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Tuesday, 31 March 2020

MoFA, MoIC meet to fight COVID-19

THE Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of International Cooperation held their second meeting on working group's preparedness and response to COVID-19.

Present at the meeting were working group chairman and Permanent Secretary of Ministry of Foreign Affairs, directors-general of various departments, deputy permanent secretaries and group members.

In his address to the meeting, Union Minister for International Cooperation U Kyaw Tin said that in his capacity as Secretary (1) of the central committee, he coordinates assistance in international cooperation to prevention and containment of COVID-19, negotiating between ministries, and assisting international diplomats, expats and Myanmar nationals abroad.

The Union Minister said they are implementing the central committee's directives and action plans in real time. He said they are issuing restrictions on people travelling from countries with COVID-19 outbreak, suspending issuing visas on arrival and E-visas, permitting entry of expatriates only with health certificate showing



Union Minister U Kyaw Tin chairs the second meeting on working group's preparedness and response to COVID-19 in Nay Pyi Taw. PHOTO: MNA

no COVID-19.

The Union Minister said they must continually monitor global situation and provide advice to the central committee on updating strategies accordingly and increase action plans as necessary. He said Myanmar nationals and UN officials in the country will be regularly updated on COVID-19 cases. He said each staff members should follow the guidelines

closely and share them with their families and communities.

Next, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs reported on the implementation of the central committee's directives and the directors-general and members discussed international strategies employed against COVID-19.

The participants of the meeting also suggested to re-

view the existing plans for tackling the impacts on the economy sector due to the COVID-19 crisis and to advice the better plans to the national-level committee, to coordinate with the embassies and foreign organizations to get assistance for preventing, control and treatment of the Coronavirus infection, to assist the foreigners in Myanmar in their leaving for their countries, to enforce

the families of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of International Cooperation to follow the directives of the Ministry of Health and Sports in face of the COVID-19 crisis and to lay down plans to ensure that the working group effectively implement the raising awareness on COVID-19 and prevention of the disease.—MNA

(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)

Four more confirmed cases of COVID-19 on Monday, total cases reach 14

Updated information about Covid-19 surveillance at 7:30 pm, 30 March 2020

1. Laboratory results of the National Health Laboratory (Yangon) on the specimens from a total of 55 persons under investigation and quarantined persons at 5:15 pm 30 March 2020 have shown two positive cases of Covid-19 (Table 1), and the remaining 51 persons were tested negative.
2. Based on the disease history of the positive patient (Case-08) (Tour Guide), the patient's clients four French visitors were quarantined at a hotel in Yangon beginning 28 March, and their specimens were taken for laboratory tests on 29 March. Three of them (Case 11) (Case 12) and (Case 13) were tested positive and will be admitted to the Waibargi Specialist Hospital despite no symptoms.

SEE PAGE-3

TODAY INSIDE

NATIONAL

Chinese Embassy, Jack Ma Foundation, Alibaba Foundation donate Covid-19 medical supplies

PAGE-2



NATIONAL

Appeal to Myanmar citizens returning to Myanmar via border gates

PAGE-3

BUSINESS

Over 160 export, import items to get online licence in April

PAGE-5



Public contributions to 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 30 March 2020.

Donors	Amount (million kyats)
1. Myanmar Gems and Jewellery Entrepreneurs Association	100
2. Members of Union Solidarity and Development Party	50
3. U Thet Lin and Daw Thi Thi Tin (TZTM Group of Companies and Mingalar Thiri Hotel, Nay Pyi Taw	30
4. Kan Pwint Oo Jewellery Company	17.65
5. Yatana Yaunchi Jewellery Company	17.65
6. Emerald Park Jewellery Company	17.65
7. Nay Min Kabar Jewellery Company	17.65
8. Ayeya Yatana Jewellery Company	17.65
9. Myanmar Thura Jewellery Company	17.65
10. Chong Brothers Jewellery Company	17.65
11. Kachin National Development and Progress Jewellery Company	17.65
12. Unity Jewellery Company	17.65
13. Yatana Kyal Jewellery Company	17.65
14. Paing Phyo Thiha Jewellery Company	17.65
15. Kyaut Myat Shwe Pyi Jewellery Company	17.65
16. Myo Nwe Jewellery Company	17.65
17. Lin Latt Win Jewellery Company	17.65
18. Yatana Adhipati Jewellery Company	17.65
19. Yatana Sin Thiri Jewellery Company	17.65
20. Jade Leaf Jewellery Company	17.65
21. Mya Htike Company Limited family and friends	16.48
22. Ministry of Construction	10.00
23. Collective donation of Myanmar students in China	7.84
24. Ruby Dragon Jewellery Company	5.00
25. Jade Dragon Jewellery Company	5.00
26. U Thein Tun+ Thudhamma Theingi Daw Khin Ohn Shwe Pyae Son Robe Textile Distribution	3.00
Total	527.37

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

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

National Covid-19 committee receives donations of well-wishers



Union Minister Dr Myint Htwe receives the donation of well-wishers to the National-Level Central Committee for COVID-19 Prevention in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. PHOTO: MNA

THE National-Level Central Committee for COVID-19 Prevention, Control and Treatment have received cash and hospital equipment donated by business companies and individuals yesterday.

Union Minister Dr Myint Htwe, the Secretary (2) of the central committee, attended the donation ceremony held at his office in Nay Pyi Taw.

On behalf of the well-wishers, U Nay Win Tun, the Vice Chairman of Myanmar Gems and Jewellery Entrepreneurs Association, explained the donation.

Union Minister for Construction U Han Zaw

also talked on the needs of cooperation and coordination in fighting against the Covid-19 pandemic.

Union Minister Dr Myint Htwe expressed thanks for the donation which will be used effectively to prevent transmission of the disease.

The Union Minister and senior health officials then presented honorary certificates of the donations to the Myanmar Gems and Jewellery Entrepreneurs Association and the jewellery companies for a total of K410.05 million in cash and medical equipment worth about K14.26 million, TZTM Group of Com-

panies and Mingalar Thiri Hotel family for K30 million, Mya Htike Company Limited family for medical equipment worth about K16.48 million, the J-Mr Yan Changzhi ZTE Co., Ltd worth about K11.2 million and Shwe Pyae Sone Robe textile distribution family for K3.06 million in cash.

In the afternoon, U Paik Htwe, the secretary of CEC and officials of Union Solidarity and Development Party, donated K50 million for measures against Covid-19, and the Union Minister for Health and Sports received it. — MNA (Translated by Aung Khin)



Director-General Dr Thar Tun Kyaw presents the certificate of honour to the Chinese Ambassador to Myanmar Mr Chen Hai for the donations. PHOTO: MNA

Chinese Embassy, Jack Ma Foundation, Alibaba Foundation donate Covid-19 medical supplies

CHINESE Embassy, Jack Ma Foundation and Alibaba Foundation donated medical supplies to the Ministry of Health and Sports for fighting against Covid-19 pandemic yesterday morning.

Ms Li Xiaoyan, the Minister Counsellor from the Chinese Embassy in Myanmar, explained the coordination between China and Myanmar in prevention, containment

and treatment of Covid-19.

Director-General Dr Thar Tun Kyaw of the ministry expressed thanks and presented the certificate of honour to the Chinese Ambassador to Myanmar Mr Chen Hai for the donations of over 2,000 detection kits, 5,000 suits of the personal protective equipment, 5,000 N95 masks and 200,000 surgical masks.

Mr Ron Aung, repre-

senting the Jack Ma Foundation and Alibaba Foundation, presented 100,000 units of N95 masks and 28,800 detection kits.

Professor Dr Zaw Than Tun, the Director-General of the Department of Medical Research, received the donated items and returned the certificate of honour. — MNA

(Translated by Aung Khin)

“People are the key”

Four more confirmed cases of COVID-19 on Monday, total cases reach 14

FROM PAGE-1

3. The confirmed patient (Case 14) is the 24-year-old man living in Kyaukme Township, northern Shan State. He arrived back to Tachileik Township from Bangkok, Thailand, on 25 March. He stayed in Tachileik for two nights. He left for Mandalay by flight on 27 March afternoon. He took a private

car from Mandalay to Kyaukme on that evening. On 28 March afternoon, as he began to suffer serious vomiting and cough, he was admitted to the People’s Hospital in Kyaukme Township in that evening. He received medical treatments as a person under investigation, and his specimens were taken for laboratory tests. He is in good health conditions.

4. As Myanmar has found more Covid-19 positive cases, persons in close contacts with these patients are identified and restricted on their travels. People are advised to strictly follow the awareness of the Ministry of Health and Sports.

(Translated by Aung Khin)

Laboratory results on Covid-19 (7: 30 pm, 30 March 2020)

Sr	Age	Gender	Travel History in the previous 14 days	Place for medical treatment	Quarantine/Admission Date to hospital	Lab result on Covid-19
11	66 yrs	Female	Yes (France)	A hotel in Yangon	28 March 2020	Postitive
12	65 yrs	Male	Yes (France)	A hotel in Yangon	28 March 2020	Positive
13	61 yrs	Female	Yes (France)	A hotel in Yangon	28 March 2020	Positive
14	24yrs	Male	Yes (France)	People’s Hospital, Kyaukme Township, Shan (north)	28 March 2020	Positive

- Remaining 51 PUIs are tested negative in Covid-19 lab results

Appeal to Myanmar citizens returning to Myanmar via border gates

- * Ten patients infected with COVID-19 disease have been confirmed in Myanmar as of 29 March 2020. Among them, a 44 year old man re-entered Myanmar on 23 March 2020, from Thailand through the Myawady Border Gate, and stayed in Mingaladon Township. Laboratory tests confirmed that he was infected with the COVID-19 disease.
- * In such a situation, people who returned in groups from Thailand and people living in the country are at high risk of infection and a possible epidemic is highly imminent.
- * Hence, those who entered Myanmar through border gates would no longer be allowed to go to their homes directly and they would have to undergo a 14-day quarantine at the designated facilities arranged by the State without fail.
- * As the Union Government is in the process of expanding quarantine facilities, those who will be returning to Myanmar through border gates are requested to wait for about two weeks and return to Myanmar only after 15-4-2020.

**Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Dated: 30 March, 2020**

Announcement

THE Directorate of Industrial Supervision and Inspection, Yangon Region and the Yangon Electricity Supply Corporation (YESC) have been conducting joint inspection for 200kVA and below 200kVA transformer at the end of the electricity connection process since February 2019, to reduce the number of procedures and the time taken to connect to the electricity supply.

We would like to announce that these joint final inspections are now mandato-

ry with effect from 1st April 2020 for all electricity connections for 200kVA and below 200kVA once they are ready for inspection. The inspection will take place within three days from the time that the Directorate of Industrial Supervision and Inspection is informed by the YESC. The joint inspections are coordinated by YESC and the Directorate of Industrial Supervision and Inspection, saving the client time and effort.

Yangon Electricity Supply Corporation

ARSA explosive kills two in Maungtaw

TWO MEN were killed and three injured by an explosive triggered by ARSA in Maungtaw Township, Rakhine State, yesterday morning.

At 8:55 am on 30 March 2020, a man identified as U San Aung Phyu, 50, and 11 Dainet residents from Mingalar Nyunt Village were on their motorbikes to go check on some bird traps. They parked their bikes near Kamaungseik Village and Aungzu Village and went into the woods on foot.

It was at the intersection to Bawtala Village, 20 feet from Hlaingti Creek bridge, that members of ARSA set of an explosive and shot U San Aung Phyu and his group with small firearms. They ran back to their mo-

torbikes but found them destroyed.

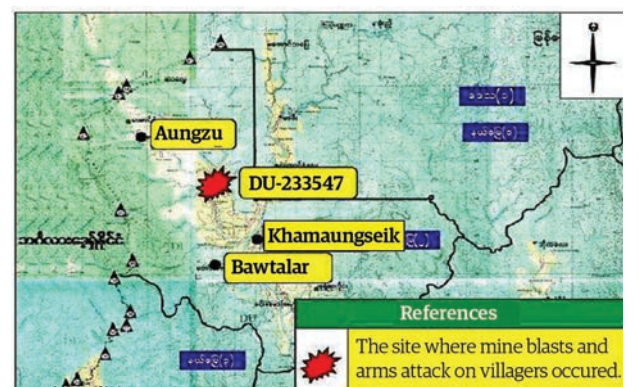
U San Aung Phyu and 9 others managed to escape to Kamaungseik Village around 9 am and he and 2 others suffered non-fatal serious injuries while two man identified as U Kyaw Thein Maung, 35, and U Maung Mae, 20, from Aungthapyay Village and Kamaungseik Village respectively, were missing.

At around 9:30 am, soldiers from Kamaungseik command and police officers went to the scene

of the incident and discovered the bodies of U Kyaw Thein Maung and U Maung Mae along with a 50-feet piece of wire and a cartridge and bullets of an AK47 firearm.

The three injured men including U San Aung Phyu were sent to Maungtaw People’s Hospital around 9:55 a.m. and are receiving medical treatment, according to the Myanmar Police Force. —MNA

(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)



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

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

Covid-19 unpacks Bagan city, temples

BAGAN cultural heritage zone, one of the UNESCO World Heritage Sites, is now sitting eerily empty amid Covid-19 fears, according to the Shwezigon Pagoda Trustees Board.

Normally, a larger number of tourists have been entering Bagan to catch a glimpse of historical temples in the backdrop of breathtaking sunsets in the ancient city. Now, Covid-19 concerns leave Bagan empty, said a local.

The visitors are scarcely seen in the famous historical temples of Bagan city; Shwezigon Pagoda, Lawkananda Pagoda, Tuyintaung Pagoda, Tantkyitaung Pagoda, Htilominlo Temple, Ananda Pagoda, Bu Pagoda, Thatbyinnyu Temple, Dhammayangyi Temple, Sulamani Temple, Payathonezu Temple, Mahabodhi Temple, Sulamani Temple, Manuha Temple, Gawdawpalin Temple, Myazedi Temple, Nanpaya Temple, and other famous pagodas, according to the board.

NyaungU Committee on Prevention, Control, and Treatment of Covid-19 are strictly supervising the restaurants not to have seating customers. The pilgrimage is available only between 9 am to 4 pm and the pilgrims are registered on the data of the pagoda trustees' board.



Pagodas, temples left empty in Bagan cultural heritage zone amid COVID-19. (FILE PHOTO)

The Bagan heritage site rarely sees visitors. Only three cars entered the site on 30 March.

"This phenomenon is rare. The social distancing due to Covid-19 turns the packed ancient cultural site into a virtually abandoned town", said Ko Nay Win Maung of Bagan.

The local tourism industry is hammered by Covid-19 and those engaged in local transportation rental business (three-

wheel, boat, horse-riding, car, e-bike, cycle, motorcycle), hotels and guesthouses, restaurants and souvenir shops are suffering from the Covid-19 concerns.

Earlier, during the high season from November to April, Bagan is usually packed with local pilgrims and tourists. They used to visit Bagan to observe the temples and stupas and view the sunset. The horse-riding business, motorcycle and electric bike rental business, hotels,

motels, and guesthouses were earning well in the high season, along with souvenir business. Those businesses created jobs for local residents.

The tourists like to enjoy Bagan's sunset views. Most of them are Chinese, French, and German. The businesses relying on tourism are nearly closed amid Covid-19 negative impacts. —Than Htike / Ko Htein

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

Stalls close to prevent COVID-19 spread in YGN

HAWKERS and food stalls across Yangon are ordered to close down for an indefinite period as a precautionary measure against COVID-19.

The announcement was made almost immediately after the Ministry of Health and Sports confirmed a positive

case of the virus and township development committees and administration offices have been notifying the public accordingly.

The Kyauktada Township Development Committee notified stalls to open at least 3 feet apart yesterday morning while

the Thaketa Administration Office announced that all stalls will be closed for an indefinite period starting from 4 pm, yesterday. They also requested people who have recently returned from abroad to notify the local administration office immediately.

Sule Pagoda will also be closed indefinitely and the number of people going about outside has visibly dropped as a result of both holidays and preventive measures against COVID-19. —Myint Maung

(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)

Stimulant tablets seized in Nawngkhio Township

A combined team including anti-narcotic drug force searched a passenger bus on Mandalay-Muse Road, Nawngkhio Township on 29 March evening.

The team arrested Soe Min Htaik (a) Ko Htaik together with 1,380 stimulant tablets and a hand phone. Police have opened lawsuit against him under the

Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substance Law, according to Myanmar Police Force. —GNLM
(Translated by TTN)

Suspect Soe Min Htaik (a) Ko Htaik seen together with seized stimulant tablets. PHOTO: MPF



Over 160 export, import items to get online licence in April

BY Nyein Nyein

MORE THAN 160 export and import items will get online licences starting from 1 April, the Trade Department under the Ministry of Commerce stated.

HS codes for 91 import items and 73 export items have been issued for the fully online system during an emergency period of Covid-19.

As per the fully online licencing system, only items registered under the HS code line are available. The applicants need to fill out the online application and the invoice and approval from the related departments are required to be attached in PDF format.

The necessary guidelines for the online systems have been shown on the website. They can see their application status on-



A cargo vessel is seen in the Yangon River. PHOTO: PHOE KHWAR

line.

The ministry has launched the online licencing system for export and import businesses starting from 1 April, with a view to reduce the person-to-person

contact and mitigate the spread of COVID-19.

This being so, under the new service, the process of licence applications, fee payment and receiving licences can be done

online.

The trade department offers an online system for a total of 164 items including CMP garment and necessary import items such as pharmaceuticals and relat-

ed items, hospital equipment, foodstuffs, fertilizers, palm oil, and oil products, milk and dairy products, electronic devices, fuel oil, lubricants, motorbikes and bicycles, agricultural products, lead, sugar, natural gas, and other products. Licence applications can be processed on www.myanmartradenet.com.mm.

The companies need to sign up membership, and application fee can be paid with the MCB eCommerce Pay of the Myanmar Citizens Bank at present. Later, the MPU eCommerce Pay will be available soon.

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

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

Domestic gold price likely to continue downward trend

By Nyein Nyein

THE price of the yellow metal in the domestic market is now touching a low of about K1,140,000 per tical (0.578 ounces, or 0.016 kilograms) and it is likely to extend its drop, said General Secretary U Ohn Myaing of Myanmar Gold Entrepreneurs Association.

"The Covid-19 impacts have suspended trading across the globe. The market drops due to Covid-19 fallout", he stressed.

"At the present time, about 75 per cent of the gold shop was temporarily shut down due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The domestic market trading is extremely slow," he continued.

"The market condition is not easy for sellers as well as buyers. Many local residents are keeping

only cash for emergency amidst Covid-19 concerns. Having said that, the market is cooling down", said U Ohn Myaing.

Global gold price stood at \$1,637 per ounce on 12 March while domestic gold price crossed K1,210,000 per tical. It fell to K1,151,500 per tical on 23 March when the price in the world market dipped to \$1,486 per ounce, as per market data.

Within three weeks, the global gold price dropped by only \$24 and the local gold price plunged by K70,000 per tical on 30 March. It fell to about K1,140,000, while the global gold price is pegged at \$1,613 per ounce.

With global gold prices on the uptick, the domestic prices hit fresh highs last year, reaching K1,000,000 per tical between 17 January and 21 February,

crossing K1,100,000 (22 June to 5 August), climbing to 1,200,000 (7 August-4 September), and then reaching a recorded peak of K1,300,000 on 5 September.

According to gold traders, in the month of November in the current fiscal, the local gold price moved in the range of 1,219,400 (2 November) and K1,173,000 (28 November). It reached the lowest level of K1,170,800 (3 December) and the highest level of K1,197,800 (28 December). The lowest price was K1,191,600 (2 January) and the highest was K1,232,700 (8 January). The gold price touched the lowest level of K1,214,100 on 5 February and the highest level of K1,234,200 on 28 February, according to the gold traders.

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

Agro-based exports cross \$1.95 bln in current FY

MYANMAR'S exports of agricultural products between 1 October and 20 March in the 2019-2020 financial year has risen to US\$1.95 billion from \$1.57 billion in the corresponding period of the 2018-2019FY, which reflects an increase of \$383.34 million, according to the trade figures released by the Ministry of Commerce.

In the export sector, the agriculture industry has performed the best, along with the natural gas sector. The major items of export by Myanmar in the agricultural sector are rice and broken rice, pulses, corn, and rubber. Myanmar also sends fruits and vegetables, sesame, dried tea leaves, sugar, and other agro-based products to other countries. Myanmar agro-products are primarily exported to China, Singapore, Malaysia, the Philippines, Bangladesh, India,

Indonesia, and Sri Lanka.

However, the export market remains uncertain due to unstable global demand.

According to an official from the Agriculture Department, the country requires specific export plans for each agro-product as they are currently being exported to external markets based upon supply and demand. Contract farming systems, the involvement of regional and state agriculture departments, exporters, traders, and some grower groups are required to meet production targets, the official said.

The Commerce Ministry is working to help farmers deal with challenges, such as high input costs, procurement of pedigree seeds, high cultivation costs, and erratic weather conditions. —Ko Htet

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

Commerce Ministry's report: Regional trade exceeds \$4.2 billion in Oct-Jan

THE value of Myanmar's regional trade with ASEAN countries through the sea routes and land borders was estimated at US\$4.2 billion in the four months (October-January) of the 2019-2020 financial year, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

The ministry has reported that imports surpassed exports in regional trade, with exports reaching \$1.29 billion and imports valued at \$2.9 billion.

Since October, Thailand has been Myanmar's largest trade

partner in ASEAN, with trade valued at \$1.7 billion, followed by Singapore (\$1.26 billion), Malaysia (\$496.148 million) and Indonesia (\$395.543 million). Viet Nam has emerged as the nation's fifth-largest trade partner, with bilateral trade estimated at \$275.13 million.

Meanwhile, Myanmar's bilateral trade with the Philippines was \$48.13 million, Cambodia \$11.36 million, while trade with Laos and Brunei stood less than \$1 million.

Myanmar's main export

items included agricultural and fishery products, as well as minerals, while imports included food and beverages, electronic tools, motor vehicles, and consumer goods. Apart from its main trade partner China, Myanmar's external trade was mostly carried out with regional trade partners. Trade with countries in the European Union, however, remained uncompetitive, compared with regional trade partners. —GNLM

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

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Taliban kill dozens of Afghan forces in two attacks

KUNDUZ (Afghanistan) — The Taliban have killed about two dozen Afghan police and pro-government fighters, officials said Monday, in two attacks that come as the foes are supposed to be preparing for peace talks.

In one of the incidents late Sunday, the insurgents killed at least six soldiers and 13 police and pro-government militiamen at several outposts near a police headquarters building in north-eastern Takhar province, provincial police spokesman Khalil

Assir told AFP. A wedding party was being held in the building at the time, but the attackers did not reach the headquarters.

“The police bravely defended and prevented the Taliban from entering the celebration,” Assir said.

Mohammad Azam Afzali, a member of Takhar’s provincial council, gave a slightly lower toll, saying 17 police and pro-government militiamen were killed in the fighting that lasted at least seven hours.

The Taliban did not immediately comment.

Meanwhile, a Taliban attack on an army outpost in southern Zabul province on Sunday night left at least six soldiers dead, the defence ministry said in a statement.

Four people were also wounded when a sticky bomb attached to a small truck went off in Kabul city on Monday morning, the interior ministry said.

No one immediately claimed that attack.

The latest bloodshed comes during diplomatic efforts to kick-start talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban.

The insurgents had agreed to speak to the government under a deal with the United States signed in Doha last month, but the dialogue has been derailed by a dispute over a prisoner exchange and the Taliban are also grumbling about the composition of Kabul’s negotiating team.

The talks were supposed to start in Oslo on March 10. Now it is unclear when they might begin. —AFP



Afghan and US flags are raised as a policeman keeps watch during a ceremony to hand over security control in the rugged mountains of the Panjshir valley on 24 July 2011. **PHOTO: AFP**

India reels from migrant worker coronavirus exodus

NEW DELHI (India)— Indian authorities struggled Monday to help millions left jobless by a crippling coronavirus lockdown, potentially undermining efforts to stop the virus ravaging the world’s second most-populous nation.

Since the lockdown began on Wednesday, hundreds of thousands of labourers have been heading back from cities where they worked to their home vil-

lages, some walking hundreds of miles and with little money or food.

The exodus has raised worries that those returning may spread coronavirus into rural areas, particularly with authorities resorting to cramming people onto buses and into relief camps and homeless shelters.

At the weekend in Delhi, migrant workers and their families fought and shoved their way onto

buses organised by India’s most populous state, Uttar Pradesh.

“I couldn’t afford the room we had so there was no choice, we had to leave,” said Ranjit Kumar, who walked with his wife and two-year-old son for two days to get from Haryana state to the bus terminal.

Around 90,000 people were transported in buses on Sunday from Ghaziabad outside Delhi, the Times of India reported. —AFP



Homeless people sit in lines outside a shelter to get food during a government-imposed nationwide lockdown as a preventive measure against the COVID-19 novel coronavirus in New Delhi on March 30, 2020. **PHOTO: AFP**

1 dead, 127 injured after train derails in central China



Rescuers work at the accident site after a train derailed at Yonghua Village of Yongxing County in Chenzhou City, central China’s Hunan Province, 30 March 2020. **PHOTO: XINHUA**

CHANGSHA — One person was killed and 127 others injured after a train derailed in the city of Chenzhou in central China’s Hunan Province Monday, local authorities said.

The accident happened in Yongxing County at 11:40 am when the train ran into a landslide, leaving five carriages derailed. The power generation car was caught on fire.

The fire has been put out and all of the injured have been sent

to hospitals, with four in serious conditions, local authorities said.

The train, T179, was running from the city of Jinan, east China’s Shandong Province, to Guangzhou in south China’s Guangdong Province, according to China Railway Guangzhou Group Co., Ltd.

The interruption caused delays of 31 trains as of 1:30 pm. The railway authorities have been adjusting routes to mitigate the impact. — Xinhua

Trump says US won’t pay Harry and Meghan security

WASHINGTON (United States) — President Donald Trump said Sunday that the United States would not pay security costs for Prince Harry and his wife Meghan, appearing to confirm that the royal couple have moved to live in California.

They reportedly flew by private jet from Canada to Los Angeles before the border between the two countries closed because of the deadly coronavirus outbreak.

The couple, who had been living in Canada for several months, rocked the royal family earlier this year with their decision to no longer represent the British monarchy and to pursue a new, independent life.

“I am a great friend and admirer of the Queen & the United Kingdom,” Trump tweeted.

“It was reported that Harry

and Meghan, who left the Kingdom, would reside permanently in Canada. Now they have left Canada for the U.S. however, the U.S. will not pay for their security protection. They must pay!”

Meghan grew up in Los Angeles and her mother, Doria Ragland, still lives in the city.

The one-time actress has a network of friends and work contacts in Los Angeles, where she could now restart her career.

Disney announced on Thursday that she will narrate a new film about a family of African elephants. Harry was reportedly caught in a hoax telephone call recently in which he attacked Trump for his stance on climate change. The Duke and Duchess of Sussex will formally step back from royal duties on 31 March. — AFP

Indigenous leaders issue plea for COVID pandemic protection

PARIS (France) – Indigenous leaders from across South America on Monday issued a desperate plea for protection against the COVID-19 pandemic, warning that the virus poses an “existential threat” to their communities.

With billions confined to their homes as the world tries to slow its unprecedented spread, tribes in the Amazon and Chaco regions are urging governments to ensure their territories are protected against outsiders possibly carrying the coronavirus.

“Indigenous people living in voluntary isolation are especially vulnerable to infectious disease as they don’t have any immunity at all against most diseases,” said Claudette Labonte, from the Congress of Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon Basin (COICA). “We call on governments to intensify surveillance and protection of indigenous territories, many of which are invaded by miners, drug traffickers, loggers, land-grabbers and tourists,” Labonte, a member of the Kamuyeneh community in French Guiana, told AFP. She said that illegal miners were seeking to take advantage of the pandemic to expand activity into French Guiana. Community leaders have decided to block the Marroni River for protection, she added.

Indigenous communities are crucial guardians of biodiversity. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change recognises them as a key player in the fight against global warming, and they are thought to protect forest that contains more than 200 billion tonnes of carbon.

Deforestation on indigenous lands is less than half the rate on other lands, but the communities are under increased threat from illegal activity and government-mandated agribusiness projects.

A group of 20 indigenous organisations from seven South American countries issued a call to governments to ensure that their protective “geographical isolation” was respected. —AFP ■

Demand explodes for New York food banks



People on low-incomes and retirees choose food at the World Harvest Food Bank after the announcement that the Trump administration reportedly has plans to cut food stamps to more than three million people across the country, in Los Angeles, California on 24 July 2019. PHOTO: AFP

NEW YORK (United States) — New York food banks have become inundated with newcomers deprived of income since the near-total halt of business in the United States’ economic capital.

Sacks of oranges, sweet potatoes and onions are spread over three tables at an open-air market in Washington Heights, a neighborhood in the north of Manhattan. Sterilized milk and cans of tuna and salmon cover three others.

Hundreds of people came over the weekend to restock at the distribution center, one of many run by City Harvest, a major New York-based charity.

There are no long lines reminiscent of the soup kitchens of the 1930s.

Instead, people trickle in, often wearing masks for protection and keeping their distance from each other under the direction of market volunteers.

Among the customers is Lina Alba, 40, a single mother with five children aged between 11 and 23. She worked as a maid in a Manhattan hotel until it closed two weeks ago.

Her two oldest children also lost their jobs.

“It is my first time,” she said. “We need the help now. This is crazy. So we don’t know what’s gonna happen in a few weeks.”

She’s trying to stay positive, though. “At least I’m spending time with my kids... I am the teacher, I am the mom -- I am everything.”

“We are alive, we are healthy, we

just need to pray.”

It took the single mother a week to register for unemployment -- the service flooded, pointing to much worse unemployment numbers than those announced by the federal government on Thursday.

But on Friday, “I did it, finally,” Alba said, relieved.

The benefits should start arriving in three weeks. Alba also hopes to receive soon at least \$1,200 from the federal government, thanks to a historic aid package passed last week by Congress. “It’s not gonna be enough,” but “you’re gonna appreciate anything right now,” she said, noting that “a lot of people” need help.

“It is the whole entire city.”

— AFP ■

UK medical fetish site donates equipment to NHS staff

LONDON (United Kingdom) — A UK medical fetish company has donated its entire stock of scrubs to the National Health Service after claims frontline medical staff do not have enough protective equipment during the coronavirus crisis.

MedFet UK announced on social media it had made the donation after being contacted by NHS bosses.

“Today we donated our entire stock of disposable scrubs to an NHS hospital,”

MedFet UK -- which describes itself on its website as an “online store for all your needle play medical fetish and roleplay supplies” -- announced on Twitter.

“It was just a few sets, because we don’t carry large stocks, but they were desperate, so we sent them free of charge.”

It added: “We have been contacted this week by representatives of NHS procurement all over the country, trying to

source basic protective equipment and clothing.”

The problem of a lack of personal protective equipment (PPE) for medical staff, who have complained about a scarcity of items such as face masks and medical scrubs, has become a contentious issue within the UK since the outbreak of the pandemic.

It has placed pressure on government ministers, amid claims the lack

of PPE reflects a shortfall in funding to public health services in recent years.

Speaking on Sunday, Housing Secretary Robert Jenrick said the government, which has blamed global shortages of kit, was working to get more equipment to health staff.

“We simply cannot and should not ask people to be on the frontline without the right protective equipment,” he said.—AFP ■

Coronavirus: latest global developments

The followings are the latest developments in the coronavirus crisis until 30 March 2020:

More than 700,000 cases

More than 727,080 cases of infection and 34,610 deaths have been recorded in 183 countries and territories since the epidemic started in China in December, according to an AFP tally compiled at 1100 GMT Monday based on official sources.

Italy has 10,779 deaths and has recorded 97,689 cases, Spain 7,340 deaths out of 85,195 cases, mainland China 3,304 deaths and 81,470 cases, Iran 2,757 deaths and 41,495 cases and France 2,606 fatalities and 40,174 cases.

A Greek woman aged in her 70s became the first person to die of COVID-19 on the Greek Aegean island of Lesbos, where the overcrowded Moria migrant camp is based.

Confinement

Moscow on Monday started a lockdown of indefinite duration and several regional authorities followed a request from Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin to make similar preparations. Russia has so far reported 1,534 cases and eight deaths.

In Nigeria, where 97 cases have been declared, the cities of Abuja and Lagos enter total confinement on Monday evening for at least 14 days.

More than 3.4 billion people in nearly 80 countries or territories have been called on or forced by the authorities to stay at home, around 43 percent of the world population, according to a count based on an AFP database.

Chinese masks for France

France continued to take delivery of masks via an airlift from China to cope with an acute shortage. After a first delivery on Sunday, France expects to receive a billion masks over 14 weeks.

Chloroquine for hospitals

The US Food and Drug Administration on Sunday authorised use of the anti-malarial drug chloroquine and its derivative hydroxychloroquine for use in hospitals as a treatment against the new coronavirus. It will not be available for the general public.

Oil prices plummet

Oil prices plunged in Asian trade to 17-year lows, with the US benchmark West Texas Intermediate falling 5.3 percent, while international benchmark Brent crude was off 6.5 percent at \$23.

EasyJet grounded

British airline EasyJet said on Monday it had grounded its entire fleet for an indefinite period.



This handout photo taken and released on 30 March 2020, by the French Defence Audiovisual Communication and Production Unit (ECPAD) shows a worker next to cargo unloaded from a plane carrying 10 million face masks ordered by France from China, at the Paris-Vatry Airport in Bussy-Lettree, eastern France, during a strict lockdown in France aimed at curbing the spread of COVID-19 (novel coronavirus). PHOTO: AFP

Wimbledon probably cancelled

Vice President of the German tennis federation Dirk Hordorff predicted in an interview with France's "Equipe" newspaper the cancellation of Wimbledon, which is scheduled for June 29-July 12. He said organisers would make the official announcement on Wednesday.

US: '100,000 to 200,000 deaths'

One of President Donald Trump's top medical advisors, Anthony Fauci, predicted that the virus could possibly result in 100,000 to 200,000 deaths in the United States.

Trump extended until April 30 recommendations for social distancing.

Britain: six months before normal

Britain's deputy chief medical officer Jenny Harries warned Sunday that life may not return to normal for six months or more, and that if emergency measures are lifted too quickly, the coronavirus virus could surge once again.

Markets resume sell-off

Asian markets fell following a steep drop on Wall Street as the jubilation from last week's enormous US stimulus package faded and investors returned their attention to the soaring infection and death rate of the pandemic. Equities have been hammered

as the virus spreads and the global economy heads for recession, but they bounced back for a few days last week as governments worldwide unleashed unprecedented rescue measures.

Returning Aussies in quarantine

Thousands of Australians returning from overseas were holed up in hotels for a mandatory 14-day quarantine as the country stepped up measures to slow the spread of the virus.

Some returning travellers have complained about conditions in the five-star hotels, reportedly writing in a private Facebook group that their food deliveries had been rejected and they had not received requested medication.

The government also announced it would spend Aus\$130 billion (\$80 billion) to supplement workers' wages over the next six months.

Police site crashes as Kiwis turn into shutdown snitches

New Zealanders have become so keen to report their neighbours for breaking coronavirus lockdown rules that police said a website dedicated to addressing the issue crashed soon after going live.

The South Pacific nation is in the midst of a four-week lockdown, with residents under orders to stay at home

or remain at least two metres (6.5 feet) apart if they must go outside.

Convictions over Hong Kong quarantine rules

Hong Kong has handed down its first convictions over violations of strict quarantine rules, with three people jailed over the breaches, local media

REF: AFP, Xinhua



Two person wearing protective masks walk under a snowfall on the Moscow outskirts on March 30, 2020, as the city and its surrounding regions imposed lockdowns today, that were being followed by other Russian regions in a bid to slow the spread of the COVID-19

reported.

A homeless man was jailed for three months after falsifying a home address to evade the isolation rules following his arrival from mainland China, while two other people were jailed for six weeks and 10 days respectively, the reports said.

Microbiologist Yuen Kwok-yung, a leading expert in the city's fight against the virus, warned on Monday that the outbreak there has got "slightly out of control", as confirmed infections increased threefold to 641 in the past two weeks.

Tough Phuket lockdown

The popular Thai holiday island has introduced even tougher restrictions than the rest of the kingdom -- which has declared a state of emergency -- with people and vehicles barred from leaving, although air travel is still an option.

The government took the step after more than 40 virus cases were discovered on the island.

Australian rugby league rolls out rescue package

Australia's National Rugby League rolled out an emergency rescue package to ensure all 16 clubs can stay afloat during the coronavirus shutdown, with plans to resume the season on July 1.

Funding was agreed that will see each team get an extra Aus\$2.5 million to cover operational costs between April and October, paid for by the NRL slashing its staffing levels by 95 percent, cutting the governing body's own expenses by half.

Myanmar Gazette

Head of Service Organization appointed

The President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has appointed Deputy Managing Director U Nyan Tun of the Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise under the Ministry of Electricity and Energy as Managing Director of the same enterprise on probation from the date he assumes charge of his duties.

President's Office continues announcement of illegal drug arrests, seizures action on tip-offs

THE Office of the President has issued Press Release No 13/2020 yesterday, publicly announcing the Ministry of Home Affairs' arrests and seizures in the fight against illicit drug trafficking up till 28 March.

The ministry made the arrests, acting on information, sent to the Drug Activity Special Complaint Department of the Office of the President as of 28 March.

The full text of the press release will be reported in the 31 March issue of The Global New Light of Myanmar. — GNLM



Myanmar Daily Weather Report

(Issued at 7:00 pm Monday 30th March, 2020)

BAY INFERENCE: Weather is partly cloudy over the Andaman Sea and South Bay and generally fair elsewhere over the Bay of Bengal.

FORECAST VALID UNTIL AFTERNOON OF THE 31st March, 2020: Weather will be partly cloudy in Upper Sagaing, Bago, Yangon, Ayeyawady and Taninthayi Regions, Kachin, Shan, Chin, Rakhine, Kayin 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 (3-6) feet off and along Myanmar Coasts.

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Likelihood of slight increase of day temperatures in Taninthayi Region, Shan, Kayah and Kayin States.

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 31st March, 2020: Generally fair weather.

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 31st March, 2020: Partly cloudy.

FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 31st March, 2020: Generally fair weather.

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SINCE the outbreak of Covid-19, we have seen the negative repercussions of the spreading of the virus, and industries which employ large labour forces, as well as employees in the hotels and tourism sector and related businesses, are bearing the brunt of the Coronavirus outbreak.

To remedy the economic impacts caused by Coronavirus (COVID-19), CMP enterprises, hotels and tourism services, along with small and medium enterprises (SMEs), are designated as priority sectors that need assistance, and a COVID-19 Fund of Ks 100 billion has been set up by the Union Government to distribute loans to them.

The loans will be provided to enterprises that are included in the priority sector at an interest of 1% for a one-year period.

To effectively support these businesses, the departments concerned are collecting data, and the industries, including SMEs and hotels and tourism sectors, are advised to systematically report to the authorities to ensure that they get the amount of financial assistance they need for their businesses.

They should all understand that incomplete applications, or applications that do not meet the stated requirements, will not be accepted.

The criteria for businesses which are eligible to apply for loans are as follows.

(a) The business must be a citizen-owned enterprise that has actually been harmed by COVID-19

(b) It must be an operating enterprise or an enterprise that has temporarily halted operations for three months from the date of this announcement, but can start up operations as soon as it receives the loan

(c) An enterprise that received its work permit or license from the relevant department before 31 March, 2018

(d) An enterprise that had an annual income during the previous two years

(e) An enterprise that has favourable conditions to pay back the loan

(f) An enterprise that will use the loan money only in paying salaries of blue and white collar workers and operations

(g) As for a company, it shall not be the one that has been suspended or canceled from the company registration. As for a non-company, it shall not be the one that has been suspended or canceled from the registration by the relevant department or organization.

(h) An enterprise that has paid its income tax/commercial



NGOs press drug firm Gilead over potential virus treatment

GENEVA (Switzerland) —More than 150 organisations and individuals on Monday urged US biotechnology firm Gilead not to enforce exclusivity over a drug that might be used to treat COVID-19 patients.

In an open letter, 145 non-governmental organisations, including Doctors Without Borders (MSF) and Oxfam, and 12 individuals claimed Gilead Sciences held primary patents of remdesivir in more than 70 countries.

That meant they could block generic development of the drug until 2031.

The open letter to Gilead chief executive Daniel O'Day was circulated by MSF.

"We write to request that Gilead take immediate actions to ensure rapid availability, affordability and accessibility of its experimental therapy remdesivir for the treatment of COVID-19, pending the results of the clinical trials demonstrating its efficacy," it said.

"We are seriously con-



In this photo illustration a Gilead logo is displayed on a smartphone photographed on coronavirus COVID-19 illustration graphic background on 25 March 2020 in Arlington, Virginia. **PHOTO: AFP**

cerned with Gilead's current approach to remdesivir, which may obscure access to this potentially critical treatment for COVID-19."

The letter said it was "unacceptable for Gilead's remdesivir to be put under the company's

exclusive control".

It urged Gilead to declare that it would not claim and enforce exclusivity.

"An exclusivity and monopoly-based approach will fail the world in combating the COVID-19 pandemic. Gilead must

act in the public interest now," the letter concluded.

Remdesivir is not new per se, having been developed to fight other viruses including Ebola, where it was shown to be ineffective. It has not yet been approved for anything.

But it is in the last phase of clinical trials in China and elsewhere in Asia, and doctors have reported that it is effective in combating the new coronavirus.

Only through randomised clinical trials however will scientists know for sure if the treatment works.

"There's only one drug right now that we think may have real efficacy. And that's remdesivir," World Health Organization official Bruce Aylward told journalists in China earlier this month.

In an open letter from O'Day, posted Saturday on Gilead's website, he said the firm hoped remdesivir would prove to be a safe and effective treatment.

"If it is approved, we will work to ensure affordability and access so that remdesivir is available to patients with the greatest need," he said.

According to Bank of America analysts quoted in the US press, Gilead could pocket up to \$2.5 billion thanks to its anti-viral drug. —AFP

Facebook offers \$100 mn to help virus-hit news media

WASHINGTON (United States) — Facebook said Monday it was donating \$100 million to support news organizations globally hurting from the coronavirus pandemic, citing the need for reliable information about the crisis.

"The news industry is working under extraordinary conditions to keep people informed during the COVID-19 pandemic," said Facebook's

news partnerships director, Campbell Brown.

"At a time when journalism is needed more than ever, ad revenues are declining due to the economic impact of the virus. Local journalists are being hit especially hard, even as people turn to them for critical information to keep their friends, families and communities safe."

The new funding includes \$25 million in emergency grants

for local news through the Facebook Journalism Project, and \$75 million for additional marketing efforts "to move money over to news organizations around the world," according to a statement.

Facebook said it will offer grants "to publishers most in need in the hardest hit countries."

The move comes amid growing concerns of cutbacks and closures of news organizations hit by lockdowns and a massive slump in advertising resulting from the health crisis.

In recent months Facebook and Google have stepped up efforts to help news organizations, following criticism that their dominance of online advertising has made it difficult for media to profit from digital operations.

Facebook has also supported fact-checking operations with AFP and other media companies, including Reuters and the Associated Press, under which content rated false is downgraded in news feeds so that fewer people see it. — AFP



In this file photo the Facebook logo is displayed on a mobile phone screen photographed on coronavirus COVID-19 illustration graphic background on 25 March 2020 in Arlington, Virginia. **PHOTO: AFP**

Calls grow for Japan PM to declare state of emergency over virus

TOKYO — Calls grew Monday for Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to declare a state of emergency to curb the spread of the novel coronavirus before it is too late.

"I personally feel it's time (Japan) makes the declaration, and devises measures based on that," Satoshi Kamayachi, an executive board member of the Japan Medical Association also serving on a government expert panel on COVID-19, said at a press conference.

Referring to an unofficial telephone conference held with other members of the panel prior to the press conference, he said, "Almost everyone agreed that it's better to declare a state of emergency."

Osaka Gov. Hirofumi Yoshimura, citing an increase in coronavirus cases in cities with an unidentified infection route, said that Tokyo and Osaka would be prime candidates to enforce measures, such as issuing stay-at-home requests to residents.

According to a special bill passed earlier this month to cope with the spread of the novel coronavirus, once a declaration is made by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, prefectural governors have

the authority to carry out specific measures.

"The central government has said (Japan) is 'barely holding up,' so the declaration needs to be made at this stage. If we leave it too late, (the virus) will be uncontrollable," Yoshimura told reporters at the Osaka prefectural office.

While residents of Osaka have already been told twice to refrain from going out unnecessarily on weekends, "We have no basis for it without a declaration. The requests should really be made based on law," he said.

Yukio Edano, leader of the main opposition Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan, agreed that Japan is entering a new phase.

"We are at the stage where we seriously need to consider declaring a state of emergency, accompanied by compensation measures," he said Monday.

As the expert panel's main role is to analyze the spread of the pneumonia-causing virus in Japan, Abe will need to consult with a separate advisory committee, of which Kamayachi is also a member, when declaring a state of emergency. — Kyodo News

Tokyo-bound medical evacuation plane catches fire in Manila, kills 8

MANILA — A small plane chartered to carry out a medical evacuation to Tokyo caught fire at Manila's international airport on Sunday night, killing all eight people aboard, police and aviation authorities said.

The aircraft was carrying six Filipinos, including a nurse and a doctor, as well as a Canadian patient and one American companion, according to Philippine Red Cross and other sources.

The plane was heading to Japan to allow the patient to receive medical treatment as major medical institutions in

the Philippines have stopped accepting new patients due to the spread of the coronavirus, according to the sources.

Scheduled flights in and out of Manila have been severely curtailed due to the government refusing entry to all foreigners to stem the spread of the virus.

According to aviation authorities and other sources, the plane appears to have run into a technical problem at the end of a runway while it was taxiing for take-off. After the incident, the runway was closed temporarily but reopened Monday morning. — Kyodo News



The wreckage of a medical evacuation charter plane headed for Tokyo's Haneda airport is seen on the runway of Ninoy Aquino International Airport in Manila 29 on March 2020. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

NEWS In BRIEF

Wuhan closes COVID-19 hospital for critical patients

WUHAN — A hospital designated for treating critically ill COVID-19 patients in Wuhan was closed Monday as the number of hospitalized patients keeps falling in the city.

Till Monday, all the COVID-19 patients have been transferred or discharged from the city's Union Hospital's Optics Valley branch, which had treated a total of 1,462 COVID-19 patients since 9 February. Assistant medical teams from Shanghai, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Fujian, Shandong and Guangdong will return after nearly two months of arduous work in the hospital. The hospital will now prepare to receive patients with non-COVID-19 ailments. According to the provincial health commission of Hubei, 1,733 COVID-19 patients are still in hospital, among which 427 are in severe condition and another 174 in critical condition. — Xinhua ■

New Zealander shot dead by suspected rebels in Indonesia's Papua

JAKARTA — Suspected rebels in Indonesia's easternmost province of Papua shot dead a New Zealander employed by an affiliate of US gold and copper mining company Freeport McMoRan and Mining Industry on Monday, according to local police.

They said an armed group of eight men, believed to be members of the separatist Free Papua Movement, shot 57-year-old Graeme Thomas Weal, an employee of PT Freeport Indonesia, at around 2 pm local time in the Kuala Kencana area of Mimika Regency, where the company operates.

"The shooting came from the jungle (behind the Freeport office)," the regency's police chief Era Adhinata told reporters, adding that the suspected rebels also injured two Indonesian employees of the same local affiliate. Over the past year, attacks by separatist rebels against Indonesian security forces have increased after a long period of relative calm in the province— Kyodo News ■

North Korea says tested 'super-large' rocket launchers

SEOUL (South Korea) — Nuclear-armed North Korea successfully tested "super-large multiple rocket launchers", state media said on Monday, but leader Kim Jong Un was not described as commanding the drill as analysts say Pyongyang seeks to normalise its launches.

With the world focused on the coronavirus pandemic and North Korea insisting it has not had a single COVID-19 case, the isolated state has carried out four such firings this month.

Unusually, the official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) did not say in its report that Kim had directed Sunday's test.

The leader is almost always shown overseeing the North's launches but on this occasion KCNA said it was led by ruling

party vice chairman Ri Pyong Chol and conducted by the Academy of National Defence Science.

South Korea had said two projectiles — presumed to be ballistic missiles — were fired on Sunday from the North Korean port city of Wonsan into the Sea of Japan, also known as the East Sea.

Images carried by the North's official Rodong Sinmun newspaper showed rockets blasting out of a launcher with six firing tubes, striking what appeared to be an island target. Kim was not seen in the photos.

"By Kim's absence, North Korea is trying to reduce the significance of the launch and stressing that the missile test is just a part of normal drills," said Go Myong-hyun, an analyst at the

Asan Institute for Policy Studies.

The last time Kim was not seen at such an event was when the North test-fired a new submarine-launched ballistic missile in October, just days before officials from Pyongyang and Washington were due to meet in Stockholm to rekindle stalled diplomacy.

However some analysts believe he was actually present, as some items he habitually uses were visible.

Virus warnings

The string of weapons drills come during a prolonged hiatus in disarmament talks with the United States and despite recent overtures from Washington offering help to contain the pandemic.

North Korea has closed its

borders to try to protect itself from the novel coronavirus and is one of the few remaining countries yet to report a case of the disease that has killed almost 34,000 people worldwide.

But the virus is likely to have reached the secretive nation, it is widely believed, with health experts warning it could devastate the country given its weak medical infrastructure and widespread malnutrition.

The day after another firing earlier this month, North Korean state media said Kim had received a letter from US President Donald Trump detailing a plan to develop ties — a move later confirmed by a White House official.

The report cited Kim's powerful sister Kim Yo Jong, who warned that the apparently good personal relationship between the two leaders would not be enough to foster broader relations. Trump also "expressed his intent to render cooperation in the anti-epidemic work", she said in a statement published by KCNA.

Analysts say the North has been continuing to refine its weapons capabilities more than a year after a summit between Kim and Trump broke down in Hanoi.

Negotiations have since been deadlocked over sanctions relief and what the North would be willing to give up in return.

North Korea is under multiple sets of sanctions from the United Nations, United States and others over its banned weapons programmes. — AFP ■



North Korea has carried out four such firings this month. PHOTO: AFP

Twitter removes two Bolsonaro tweets questioning virus quarantine

SAO PAULO (Brazil) — Two tweets by Brazilian president Jair Bolsonaro in which he questioned quarantine measures aimed at containing the novel coronavirus were removed Sunday, on the grounds that they violated the social network's rules.

The far-right leader had posted several videos in which he flouted his government's social distancing guidelines by mixing with supporters on the streets of Brasilia and urging them to keep the economy going.

Two of the posts were removed and replaced with a notice explaining why they had been taken down.

Twitter explained in a statement that it had recently expanded its global rules on managing content that contradicted public health information from official sources and could put people at greater risk of transmitting COVID-19.

In one of the deleted videos, Bolsonaro tells a street vendor, "What I have been hearing from people is that they want to work."

"What I have said from the beginning is that 'we are going to be careful, the over-65s stay at home,'" he said.

"We just can't stand still, there is fear because if you don't die of the disease, you starve," the vendor is seen telling Bolsonaro, who responds: "You're not going to die!"

In another video, the president calls for a "return



Brazilian soldiers disinfect the Subway Central Station in Brasilia on 29 March 2020. PHOTO: AFP

to normality," questioning quarantine measures imposed by governors and some mayors across the giant South American country as an effective containment measure against the virus.

"If it continues like this, with the amount of unemployment what we will have later is a very serious problem that will take years to be resolved," he said of the isolation measures.

"Brazil cannot stop or we'll turn into Venezuela," Bolsonaro later told reporters outside his official residence.

On Saturday, Health Minister Luiz Henrique Mandetta highlighted the importance of containment as a means of fighting the coronavirus, which has already infected 3,904 people in Brazil, leaving 114 dead, according to the latest official figures. "Some people want me to shut up, follow

the protocols," said Bolsonaro. "How many times does the doctor not follow the protocol?" — AFP ■

Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC)

Announcement of Additional Information for the BIMSTEC Flag and Logo Competition

- ❖ Application Deadline - 15-5-2020
 - ❖ Email Address for Application - bimsteclogo.myanmar@gmail.com
(Email copy to: bimsteclogo-sec@bimstec.org)
 - ❖ Detailed information including Terms and Conditions and selection process will be available at the official facebook pages of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Information (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Myanmar, MOI Webportal Myanmar). The application forms can be downloaded at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs's website (www.mofa.gov.mm).
 - ❖ Reference Information will be available at BIMSTEC website (www.bimstec.org).
 - ❖ All Myanmar citizens either individual or a team are eligible for competition.
 - ❖ For more details, please contact the Sub-Regional Cooperation Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Telephone Number: 067-3412447 at office hours.
- Sub-Regional Cooperation Division
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

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

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

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Consignees of cargo carried on M.V PHU DAT 168 VOY. NO. (-) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 28-3-2020 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of TMIT 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 RK SHIPPING & TRADING
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Phone No: 2301178

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V SINAR BANDA VOY. NO. (180 N/S)

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V SINAR BANDA VOY. NO. (180 N/S) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 30-3-2020 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of MITT/MIP 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 SAMUDERA SHIPPING LINE

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V AS SERENA VOY. NO. (013N/014S)

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V AS SERENA VOY. NO. (013N/014S) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 29-3-2020 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of MITT where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

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

Phone No: 2301185

Japanese comedian Shimura dies of coronavirus-related pneumonia

TOKYO — Ken Shimura, a veteran slapstick comedian and a one-time member of rockabilly band and comedy group The Drifters, died Sunday of pneumonia caused by the novel coronavirus, his agency said. He was 70.

A household name in Japan, Shimura last week became the first Japanese entertainment figure to announce an infection with the virus. His agency announced his death from the disease known as COVID-19 on Monday.

Shimura was admitted to a Tokyo hospital on March 20 after developing a fever and was diagnosed with severe pneumonia. The comedian was put on a ventilator on March 21 and never regained consciousness. He tested positive for the virus on March 23.

“I don’t think he imagined he would die a death like this,” said a representative of his agency. “I am sure he was working hard with his sense of mission to deliver laughter to people.”



Comedian Ken Shimura. — Kyodo News

Formed by the late actor Chosuke Ikariya and four other men in 1964, the group, which opened for The Beatles in Japan in 1966, became one of the biggest successes in Japanese comedy history. The surviving members of The Drifters — Cha Kato, 77, Boo Takagi, 87, and Koji Nakamoto, 78 — who also belong to the same agency, were too shocked

to issue a statement immediately after the news. They released comments later in the day.

“I feel hatred for the coronavirus that took away the life of The Drifters’ treasure, and a Japanese treasure. I want everyone to take his death as something that could happen around you and take care of themselves,” Kato said in a statement.

Nakamoto said in the same statement that it is “really regretful” that Shimura, the youngest member of the group, had to die following the death of Ikariya.

“I wanted to do a skit with you again. I extend my deepest condolences,” said Takagi in the statement. Famous Japanese songstress Naoko Ken tweeted of her friend’s death, “I cannot think anything now. I can no longer see Ken-chan. This is too sad.”

“I was happy working with you. Thank you,” Ken, who played Shimura’s wife in TV comedy skits, also wrote. — Kyodo News ■

Country music star Joe Diffie dies of coronavirus



Country music star Joe Diffie has died at the age of 61 of coronavirus. PHOTO: AFP

His death came just two days after he had announced that he had tested positive for the virus and was receiving medical care.

“My family and I are asking for privacy at this time,” he said. “We want to remind the public and all my fans to be vigilant, cautious and careful during this pandemic.”

Diffie, who was from Oklahoma, had several hit songs during the 1990s including “Pickup Man,” “Prop Me Up Beside the Jukebox (If I Die)” and “John Deere Green.”

His first album, “A Thousand Winding Roads,” was released in 1990 and including his hit song “Home.”

Nearly 137,000 people have tested positive for coronavirus in the United States and there have been more than 2,400 deaths. —AFP ■

WASHINGTON (United States) — Joe Diffie, a Grammy award-winning country music singer who had several chart-topping hits in the 1990s, has died of coronavirus. He was 61.

Diffie’s death was announced on his Facebook page, which said he died on Sunday “from complications of coronavirus.”

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V ELPIDA GR

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V ELPIDA GR VOY. NO. (1930) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 31-3-2020 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of MITT-3 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 CHUN AN INTERNATIONAL
LOGISTICS CO, LTD

Phone No: 2301928

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V YANTRA BHUM VOY. NO. (1039 W/E)

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V YANTRA BHUM VOY. NO. (1039 W/E) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 30-3-2020 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of MITT/MIP 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 REGIONAL CONTAINER
LINES

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V TRIESTE TRADER VOY. NO. (013S)

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V TRIESTE TRADER VOY. NO. (013S) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 29-3-2020 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of MITT/MIP 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 MCC TRANSPORT (S’PORE)
PTE LTD

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V NINOS VOY. NO. (1118 S/N)

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V NINOS VOY. NO. (1118 S/N) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 30-3-2020 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of HPT where it will lie at the consignee’s risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

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

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V PNT MIGHTY

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V PNT MIGHTY VOY. NO. (02/2020) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 28-3-2020 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of SPW-6 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 BEN LINE AGENCIES
(SINGAPORE) PTE, LTD

Phone No: 2301928

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V ALVAN VOY. NO. (SCY 1076)

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V ALVAN VOY. NO. (SCY 1076) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 31-3-2020 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of MITT where it will lie at the consignee’s risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S LAND AND SEA
INTERMODAL LOGISTICS SDN BHD LINE

Phone No: 2301185

G-20 trade ministers hold emergency talks on coronavirus impact



Group of 20 leaders meet in Osaka in June 2019. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

TOKYO — Trade ministers from the Group of 20 major economies held an emergency teleconference Monday on the economic impact of the novel coronavirus.

The pandemic that originated in Asia and engulfed Europe and North America has sparked fears of a global recession as authorities impose travel restrictions and citywide lockdowns

in a bid to slow the spread of COVID-19.

The trade ministers, including Hiroshi Kajiyama of Japan, are expected to discuss ways to prevent supply chain disruptions for medical supplies and other key goods, according to a Japanese official.

The emergency meeting was called by Saudi Arabia to follow up on last week's telecon-

ference among G-20 leaders, in which they agreed to "continue working together to...coordinate responses in ways that avoid unnecessary interference with international traffic and trade."

"Emergency measures aimed at protecting health will be targeted, proportionate, transparent, and temporary," the leaders said in a joint statement. — Kyodo News

Police site crashes as Kiwis turn into shutdown snitches

WELLINGTON (New Zealand) — New Zealanders have become so keen to report their neighbours for breaking coronavirus lockdown rules that police on Monday said a website dedicated to addressing the issue crashed soon after going live.

The South Pacific nation is in the midst of a four-week COVID-19 lockdown, with residents under orders to stay at home or remain at least two metres (6.5 feet) apart if they must go outside.

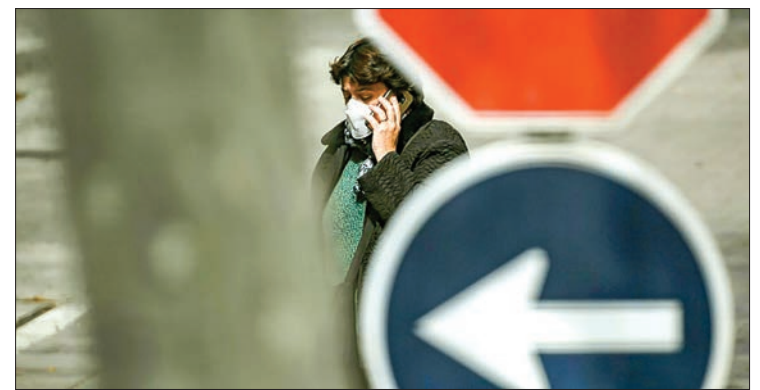
Police commissioner Mike Bush said that a police website www.police.govt.nz/105support opened on Sunday afternoon and received such heavy traffic that it temporarily crashed.

"We've had 4,200 reports of

people believing others weren't complying," he told reporters.

"It shows how determined Kiwis are that everyone complies with us." Bush said breaches included a party of about 60 people at a backpacker hostel in Queenstown and tourists continuing to travel the country in campervans.

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern backed the informants and also urged the public to report any price gouging at supermarkets via a dedicated email address. "Now is not the time to bend the rules. This is a time to stay at home and save lives," she told reporters. New Zealand, with a population of about five million, has 552 confirmed COVID-19 cases, one of them fatal. —AFP ■



Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern backed the informants, saying 'now is not the time to bend the rules'. PHOTO: AFP

Hungary's Orban seeks sweeping new powers in virus fight

BUDAPEST (Hungary) — Hungary's parliament was expected to endorse a bill on Monday giving nationalist premier Viktor Orban sweeping new powers he says he needs to fight the new coronavirus pandemic.

Critics at home and abroad have condemned the "anti-coronavirus defence law", saying it gives Orban unnecessary and unlimited power in a ruse to cement his leadership rather than battle the virus.

After declaring a state of emergency on 11 March, Orban expects parliament to allow him to extend it indefinitely beyond an initial 15-day period and largely rule by decree in order to fight COVID-19 and its impacts.

According to the draft posted on the parliament website on March 20, the bill would enable the government to indefinitely extend powers of decree until it decides when the state of emergency is over, removing the current requirement for MPs to approve any extension.

It also introduces jail terms



Orban's government proposed the bill to parliament to enable wide rule-by-decree powers. PHOTO: AFP

of up to five years for anyone spreading "falsehoods" about the virus or the measures against it, stoking new worries for press freedom.

Since taking power in 2010, the self-styled "illiberal" nationalist has transformed Hungary's political, judicial and constitutional landscape.

The 56-year-old has frequently clashed with European institutions, NGOs and rights groups with Brussels suing

Hungary for "breaching" EU values — charges fiercely denied by Budapest.

Orban has given criticism of the coronavirus law short shrift, accusing critics of alarmism and appealing to "European nit-pickers" to let Hungary defend itself against COVID-19.

'Imaginary demons'

"If they can't help, then at least don't stop the Hungarians from defending (against the virus),"

he said Friday. His justice minister, Judit Varga, told foreign reporters Friday that parliament could revoke the decrees at any time, and that the opposition were "fighting imaginary demons and not dealing with reality".

She also said decrees could be sent to the constitutional court for review.

A government spokesperson Zoltan Kovacs insisted on Twitter Monday that the bill is time limited by the parliament's powers of revoke, and by the pandemic itself which "hopefully ends one day".

He added that "72 per cent of Hungarians support this measure", referring to a recent poll about the provision on spreading falsehoods.

Last week, opposition MPs said however they do not trust Orban not to abuse unlimited special powers and refused to back the bill unless a time deadline is imposed on the decrees.

But it is almost certain to be made law when it comes before

MPs as Orban's Fidesz party enjoys a two-thirds majority.

A government minister, Gergely Gulyas, said it could come into force Monday midnight if the house speaker and Hungarian president sign it immediately.

Agnes Kunhalmi, a lawmaker for socialist opposition party MSZP, urged Orban to "not perpetrate political games against the opposition" and add a three-month expiration date to the bill.

'Principles of democracy'

Akos Hadhazy, an independent MP, told AFP that Orban did not need any "extraordinary empowerment" as his party already controls parliament and had instead set up a "trap for the opposition" with pro-government media accusing it of being on the side of the virus by opposing the bill. Criticism of the bill has also come from abroad with the UN human rights office saying it was following the Hungarian developments "with concern". —AFP ■

Stocks, oil prices slide on shattered demand

TOKYO — World stock markets mostly tumbled and oil prices plunged Monday despite fresh Chinese and Australian stimulus to shore up an economy shattered by the coronavirus fallout.

Australia was out on its own — its stock market surging 7.0 per cent as the country's virus infections slowed, while after the close of trade in Sydney the government unveiled an income-support plan worth US\$80 billion.

Crude oil meanwhile struck the lowest levels in more than 17 years on Monday, with Brent North Sea tumbling to \$22.58 per barrel at one point.

"Estimates for the (oil) demand side are being revised downwards on an almost daily basis, while on the supply side there is still no sign of any reconciliation between Saudi Arabia and Russia" regarding their price war, Commerzbank said in

a client note.

There are warnings that oil could sink even further as storage tanks around the world approach full capacity.

Elsewhere Monday, the dollar climbed across the board, while Asian stock markets mostly fell following Friday's steep drop on Wall Street and Europe.

Jubilation over last week's enormous US stimulus package has largely faded, with investors returning their attention to the soaring infection and death rate figures of the coronavirus.

US President Donald Trump on Friday signed off Washington's stimulus measures worth more than \$2 trillion.

While the disease ravages populations and the global economy grinds to a halt with 40 per cent of the planet in lockdown, experts are struggling to get a grip on the scale of the crisis that

is forecast to cause a worldwide recession.

Analysts say there are likely more dark days ahead, with Trump abandoning his timetable for life returning to normal in the United States and extending emergency restrictions for another month.

The president said he expected the country to "be well on our way to recovery" by June 1 — dropping his previous target of mid-April.

Meanwhile, senior US scientist Anthony Fauci issued a tentative prediction that COVID-19 could claim up to 200,000 lives in the US.

Governments and central banks have acted to shore up the global economy, pledging around \$5 trillion in stimulus support, with China on Monday joining the party by lowering bank borrowing costs and pumping billions



With billions of people around the world in lockdown for the foreseeable future, there are increasing worries about the impact on the global economy, which is already expected to fall into recession. **PHOTO: AFP**

of dollars into financial markets, while Singapore also eased rates.

AxiCorp's Stephen Innes said markets looked like they were "nearing policy fatigue where it becomes less effective, and as the surprise element diminishes, no one cares".

"So, while policy responses in the US and Europe have been spectacular... the coronavirus keeps spreading globally, deepening fears of the economic and financial impact across countries.

More market turmoil likely lies ahead."

He also pointed out that with the corporate reporting season approaching "now we are about to enter a vortex of bad earnings, bad economic data, and bankruptcies". Measures to contain the coronavirus outbreak will slash German 2020 economic output before a rebound next year; a panel of economists who advise the government said Monday.—AFP ■

China slashes rate, pumps \$7 bn into market to counter virus

BEIJING (China) — China's central bank on Monday cut an interest rate on loans to banks by the largest margin in five years and injected 50 billion yuan (\$7 billion) into the financial system to help the world's second-largest economy weather the coronavirus impact.

The People's Bank of China (PBoC) said it launched a 50-billion-yuan reverse repurchase operation on Monday and lowered the seven-day reverse repurchase rate from 2.40 per cent to 2.20 per cent.

It was the "largest cut since

2015 and takes the 7-day reverse repo rate to its lowest on record", said Julian Evans-Pritchard, senior China economist at Capital Economics.

"By offering funds at a lower rate, the PBoC will be able to keep market interbank rates low even as the liquidity from the RRR (reserve requirement ratio) cuts is absorbed by the banking system," he said, referring to an earlier lowering of the amount of cash lenders must keep in reserve.

The deadly pathogen has claimed almost 40,000 lives worldwide, hitting businesses

and consumers, and its global spread has dampened hope of a quick recovery in export-dependent China, where the pandemic first erupted in December.

The latest move comes as governments and central banks around the world ease monetary policy and unveil titanic stimulus measures worth around \$5 trillion to counter the economic impact of the pandemic, which forecasters warn will cause a deep recession.

The Communist Party's decision-making politburo also called last Friday for stronger counter-cyclical policy measures and a step-up in stimulus.

The politburo said where appropriate, the fiscal deficit ratio should be raised, special treasury bonds should be issued, and that there should be an increased quota of local government special bond issuance, China's official Xinhua News Agency reported.

Effective loan rates should also be guided down, "maintaining reasonable and sufficient liquidity", officials added. Monday's move appears to have had little impact on market sentiment, with Shanghai's key stock index about one per cent lower in the afternoon.—AFP ■



The global spread of the coronavirus has dampened hope of a quick recovery in export-dependent China, where the pandemic first erupted in December. **PHOTO: AFP**

Ruling party asks for 60 tril yen stimulus to aid virus-hit economy

TOKYO — The ruling Liberal Democratic Party called Monday for a 60 trillion yen (\$556 billion) stimulus package to help households and small businesses survive the fallout from the new coronavirus outbreak after Prime Minister Shinzo Abe warned of a prolonged battle.

Abe has pledged to compile the "boldest-ever" package that would exceed the 56.8 trillion yen stimulus at the time of the 2008 global financial crisis. His administration plans to finalize the details by early April and secure funding in an extra budget for fiscal 2020.

The LDP is proposing that fiscal spending should be around 20 trillion yen, compared with the 15 trillion yen in the stimulus package formulated in the aftermath of the collapse of Lehman Brothers Holdings Inc.

The coronavirus outbreak that began in China late last year has already dealt a blow to a weakening economy hit by a consumption tax hike in October from 8 per cent to 10 per cent. Opposition lawmakers, along with some within the LDP, have been stepping up calls for lowering the tax rate to reduce the burden on

struggling households.

Abe, who went ahead with the twice-delayed tax hike, has sounded negative about lowering it now, casting doubt over its effect.

In its recommendations, the LDP aims to give benefits worth over 10 trillion yen, equivalent to a 5 percentage point cut in the consumption tax rate. Such benefits include cash handouts to households, and subsidies to small and midsized companies and freelancers.

The proposals came after Abe unveiled a plan to give cash to households during a press conference on Saturday, though he said the government would limit eligibility after some lawmakers stressed the need for a nondiscriminatory cash handout scheme. To expand financial support to small and midsized companies, Abe pledged to provide loans with no interest or collateral at private financial institutions. The LDP said over 40 trillion yen is needed to ensure companies can have access to funding and to give subsidies to firms that keep jobs despite the difficult business environment.—Kyodo News ■

New Olympic date likely 'this week': organisers

TOKYO (Japan) — New dates for the delayed Tokyo 2020 Olympics will likely be revealed this week, organisers said Monday after the coronavirus forced the historic decision to postpone the Games until next year.

Tokyo 2020 chief Yoshiro Mori told reporters they were weighing the pros and cons of a summer and spring Games and he expected a decision from the International Olympic Committee (IOC) soon.

"I think perhaps there will be some kind of communication from (IOC) President (Thomas) Bach this week," Mori told reporters.

The Tokyo 2020 Olympics were due to open on July 24 and run for 16 days, but the coronavirus pandemic forced the first peace-time postponement of the Games.

The IOC and Japan had for weeks insisted the show could go on but the rapid spread of COVID-19 prompted growing disquiet among athletes and sporting federations. The Olympics was the highest-profile sporting casualty of the coronavirus that has wiped out fixtures worldwide and all but halted professional sport.

There was some speculation that Japanese organisers could take advantage of the blank can-

vas to shift the Games to spring, avoiding the heat of the Tokyo summer that had been their main concern before coronavirus struck.

Due to the heat, the marathon has been moved to Sapporo, a city some 800 kilometres (500 miles) to the north of Tokyo where the weather is cooler even at the height of summer.

But given the ongoing pandemic and need for preparation time, the most likely plan would be for the Games to begin on July 23, 2021, public broadcaster NHK said over the weekend, citing sources within the organising panel.—AFP ■



Yoshiro Mori, President of the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games Organising Committee, faces an unprecedented challenge. PHOTO: AFP

Coronavirus may prove virtual sports game changer

PARIS (France) — With an unprecedented captive audience of three billion people in coronavirus lockdown virtual sports events are wooing fans after traditional live sports were shut down and public gatherings banned in many countries.

Horse-racing, boxing, cycling, football and motor-racing chiefs are desperate to maintain their fanbase and are scrambling to provide a fix and maintain revenues.

With stadiums closed and events such as the Tokyo Olympics and Euro 2020 postponed, organisers are generating advertising revenue by streaming virtual sports on YouTube, Facebook and Twitch or even broadcasting them on traditional television platforms.

Sports is where the numbers are and fans denied real games are turning to live streaming, watching people play games, and taking part in those video games themselves.

Italy's Mugello motorcycling circuit, which would have attracted 200,000 people for its MotoGP weekend on Sunday, may just have pulverised that figure with



Racegoers attend the final day of the Cheltenham Festival horse racing meeting at Cheltenham Racecourse in Gloucestershire, south-west England, on 13 March 2020.

PHOTO AFP

a live-streamed virtual race promoted as "The stay at home GP".

Honda's world champion Marc Marquez came fifth as the globe's top riders sat uncomfortably on their sofas livestreaming from their living rooms.

Alex Rins looked bored playing with his pet dog on his knee.

Alex Marquez, younger brother of the world champion, won the race and asked jokingly "will the points count to the championship?".—AFP ■

Well-wishers donate cash, hand sanitizers, face masks to MFF quarantine site

Well-wishers donated cash, hand sanitizers, and face masks to the Myanmar Football Federation (MFF)'s National Football Academy quarantine site in Yangon yesterday.

Dr Ye Mon Htut, MFF EC member and president of Futsal committee donated K7 million, U Zaya Thura Mon, CEO & Founder of Zeya & Associates, K5 million, and U Kyaw Nanda from Baby Ancestor Company and Magteron Company health-care equipment for disinfection.

U Aung Moe Kyaw, co-chairman of Grand Royal Group, also donated 500 hand sanitizers; Mr Vijay Kumar Kedia from Daily Star Co. Ltd contributed K3-million-worth face masks, and MPT donated 250 SIM Cards and 250 top-up cards.

MFF General Secretary U Ko Ko Thein and EC members accepted the donations and returned certificates of honour to donors. — Kyaw Khin ■



Juventus star Cristiano Ronaldo during the club's last match played behind closed doors in Turin against Inter Milan on 8 March. PHOTO: AFP

Juventus shares surge after players' take pay cut

MILAN (Italy) — Shares in Italian football giants Juventus surged Monday after the club's decision to cut their players' salaries in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic.

The Serie A champions announced on Saturday that they had cut their players' and coach Maurizio Sarri's salaries from March until June after all Italian sport was suspended.

The club's shares rose by 7.94 percent on the Milan Stock Exchange early Monday in a

market that has taken a major hit from the coronavirus crisis.

Juventus' highly-paid stars include five-time Ballon d'Or winner Cristiano Ronaldo and Wales midfielder Aaron Ramsey, who joined from Arsenal on a free transfer last year.

"The economic and financial effects of the understanding reached are positive for about 90 million euros (\$100.5 million) for the 2019/2020 financial year," the club had said in a statement.

Juventus, who led second-placed Lazio by a point in Serie A before the suspension on March 9, added that should the season be finished later in the year, the players could be paid extra in those months.

Over 10,000 people have died from COVID-19 in Italy, more than in any other nation. Players at other big European clubs have also agreed to take pay cuts, including Bayern Munich and Borussia Dortmund in Germany.—AFP ■