Management Bill has been submitted to the President on 24 March to turn into law as both Pyithu Hluttaw

and Amyotha Hluttaw have approved it.

Approval of JICA loan for MoEE

Deputy Minister for Electricity and Energy U Khin Maung Win explained the proposal to get Yen 7.339 billion loan from Japan International Cooperation Agency, which was sent by the President to the Hluttaw. He elaborated on the project schedule.

Deputy Minister for Plan-

ning, Finance and Industry U Maung Maung Win presented a plan to sign the loan contract with JICA by the end of March 2020 after the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw has approved it.

The JICA loan proposal was approved by the Hluttaw with 511 votes for and 3 against it, with 1 abstention.

Myanmar Geoscience Council Bill

Secretary of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Joint Bill Committee

Dr Myat Nyana Soe presented the Myanmar Geoscience Council bill sent by the President with recommendations.

The bill was approved by the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw with the agreements of Ministry of Education and the joint bill committee. The recommendations of President on the bill will be amended by the Hluttaw and it will be returned to the President.

Deputy Minister for Electricity and Energy U Khin

Maung Win explained the proposal to get US\$350 million loan from the International Development Association of the World Bank, which has been by the President to the Hluttaw. He elaborated on the work plan and benefits of the project.

Deputy Minister U Maung Maung Win explained their plans for financial processes after the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw has approved it.

SEE PAGE-2

MoHS continues daily COVID-19 coord meeting

THE daily central coordination meeting on preparedness and response to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) held meeting No. 41/2020 yesterday.

In his address to the meeting, Union Minister for Health and Sports Dr Myint Htwe said they will upgrade the central command centre from this day to better manage and facilitate engagement with COVID-19. He said they must amend their current strategies for the virus as 3 imported cases have arrived in Myanmar.

He said thousands of Myanmar migrant workers from Thailand returning home in groups is a dangerous scenario as it can help spread COVID-19. He said state/regional medical officials must place containment strategies in place with that fact in mind.



Union Minister Dr Myint Htwe attends the coordination meeting on preparedness and response to Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) held yesterday.

PHOTO: MNA

SEE PAGE-2

INSIDE TODAY

NATIONAL

Thingyan talk-show continues filming

PAGE-4

NATIONAL

MNL football clubs' fans donate cash, hand gels

PAGE-10

LOCAL NEWS

Over 4,000 to buy apartments in Mya Yee Nanda affordable housing complex

PAGE-6



LOCAL BUSINESS

UMFCCI, associates to sell basic foodstuffs at fairer prices in industrial-zone townships

PAGE-7

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw approves JICA, IDA, EDCF loans on final day of 15th regular session

FROM PAGE-1

The IDA-18 loan proposal was approved by the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw with 490 votes for and 1 against, with 2 abstentions. Amendment proposals for Myanmar Medical Council Law

Secretary of the Joint Bill Committee Dr Myat Nyana Soe presented the amendment proposals on Myanmar Medical Council Law.

The Speaker also announced the bill will be processed in line with the rules and regulations of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw.

Approval of JICA loan for MoTC

Union Minister for Transport and Communications U Thant Sin Maung and Deputy Minister for Planning, Finance and Industry U Maung Maung Win explained the proposals for Yen 40.604 billion loan from the Japan International Cooperation Agency.

The Pyidaungsu Hluttaw unanimously approved the proposal with 439 votes.

Industrial Zone bill

Secretary of Joint Bill Committee Dr Myat Nyana Soe presented the controversial Industrial Zone bill, and it was discussed by MP U Soe Thein (a) U Maung Soe from Tanintharyi constituency 10.

The Pyidaungsu Hluttaw approved the bill with the agreements of the Ministry of Planning, Finance and Industry and the Joint Bill Committee.

The Speaker also announced the bill will be processed in line with the rules and regulations of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw.



Pyidaungsu Hluttaw convenes its 29th day meeting of 15th regular session in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. PHOTO: MNA



Deputy Minister U Khin Maung Win. PHOTO: MNA



MP Dr Myat Nyana Soe. PHOTO: MNA



Union Minister U Thant Sin Maung. PHOTO: MNA

EDCF loan for MoTC

Union Minister for Transport and Communications U Thant Sin Maung and Deputy Minister for

Planning, Finance and Industry U Maung Maung Win explained the proposals for US\$125 million loan from the Economic Development Cooperation Fund.

The Pyidaungsu Hluttaw unanimously approved the proposal with 444 votes for and no against, with 1 abstention.

The Pyidaungsu Hluttaw

also took record on the State Visit of Myanmar delegation led by President U Win Myint and the First Lady to India from 26 to 29 February 2020. The Pyidaungsu Hluttaw also took record the Revenue Appellate Tribunal rules sent by the Ministry of the Office of the Union Government, and the rules for election of the High Court Bar Council sent by the Union Supreme Court. The amendment proposals for the rules will be sent to Union-level bodies. In concluding remark, the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker expressed thanks to all the persons concerned with the meetings for 29 days during the 15th regular session.—Aung Ye Thwin, Aye Aye Thant

(Translated by Aung Khin)

MoHS continues daily COVID-19 coord meeting

FROM PAGE-1

The Union Minister said this mass return is a unique phenomenon and the regional office of WHO will be contacted for assistance. He said the people returning should cooperate in quarantining themselves for 14 days and following MoHS guidelines closely to prevent the spread of the virus.

He said following instructions and guidelines for home, facility and hotel quarantines is the most effective method for containing the virus. He said township doctors, health offi-

cial, general administration staff and local elders should help disseminate these crucial facts loud and clear in their communities.

The Union Minister said they have uploaded a set of clear instructions and guidelines regarding COVID-19 to relay to the public with megaphones on their website. He said they will soon begin daily reminders for key actions for suggestions and collaborate with state/regional authorities for distribution of medicines, medical equipment and protective equipment. He said they

will also upload details of public donations on their website and update it daily.

The Union Minister said they have formed a COVID-19 email group with senior ministry officials to quickly and effectively disseminate news and information on the virus and will include state/regional chief ministers and social affairs ministers soon.

He said they will soon begin community-based facility quarantine for Myanmar nationals returning from work in Thailand and the ministry will issue detailed guidelines

regarding the matter and expects local residents and ward/village administration officials to work together to enforce them. A quarantine map will be drawn and local doctors will collaborate with residents and administrators to check up on quarantined persons regularly.

The Union Minister said if additional positive cases develop, the ministry will notify the public of their history of places visited and transportation used so that those who have been in close contact will be aware and proper containment measures can be taken.

The meeting then commenced with discussions on global infection and mortality rates, state/regional processes, the status of the 3 COVID-19 positive patients, preparations for community-based facility quarantine, findings from a field inspection at Myawady border checkpoint by a team led by the director-general of the Union Minister's office, plans to collaborate with Ethnic Health Organizations, and inviting newly-graduated health officials, midwives and volunteers for assistance.—MNA

(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)

“People are the key”

Returnees from Thailand can face action unless reporting to authorities under disaster law

UNION Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Dr Win Myat Aye called on officials of the ministry's departments in regions and states for cooperating with regional authorities in fighting the COVID-19 in their regions respectively.

He urged the officials at the video conferencing meeting yesterday to work together with regional authorities to provide the community-based facility quarantine to Myanmar migrant workers returned from Thailand.

In his address, the Union Minister urged his ministry's employees to explain the returnees about the benefits of the quarantine and about the duty of a good citizen to follow the directives of the health authorities.

He said those who failed to follow the directives of the authorities can face action under the Section-2 (b) of the Natural Disaster Management Law as the Covid-19 pandemic is also a natural disaster.

The governmental employ-



Union Minister Dr Win Myat Aye holds the video conferencing with officials of the ministry in regions and states over prevention of the spread of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) yesterday. **PHOTO:MNA**

ees are obliged to articulate the Natural Disaster Law to the people to ensure that people do not break the law.

At the video conferencing,

Deputy Minister U Soe Aung also urged the officials to cooperate with the officials of General Administrative Department in fighting the infectious dis-

ease. The officials from the regions and states also discussed the tasks with the Union Minister.—MNA

(Translated by TTN)

Voice of Myanmar nationals returning from Thailand

THE Kayin State government has arranged free transportation for Myanmar nationals returning from Thailand via Friendship Bridge 2 in Myawaddy to their hometowns. Hpa-an District Administrator U San Maung and officials assisted the return trip at Hpa-an Highway Terminal on 25 March.

Ko Kyaw Khine is returning from Bangkok to Shwebo in Mandalay Region. He said he has received assistance throughout his return trip. He said the Thai government performed health screening,

helped with the passport and the Kayin government, police officers and officials welcomed him at the bridge. He says everyone feels happy that the Union Government and Kayin State government have made preparations for them to return home.

Ma Ei Ei Phyu from Lewe, Nay Pyi Taw, was working in a prawn factory in Mahachai before returning. She said the return trip has been smooth and she had her health screened and provided her contact details. She said if Thailand was locked down

while she was still there, she would be devastated and people are more important than money. She said she will closely follow ministry guidelines and stay with her family.

Ko Ye Min Tun is returning to Magway from Banmauk, Thailand. He said they had to rush as they heard friendship bridge 2 would be closing down. He said they were provided free meals and free SIM cards to contact their families. He said he is delighted and grateful for the authorities arranging free travel back

to Magway as it would normally cost about K40,000 to K50,000 to do so.

Maung Aung Ko Ko is returning to Pyay and said he is prepared to self quarantine for 14 days but is happy to be able to see his family.

Daw Kyi Kyi San from Pyimakan Sanpya Village, Thonekwa Township, Yangon Region, said both the Thai and Myanmar authorities have been immensely helpful in the return trip. She wished for all Myanmar nationals to return home as she is worried they would be in trouble if the virus spreads in Thailand. She is also prepared to self-quarantine for 14 days and to immediately seek medical assistance if symptoms arise.

Myanmar-Thai Friendship Bridge 2 was originally used solely for commerce, but is currently handling entry/exit of persons while Bridge 1 is suspended. As of 25 March, over 23,567 Myanmar nationals have returned through the bridge. —Saw Myo Min Thein (IPRD)

(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)



Myanmar migrant workers make registration as they return from Thailand. **PHOTO:SAW MYO MIN THEIN (IPRD)**

Trade Department to launch online services as of 1 April

THE Department of Trade under the Ministry of Commerce will provide online services for export and import licences as of 1 April, aiming to reduce person-to-person contacts in preventing the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (Covid-19).

Under the new service, the process of licence applications, fee payment and receiving licences can be done online.

The online services will cover CMP businesses (garment), imports of medicines and related items, hospital equipment, foodstuffs, fertilizers, palm oil and oil products, milk and dairy products, electronic gadgets, items for fuel, lubricants, motorbikes and bicycles. Online export licences will be issued for agricultural products, lead, sugar, natural gas and other products.

The details of HS Codes will be posted on the ministry's website www.commerce.gov.mm.

Licence applications can be processed on www.myanmartradenet.com.mm, for the maritime and border trades.

The companies need to apply for member registrations, and application fee can be paid with the MCB eCommerce Pay of the Myanmar Citizens Bank at present, and the MPU eCommerce pay will be available soon.

For custom clearance processes, the electronic data must be sent to the Myanmar Automated Cargo Clearance System (MACCS) of Customs Department.

The merchants will have to apply for Myanmar Tradenet Member, installing Google Authenticator on mobile phones for security and synchronizing the Google Authenticator with Myanmar Tradenet Account and MCB account.

More details about licence application processes are available at landlines 067408221 for Nay Pyi Taw and 01371219 for Yangon during office hours.—MNA

(Translated by Aung Khin)

Message of Greetings from Commander in Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing on the occasion of the 75th Anniversary Diamond Jubilee of Armed Forces Day on 27 March 2020

Citizens of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, ethnic national brothers and sisters, born of this Union,

The 27 March 2020 is the 75th Diamond Jubilee Anniversary of Armed Forces Day. Our Republic of the Union of Myanmar has achieved the 72nd anniversary of independence and sovereignty on 4 January 2020. The history of the Tatmadaw has traversed in parallel with the struggle for independence. The right to hold in our hands Independence and sovereignty is also the priceless right of ownership of the Myanmar people.

The history of the Myanmar people is long. The ugliest and darkest period in Myanmar history was the time when the country was under colonial rule, when we were ruled by foreign aggressors, in other words when we were ruled as slaves.

The main causes for losing the country's independence were the lack of unity and a powerful modern armed force. Due to this lesson given by history, the young thirty patriotic comrades led by Bogyoke Aung San acquired modern military skills with much sacrifice, daring and strenuous efforts. They began to stage an anti-fascist revolution together with the people on 27 March 1945, till independence was achieved. This day was initially designated as the "Resistance Day", and beginning from 1995 it was renamed "Armed Forces Day" with deep meaning, and on 27 March 2020, we have reached the 75th Diamond Jubilee Anniversary. During this Diamond Jubilee period which was not traversed with ease and comfort, the Tatmadaw completed this long arduous and hazardous journey through the sacrifice of life, body, blood and sweat. All these sacrifices were made by all those who sacrificed with only one objective for the State and the People: Independence and perpetuation of Sovereignty, Non-disintegration of the



Senior General Min Aung Hlaing.

Union, and Non-disintegration of national unity. The Four Solemn Vows of the Tatmadaw members who have made the above sacrifice are as follows:

- (1) We pledge loyalty to the State and the people
- (2) We pledge loyalty to the fallen soldiers
- (3) We will dutifully perform the tasks and orders given by the superiors
- (4) We pledge to sacrifice our lives for our State, our people and our Tatmadaw.

If we look at the different periods the past, present and

future, the Tatmadaw has firmly stood with loyalty for the State and the People, throughout the past 75 year period for independence and to maintain the independence thus achieved using our bare chests as bunkers. At present, the Tatmadaw is performing defence duties and other historic duties, focusing on strengthening the path of multiparty democracy which is the aspiration of the people, and the interests of nation and its people, regardless of any challenges, for political stability, security stability and lasting peace which are key necessities for the country with diligence and ardent spirit. In the future also, the Tatmadaw is developing itself into a capable, modern, patriotic and powerful organization to keep abreast with regional and world military powers. The Tatmadaw must not disintegrate for the sake of the nation. Those who want to destroy the Tatmadaw tried to do so in the past, present and future. In these circumstances, the Tatmadaw must have alertness, wisdom, always training, always having military awareness and always battle ready.

The Tatmadaw is a genuine Union Tatmadaw as it is formed with offspring of our national people. The Tatmadaw is a component of the State and the People.

We and our new generations need to safeguard significant historic traditions of the Tatmadaw in the same way as our lives. With solemn vows standing in frontlines not to lose any inch of our national territories, I send this message of greetings on 75th Diamond Jubilee Anniversary of Armed Forces Day. Myanmar must exist till the end of the world.

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing
Commander in Chief of Defence Services
27 March 2020

(Translated by Aung Khin)

Thingyan talk-show continues filming

FILMING for 'Thingyan Yin Khone Than' talk-show continued on 25 March with a discussion on the classic film 'Maung Doe Cherry Myay' at MRTV studio in Yangon.

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 Organiza-

tion, 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.

Academy Daw Swe Zin Htaik will lead the discussion of 'Maung Doe Cherry Myay' and onboard are Academy Aung Lwin, actress Daw Mary Myint and Daw Htar, who sang the

song for the film, in the round-table discussion. 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 talk-show programme covering Thingyan movies such as 'Maung Doe Cherry Myay (Second part)', 'Hmone Shwe Yi' and 'Padauk Ka De Gita' will be broadcast during the Thingyan water festival— Kyaw Swar (FDC)

(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)



'Thingyan Yin Khone Than' talk-show is being shot at the MRTV, Yangon. PHOTO: MNA

Public contributions to the fund of National-Level Central Committee on Prevention, Control and Treatment of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (Covid-19)

THE government is increasing its momentum for measures against the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (Covid-19) pandemic. For the successful implementation of these measures, the following companies, organizations and individuals have contributed cash donations until 3:30 pm on 26 March 2020.

Donors	Amount (million kyats)
1. Health network of National League for Democracy	50.00
2. AA Medical	10.00
3. AMTT	2.00
4. DKSH Co Ltd	20.00
5. FAME Pharmaceutical Industry Co Ltd	20.00
6. Myanmar Pharmaceutical & Medical Equipment Entrepreneurs' Association	10.00
7. Zifam Pyrex Myanmar Co Ltd, Pinnacle House Co Ltd	5.00
8. KTZ Co Ltd	5.00
9. Fair Deal Co Ltd	5.00
10. United Pharma Co. Ltd	5.00
11. U Aye Myint (Roasis Co Ltd)	5.00
12. Royal Ruby Co Ltd	3.00
13. Lifeline Co Ltd	3.00
14. TTO Pharm Co Ltd	3.00
15. Zar & Zar Co Ltd	3.00
16. Myanmar Maternal and Child Welfare Association	10.00
17. U Tin Oo and Dr Htwe Thandar Yi (IEM Co Ltd)	10.00
18. U Win Lwin and Daw Myat Myat Maw (Myat Miba Co Ltd)	50.00
19. Myanmar Women Affairs Federation	20.00
20. Individual donors	46.3263
Total	295.3263

Further donations of cash and hospital items / equipment will be published.

National-Level Central Committee on Prevention, Control and Treatment of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (Covid-19)

Bean market in Mandalay going strong amid global pandemic



Beans merchants evaluate the quality of beans at Mandalay depots.
PHOTO: MIN HTET AUNG (MAN SUB-PRINTING HOUSE)

The spread of COVID-19 across the globe has caused Myanmar's crop sales to come to an almost

complete standstill but Chinese demand has kept the trade of lima beans, mung beans, rice

beans and peanuts thriving in Mandalay, according to local merchants.

The Mandalay wholesale centre is complying with health guidelines issued by the Ministry of Health and Sports and is keeping the centre open from 9 to 11 am. Continued demand from China has kept the market alive for farmers and merchants, said U Soe Win of Soe Win Myint Sales Centre.

Mandalay is the central trading hub for Myanmar's lentils and COVID-19 has lowered prices, said U Soe Win.

However, trade hasn't stopped and farmers and merchants are happy with that fact. He said the Indian market is not purchasing their usual black grams and pigeon peas and are monitoring the market. He hopes the market will continue to operate while adhering to ministry-issued health guidelines.

U Kyi Soe from Ngazun Township, Mandalay Region, said he has loan payments to make to Moe Bank for March but the wholesale centres were closed. He said they need to be open for farmers like him to have an income. He said the onion season is approaching soon but market prices are less than charming as he hears a viss will sell for only K700 and may even drop lower.

Currently, Chinese merchants are purchasing lima beans from Myanmar at K47,000 per three tins, rice beans for K50,000 per three tins, mung beans for K108,000 per three tins, and peanuts for K3,300 per viss.—Min Htet Aung (Man Sub-printing House)

(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)

Latha Township sprays disinfectants to fight coronavirus

THE 19th Street and 20th Street in Latha Township implemented a collective disinfectant measure on 25 March to fight against the coronavirus.

Officials from Latha Township Development Committee, civil society organizations, and wards leaders sprayed disinfectants in the township.

They will also set up hand washing basins, provided hand gels, and distributed masks.

As Latha is one of the busy townships in Yangon, the spraying of disinfectants will continue in other parts of the township.—MNA



Healthcare workers spray disinfectant in Latha Township.
PHOTO: KO KO ZAW (MNA)

(Translated by Kyaw Zin Tun)

MPT MNL (U-21) 2020: Ayeyawady United leads standing table

AYEYAWADY United is leading the standing table of MPT Myanmar National League (U-21) 2020 so far, according to the league's social media.

Out of the nine matches of Week-11, nine matches were played and two matches were postponed due to the Covid-19.

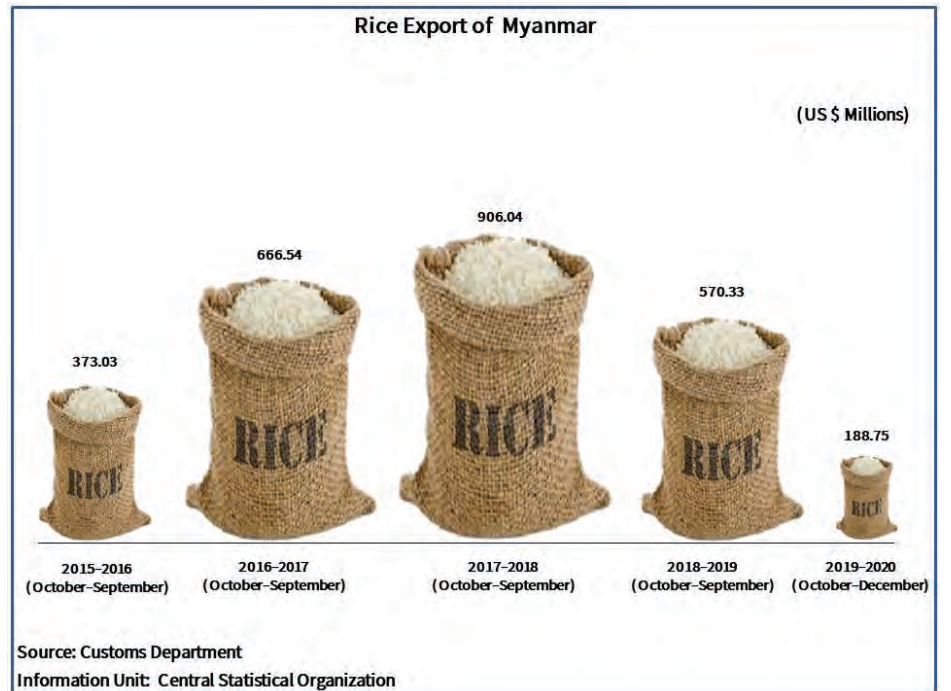
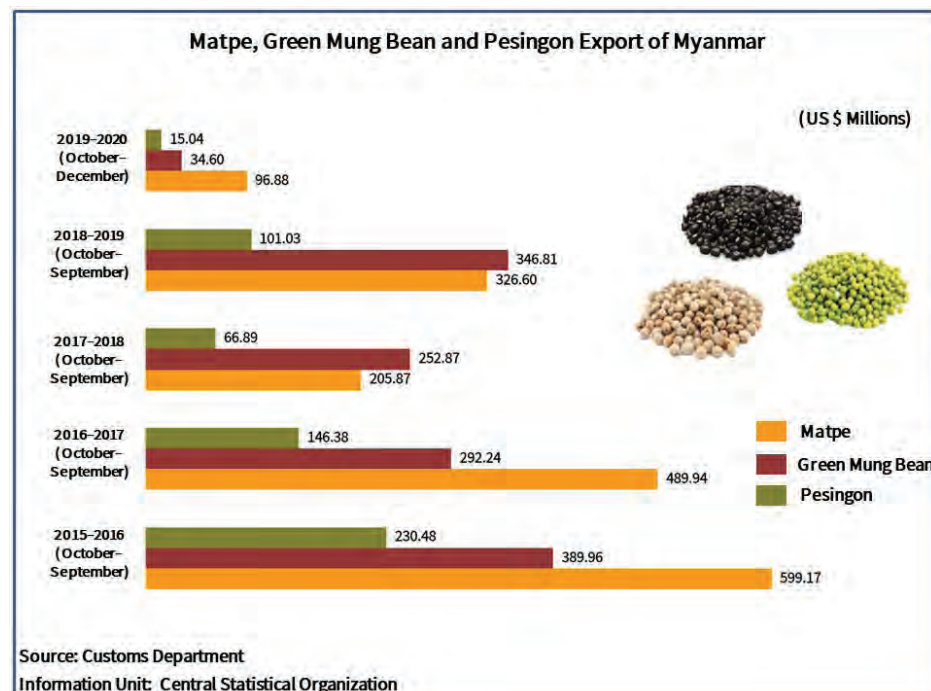
The top team Ayeyawady United earned 28 points from nine wins and one draw, followed by Yadanarbon FC is in the second place with 26 points,

and ISPE FC in the third place with 25 points.

Shan United is in the fourth place with 24 points, followed by Myawady with 21 points, Chinland FC with 19 points, and Yangon United with 18 points.

The two matches that was postponed from Week-11 are the match between University and Zwegapin United, and the match between Kachin United and Yaw Myay FC. —Kyaw Khin

Trade Mark Ads Call Thin Thin May, 09251022355, 09974424848



THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

www.globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

ACTING CHIEF EDITORAye Min Soe
dce@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com**SENIOR EDITORIAL CONSULTANT**

Kyaw Myaing

SENIOR EDITOR

Aungthu Ya

SENIOR TRANSLATORSZaw Htet Oo
Aung Khin**INTERNATIONAL NEWS EDITOR**Ye Htut Tin,
Aung Htein,
editor1@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com**LOCAL NEWS EDITORS**Tun Tun Naing (Editor),
intlnews@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com**TRANSLATORS**Hay Mar Tin Win,
Ei Myat Mon,
Kyaw Zin Lin,
Kyaw Zin Tun**REPORTER**Nyein Nyein Ei,
reporter1@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com**PHOTOGRAPHER**Kyaw Zeya Win @ Phoe Khwar
Kyaw Zeya**COMPUTER TEAM**Thein Ngwe, Zaw Zaw Aung,
Hnin Pwint, Kay Khaing Win,
Sanda Hnin, Thein Htwe,
Nyi Lin Thu**EDITORIAL SECTION**(+95) (01)8604529,
Fax – (+95) (01) 8604305**CIRCULATION & DISTRIBUTION**San Lwin, (+95) (01) 8604532,
Hotline - 09 974424114**ADVERTISING & MARKETING**(+95) (01) 8604530,
Hotline - 09 974424848
marketing@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com
subscription@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

Printed and published at the Global New Light of Myanmar Printing Factory at No.150, Nga Htat Kyee Pagoda Road, Bahan Township, Yangon, by the Global New Light of Myanmar Daily under Printing Permit No. 00510 and Publishing Permit No. 00629.

gnlmdaily@gmail.com
www.globalnewlightofmyanmar.com
www.facebook.com/TheGNLMTHE GLOBAL
NEW LIGHT OF
MYANMAR

www.globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

Write for us

We appreciate your feedback and contributions. If you have any comments or would like to submit editorials, analyses or reports please email ce@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com with your name and title.

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

Over 4,000 to buy apartments in Mya Yee Nanda affordable housing complex

MORE than 4,000 people have applied for buying flats in the Mya Yee Nanda affordable housing complex, which will be sold by Mandalay City Development Committee (MCDC), an MCDC news release stated.

MCDC is selling the apartments of Mya Yee Nanda affordable housing complex to retired government servants, civil service personnel, private companies' staff, and the general public. Among them, the general public has mostly applied for buying those housing complexes.

Previously, those who won the lucky draw to buy the units had to pay a deposit of K500,000. Now, the lucky draw winners have to pay a deposit of K2 million.

More than 6,000 people have procured the application forms to buy affordable housing units. Among them, over 4,000 people have submitted their application forms.

Now, MCDC has received more than 4,000 application forms and will conduct the lucky draw on 10 March.

MCDC will sell over 500 flats this time. Those who have won



About 2,000 affordable apartments to sell in Mandalay Region.

PHOTO: MIN HTET AUNG (MANDALAY SUB-PRINTING HOUSE)

the lucky draw must follow the rules and regulations adopted by MCDC. They are allowed to pay in the prescribed amount through an installment plan with the banks.

A ground floor apartment is being sold for over K28 million, a first floor one for over K25.7 million, a second floor one for over K23.1 million, a third floor one for over K21.1 million, a fourth-

floor one for over K19.5 million, and a fifth-floor one for over K18 million. These prices will include three-per-cent commercial tax. —Aye Cho

(Translated by Hay Mar)

MRPTA ensures regular supply to maintain rice price in markets

MYANMAR Rice & Paddy Traders Association (MRPTA) has made arrangements to ensure the arrival of 100,000 rice bags per day at the markets because people are buying many more rice bags than usual panicked by Covid-19, the MRPTA informed on 25 March.

Also, MRPTA has announced that people can complain of those who are selling the rice at a much higher price. MRPTA has found people wor-

ried about the Covid-19 pandemic starting to outbreak and spread across the country.

As a consequence, the groceries are highly demanded because people are panic buying and stockpiling staple food such as rice, oil, and salt, etc. Some self-interest seekers are taking advantage of this situation and selling the foodstuffs at much higher prices. We have also received some complaints from the consumers that the rice retailers

and wholesalers are selling rice at an exorbitant price.

MRPTA has already urged their association's members, the rice traders in Yangon and the rice traders from other regions not to sell the rice at a higher price.

Although MRPTA is selling the rice in Wahdon/ Bayintnaung wholesale markets, which are crowded places, MRPTA has also opened the shops to sell the rice daily except (Saturdays, Sundays

and the public holidays). And the shops are briefed on health awareness like cleansing to keep a healthy environment.

Around 50,000 rice bags are entering daily from Ayeyarwady, Bago and Yangon regions and also from other townships. Moreover, MRPTA is making arrangements to ensure the arrival of around 70,000-100,000 rice bags per day in such a time of high demand. —Aye Maung

(Translated by Hay Mar)

Bridges construction completes more than half in Sagaing Region

CONSTRUCTION of the under-180-foot bridges was completed 63 per cent in 2019-2020 fiscal year (FY). The bridges were built for the development of the road and bridge sector in the Sagaing region, said Deputy Director Daw Moe Moe Myint of the Road Department.

"The road department has targeted to build 183 under-180-foot bridges in this FY. The

road department is constructing 121 bridges while four special task teams are constructing 62 bridges. At present, more than 50 per cent of the construction of the bridges has been completed. The related department is inspecting the project areas to complete the project in time and to be able to ensure good quality ones in cooperation with the Hluttaw representatives,"

she stressed.

In this FY, 183 under-180-foot bridges are expected to build in the Sagaing region. A total of 107 bridges have been completed in the third week of March. The remaining 76 bridges are being constructed 63 per cent of which has been completed so far.—Win Oo (Zayyardine)

(Translated by Hay Mar)

Trade Mark Ads

Call
Thin Thin May,09251022355,
09974424848

UMFCCI, associates to sell basic foodstuffs at fairer prices in industrial-zone townships

By Nyein Nyein

THE Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (UMFCCI) and its affiliated organizations have considered selling basic food commodities at the much fairer price in the townships where industrial zones are located, said UMFCCI Vice-Chair Dr Maung Maung Lay.

“They want to sell basic foodstuffs directly to consumers. This move aims to avoid the unnecessary price hike as there is an abundant supply in their hands. The federation and its associates just want to make smooth commodity flow,”

he highlighted.

UMFCCI has cooperated with its affiliated organizations such as Myanmar Rice Federation (MRF), Myanmar Rice & Paddy Traders Association (MRPTA), Myanmar Edible Oil Dealers' Association (MEODA), and Hlinethaya Industrial Zone Management Committee and sold the basic food commodities at a more reasonable price for the local people in Hlinethaya Township on 26 March.

Besides, this plan will proceed to other industrial townships in the coming days, in coordinating with other related organizations.

This effort is to ensure the adequate supply of basic foodstuffs in the local market and control the price increase amid Covid-19 negative impacts.

They will make sure not to harm the local vendors, corner stores, retail and wholesale businesses.

At present, the majority of the hard labours and low-income groups are dwelling in Hlinethaya, Shwepyitha and Shwelipan townships. The federations and associates will offer the basic commodities at a much fairer price, said MRF Chairman U Ye Min Aung.

The rice and other commod-

ities will be sold to the factory workers and locals in the townships as much as they demand, he stressed.

In the meantime, some unscrupulous traders are exploiting the market upon the false news amongst the people and selling foodstuffs with the upcharge, UMFCCI Vice-Chair Dr Maung Maung Lay also added.

“Some people began to panic due to false news and they are hoarding in grocery stores. Similar cases are now happening across the world. Some are out of stocks even in the US. The panic-buying is still visible in some places. It's just a usual

phenomenon and such shoppers will slowly cool down,” he said.

Besides, MRF has already notified the public not to believe misinformation and disinformation and reaffirmed them the other day not to worry about any possible shortage of rice as they have an adequate supply of rice in the domestic market.

State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi has reported to the public on MRTV on 24 March that the Government has no plans to shutter the necessary public services, markets, sales and purchases centres, ensuring food security.

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

SEZs rake in \$84.26 mln investments in 2019-2020FY

FOREIGN investments of US\$84.267 million have flowed into the Special Economic Zones (SEZs), under the Special Economic Zone Law, as of 6 March in the 2019-2020 financial year, according to the figures released by the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration (DICA). Since its establishment, a total of 114 enterprises from 18 countries and four local businesses have ploughed in \$1.929 billion as of end-February, 2019 in the zones, the investment source indicated.

While the manufacturing sector has absorbed the largest share of foreign investments, FDI has also flowed into the trading, other services, transportation and logistics, real estate, and hotel sectors.

Japan has topped the list of foreign investors so far, accounting for 34.69 per cent of the overall investment, followed by Singapore and Thailand. FDI has also flowed into the SEZs from the Republic of Korea, Hong Kong, the UK, Australia, the UAE, Malaysia, Austria, China (Taipei), Panama, China, Brunei, Viet Nam, France, Switzerland, and the Netherlands.

Myanmar is currently implementing three Special Economic Zones — Thilawa, Kyaukpadaung, and Dawei. Out of the three, Thilawa is leading to better infrastructure and successful businesses.

At present, more than 80 businesses are operating in the Thilawa SEZ. The SEZ has employed more than 12,000 permanent workers, including permanent and construction workers, according to the management committee.

An annual report of the Myanmar Thilawa SEZ Holdings Public Limited for 2017-2018 stated that 97 per cent of Thilawa Zone A and 61 per cent of Zone B have been sold. More than 60 per cent of businesses in Thilawa is domestic-oriented manufacturing enterprises, while 40 per cent are export-oriented manufacturers, according to a press statement issued by the company in June this year.

A company exporting at least 75 per cent of the production in value is registered as a Free Zone investor and is exempt from paying corporate tax for 7 years from the time it starts commercial operations. Companies such as logistics, which support export-oriented manufacturing, can also be listed as free zone companies. Domestic-oriented manufacturing companies are regarded as promotion zone companies, and they are eligible for a five-year holiday on corporate tax.

There are other tax incentives for the free zone and promotion zone investors on the importation of capital goods, raw materials and merchandise, and consigned goods and vehicles. Further details about the tax system are available on <http://www.myanmarthilawa.gov.mm>.

Myanmar has already attracted foreign direct investment of more than US\$2.788 billion between 1 October and 6 March in the 2019-2020 financial year, including the expansion of capital by existing enterprises and investments in the SEZs, according to the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration (DICA).—Ko Htet

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

Black sesame farmers get high prices amidst growing demand from Japan, China



Farmers harvest sesame in Magway. PHOTO: ZEYATU (MAGWAY)

THE growing demand for black sesame, which is grown with Good Agricultural Practice (GAP), from Japan and China has driven the price up in the domestic market, according to Mandalay Commodity Depot.

“Japan buys a large quantity of black sesame this year. China and Japan are competing for offers to buy them. The price dropped during the first outbreak of Covid-19 in December. Now, the price jumps as Japan buys about 30 per cent of sesame produced in Magway Region, while China constitutes 70 per cent of its production”, said an official with Magway Commodity Depot.

At present, the stocks of sesame seeds have become smaller in the market. GAP sesame fetched K215,000 per bag. The price increases by K15,000 compared with last month's price, he added.

Besides exporters, local millers are also highly pur-

chasing the sesame seeds. The growers are also holding the stocks, lessening the supply to the market.

The sesame seeds are now priced K120,000-215,000 per bag for various sesame seeds depending on the quality.

The number of sesame acreages has increased in the country and this year's yield rate is higher than the previous years.

China is the main buyer of Myanmar's sesame, which is also shipped to markets in Japan, South Korea, China (Taipei), UK, Germany, the Netherlands, Greece, and Poland among the EU countries.

The EU markets prefer organic-farming sesame seeds from Myanmar, said an official from the Trade Promotion Department.

Japan prefers Myanmar's black sesame seeds, cultivated under good agricultural practices (GAP), and purchases them

after a quality assessment. Black sesame seeds from Myanmar are also exported to South Korea and Japan. Meanwhile, China purchases various coloured sesame seeds from the country.

Sesame is cultivated in the country throughout the year. Magway Region, which has gained a reputation as the oil pot of Myanmar, is the main producer of sesame seeds. The seeds are also grown in Mandalay and Sagaing regions.

Of the cooking oil crops grown in Myanmar, the acreage under sesame is the highest, accounting for 51.3 per cent of the overall oil crop plantation.

The volume of sesame exports was registered at over 96,000 tons, worth \$130 million, in the 2015-2016 fiscal year; \$100,000 tons, worth \$145 million, in the 2016-2017 FY; and, 120,000 tons, worth \$147 million, in the 2017-2018 FY.—GNLM

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

Stay at community based quarantine called key to preventing spread of Covid-19

THE return of thousands of Myanmar's migrant workers from Thailand has placed our country at a high risk of spreading the COVID-19 infection.

It is not a normal situation when thousands of people return from a country which is experiencing the Coronavirus infection. The returnees might carry the Coronavirus with them and could first infect their own families, then spread the virus to others.

The Ministry of Health and Sports has reported the situation to the World Health Organization, seeking assistance in preparation to prevent a possible outbreak of the infectious disease.

With new aggressive restrictions, including community based facility quarantines to stem the spread of the coronavirus, the regional health authorities could take aggressive actions, in cooperation with local people, to impose the facility quarantine on returnees from Thailand.

Also, local authorities have been advised to enforce the 14-day home quarantine on returnees, to prevent the spread of the Coronavirus. This is the best way to protect your families and local people, if you were to bring the virus into Myanmar.

Hence, health authorities in townships across the country are carrying out measures, based on the current situation we are facing today.

The situation has also demanded that the Ministry of Health and Sports take further steps to speed the works of its Central Command Centre to quickly respond for the prevention, control and treatment in a timely manner.

We are confident that if the returnees from those countries experiencing the Coronavirus outbreak strictly follow the instructions from the health authorities, we can control the spread of the exported virus.

With new aggressive restrictions, including community based facility quarantines to stem the spread of the coronavirus, the regional health authorities could take aggressive actions, in cooperation with local people, to impose the facility quarantine on returnees from Thailand.

To be able to carry out the community based facility quarantine systematically, local health authorities and members of the public must strictly follow the directives laid down by the Ministry of Health and Sports.

Additionally, local health authorities are on alert to keep watch of the health conditions of the returnees from foreign countries during the 14-day home and facility quarantine period.

The role that local health officials are playing is an important part of the preparedness and response to the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) in our country.

People are also urged to stay home and avoid large gatherings, since the virus is highly contagious.

xxxxxxx

China's Xi calls for tariff cuts at G20 virus talks

At such a drastic moment, the G20 members should once again step forward, join hands and champion a strong and well-organized collective global response.

CHINESE President Xi Jinping on 26 March urged G20 countries to remove trade barriers in an effort to spur a global recovery after the economic shock of the coronavirus pandemic.

"Xi urged G20 members to cut tariffs, remove barriers and facilitate the unfettered flow of trade" during his remarks at the emergency online summit, the official Xinhua news agency reported.

China has been hit hard by the Covid-19 outbreak since it emerged in the country late last year, with more than 80,000 infected and nearly 3,300 dead nationwide, according to official figures.

The world's second-largest economy ground to a halt in February as authorities shut factories and imposed drastic lockdowns to curb the spread of the disease.

Economic growth had already slowed as a result of the long-running trade war with the United States that saw billions of dollars in tariffs slapped on trade between the two countries.

A main forum for international cooperation

Created in 1999, the G20 is a main forum for international cooperation on financial and economic issues. It comprises 19 countries plus the European Union. The countries are Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa,

South Korea, Turkey, Britain, and the United States.

The group, home to almost two-thirds of the world's population, accounts for about 86 per cent of the gross world product and 75 per cent of global trade.

Critical juncture

The world has now arrived at another critical juncture since the 2008 international financial crisis. Only this time is the health of both the global economy and humanity itself at stake.

To pull through this moment of twin crises — a raging coronavirus pandemic and a reeling global economy — requires purposeful guidance, as well as a swift and coordinated multilateral response.

Saudi Arabia, the chair of the Group of 20 (G20) major economies this year, staged an emergency virtual summit on Thursday.

The meeting could not come at a more appropriate time.

It will be the first time for the G20 leaders to hold a tele-summit since the mechanism, which had used to only gather finance ministers and central bankers, was elevated to be the world's premier platform for international economic cooperation in 2008 and helped the world ride out the worst global economic crash since the 1929 Great Depression.

Far more intractable

The situation is far more intractable this time. Ending the pandemic, which has led to shut-

downs of factories and businesses in many parts of the world, and invigorating the global economy seem two contradictory missions.

So far, many governments have adopted measures to contain the disease and rescue their economies. However, the repeated stock market plunges indicate that they are not enough to calm investors' nerves and rebuild confidence.

At such a drastic moment, the G20 members, which account for around 90 per cent of the gross world product, 80 per cent of global trade and about two thirds of the entire human population, should once again step forward, join hands and champion a strong and well-organized collective global response.

To restore confidence

The most urgent task is to end the pandemic as soon as possible so as to restore confidence in the tumbling global markets.

The still spreading global pandemic is the very reason behind the panic and economic disruption.

The G20 members should come together in unity, share critical information and align their response efforts, so as to effectively arrest the virus' global spread.

One major problem exposed in the ongoing pandemic is a deficit in global public health governance, which resulted in a mainly country-based response so far when the crisis is beyond borders.

The good news is that the G20 has already set its action in motion. The G20 finance chiefs and central bankers agreed on Monday during their televised meeting to address the risks of debt vulnerabilities, develop a joint G20 Action Plan in response to COVID-19, and support financial stability and alleviate liquidity constraints for emerging markets and developing economies.

The bad news is that protectionism and isolationism are often on the rise when a crisis hits. The G20 members need to speak in one loud voice to reaffirm multilateralism and find a way to keep the world trade running when some restrictive measures have to be taken to contain the virus.

The pandemic should never be taken as an excuse to disassemble global supply chains, or run each country's economy wall-



Leaders of the G20 major economies are holding an online summit on March 26, in a bid to fend off a coronavirus-triggered recession, after criticism the group has been slow to address the crisis. PHOTO: AFP

Common health of mankind

In the long run, a global architecture for the common health of mankind should be strengthened to better deal with future health emergencies and shore up confidence. To do that, the United Nations and the WHO should be given a core role.

Meanwhile, the world's top 20 major economies should join the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank to fight the slump in the global markets and drag the world economy back from the edge of another full-blown recession.

As of 10:00 CET (0900 GMT) on Wednesday, a total of 414,179 cases of COVID-19 have been reported in 196 countries and territories, with more than 18,000 killed by the outbreak, according to the situation dashboard by the World Health Organization (WHO).

Raffaele Marchetti, a professor of international relations at LUISS University in Rome, told Xinhua the novel coronavirus has become "the biggest priority" on the G20's agenda.

The International Monetary Fund has forecast that the coronavirus pandemic is likely to spark a global recession, which prompted Saudi Arabia, this year's G20 chair, to call for the special summit to address the issue.

Some 10 years ago, at the height of the international financial crisis, the G20 managed to salvage the global economy and showed that the human race is capable of addressing a crisis with solidarity.

This time the fight is even harder and the stakes much higher. The G20 should once again rally the confidence of countries around the world that as long as the international community works together in good faith, a total victory will be within reach.

Push for collaboration

With officials from the Group of 20 (G20) countries preparing for an emergency leaders' video summit, analysts said countries hit hard by COVID-19 should push for collaboration to address related economic and health problems.

The Group of 20 leaders agreed Thursday to inject \$5 trillion into the global economy to counteract the social and economic impact of the coronavirus pandemic.

In their joint statement released after an emergency video conference, the leaders supported the agreement earlier in the week between Japan and the International Olympic Committee to postpone this summer's Tokyo Games by one year.

ly to spark a global recession, which prompted Saudi Arabia, this year's G20 chair, to call for the special summit to address the issue.

Antonio Villafranca, research coordinator and head of the European program at the Italian Institute for International Political Studies, said reflecting on the 2008-09 world financial crisis can provide a blueprint for G20 countries to address the economic implications of COVID-19.

"If the finance ministers and central bank governors can agree to coordinate action to help guarantee liquidity in financial markets and to take other steps to lessen the economic blow from the outbreak, then that will send a welcome signal to markets," Villafranca said.

G-20 to inject \$5 trillion into the global economy

The Group of 20 leaders agreed Thursday to inject \$5 trillion into the global economy to counteract the social and economic impact of the coronavirus pandemic.

In their joint statement released after an emergency video conference, the leaders supported the agreement earlier in the week between Japan and the International Olympic Committee to postpone this summer's Tokyo Games by one year.

REFERENCES Xinhua; Kyodo Updated News



Working at home Yuki Sato, an employee of a startup company. PHOTO: AFP / BEHROUZ MEHRI

Weather icons and Myanmar Daily Weather Report (Issued at 7:00 pm Thursday 26th March, 2020)

BAY INFERENCE: Weather is partly cloudy to cloudy over the South Bay and a few cloud over the Andaman Sea and elsewhere over the Bay of Bengal.

FORECAST VALID UNTIL NOON OF THE 27th March, 2020: Light rain or thundershowers are likely to be isolated in Kachin State. Degree of certainty is (60%). Weather will be partly cloudy in Upper Sagaing, Mandalay, and Taninthayi Regions, Northern Shan, Chin, Rakhine and Mon States and generally fair in the remaining Regions and States.

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

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Slight increase of day temperatures in Magway, Bago and Yangon Regions and Shan State.

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 27th March, 2020: Generally fair weather.

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 27th March, 2020: Generally fair weather.

FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 27th March, 2020: Generally fair weather.

Advertisement for globalnewlightofmyanmar.com including contact info and hotline numbers.

Invitation to young writers for Sunday Special. The Global New Light of Myanmar is accepting submissions of poetry, opinion, articles, essays and short stories from young people for its weekly Sunday Next Generation Platform.

Football fans of MNL clubs give away cash, hand gels to locals



A football fan of Sagaing United FC gives hand sanitizer to a woman in the Chindwin Yadana Market in Monywa yesterday. **PHOTO: MNL**

THE football fans of Myanmar National League donated cash, and hand gel yesterday in some townships, according to the league's social media.

Fans of Southern Myanmar FC donated hand gels and cash to the investigation team

at Kyaikmayaw traffic circle in Mawlamyine yesterday.

Sagaing United's football fans have also conducted Covid-19 awareness campaigns at the Chindwin Yadana Market in Monywa.

Rakhine United FC has con-

ducted precautionary measures for the players who will return to their native places yesterday, checking the body temperature of the players, and urging them to follow the guidelines issued by the Ministry of Health and Sports. —Kyaw Khin

British study shows unknowns of COVID-19 spread

LONDON — Authors of headline-grabbing research into how many people in Britain may already be infected with COVID-19 insisted Wednesday their research showed the need for widespread antibody testing to contain the pandemic.

Researchers at the University of Oxford used mathematical modelling to examine possible infection rates consistent with the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases and deaths in Britain: more than 8,000 and 422 as of Wednesday morning, respectively. Using

several hypothetical transmission rates, the models showed a huge variation in the possible numbers of people who have caught the deadly virus in Britain and Italy but exhibited no serious symptoms, and so would not be candidates for testing. — AFP ■



Medical staff at the IHU Mediterranee Infection Institute in Marseille, France show packets of chloroquine and hydroxychloroquine. **PHOTO:AFP**

Antimalarial drug no better than standard coronavirus care: study

BEIJING — Hydroxychloroquine, an antimalarial drug dubbed a "gift from God" by US President Donald Trump for its potential ability to fight the new coronavirus, was found to be no more effective than standard treatment in a small Chinese study.

The paper, which was published in the Journal of Zhejiang University on 6 March, looked at 30 COVID-19 patients, half of whom received the medicine.

After seven days, 13 of the patients who were on the drug tested negative, compared to 14 people who weren't on it.

One of the patients on it went on to develop severe illness, while the median time taken for the individuals to recover was similar in both groups.

The sample size is considered too small to be statistically significant. But a similar number of patients were examined in a recent French study that found the same drug to be highly effective at fighting the infection, especially when taken in combination with the antibiotic azithromycin.

That triggered heightened global interest in hydroxychloro-

quine, and a related compound called chloroquine, which are synthetic forms of quinine and have for decades been used to treat malaria, as well as rheumatoid arthritis and lupus.

President Donald Trump last week announced his administration was working with pharmaceutical companies to expand access to the medicines so that more doctors can prescribe them "off label" — meaning not for their original intended use.

Trump has said they could be a "gift from God" and a "game changer," even as many scientists have cautioned against overhyping unproven medicines before large scale clinical trials are carried out.

Such experiments are considered the gold standard in the field, last months or years and involve thousands of patients, often from around the world.

Patients are assigned at random to either receive the drug under investigation or a placebo, and the studies are "blinded" meaning the participants and their doctors are unaware which group they are in, to further reduce bias. — AFP ■

Revisiting decades-old Voyager 2 data, scientists find one more secret

WASHINGTON — Eight and a half years into its grand tour of the solar system, NASA's Voyager 2 spacecraft was ready for another encounter. It was January 24, 1986, and soon it would meet the mysterious seventh planet, icy-cold Uranus.

Over the next few hours, Voyager 2 flew within 50,600 miles (81,433 kilometres) of Uranus' cloud tops, collecting data that revealed two new rings, 11 new moons and temperatures below

minus 353 degrees Fahrenheit (minus 214 degrees Celsius). The dataset is still the only up-close measurements we have ever made of the planet. Three decades later, scientists reinspect that data found one more secret.

Unbeknownst to the entire space physics community, 34 years ago Voyager 2 flew through a plasmoid, a giant magnetic bubble that may have been whisking Uranus' atmosphere out to space. The finding, reported in

Geophysical Research Letters, raises new questions about the planet's one-of-a-kind magnetic environment.

A Wobbly Magnetic Oddball

Planetary atmospheres all over the solar system are leaking into space. Hydrogen springs from Venus to join the solar wind, the continuous stream of particles escaping the Sun. Jupiter and Saturn eject globs of their electrically-charged air. Even

Earth's atmosphere leaks. (Don't worry, it will stick around for another billion years or so.)

The effects are tiny on human timescales, but given long enough, atmospheric escape can fundamentally alter a planet's fate. For a case in point, look at Mars.

"Mars used to be a wet planet with a thick atmosphere," said Gina DiBraccio, a space physicist at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center and project scientist for

the Mars Atmosphere and Volatile Evolution, or MAVEN mission. "It evolved over time" - 4 billion years of leakage to space - "to become the dry planet we see today."

Atmospheric escape is driven by a planet's magnetic field, which can both help and hinder the process. Scientists believe magnetic fields can protect a planet, fending off the atmosphere-stripping blasts of the solar wind. — ANI ■

Japan to impose entry ban on 21 European countries, Iran

TOKYO — Japan will impose an entry ban on foreign travelers coming from 21 European countries and Iran as part of stronger measures to contain the new coronavirus, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said Thursday.

Starting midnight Thursday, those who have been to any of the 21 countries including Italy and Germany within 14 days of arriving in Japan will be turned away.

Japan has already closed its doors to foreign travelers from parts of China and South Korea, which had initially been hardest hit by the outbreak of COVID-19.

Speaking at a meeting of the newly created national headquarters on the coronavirus response, Abe also said Japan will begin asking visitors and its nationals arriving from some countries in Southeast Asia, the Middle East and Africa to self-quarantine for



FILE: Passengers who arrived on one of the last flights from the Chinese city of Wuhan walk through a health screening station at Narita airport in Chiba prefecture, outside Tokyo, Japan. PHOTO: AFP

14 days.

The request applies to arrivals from 11 countries including In-

donesia, Singapore and Thailand, as well as Israel and Qatar, who will also be asked to watch for

symptoms such as high fever and coughing, and refrain from using public transportation. It will last

from midnight Friday through the end of next month.

Similar steps are in place for the United States and Egypt.

Japan will also suspend visas that have already been issued to citizens of the countries in Southeast Asia, the Middle East and Africa. The coronavirus epidemic that first broke out in central China late last year has continued to spread at an alarming rate. According to data compiled by Johns Hopkins University, more than 470,000 infections have been confirmed globally, with the death toll having topped 21,000.

Japan's announcement of stronger measures to fight the pandemic comes as cases in Tokyo have surged in recent days, with Gov. Yuriko Koike asking residents to stay at home this weekend to prevent an "explosive rise."—Kyodo News ■



Khan, founder and chief executive of Toronto-based BlueDot, said AI is helping in the containment phase with systems that used 'anonymized' smartphone location data to track the progression of the disease and find hotspots, and to determine if people are following 'social distancing' guidelines. PHOTO: AFP

Artificial intelligence may be pandemic lifesaver... one day

WASHINGTON — On 30 December, researchers using artificial intelligence systems to comb through media and social platforms detected the spread of an unusual flu-like illness in Wuhan, China.

It would be days before the World Health Organization released a risk assessment and a full month before the UN agency declared a global public health emergency for the novel coronavirus.

Could the AI systems have accelerated the process and limited, or even arrested, the extent of the COVID-19 pandemic?

Clark Freifeld, a Northeastern University computer scientist working with the global disease surveillance platform HealthMap, one of the systems detecting the outbreak, said it remains an open question.

"We identified the early signals, but the reality is it's hard to tell when you have an unidentified respiratory illness if it's a really serious situation," said Freifeld.

Dataminr, a real-time risk detection technology firm, said it delivered the earliest warning about COVID-19 on December 30 based on eyewitness accounts from inside Wuhan hospitals, pictures of the disinfection of the Wuhan seafood market where the virus originated and a warning by a Chinese doctor who later died from the virus himself. "One of our biggest challenges is we tend to be reactive in these situations, it's human nature," said Kamran Khan, founder and chief executive of the Toronto-based disease tracking firm BlueDot, one of the early systems that flashed warning flags in December over the epidemic.—AFP ■

Fake cures, risky rumours: virus misinformation hits home

HONG KONG — From being duped into taking poisonous "cures", to watching businesses crumble and avoiding life-saving medication, people are suffering devastating real-world impacts of a deluge of online virus misinformation.

As the new coronavirus that has killed more than 20,000 people causes markets to crash and sets scientists scrambling for a solution, rumours and false claims are fuelling confusion

and deepening the economic misery.

The effects can be tragic — in Iran, one of the hardest-hit countries, more than 210 people died from drinking toxic alcohol after claims circulated online that it could treat or ward off COVID-19, the official Irna news agency reported.

Dangerous fake cures debunked by AFP include consuming volcanic ash and fighting infection with UV lamps or chlo-

rine disinfectants, which health authorities say can harm the body if used incorrectly.

Another remedy that "kills the coronavirus", according to misleading social media posts, is drinking silver particles in liquid, known as colloidal silver.

"I am making colloidal silver now. I have asthma and does it really work... worried/stressed over virus. Does this help if I take a teaspoon a day. New to this..." said a post by a user named Michelle in a public Facebook group, alongside a photo of a jar of water with a metal rod in it.

The side effects of taking colloidal silver can include a bluish-grey skin discoloration and poor absorption of some medicines including antibiotics, according to the US National Institutes of Health.

But this has not put some people off. An Australian man who said he regularly buys the concoction told AFP it had "sold out in my town ... but before the virus, I could always get some".—AFP ■



A man in the US died after taking a form of chloroquine used to clean fish tanks in the mistaken belief it would protect against the coronavirus. PHOTO: AFP

Trade Mark Ads

Call Thin Thin May, 09251022355, 09974424848

Will coronavirus bump web traffic into the slow lane?

BERLIN — With more than one third of the globe's population confined to their homes in an attempt to limit the spread of the coronavirus, some are asking if the increased demand being put on the internet could substantially slow down web traffic.

To what extent has web traffic grown with billions watching on screens at home?

According to Nokia, one of the world's three largest telecoms equipment producers, most countries' telecoms networks are currently seeing a rise in internet usage of between 30 and 45 per cent, with peaks being around 20 to 40 per cent higher than this time last year. The Finnish firm says there is an "unprecedented rise" in use of applications which require little transmission delay during normal office hours, with videoconferencing tools such as Skype or Zoom seeing usage skyrocketing 300 per cent in the United States, while video game usage is up 400 per cent!

Are we in record traffic territory?

Germany's DE-CIX internet exchange, which is one of the



Are we going to overload? PHOTO: AFP

world's most substantial web traffic hubs, has recorded historic usage peaks across its connection infrastructure in both Europe and the United States.

On 10 March, it saw a peak of an unprecedented 9.1 terabytes per second data throughput — or 1,165 gigabytes. However, DE-CIX says it believes it is "prepared" for even higher activity levels which it will meet, it says, "with no problem".

Is the internet under strain?

Telecoms networks consist of a complex array of infrastructure. When users say they have a delay or unstable connection it

is very difficult to assess whether the signal congestion is due to a problem with their equipment, their telecoms operator or the global network.

Some services — for examples, online learning or business VPNs — can also appear saturated to users owing to insufficient provider bandwidth rather than the networks themselves being behind choke points.

"For now, the networks seem to have stood up to the increase" in traffic, says Nokia, although "these increases were supposed to happen over several years" rather than suddenly occur without notice. — AFP ■

Toyota suspends production in South Africa amid coronavirus spread

NAGOYA — Toyota Motor Corp. said Thursday it will suspend production at its plant in South Africa until April 16 due to the restriction on movements implemented by the government following the spread of the coronavirus in the country.

The Japanese auto giant has already decided to temporarily halt output at some other overseas production bases as well as domestic ones as the spread of the virus causing the COVID-19 respiratory illness forces factory workers to stay home while demand for vehicles falls worldwide.

In South Africa, Toyota manufactured about 137,000 units last year, including the Corolla sedan and the Hilux pickup truck.

Toyota said Monday it will briefly stop seven production lines at five domestic plants from 3 April to adjust to slowing global demand in the wake of the coronavirus outbreak.

Subaru Corp. said Thursday it will delay the planned resumption of production at its plant in the US state of Indiana to April 7 from the initially scheduled Monday, due to the curfew issued by the state government.

The Japanese automaker halted output in the US factory last Monday to prevent workers from being infected with the coronavirus and adjust production due to falling demand for its vehicles. — Kyodo News ■



A Toyota Motor Corp. logo on a Prius PHV is polished on 9 May, 2018, at a Toyopet dealership for the automaker's vehicles in Tokyo's Shibaura area. PHOTO: KYODO



Online retailer JM Bullion has warned customers to expect delivery delays of more than 15 days owing to "extreme order volumes". PHOTO: AFP

Gold sparkles in COVID-19 shadow

LONDON — Gold, prized by investors in times of crisis as a safe haven, is experiencing surging demand in the face of the coronavirus outbreak — from both commodity traders and retail buyers.

The precious metal had forged a seven-year peak on commodity markets this month as traders sought shelter from the COVID-19 pandemic and its destructive economic impact.

The commodity has also rocketed as investors seek to guard against rising inflation — with many central banks injecting immense amounts of liquidity into the financial system to counter virus fallout.

'Phone has not stopped'

"The phone has not stopped ringing" because "demand has exploded", said Alessandro Soldati, boss of Gold Avenue, the online retail arm of Swiss refiner and ingots producer MKS PAMP

Group. Over the last three weeks, as the new coronavirus strain spread across the globe, Gold Avenue experienced more sales than during the entire final quarter of last year. With most orders placed online, Gold Avenue has "all the tools" to help meet the rapid growth in demand, according to its chairman Omar Liess.

Some companies are encountering some issues meeting the sheer volume of demand.

But the main problem is logistical — because so many flights are cancelled because of the coronavirus outbreak.

Customers still however have the option of keeping their gold coins and bars in safes — because trading companies usually offer such storage solutions.

And if they do want to take physical delivery of the glamorous precious metal, then customers face the prospect of a long wait. — AFP ■

Trudeau promises more assistance to Canadians, businesses

OTTAWA — Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced that more financial aid will go to Canadians and businesses to weather the COVID-19 pandemic after the Canadian parliament approved the emergency package of 82 billion Canadian dollars (about 56 billion U.S. dollars).

The parliament passed the legislation of the emergency package of 82 billion Canadian dollars earlier Wednesday.

Trudeau told a daily news conference that his government is aware of the uncertainty facing

the country and has merged two public assistance measures into a single program to make it easier for Canadians who are out of or off work because of COVID-19 to apply and receive money.

It combines the Emergency Care Benefit (10 billion Canadian dollars) and Emergency Support Benefit (5 billion Canadian dollars) into the Canada Emergency Response Benefit and will provide workers affected by the COVID-19 pandemic with 2,000 Canadian dollars (about 1400 US dollars) per month for the upcoming four months. — Xinhua ■

\$2 trillion rescue package passes US Senate, heads to House

WASHINGTON — The US Senate unanimously passed the nation's largest-ever rescue package late Wednesday, a \$2 trillion lifeline to suffering Americans, critically depleted hospitals and an economy ravaged by a rapidly spreading coronavirus crisis.

The measure cleared the Senate 96-0 after days of tumultuous, sometimes bitter negotiations and debate, as the US death toll for the pandemic soared past 1,000, with 68,000 confirmed infections.

Outbreaks have grown nationwide, but with particular fear that New York could be the

next epicenter of the coronavirus pandemic. "Let us tell them tonight that help is on the way, that they are not truly alone, that this country, that this Senate, that this government is here for them in a time of dire need," top Senate Democrat Chuck Schumer said moments before the vote.

"Let us marshal this government into action."

The measure now heads to the House of Representatives, where a Democratic leader said he expected it to pass by voice vote Friday before it goes to President Donald Trump for his signature. Second-ranking House

Republican Steve Scalise was urging his fellow Republicans to vote to pass the package, his communications director said.

The monster package, thrashed out between Republicans, Democrats and the White House, provides direct cash payments to millions of hurting American taxpayers, amounting to \$3,400 for an average American family of four.

It provides some \$500 billion in grants and loans to small businesses and core industries, including as much as \$50 billion for strained airlines and their employees.—AFP ■



FILE: Travellers arriving at Changi Airport on 16 March, 2020. Of the 23 new Covid-19 cases announced on 17 March by the Ministry of Health, 17 are imported. PHOTO: AFP

Singapore GDP contracts sharply, in warning for virus-hit global economy

SINGAPORE — Singapore's economy suffered its biggest contraction since the financial crisis during the first quarter as the coronavirus pandemic escalated, data showed Thursday, an ominous sign of the devastation being inflicted on the global economy.

The finance minister meanwhile announced Sg\$48 billion (US\$33 billion) in fresh stimulus, taking to about Sg\$55 billion the amount so far pledged by the government to help the export-reliant financial hub weather the downturn.

One of the world's most open economies which is viewed as a barometer for the health of global trade, Singapore is now heading for a deep recession this year after shrinking 2.2 per cent on-year

in January-March.

"COVID-19 is like an economic tsunami hitting Singapore's shores," said Selena Ling, head of research and strategy at the city-state's OCBC Bank.

Singapore is one of the first economies to report growth data since the virus outbreak began, and the dismal figures add to signs the world is heading for a deep, painful recession with more than three billion people now under lockdown.

Governments and central banks around the world have been unleashing unprecedented measures to battle the fallout from the pandemic, with US Senate leaders agreeing on a \$2 trillion deal for the hard-hit American economy.—AFP ■



Workers building a makeshift morgue outside of Bellevue Hospital in New York. PHOTO: AFP

Major stock markets retreat awaiting 'ugly' US jobs fallout

WASHINGTON — European and leading Asian stock markets were back in the red Thursday as investors once again focussed on the devastating economic fallout the coronavirus pandemic is expected to

wreak. After a sharp contraction in growth for Singapore — whose economy is viewed as a barometer for the health of global trade — all eyes were on upcoming US jobless claims data, which is expected to show

a massive rise.

The dollar was down sharply against its main rivals ahead of the figures, forecast by analysts to be considerably "ugly".

Federal Reserve Chairman

Jerome Powell on Thursday said the US central bank would continue to "aggressively" pump liquidity into the economy, while acknowledging there would be a sharp downturn.

His comments came as G20

leaders were to hold a summit by teleconference, with hopes they would provide a united front after the group of leading economies was accused of being too slow to address the crisis.—AFP ■

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V TAN BINH 234

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V TAN BINH 234 VOY. NO. (04/20) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 28-3-2020 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of WILMAR where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

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

Phone No: 2301928

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V PERIDOT

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V PERIDOT VOY. NO. (32L) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 28-3-2020 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of MKW where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

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

Phone No: 2301928

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V PAGONA

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V PAGONA VOY. NO. (01/20) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 28-3-2020 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of IBTT where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S UNI SPRING LOGISTICS
HOLDING PTE LTD

Phone No: 2301928

Nine doctors die from coronavirus in Philippines

MANILA — Nine doctors have died in the Philippines from the coronavirus, the country's top medical association said Thursday, as hospitals were overwhelmed and medics complained about a lack of protection on the front lines.

The announcement of the doctors' deaths heightened fears that the scale of the health crisis in the Philippines is much worse than is being officially reported, with the confirmed virus death toll at just 38.

The main island of Luzon, home to 55 million people, is in the second week of a lockdown to contain the spread of the disease, however medics are warning there is a surge in cases.

The Philippine Medical As-



A health worker wearing a face mask holds a placard during a protest in front of a government hospital in Manila. PHOTO: AFP

sociation said Thursday a ninth doctor had died of the virus, and that health workers were not getting enough protection.

"If it were up to me, test the frontliners first and test them again after seven days. Doctors could be carriers themselves,"

Benito Atienza, vice president of the Philippine Medical Association told AFP.

Three large Manila hospitals announced Wednesday they had reached full capacity and would no longer accept new coronavirus cases.

Hundreds of medical staff are no longer accepting patients because they are undergoing 14-day self-quarantines after suspected exposure, the hospitals said.

Just under 2,000 people had been tested in the Philippines as of Tuesday from those with severe symptoms and those considered most vulnerable to COVID-19, such as the elderly, those with life-threatening ailments, and pregnant women.—AFP ■

Singapore unveils 2nd stimulus package to tackle virus crisis

SINGAPORE — The Singapore government on Thursday unveiled a second stimulus package worth S\$48 billion (about \$33 billion) to help the wealthy city-state cope with the coronavirus pandemic, which is threatening to be its worst economic crisis.

"We are facing an unprecedented crisis of a highly complex nature," Deputy Prime Minister Heng Swee Keat told Parliament as he announced the second package this year to help businesses and workers. "In economic terms alone, this will likely be the worst economic contraction since independence."

The latest package raises the government's virus-related relief to S\$55 billion, which is about 11 per cent of gross domestic product.

Earlier in the day, Singapore further downgraded its growth

forecast for 2020 due to the pandemic, projecting a contraction of 1 per cent to 4 per cent. Its worst-ever performance since independence in 1965 was in 1998, when GDP shrank 2.2 per cent during the Asian financial crisis.

Heng said the government has sought and obtained in-principle support from President Halimah Yacob to draw up to S\$17 billion from Singapore's past reserves. The last time the government had to draw on past reserves was during the global financial crisis in 2009.

The government will earmark S\$15.1 billion to support Singaporean workers under a "jobs support scheme." For sectors most battered by the crisis, such as the airline and tourism industries, the support for wages can be as high as 75 per cent.—Kyodo news



South Korean soldiers in protective gear spraying disinfectant in Seoul 25 March to help prevent the spread of the coronavirus. South Korea has the most cases of infections outside mainland China, weakening consumption and prompting the Bank of Korea to issue a warning about possible economic contraction in the first quarter. PHOTO: AFP

S Korea unveils 80 bln USD of fiscal stimulus, unprecedented monetary steps over COVID-19 outbreak

SEOUL — South Korea has unveiled 100 trillion won (about 80 billion US dollars) worth of fiscal stimulus package and unprecedented monetary policy steps to help stabilize volatile financial markets and minimize the economic fallout from the COVID-19 outbreak across the globe.

The country's central bank on Thursday added an "unlimited" liquidity supply to its emergency moves. According to the Bank of Korea (BOK), an open bidding will be held once a week by the end of June to provide liquidity "with no limit" to financial institutions.

The unlimited liquidity will be given for the next three months via the 91-day repurchase agreement (RP) transac-

tions, in which the BOK lends money to financial institutions for 91 days with certain bonds as collateral. The institutions will get the bonds back and repay the borrowed money to the BOK in maturity.

It would be the very first time that the BOK provided an unlimited amount of liquidity for the market. The BOK said it would not be wrong to call it a quantitative easing (QE) though it is different from the US version.

The unlimited liquidity supply was aimed to help stabilize financial markets and minimize the negative effect from the COVID-19 outbreak, while supporting the government's fiscal stimulus package, the BOK noted.—Xinhua ■



Travellers are seen wearing a protective mask at a self check-in kiosk at Changi Airport on 30 January, 2020 in Singapore. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

NEWS In BRIEF

Hong Kong police arrest pro-democracy politician for "sedition"

HONG KONG — Hong Kong police on Thursday arrested a pro-democracy politician for allegedly inciting hatred against a police officer by exposing his identity online.

Democrat Cheng Lai-king, 60, chairwoman of the Central and Western District Council, is accused of "seditious intention" for having reposted on her Facebook account information of a police officer accused of injuring an Indonesian reporter during a protest last year.

"This is revenge taken by police," fellow Democrat lawmaker and councilor Ted Hui told reporters outside a police station while protesting Cheng's arrest. "Police use of the law which was targeting behavior against the British queen is unconstitutional." The post in question, which has since been deleted, called for an "eye for an eye" and urged the police officer in question to "turn himself in," according to Radio Television Hong Kong.—Kyodo News ■

China professor of Hokkaido university confessed to spying: Beijing

BEIJING — China said Thursday it has detained a prominent Chinese scholar at a Hokkaido university for suspected espionage, claiming he has confessed to the crime.

"The facts of the case are clear and the evidence is conclusive," Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said during a regular press briefing, stressing that Yuan Keqing, a professor of East Asian political history at the Hokkaido University of Education, is a Chinese citizen.

Details of the alleged espionage were not disclosed.

Yuan has not been in contact with the university since mid-June, after he left for China to attend the funeral of his mother, according to the university and his friends.

The university last heard from his wife in July that Yuan was being treated for an unspecified illness.—Kyodo News ■

G20 in virtual huddle as virus toll tops 21,000

MADRID — World leaders are to hold online crisis talks Thursday on the coronavirus pandemic that has forced three billion people into lockdown and claimed more than 21,000 lives.

With the disease tearing around the globe at a terrifying pace, warnings are multiplying over its economic consequences, and experts say it could cause more damage than the Great Depression.

Amid squabbling between the leaders of China and the US over who is to blame, UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres called for the world to act together to halt the menace.

“COVID-19 is threatening the whole of humanity,” he said. “Global action and solidarity are crucial. Individual country responses are not going to be enough.”

The global lockdown -- which also took in India’s huge population this week -- tightened further Thursday as Russia announced it was grounding



The economic impact of coronavirus on French businesses has prompted the Finance Ministry to create a dedicated crisis unit. PHOTO: AFP

all international flights, while Moscow’s mayor ordered the closure of cafes, shops and parks.

Tokyo’s millions of citizens have been told to stay home and tourism-dependent Thailand has shuttered its borders.

Economists say the restrictions imposed around the world could cause the most violent recession in recent history.

“The G20 economies will experience an unprecedented shock in the

first half of this year and will contract in 2020 as a whole,” ratings agency Moody’s said.

Unemployment rates are expected to soar — as much as 30 per cent in the US — according to James Bullard, president of the St Louis Federal Reserve.

Leaders of the G20 major economies will hold a virtual huddle later Thursday in the shadow of such dire predictions.

As the world con-

fronts the COVID-19 pandemic and the challenges to healthcare systems and the global economy, we convene this extraordinary G20 summit to unite efforts towards a global response,” tweeted the king of Saudi Arabia. Saudi currently holds the rotating G20 presidency.

WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said richer nations needed to offer support to low and middle income countries.—AFP ■

Flying aid to virus-hit Italy, Moscow flexes soft power

MOSCOW — Since the coronavirus took hold in Europe, Moscow has sent planes of virus experts and aid to Italy while fighting accusations of spreading disinformation, flexing its “soft power” in various ways during the

pandemic. The Russian defence ministry released multiple daily statements after the first planes took off for Italy on Sunday, carrying 100 virus specialists with medical equipment, mobile laboratories and dis-

infection units. The experts sent to Italy have worked on international epidemics including African Swine Fever and in developing an Ebola vaccine, the ministry said. They are to work in cities including northern

Bergamo near Milan, the hardest hit by the virus.

China and Cuba have also sent experts to Italy.

The Russian aid comes at a crucial time for Italy, which has warm ties with Moscow and has supported lifting sanctions against it. Meanwhile European Union countries have been slow to help their fellow member.

The Russian aid comes as the EU is also divided on a potential rescue plan for the region’s economy. Germany has warned against unreasonable expectations while Italy, France and Spain have urged a massive response.

“(President Vladimir) Putin scored a win here,” political analyst Alexi Malashenko said of Russia’s strategy.

“First of all it’s humane, secondly it hints that (anti-Russia) sanctions are inappropriate.” —AFP ■



The Russian aid comes at a crucial time for Italy, which has warm ties with Moscow and has supported lifting sanctions against it. PHOTO: AFP

Asleep In Jesus Saga Naw Seng Aged (61)

It is with great sadness that the family of Saga Naw Seng announces his passing (after a brief illness), at 8:55 pm (Tokyo Time) on Tuesday, March 24, 2020 at the age of 61 years. Saga Naw Seng will be lovingly remembered by his wife of 35 years, Dr. Ubyit Ja Bu and his children, Saga Ja Tsin + Lajawn Awng Dan, Saga Ja Jum Awng and Saga Seng Awn as well as his only grand-daughter Lajewn Ja Ningli Awng. A funeral and cremation service in memory of Saga Naw Seng will be held at 11:00 am on Saturday, March 28, 2020 at Kachin Christian Peace Church (KCPC-Japan).

Bereaved Family

Warring sides in Yemen back calls for coronavirus ceasefire

SANAA — All sides in Yemen’s long conflict offered support on Thursday for the United Nations’ call for a ceasefire to protect civilians from the coronavirus pandemic.

The move came on the fifth anniversary of regional power Saudi Arabia’s intervention in Yemen’s civil war, at the helm of a military coalition supporting the internationally recognised government against the Iran-backed Huthi rebels.

Yemen’s broken healthcare system has not so far recorded a case of coronavirus but aid groups have warned that when it does hit, the impact will be catastrophic in a country already regarded as facing the world’s worst humanitarian crisis.

Millions of people have been displaced and

diseases including cholera are widespread due to the scarcity of clean water.

Saudi Arabia, the Yemen government and the rebels all welcomed the appeal from UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres who this week called for an “immediate global ceasefire” to help avert disaster for vulnerable people in conflict zones.

However, the Yemen conflict has been punctuated by failed agreements, and negotiating a pause could be very difficult. None of the parties to the conflict spelt out any mechanism for the process.

“The government of Yemen welcomes the call of the UN chief... for a ceasefire in the face of coronavirus, and to de-escalate acts of violence in the entire country,” it said in a statement.—AFP ■



Save the Children said more than 7,522 youngsters have been killed or maimed over the past five years in the Yemen conflict. PHOTO: AFP

Delaying Olympics will involve 'massive' costs, organisers say

TOKYO — Rescheduling the Tokyo 2020 Olympics will involve “massive” additional costs, organisers of the Games conceded Thursday (Mar 26) as they convened a taskforce to begin working on the “unprecedented” and complex task.

The historic decision to postpone the Games over the new coronavirus outbreak leaves organisers with a logistical headache as they work to shift the enormous event to an as-yet-undecided date next year.

“One by one, we need to ensure the problems we face

can be solved,” Tokyo 2020 CEO Toshiro Muto said in opening remarks at the first meeting of the taskforce.

“Additional expenses are going to be quite massive we assume. With regards to our revenues, we need to make a lot of effort there,” he added.

Muto gave no estimates for how much the process of postponing the Olympic and Paralympic Games could cost. But according to the Nikkei daily, organisers estimate it will cost an extra \$2.7 billion, including for venue rentals, rebooking

hotels and additional payments for staff and security guards, among others.

Those costs could still come down depending on the outcome of negotiations, the business daily reported. Muto said organisers would not rip up their existing plans, but added: “I guess we need to step back a bit.”

“Sometimes you need to go back to the drawing board,” he said. The Olympics have never faced this much disruption in peacetime, and the decision to delay the event has creat-



Tokyo 2020 president Yoshiro Mori said the challenge was unprecedented. **PHOTO: AFP**

ed unprecedented challenges, Tokyo 2020 president Yoshiro Mori said.

Tokyo 2020 staff “will experience difficulties they have nev-

er experienced before. I am sure they will rise to the occasion. This is going to be a very difficult task that we are facing,” he said. —AFP ■

French sports minister evokes Tour de France spectator ban



French Sports Minister Roxana Maracineanu raises notion of Tour de France spectator ban. **PHOTO: AFP**

PARIS — French sports minister Roxana Maracineanu says this year’s Tour de France could be staged without spectators in a bid to combat the coronavirus pandemic.

The French government is in talks with Tour organisers about the future of the June 27-July 19 edition of world cycling’s top event which draws more than 10 millions fans annually to the roads of France.

All options are being considered including postponement or cancellation of the event which has been raced every year in peacetime since 1903, the min-

ister said. “Everything is imaginable. We have (imposed spectator bans) for other competitions before, even though it won’t have the same impact because the business model of the Tour doesn’t depend on ticket sales like football or rugby,” she told France Bleu radio station on Wednesday. The postponement of the Tokyo Olympics and the Euro 2020 football championships has focused attention on the Tour which winds its way for thousands of miles through the towns and villages of France in a wide loop for three weeks ending on the Champs Elysees in Paris.—AFP ■

Economic crisis from coronavirus begins to bite in European football

BERLIN — Europe may be the financial powerhouse of global football, but the economic impact from the coronavirus pandemic is already beginning to hit and the consequences could be disastrous for clubs across the continent.

When players at Bayern Munich, one of the world’s richest clubs, have reportedly agreed to take pay cuts, it is not difficult to imagine the troubles in store for the sport as a whole.

Many clubs lack sufficient cash reserves to get them through a sustained period without revenue coming in. For example in Scotland, where clubs rely heavily on gate receipts, the situation is “clearly unsustainable”.

That is the view of Aberdeen chairman Dave Cormack, who forecasts facing five million pounds (US\$5.9 million) of costs without any money coming in over the next few months.

“No club, whatever their size, scale or level of investment, can withstand a total lack of income over a period of anything between three to six months,” Cormack said.

Even the German league (DFL) - which runs the Bundesliga and has annual turnover of more than four billion euros (US\$4.3 billion) - fears a catastrophe. “If we don’t play games behind closed doors as soon as possible, there is no point wondering if we should have a league of 18 or 20 teams,” said DFL chief executive Christian Seifert. “We won’t even have 20 professional clubs anymore.”

EYE-WATERING LOSSES
It is almost two weeks since leading leagues across Europe stopped. No matches means

no money from gate receipts, and before long payments from broadcasters may stop too.

The sums set to be lost everywhere are eye-watering. In England, according to reports, the Premier League faces losing 762 million pounds from domestic broadcast deals with Sky Sports and BT Sport.

Analysis by accounting firm KPMG suggests cancelling the rest of the season would cost the ‘Big Five’ leagues of England, Spain, Germany, Italy and France a combined total of over four billion euros.—AFP ■



The Tottenham Hotspur Stadium in north London, where Spurs were due to host Manchester United on Mar 15 before the season was suspended. **PHOTO: AFP**

Athletes village condo buyers fret after Tokyo Olympics delay

TOKYO — The postponement of the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics is likely to delay the handover of converted condominiums at the athletes village, leaving the developers and future residents

with many questions.

“We weren’t expecting any postponement,” said a spokeswoman from Mitsui Fudosan Co., one of the project developers. “There will likely be an impact but

we are still checking the situation, as the decision on the postponement came out of the blue,” she added. Demand has been strong for apartments in the “Harumi Flag” complex in Chuo Ward,

where around 12,000 people are to reside in the 5,600 units spread across 23 high-rise buildings. The new harbor front community built in a 13-hectare space some 2.5 kilometers from the upscale Gin-

za shopping district will feature commercial facilities, parks and schools. More than 2,000 applications were submitted for 940 condos made available for sale in July last year.—Kyodo News