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Monday, 6 April 2020

State Counsellor discusses livelihood of daily-wage workers, masks, reduction of electricity bills, internet usage costs on her FB account

STATE Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi discussed the following issues, as reported to the people on her Facebook account yesterday.

She said the following were the top issues people wanted to know, according to messages she received on her Facebook page.

- (1) Livelihood of daily-wage people during the shutdown period
 - (2) Mask issues
 - (3) Reduction of electricity bills, and
 - (4) Internet usage bills
- Regarding issue (1), measures are being taken to

implement the best plan with the use of State Funds, COVID-19 National Level Central Committee's Fund. We will have to consider not only one area or region but also the whole country. I highly request all to donate cash to the fund of the central committee. Much needs to be done.

- (2) During this month, the Ministry of Health and Sports is planning to distribute 6.3 million of masks to the people. We have placed more orders for masks.
- (3) We are trying to find the best solution for reducing electricity bills.

- (4) Telephone operators have already reduced Internet usage costs.

While you are staying farther from each other with great care, please don't forget Metta (loving kindness) and compassion. We are all children of the Union.

As I am a beginner using Facebook, I have to take time in typing messages. But, I am delighted to be able to contact with the people. I'm sure my typing will become faster before long.

Through thick and thin, may all our brethren be healthy and have peace of mind.

(Translated by GNLM)

No new cases of COVID-19 on Sunday after National Laboratory conducts 55 tests

COVID-19 cases remain at 21

1. The Ministry of Health and Sports is closely monitoring, conducting surveillance and medical treatments, identifying those who had close contact with the positive patients for quarantines, admitting to the hospitals, getting information about the returnees from foreign countries in coordination with local authorities and state departments, and travel restrictions on them in measures against the COVID-19.
2. There were 38 new persons under investigation between 6 pm on 4 April and 6 pm on 5 April.
3. Laboratory results of the National Health Laboratory (Yangon) on specimens from a total of 55 persons under investigation and the persons under the quarantine at hospitals, homes and hotels on 5 April 2020 has shown all of the 55 persons tested negative.
4. Out of 20 COVID-19 positive cases, 1 is at Tiddim hospital in Chin State, 11 at Waibargi hospital, 1 at Kandawnadi hospital in Mandalay, 1 at Nay Pyi Taw People's Hospital, 1 at Lashio People's Hospital and 4 from Paukkaung Township at the Pyi Township hospital in Bago Region. Health conditions of 19 positive patients are good and one patient at Waibargi hospital is being isolated for intensive care.
5. 6. As Myanmar has found a total of 21 COVID-19 positive cases from 23 March to 5 April. People are advised to strictly follow the awareness of the Ministry of Health and Sports to prevent the viral transmissions to both families and communities.

(Translated by Kyaw Zin Tun)

Video conference of State Counsellor with COVID-19 fighters from Bago Region to be broadcast live

A video conference between State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and the people from Bago Region participating in fighting COVID-19 at the frontline will be broadcast live on the Facebook account of the State Counsellor at 10 am on 6th April. —MNA

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Online training conducted for organizing psychosocial support activities

AN online training for the staff of Social Welfare Department under the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement (MSWRR) for organizing psychosocial support activities at the quarantine facilities was opened yesterday.

The aim of the three-day course is to provide psychological support to the COVID-19 patients at the community-based quarantine facilities, and prevent from occurring gender-based violence among the COVID-19 patients.

At the online training, SWRR Union Minister Dr Win Myat Aye said the government is effectively implementing the works on pre-

vention, control and treatment of COVID-19, and the National-Level Central Committee on Prevention, Control and Treatment of COVID-19 was formed on 13 March.

In the the central committee's seven tasks, conducting public awareness programmes, giving necessary instructions, and issuing guidelines are included.

The COVID-19 Emergency Response Committee was formed on 30 March in order to quickly find out, investigate, and quarantine the people with COVID-19 infection, those who returned from foreign countries,

and those who in contact with COVID-19 patients without waiting the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 infection. The duties of the emergency response committee also include providing foods, and healthcare at the quarantine facilities, and psychological support to the quarantined persons.

The ministry is member of the both committees, and conducting public awareness programmes across the country including wards and villages, in corporation with related departments and civil society organizations, said the Union Minister.

Psychological support activ-

ities at the quarantine facilities will be organized soon after the training is completed.

With the cooperation from the Nippon Foundation, experts from the ICT Development Center at the Social Welfare Department Head Office in Yangon organized the online course.

The trainees, in cooperation with volunteers, must organize psychological support activities at the quarantine facilities in regions and states, said the Union Minister.

He also urged the trainees to develop their communication skills so that they can communi-

cate effectively with the public during their psychological support programmes.

The ministry will also form a coordination team to seek the cooperation from civil society organizations and volunteers for the COVID-19 emergency response sub-committees in states and regions, he added.

Dr Aye Myat Lwin, lecturer for the psychological support subject, explained the purpose of conducting the course.

A total of 80 trainees joined the course. — MNA

(Translated by Kyaw Zin Tun)

Market prices stable, take-away system in place in Nay Pyi Taw



Essential foodstuffs seen at the Ahara Thukha market in Nay Pyi Taw. PHOTO: MNA



People buying vegetables at the Thapyaygon market in Nay Pyi Taw. PHOTO: MNA

Purchase of basic commodities rose sharply after COVID-19 positive cases appeared in Myanmar and while the market price went a bit unstable for a while, it has since regained normalcy in Nay Pyi Taw Council.

Vendors in Thapyaygon market report that purchasing has returned to normal and there is sufficient basic com-

modities to go around. One of the vendors, Daw Thuzar Win, said buying and selling of fish, meat and poultry has returned to normal and COVID-19 awareness is raised by authorities in markets. Even though she sometimes worries, she has to open her stall to acquire income.

Pyinmana's Ahara Thukha market does not experience

much difference in prices either, and store owner U Tin Maung Swe said he sells rice, cooking oil, salt and other commodities at usual prices as they can still be acquired normally with no shortage of stocks in sight.

Face masks, hand gel, Dettol and ethanol are on sale at the two aforementioned markets and Junction Center in Nay Pyi



U Hlaing Oo.



Daw Thandar Hlaing.

Taw but the price of face masks, at K450-K500 per piece, is criticized by the public for being out of reach of most people.

U Hlaing Oo drives a motorbike taxi from Kinmoontan Ward and says if community quarantines were to be imposed, it would seriously affect people like him who have to work everyday to get their daily income and requests authorities to consider that fact in their plans.

Most pubs, bars and tea shops have been closed in Nay Pyi Taw to prevent the spread of the virus and dine-in have been replaced with only take-away

systems in restaurants.

U Zaw Min Hla is a restaurant manager and says they suspended dine-ins since 31 March. He said authorities come to check on the situation thrice a day and pricing and demand are proceeding normally.

The Nay Pyi Taw City Development Committee is spraying disinfectants across communities, installing hand-wash basins, cleaning public areas, ensuring there is no shortage of food and prices are not hiked up for exploitation. —MNA

(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)



People buying crops at the Thapyaygon market in Nay Pyi Taw. PHOTO: MNA

"People are the key"

Hundreds of donors contribute to COVID-19 prevention, treatment

UNION Minister for Health and Sports, Dr Myint Htwe, accepted donations of monetary support and medical supplies for combating COVID-19 at Kyaikkasan Stadium, Yangon, yesterday.

The donations were made to the Ministry of Health and Sports and the National Central Committee on COVID-19 Prevention, Containment and Treatment.

Firstly, the Chairman of the Myanmar Chamber of Commerce for Pharmaceutical and Medical Device, U Zaw Moe Khine, KBZ Executive Director U Zaw Lin Aung and UMFCCI President U Zaw Min Win explained the donations on behalf of all donors.

The Union Minister then delivered an address where he said the ventilators, patient monitors and other medical supplies and devices will not help not only with COVID-19, but with other patients in the future as well.

He said these can also be used to train future doctors and nurses and thus fulfill both short and long-term goals. He then thanked all donors for the donation.

Next, the Union Minister and Director-General Dr Thar Tun Kyaw accepted the donations and gave certificates of honor in return. The donation ceremony saw K212,325,000 for the central committee and K2,911,575,050



Union Minister Dr Myint Htwe receives the donations of cash and medical equipment for combating COVID-19 in Yangon yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

for the Ministry of Health and Sports and USD15,000 worth of medical supplies and devices,

K729,502,000 to the Yangon Region Public Health Department, and basic commodities for quar-

antine centers, donated by 192 donors.—MNA (Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)



Officials testing the body temperature of the staff from the resorts and hotels on the islands in the Andaman Sea yesterday as they return Kawthoung. **PHOTO: KYAW SOE**

Hotel staff from islands in Andaman Sea receive health checks as they return Kawthoung

KATHOUNG authorities screened the foreign and local staff from the resorts and hotels on the islands in the Andaman Sea as they arrived back the town yesterday. At the Myoma Jetty, the health workers tested about 100 staff from the Victoria Cliff Hotel and Resort on the NyaungOoPhee Island which shut down due to the COVID-19.

There was no cases of high fever with similar symptoms of the COVID-19, said the authorities.

About 30 local staff returned

home while the remaining 70 staff would be provided with facilities and health care until the hotel reopen. In a five-star hotel on the Thahtay Island, there are 348 Thais, 113 Filipino and 1000 Myanmar staff.

Foreign and local staff at the hotels on the islands in the Andaman Sea are also provided with facility quarantine and health care at the respective hotels.

During the period of closure, staff would receive 50 per cent of their salaries and food aid.—Kyaw Soe (Kawthoung)

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IWT to arrange ferry schedules during Thingyan festival

"WE will arrange the operation times to have smooth transportation for the commuters during six days of Thingyan Festival. The ferry operators will slash operation times, said Assistant Manager U Thein Myint of the Inland Water Transport (IWT Delta Division).

The crossing times of ferries on Yangon Pansodan-Dala, Wadan-Dala, Yangon-Khanaungto, Shwelaung-Myaynu, Wakema-Htawkanut routes will be reduced during Thingyan Festival, according to the Inland Water Transport (Delta Division).

The relevant health departments and philanthropic organizations are raising awareness activities for Covid-19 and giving out masks. As precautionary measures, they are daily spraying disinfectants on the ferries. They arrange the seat at three feet apart. The hand washbasins are installed in the compound of the port terminal, he said.

The ferry service normally runs 46 crossings per day. Between 12 and 17 April, the service on Pansodan-Dala will reduce to 26 times per day, while the operation times of Wadan-Dala ferries will be cut from 15 to 6, Yangon-Khanaungto from 6 to 4,

People getting off from the ferry boat at the Dala Jetty. **PHOTO: NAING LIN KYAW (DALA)**

Shwelaung-Myaynu from 10 to 8 and Wakema-Htawkanut from 12 to 10. The ferry service will be operating normally.

However, the ferry running from Yangon to Kyonmange will not run on 11 and 18 April and it will resume on 25 April. The ferries on Yangon-Kyarkan route will not leave on 9 and 16 April and the ferry service will get back to normal on 23 April.

Usually, the operation times of ferry are reduced during Thingyan holidays, according to the department.

The Pansodan-Dala Port is the only gateway for the local people in southern Yangon -- Dala, Twantay, Kawhmu, Kungyangon townships and some townships in Ayeyarwady Region to link with commercial city hub of Yangon. Three motor vessels named Cherry 1, 2 and 3, donated by Japan, have been running 46 crossings per day for estimated 30,000 commuters. The port is one of the crowded places in the town. Owing to the Covid-19 outbreak in March, a sharp drop of local and foreign passengers

is seen around the port.

Following the WHO's declaration of Covid-19 a pandemic, the relevant departments are directed to restrict public gatherings and events until 30 April as the Covid-19 can be rapidly and easily transmitted through public transport and gatherings. The Ministry of Health and Sports has already released the announcements to the public to prevent and control the possible spread of Covid-19.—Naing Lin Kyaw (Dala) (Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

Farmers get profits as okra price increases

OKRA farmers in the villages of Kawlin and Wuntho townships in Sagaing Region, gained profits due to high price of okra (lady's finger) this year compared to previous year, according to U Phoe Htein, an okra farmer from Oakpho Village in Wuntho Township.

"An acre of okra farm yields about 20,000 pieces of okra daily. Okra fruits were sold at K 2 to 3 per piece last year. But, they were being sold at K 5 to 7 per piece this year. Therefore, we

got big profit this year," said U Phoe Htein.

Daw Thay, a vegetable seller from Maying Zeya Village, also said "I directly purchase vegetables including okra fruits from the farmers, and sell them at Wuntho market. Last year, we, sellers, couldn't purchase all the fruits produced the farms. But this year, we don't get enough okra fruits that we want to purchase from the farms."—Myint Tun Min (Kawlin) (Translated by Kyaw Zin Tun)

Women selecting the okra fruits for sale in market. **PHOTO: MYINT TUN MIN (KAWLIN)**

Illegal drugs confiscated in Hpa-an, Pyin Oo Lwin

POLICE sized a total of 2,800 stimulant tablets in Hpa-an Township, Kayin State and Pyin Oo Lwin Township in Mandalay Region on Saturday.

Anti-narcotic police searched Kyaw Khaing Thein who standing near his motorcycle on a road near Kangyi Kanlay Village, Hlar Kar Village-tract in Hpa-an Township, and seized 1, 800 stimulant tablets and a mobile from him.

Police from Pyin Oo Lwin also raided the house of Ma San San Myint (a) Fu Mein in Mine Lone Village, Naung Hline Village-tract in Pyin Oo Lwin Township, and confiscated 1,000 stimulants and a mobile phone.

Police filed charges against them under the Anti-narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Law, according to Myanmar Police Force. — GNLM (Translated by Kyaw Zin Tun)

Suspect named Kyaw Khaing Thein seen with illegal drugs. **PHOTO: MPF**

Share prices fall despite high trade volume

THE value of shares traded on the Yangon Stock Exchange (YSX) in March has dipped to K1.42 billion compared with K1.48 billion recorded in February, despite an increase in trading volume, the exchange's monthly report stated. The drop in total trading values last month is attributed to a fall in share prices. In January 2020, 196,836 shares worth K1.25 billion were traded on the exchange while 188,919 shares were traded on the exchange in February and 228,913 shares were traded in March.

At present, shares of five listed companies — First Myanmar Investment (FMI), Myanmar Thilawa SEZ Holdings (MTSH), Myanmar Citizens Bank (MCB), First Private Bank (FPB), and TMH Telecom Public Co. Ltd — are being traded on the stock exchange. The sixth public company -- Ever Flow River Group Public Co., Ltd.

(EFR) was given green light to be listed on the exchange and the first day of share trading was earlier scheduled on 20 March 2020 in accordance with Section 41 (c) of the Securities Exchange Law and Section 7 and 8 of the Securities Listing Business Regulations. However, due to the Covid-19 consequences, it was postponed and the base price and listing date will be timely published to investors in accordance with the conditions of instructions by the government, according to YSX's notice.

Next, the Securities and Exchange Commission of Myanmar (SECM) has allowed foreigners to invest in the local equity market in March.

The YSX was launched three years ago to improve the private business sector. It has introduced rules and regulations regarding the stock exchange and knowledge of share trading through



Visitors seen near the monitor screen of the Yangon Stock Exchange. PHOTO: PHOE KHWAR

stock investment seminars.

To boost the trading, the YSX has doubled its stock trade matching time from two to four per day last year. The exchange has launched 7 times matching per day on 26 March 2020.

In addition to this, it has held promotional events to attract new

investors and encourage existing investors to trade more actively. The stock exchange has also sought the government's support to get more public companies to participate in the stock market and help more institutional investors, such as financing companies, investment banks, and

insurance companies, to emerge.

A total of 2.4 million shares worth K13.39 billion were traded on the YSX in 2019, a significant increase compared to the previous year, according to the annual report released by the exchange. — Ko Htet (Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

Domestic oil prices slide low amid global fallout

DOMESTIC oil prices have registered a downward trend for the past three months on the back of falling prices in the global markets, and it is expected to remain stable on the low side, said a market observer.

The oil and gas sector has been crashed during Covid-19 outbreak. Demand is plummeting, production and prices are following, and Saudi Arabia and Russia are jockeying to hold onto market share, the Oilprice.com reported. In the global markets, oil prices dipped to US\$34.11 per barrel for Brent oil and \$28.34

per barrel for WTI crude oil on 4 April 2020. Domestic oil prices have been on the decline since 10 January 2020 owing to a fall in global oil prices. On 8 January 2020, oil prices were pegged at around K905 per litre for Octane 92, K995 for Octane 95, and K985 for diesel and premium diesel. Then, the prices in the domestic market have been extending its drop. On 5 April 2020, the oil prices touched a low of K360 per litre for Octane 92, K500 for Octane 95, K490 for diesel, and K500 for premium diesel, according to the domestic oil market.

“Sure, the drivers have been happy for months now as the price drops by half”, said a taxi driver. On 10 October 2018, due to an increase in global crude oil prices and the weakening of the Kyat against the US dollar, oil prices have touched a high of K1,065 per litre for Octane 92, K1,115 for Octane 95, K1,085 for diesel, and K1,105 for premium diesel. Ninety per cent of fuel oil in Myanmar is imported, while the remaining 10 per cent is produced locally. Myanmar has imported about one million tonnes of diesel and petrol worth nearly \$600 million over the past two months of the current fiscal year, according to the Ministry of Commerce. Myanmar imports fuel oil primarily from Singapore, with monthly volumes touching 200,000 tonnes for gasoline and 400,000 tonnes for diesel. There are about 2,000 fuel stations and 50 oil importer companies in Myanmar.—Ko Htet (Translated by Ei Myat Mon)



A man refilling the vehicle at a fuel station in Yangon. PHOTO: PHOE KHWAR

Myanmar's exports see sharp rise by \$988.7 mln

MYANMAR'S exports between 1 October and 20 March in the 2019-2020 financial year have shot up to US\$8.66 billion from \$7.67 billion registered in the corresponding period of the previous fiscal, according to the data from the Ministry of Commerce.

The figure reflects an increase of \$988.78 million compared with the year-ago period.

Of the seven export categories, agriculture, fisheries, finished industrial goods, and minerals showed an increase in exports. Meanwhile, exports of livestock, forest products, and other goods declined.

Export values were registered at \$1.95 billion for agro-products, \$53.4 million for livestock, \$469.44 million for fishery products, \$1.065 billion for minerals, \$86.4 million for forest products, \$4.84 billion

for manufactured goods, and \$191.2 million for other goods.

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

The Ministry of Commerce is focusing on export promotion to reduce the trade deficit. Since 2011, the Ministry of Commerce has adhered to its reform policy.

A series of moves to liberalize and open the economy have been introduced through policy development to improve the trade environment. — Ko Khant

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

Myanmar's imports surge in 2019-2020FY Q1/Q2

THE value of Myanmar's imports between 1 October and 20 March in the current fiscal year stood at US\$10.02 billion, an increase of \$1.78 billion from \$8.235 billion registered in the year-ago period, according to the data released by the Ministry of Commerce.

The value of imports in the

consumer, capital, intermediate goods, and CMP businesses groups rose significantly in the current fiscal.

Over the past five months, capital goods, such as auto parts, vehicles, machines, steel, and aeroplane parts were brought into the country. Their import val-

ue was estimated at \$3.85 billion. The figure was \$1.27 billion higher compared to the same period in the previous FY.

Meanwhile, Myanmar imported consumer products worth \$1.7 billion, including pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, and palm oil. The imports of consumer

products showed a rise of \$150.9 million compared with the same period in the previous FY.

Intermediate goods make up a large share of Myanmar's imports, with petroleum products and plastic raw materials being the main import items. In the current fiscal, imports of raw

materials jumped to \$3.38 billion from \$3.09 billion registered during the year-ago period.

During the same period, raw materials worth \$1.07 billion were also imported for the Cut-Make-Pack (CMP) garment sector. — GNLM (Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

Happy Geologists Day!

BY THAN HTUN (MYANMAR GEOSCIENCES SOCIETY)

THE first Sunday in April is traditional celebration of Happy Geologists Day!

First of all, allow me to wish Happy Geologists Day! to our President U Win Myint (graduated from the Yangon University with B.Sc. Degree in Geology in 1974) who is an honour to our geology profession.

This professional holiday was established in the Soviet Union in 1980, but after its collapse the tradition to celebrate Geologist Day wasn't forgotten. Nowadays it's a professional holiday of geologist in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. Geologist Day was established under the initiative of a group of Soviet prominent geologists, headed by academician Alexander Yanshin. Discovery of deposits of the oil and gas West Siberian province in 1966 became the reason for creation of the holiday. The geologists applied to the government with their request, that was approved by decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet on March 31, 1966. The date for the holiday was not chosen randomly. It marks the end of the winter and beginning of preparation for summer field work. Geologist Day is traditionally celebrated by all geological and mining organizations. Other people, who are involved in relating to geology fields, also consider this holiday as their professional day.

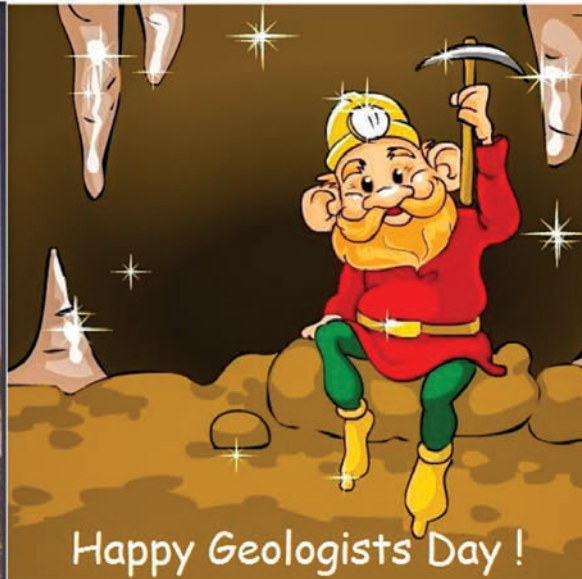
The timing of the holiday, the first Sunday in April, was chosen because it marks the end of winter and beginning of preparation for summer field work and expeditions. Geologists Day is traditionally celebrated in almost all geological and mining organizations of the former Soviet Union with festivities starting at the end of preceding week. With tens of thousands of geologists from the former Soviet Union working around the world, the tradition of celebrating the Geologists Day is becoming more international. In addition to geologists, many others involved in related fields also consider this day as their professional holiday and celebrate it.

In US, from the earth's crust to the deep into its core, they recognize Geologists Day on the first Sunday in April. Geologists study the history, structure, and impact of other processes on the earth. Their discoveries and research play an essential role in our daily lives. Geology blends well with other sciences such as chemistry and physics. In fact, they are necessary for agriculture, architecture and weather prediction.

Those who pursue a geology degree open up a wide range of careers. From oceanography to NASA, education, government, and research, geology offers a worldview to applicants. Hobbyists and enthusiasts have a place in geology, too. Even amateur geologists contribute to the science from time to time. That's part of the intrigue of geology and why we celebrate Geologist Day.



Rector Dr. Tha Hla.



Professor Dr. Nyi Nyi.

History of Geologists' Day

Geology, or the study of the composition of rocks, soil and other materials, has been around since the times of Ancient Greece. Greek scientists wondered how the rocks were formed, studying fossils, and generating theories about how they were formed. Later during the Middle Ages when science was thought to have challenged the Catholic Church. During this time Leonardo da Vinci explored the functions of the human body but also became a pioneer in geology. He also concluded that the fossils embedded on mountain tops must have been from animals that swam on an ancient sea bed, though they couldn't conclude how they got there. During the 17th-century, links begin to be made between sedimentary deposits in the oceans and the strata observable in rock formations. Much of the explanation as to how that happened however remained a mystery until James Hutton and Strata Smith came along. They helped find the explanation of the earth's long and slow development over the course of thousands of years. Geologists' Day aims to show appreciation for the geologists that continue to study the rocks and all its formations. It also strives to help further the study of how the earth came to be. Geologists' Day is all about learning the history of the earth, the geologists who studied the earth and help inspire people out there to study geology.

How to celebrate Geologists' Day

Celebrate Geologists' Day by learning a bit about what geology is all about. Digging in rocks, observing maps, and studying how they came to be is what a geologists' job is all about. Take the time to join a few online classes and see if it is something you enjoy. If so, why not go for a degree while you're at it. Take a look into the history of geologists, what they believed about the earth at the time. Also show your appreciation for their studies by sharing this holiday with your friends and family. Although development of Geosciences should include academic and

industrial sectors, the source of geology education is mainly Universities therefore this article will emphasize on the academic history of senior Myanmar geologists. I wish all Myanmar fellow geologists Happy Geologists Day!, today, auspicious day of 5th April 2020.

Again, I am highly honour to mention the dignitaries who are geologists with their respective ranks; Dr. Nyi Nyi (Minister for Mines), U Than Nyunt (Deputy Minister for Energy), U Aung Htoo (Deputy Minister for Energy) and Dr. Ye Myint Swe (Deputy Minister for Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation).

History of Myanmar Geology

Myanmar, the second largest country in Southeast Asia, occupies a geologically critical position in the northeast corner of the Indian Ocean, where the northern end of the Sunda-Andaman arc, the world's second-longest arc system, has collided with the Indian continent in the Naga Hills and its juxtaposed with the eastern end of the India-Asia collision zone and Himalayas to the east. For its size and population, Myanmar has a disproportionately large number of world-class metallic mineral deposits, producing offshore and onshore reserves of gas and oil, and an abundance of gemstones, reflecting the country's varied geology (Andrew Mitchell, 2018).

Burma lost her independence in the three successive colonial wars waged by the British imperialists in 1824, 1855 and 1885. After the First Anglo-Burmese War of 1824, Arakan, Tanasserim and Assam were annexed by the British, and Lower Burma was lost after the Second Anglo-Burmese War of 1855. After the 1824 War the Viceroy of India sent a mission to Burma led by J. Crawfurd who on the way made geological observations and collected fossils which were later identified by Rev.

W. Buckland. Crawfurd's account (1827) marked the first scientific observation of Burmese geology. During the 1830s, two important accounts appeared: Pere

Guiseppe d'Amato (1803) gave the first authentic account of the Ruby Mines and Pemberton and Hannay (1837) made the first valuable contribution on the amber and jade. In Tenasserim area, F. Mason (1850) gave an account of the "Natural Productions of Burmah", wherein geology, minerals and topography of the Tenasserim area were given. This work was revised later by Theobald in 1882 and the portion of fauna and flora was greatly expanded.

The Geological Survey of India was established in 1851 with T. Oldham as its first Director. Oldham accompanied the Mission to the Court of Ava led by Sir Henry Yule sent after the second Anglo-Burmese War of 1885 and Oldham's Appendix to the Yule Memoir (1858) constitutes the first comprehensive account of the geology of Central Basin of Burma. The proper geological investigation of Lower Burma was commenced by W.T. Blandford in 1860 assisted by F. Fedden. Their work was continued by W. Theobald in the 1860s and 1870s during which period, his classic work on "The Geology of Pegu" was published. During the period between the Second and Third Anglo-Burmese Wars, Mark Fryar (1872, 1882), a Mining Geologist investigated and reported periodically on the Tenasserim to the Chief Commissioner of British Burmah. The Arakan area at that time received the attention of F.R. Mallet (1882). After the annexation of Upper Burma by the British in 1885, the first systematic examination of Upper Burma was commenced by F. Noetling in 1888. Voluminous papers and reports were prepared by this observer, the most valuable of which is a large memoir figuring and describing the fossils of the "Miocene" of Burma. This work has since been revised by Vredenburg in 1921. Noetling also studied the local oil industry (1891) and its modern exploitation (1897). During this period a notable contribution was made by Brown & Judd (1895) on the Pre-Cambrian geology and mineralogy of Mogok area where the famous rubies were found. **(TO BE CONTINUED)**

AFTER LAYOFFS

Giant small business program poses herculean challenge for US banks

AFTER laying off almost all of his workforce across seven stores, Legacy Toys owner Brad Ruoho sees a path to rehiring them only if the new \$350 billion US small business lending program performs as promised.

Passage of the giant US relief package that includes the program “enabled us to feel more confident about bringing on extra help,” said Ruoho, whose Minnesota-based chain has already re-hired 10 of 75 employees to support a growing e-commerce push.

Ramping up the massive program will be a herculean task for the Small Business Administration (SBA) and for the nation’s banks during a period of skyrocketing unemployment.

Signs were mixed by Friday afternoon, with the biggest US banks at various stages of rolling out their programs and the status of many lenders changing by the minute.

Questions cropped up on everything from bank money-laundering rules to how fast loans could be issued from lenders not previously part of the SBA programs. On top of that were nitty-gritty details about forms and documentation.

Questions cropped up on everything from bank money-laundering rules to how fast loans could be issued from lenders not previously part of the Small Business Administration programs.



A shopping mall parking lot sits empty in East Garden City, New York in March 2020. PHOTO: AFP

The SBA on Twitter pointed to huge interest in the program -- with more than \$2 billion in loans around 1900 GMT -- but it wasn’t clear how quickly those funds would flow to companies that face immediate cashflow problems.

Jim Friedlander, president of New York-based Arrangements Abroad, which organizes vacation packages, fears the funds may not arrive in time for him to avoid laying off some of his 32 employees.

“The government, to its credit, is trying to do something fast and big, and you do want to be

careful to avoid fraud,” Friedlander said.

“But it is helpful to have clear information so you don’t have the expectation that the money is going to come right away.”

- ‘Up and running’ -

A linchpin of the newly enacted US relief bill is a \$349 billion Paycheck Protection Program, which provides forgivable loans to small businesses that retain their workers or rehire laid-off employees by June 30.

The funds can be used to finance eight weeks of payroll or

rent and are designed to allow small businesses such as restaurants, stores and hair salons to maintain their employees while remaining shuttered for public health.

Small businesses, which represent a segment of the economy with less access to private capital than larger companies, have received bipartisan support under the program, which is just one element of the \$2 trillion relief bill signed into law last week by Trump.

Experts on small business fi-

nance have lauded the program’s intentions, but expressed skepticism that Washington would be able to execute as quickly as needed.

They question whether the SBA, which will guarantee the loans, and the private US banking industry have enough bandwidth given the scale of need.

At a press briefing Thursday night, US Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said the government had doubled the interest rates on the loans to one percent following complaints from small banks and insisted the program would be “up and running tomorrow.”

But just what that means remains unclear.

As of 1800 GMT, Bank of America had processed nearly 60,000 applications.

JPMorgan Chase, which had earlier said it did not expect to launch on Friday, also began taking information from clients, while Wells Fargo said it was “working as quickly as possible to be ready.”

An unknown is how much the SBA will streamline the normally onerous due diligence process that can take weeks, a banking source said.

SOURCE: AFP

Europe escalates anti-virus battle amid “second window of opportunity”

ALTHOUGH infections of COVID-19 are still surging in Europe, with a total of 583,141 confirmed cases and 42,334 deaths reported as of Saturday morning, the World Health Organization (WHO) has said the region could see a potential stabilization of the outbreak.

Suppressing virus transmissions, saving lives, addressing the profound social and economic consequences of COVID-19 ... Europe, the epicenter of the pandemic, has been escalating an arduous anti-virus battle since mid-March amid “a second window of opportunity.”

“While the virus has hit us hard, the people of Europe have hit back just as hard,” European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said at an extraordinary session of the European Parliament.

UNPRECEDENTED LOCK-DOWN

Gonzalo Resa Heras, a 21-year-old Spaniard, has been facing many changes in his life

Facing the COVID-19 outbreak, European countries are stepping up efforts to contain the virus, save lives, and address the profound social and economic impacts of the pandemic.



Policemen check drivers for special permissions that are needed to be outdoors in Athens, Greece, March 23, 2020. PHOTO: XINHUA

ever since Spain imposed a national lockdown on March 14 which, after an extension, will be in force until April 25.

For example, he does not need to wake up early every day to take a train from his hometown in the municipality of Torrejon de Ardoz to his university in the city of Alcala de Henares, as Madrid

has suspended classes in schools indefinitely from March 11.

Apart from Spain, many other European countries have also extended their lockdown periods, tightened social restrictions and upgraded social distancing measures to slow down the spread of the virus. Italy, which has reported over 120,000 confirmed cases

with over 15,000 deaths, will extend its nationwide lockdown until April 13, Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte said, stressing the country is not in a condition to relax its restrictive measures yet.

“We are beginning to see the positive effects” of the lockdown and relaxing it now would mean that the sacrifices made so far would have been in vain, said Conte.

Noting that the lockdown measures seem to be working, Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte said the country will extend the restrictions till April 28.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel asked citizens to refrain from private trips and visits from relatives during the Easter holidays, as the country has extended its restrictions on social gatherings to April 19 at the earliest.

The Greek Supreme Court has reminded the country’s pros-

ecutors of the need to strictly impose measures introduced by Greek health authorities, citing profiteering and illegal gatherings as examples of crimes on which prosecutors need to be especially tough. Five municipalities in northern Greece facing a critical epidemic situation have imposed night curfews, and so has Cyprus for the first time during peacetime. Calling the massive scale of unprecedented lockdown measures “a second window of opportunity,” the chief of the World Health Organization (WHO) Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus has urged countries to use this critical window to suppress and stop the transmission of COVID-19.

Thanks to social distancing measures, European countries, particularly the most affected ones like Italy and Spain, could see the curve of cases potentially stabilizing, said Michael Ryan, executive director of WHO’s Health Emergencies Program.

SOURCE: Xinhua

Let's fight COVID-19 together

A MIDST the COVID-19 crisis, our country is experiencing a challenging time.

In this time of crisis, healthcare workers are risking their lives on the front lines to protect all families and communities in our country and to keep us safe.

Our People, especially families of daily-waged workers, are struggling with their livelihoods, while industries which create jobs for workers are bearing the brunt of the impact from the COVID-19 outbreak. Many businesses have been hit by the outbreak due to social distancing mandates.

Even in ordinary times, jobs and livelihoods are an important problem and, unfortunately, Covid-19 is amplifying that stress. Public participation is high in our country and private donors are also working to minimize the consequences of COVID-19.

Yesterday, donors handed over cash, medicine and medical equipment to the National Committee on Prevention, Control and Treatment on Coronavirus Disease-2019 (COVID-19) at the time when our country needs them to fight the disease.

... we would like to encourage people throughout the country to do their part to support them, primarily by practicing greater personal hygiene and to follow recommended social distancing measures, especially in April, which is an important period for our country to defeat the global pandemic.

We thank all the donors for their timely and much-needed assistance, which helps bridge the immediate gap of supplying personal protective equipment, hospital equipment and medical supplies to where it is needed most across the country.

This donation will assist in every aspect for the people in the prevention, containment and treatment of COVID-19.

However, much has to be done in our country to overcome the crisis.

These are challenging times for everyone and nobody should be left behind. We highly request that all people donate cash to the fund of the central committee.

At the same time, we would like to encourage people throughout the country to do their part to support them, primarily by practicing greater personal hygiene and to follow recommended social distancing measures, especially in

April, which is an important period for our country to defeat the global pandemic.

Despite the challenges of containing COVID-19, we are confident that our country can overcome this crisis together, due to our determination and commitment.

We, brethren of the Union, must recognize that today is the time to show our compassion and loving-kindness for each other. Let's fight COVID-19 together.

Fourth year of Ministry of Education under civilian government

The Ministry of Education and UNESCO collaborated on the Strengthening Pre-Service Teacher Education in Myanmar (STEM) project and will upgrade the 2-year diploma courses in education colleges to 4-year course.



Union Ministry Dr Myo Thein Gyi.

By Nandar Win
PHOTO: SOE AUNG (EDUCATION)

E DUCATION is an essential resource for national socio-economic development and something that you have to keep accumulating throughout your whole.

The Ministry of Education strives for education of the highest quality and developed the National Education Strategic Plan (2016-2021) after conducting sound research and producing two inclusive education reports.

The ministry adheres to the following 12 priority tasks promised to the public:

- (a) Early childhood care and development.
- (b) Ensuring all citizens have primary level education at minimum and creating opportunities for them to access middle and higher level education.
- (c) Ensuring all school-aged

children complete primary school and prioritizing children facing physical, mental, nutritional, economic hardships or those in remote areas to access education.

- (c) Adapting school curriculum into ethnic languages for children of ethnic nationals at the primary level through collaboration with state/regional government, and elevating ethnic languages and culture.
- (d) Ensuring suitable teacher to student ratio.
- (e) Developing the subject expertise and teaching capabilities of teachers of various schools.
- (f) Ensuring all citizens have access to basic education and prioritizing schools or underdeveloped regions (especially middle schools and high schools with inadequate school supplies).
- (g) Organizing supplementary vocational training for individuals without insufficient educational opportunities.
- (h) Supporting colleges and universities to develop their own curriculum and academic autonomy to develop international standard curricula and education systems.
- (i) Ensuring technological vocational training develops on the same level as university education.
- (m) Ensuring an education



State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi encourages the school children during her visit to Basic Education Primary School (Bawgawady) on 28 January 2020.

system that does not burden student parents or to the community.

- (m) Ensuring educational budgets provided by the Union Government, the private sector and from sources home and abroad are used in the most efficient manner.
- (o) Implementing edu-

cation reforms, management and research programmes based on accurate information.

The Ministry of Education works hard to ensure there is no discrimination, no one is left behind in education and uniting people for peaceful coexistence, valuing different unique culture through encouraging learning,

reading, playing and coexisting together.

The ministry ensures the education system teaches students and all relevant persons accountability and responsibility. Priority task 1 focused on early childhood care and education and 80,658 preschool children of 3,115 preschools were taught by 4,571 teachers in 2019-2020 academic year.

The ministry also works together with Basic Education Sub Sector Working Group (BESSWG) and affiliations for training preschool teachers for preschool sustainability. There are 873,548 students across Myanmar and opened KG classes with new curriculum in schools across the nation to ensure all children can attend kindergarten.

"We promoted 5,651 schools in the 2019-2020 academic year, especially schools in remote areas of Kayin State, Chin State, Sagaing Region, Magway Region, Rakhine State, Shan State and Ayeyawady Region that had difficulty accessing middle and high school education since 2016," said Dr Myo Thein Gyi, Union Minister for Education.

The number of middle schools increased by 2,169 and high schools by 2,135 between 2015-2016 to 2019-2020 academic year and the number of teachers for primary, middle and high schools to 7,637, 16,771 and 4,436 respectively. Students for middle and high schools increased to 393,961 and 313,808 and bachelor course students increased to 84,009.

Dr Myo Thein Gyi said the

number of students reached 5 million in the seventy years between 1921 to 1988 and has now reached to 9.7 million, meaning there was a 5 million increase in the 30 years between 1988 to now. He said schools still need support with more teachers, classrooms, desks and chairs and libraries for school development.

"The number of Grade 5 graduates increased by 1,695,191 compared to 2015-2016 academic year and Grade 9 graduates increased by 183,289 compared to the same academic year. Over 900,000 applicants took the 2020 matriculation examination, an increase of 333,978 from 2016. There were 267,696 applicants passed the 2019 matriculation exam making it an increase by 70,000," said Dr Myo Thein Gyi.

The Ministry of Education issued education stipends from 2016-2017 to 2018-2019 academic year and provided K48.065 billion for about 200,000 students. A total of 20,454 schools have been promoted over a 4-year period.

The ministry is testing new DBE boxes in Yangon Region, Mandalay Region and Nay Pyi Taw that contain textbooks, teacher guidebooks, teaching aids, video spots, soft copies of educational documents and augmented reality teaching aids.

Extracurricular primary education was implemented in 95 townships in 2017-2018 academic year for 8135 students, in 90 townships in 2018-2019 academic year for 8946 students and in 85 townships in 2019-2020 academic year for 7545 students.

SEE PAGE-10



A teacher teaching the school children in a classroom of Basic Education Primary School (Bawgawady) in Pyinmana.



A teacher helping an old student in a classroom in Myitkyina.



The two-storey staff housing of Basic Education Primary School (Kyaing Lat).



Myanmar Daily Weather Report (Issued at 7:00 pm Sunday 5th April, 2020)

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

FORECAST VALID UNTIL AFTERNOON OF THE 6th April, 2020: Rain or thundershowers are likely to be isolated in Sagaing, Mandalay, Magway and Taninthayi Regions, Kachin, Shan (North and East), Chin and Northern Rakhine States. Degree of certainty is (60%). Weather will be partly cloudy 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 Nay Pyi Taw, Lower Sagaing, Mandalay, Magway, Bago and Yangon Regions.

FORECAST FOR NAYPYITAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 6th April, 2020: Partly cloudy.

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 6th April, 2020: Partly cloudy.

Invitation to young writers for Sunday Special

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

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Fourth year of Ministry of Education under civilian government



A teacher teaching the ethnic people in Panpat village, Kayah State.



The schoolchildren reciting poems at No 5 Basic Education High School in Kentung.

FROM PAGE-9

Extracurricular middle school education was implemented in 8 townships from 2016 to 2018 for 176 students and for a second time in 8 townships in 2019-2020 academic year for 260 students. Fifty-one students who completed extracurricular primary education, transferred to school education systems and passed the matriculation exam.

Soft copies of textbooks for grades 1, 2, 3 and 6 are uploaded on nepc.edu.mm and derpr.moe.edu.mm. Soft copies for grades 4, 7 and 10 are slated to be uploaded in 2020-2021 academic year.

The Ministry of Education has collaborated with state/regional governments to provide education for grades 1 to 3 in 63 ethnic languages. There are 11298 teaching assistants and 14786 language teachers teach-

ing over 800,000 students in 13100 schools across the nation.

The ministry collaborated with the Ministry of Ethnic Affairs, state/regional governments and ethnic literature and culture committees and UNICEF to research the effectiveness of ethnic language teaching in 7 states. They were able to develop vocabulary cards in English-Myanmar-ethnic languages for Jing Phaw, Kayah, Sagaw Kayin, Chin (Falam), Mon, Rakhine and Shan languages and in Jing Phaw, Lawwai, Kayah, Poe Kayin, Chin (Haka), Chin (Falam), Mon and Shan languages for Grade 1, Grade 2 and Grade 3.

Primary and middle school teachers were given training on the new textbooks and teaching guidebooks for Grade 3 and Grade 6 in 2019-2020 academic year. Similar training for teachers of grades 4, 7 and 10 are planned for 2020-2021 academic year.

“In the technical and vocational skills sector, 137 teachers were given training in Belin in 2019-2020 FY,” said Dr Myo Thein Gyi. “Training for the 4-year curriculum at the Education Degree College for the teachers was given in October and November 2019. We partnered with the British Council, VSO, the Open University and Montrose Consulting in implementing the Towards Results in Education and English (TREE) project for teachers of 25 education universities,” he added.

Between 2016-2017 academic year and 2018-2019 academic year, 368 professionals from abroad were teaching in colleges and universities across Myan-

mar. There were 138 active MoUs and MoAs with international universities and organizations between the same academic years.

The Ministry of Education and UNESCO collaborated on the Strengthening Pre-Service Teacher Education in Myanmar (STEM) project and will upgrade the 2-year diploma courses in education colleges to 4-year course. International Quality Assurance Units have been set up in colleges and universities across the nation as well.

In point 6 of the ministry’s 12 priority tasks, a total of 14473 school buildings were built between 2016-2017 and 2018-2019 academic years to allow more access to education in underdeveloped regions, spending K520.520 billion for that purpose.

Dr Myo Thein Gyi said the joint Poverty Report with the World Bank and Ministry of Planning, Finance and Industry found higher cases of poverty in Ayeyawady Region, Shan State, Sagaing Region, Magway Region and Rakhine State. He said those with the highest poverty rates had never even been to school. Those who dropped out after primary or high school could only get low-income jobs and the only way for them to get better paying jobs is to complete high school education and acquire vocational, scientific and college education, said the Union Minister.

Another joint report with World Bank and MoPFI in 2020, the Social Economic Report, showed the highest dropout rates were in Shan State, Rakhine State, Kayin State, Mon State, Ayeyawady Region, Bago

Region, Taninthayi Region and Yangon Region.

The Union Minister said there have been development as people between 15 to 24 have a 50.24 per cent attendance rate for middle, high and vocational training schools and colleges, 59 per cent attendance in high schools and 78 per cent attendance in middle schools.

Distance education is another important sector that has been given priority and the Transformation by Innovation in Distance Education (TIDE) opened the third Residential School courses with 200 teachers from 20 universities across the nation receiving training.

The ministry utilized K171.692 billion for school development between 2016-2017 and 2018-2019 academic years, K13.574 billion to distribute exercise books for free, and K146.056 billion to distribute school textbooks for free as well.

Then in 2019-2020 academic year, the ministry utilized K59.378 billion to develop schools, K9.571 billion to distribute exercise books and K 108.233 billion to distribute school textbooks for free.

The Ministry of Education finds that rote memorization is the biggest obstacle to developing critical thinking and problem solving skills, innovation and social skills. The ministry will continue to implement the National Education Strategic Plan with transparency and efficiency in order to elevate the entirety of the educational sector in Myanmar.

(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)



A teacher teaching the drawing in a classroom at No 5 Basic Education High School in Kentung.

COVID-19: Top stories of the day

Pope urges courage as global death toll tops 65,000

Pope Francis appealed Sunday for courage in the face of the coronavirus pandemic that has claimed more than 65,000 lives across the globe in just three months.

US President Donald Trump has already warned Americans to brace for a “very horrendous” number of deaths in the coming days, as the number of confirmed cases there surged past 300,000 — the highest in the world.

Queen Elizabeth II is also set to give a rare address on Sunday aimed at rallying Britain, where the government is warning of tougher measures on social distancing to try to curb surging infections.

Lebanon repatriates nationals in rare flights

Lebanon on Sunday started repatriating nationals stranded abroad in its first flight in weeks since it closed its international airport to stem the novel coronavirus.

The first of four planes touched down at the Beirut international airport late Sunday morning bringing in 78 passengers from Riyadh, local television reported.

Authorities said more than 20,000 had signed up to be repatriated in total this week and at the end of the month.

Spain sees 3rd daily drop

Spain saw its third consecutive daily decline in the number of people dying from the coronavirus pandemic as the country recorded another 674 deaths on Sunday, official figures showed.

The health ministry said the number, the lowest in 10 days, brought total deaths to 12,418 since the pandemic hit Spain.

The number of infections rose 4.8 percent to 130,759.

A united front in tackling the crisis

Luxembourg has created a new task force dedicated to the research of the

Scientific research is the key for understanding the developments of the pandemic. However, final decisions are still being taken on the political spectrum.



A man wearing gloves and a face mask walks by a mural reading “Cancel Plans Not Humanity” in Los Angeles, California. PHOTO: AFP

coronavirus. The approach sees 14 groups work closely together to coordinate their results.

Luxembourg’s scientific community has significantly grown over the past years. Close to 3,000 researchers are currently working in the Grand-Duchy with more than half being employed by the government.

Scientific research is the key for understanding the developments of the pandemic. However, final decisions are still being taken on the political spectrum. Nonetheless, Luxembourg’s small size encourages regular exchange with foreign experts, an essential process to steer the country out of the crisis.

Spanish farmers, fishermen feel COVID-19 fallout

Spain, like much of the rest of Europe, has been in a lockdown since mid-March to curb the spread of the virus and this has altered consumers’ habits, with people making fewer trips to the supermarket and no longer eating out.

The closure of Spain’s borders has added to the burden, leaving farmers struggling to bring in crucial temporary workers to pick produce and care for animals.

One of the hardest-hit crops has been strawberries from Huelva in the southern region of Andalusia, which supplies Europe with 90 percent of the fruit at this time of the year.

Demand for strawberries has been halved this year, according to farmers’ unions.

Demand for meat and fish is down because bars and restaurants that buy a lot are closed.

US small businesses seek \$5.4 billion

Small and medium-size US businesses have applied for more than \$5.4 billion in government-backed loans as a key pillar of the country’s coronavirus relief plan took effect, the Trump administration said.

Jovita Carranza, who heads the federal Small Business Administration, said late Friday on Twitter that 17,503 companies — those with 500 or fewer employees — had filed applications through local banks for loans totaling more than \$5.4 billion.

Friday was the first day the companies were able to apply for the money, intended in large part to help them pay employees’ salaries.

The loans, which could eventually total \$350 billion, constitute a central part of the \$2.2 trillion coronavirus

relief plan adopted by Congress and then signed into law by President Donald Trump on March 27.

World’s largest jazz festival in Montreal cancelled

This year’s Montreal Jazz Festival, the world’s largest, and other popular summer jamborees in Canada’s francophone metropolis were cancelled Friday due to the COVID-19 pandemic, organizers announced. It had been scheduled to start on June 25.

60s icon Marianne Faithfull treated for COVID-19

British singer Marianne Faithfull has tested positive for coronavirus and is being treated in hospital, her publicists said on Saturday.

“Marianne Faithfull’s manager... has confirmed

that Marianne is being treated for COVID-19 in hospital in London,” music industry publicists Republic Media tweeted.

“She is stable and responding to treatment. We wish her well and a full and speedy recovery.”

Faithfull, 73, was one of the icons of the 1960s and was catapulted to fame at the age of just 17 singing “As Tears Go By”, written by Mick Jagger and Keith Richards of the Rolling Stones.

Chile drought causing water shortage

With historically low river flows and reservoirs running dry due to drought, people in central Chile have found themselves particularly vulnerable to the coronavirus pandemic.

Years of resource exploitation and lax legislation have allowed most reservoirs in that part of the country to run dry.

“There are now 400,000 families, nearly 1.5 million people approximately, whose supply of 50 liters of water a day depends on tankers,” Rodrigo Mundaya, spokesman for the Movement for the Defense of Water, the Earth and the Protection of the Environment, told AFP.

Queen Elizabeth II to praise virus response

Queen Elizabeth II will urge people to rise to the challenge posed by the coronavirus outbreak, in a rare special address to Britain and Commonwealth nations on Sunday.

In extracts released Saturday of what royal officials said was a “deeply personal” speech, the

93-year-old monarch will say she has faith that people will respond, despite the difficulties.

The broadcast, scheduled to air at 1900 GMT on Sunday, is only the fourth time in her 68-year reign that she has made a special televised address outside her annual Christmas Day message.

It comes as daily deaths in Britain hit a record high of 708, including a five-year-old child on Saturday, taking the overall toll to 4,313 — and as the country prepared for a third week of lockdown.

Turkey tightens controls in public places

Turkey stepped up controls Saturday on crowded public spaces including markets and ferries in Istanbul, a day after President Recep Tayyip Erdogan imposed the use of face masks to curb the coronavirus outbreak.

The death toll in the country of 83 million people has now topped 500, according to official figures published on Saturday, while the number of cases has reached nearly 24,000 — most of them in the economic capital Istanbul.

104-year-old WWII veteran defeats coronavirus

Bill Lapschies from Oregon has fought many battles in his life — the 104-year-old veteran defeated coronavirus, right in time for his birthday.

According to the Washington Examiner, the 104-year-old WWII veteran is the oldest known coronavirus survivor. Last Wednesday, he celebrated his birthday with his family less than one month after testing positive for the virus. Lapschies told Oregon Public Broadcasting: “I don’t know. It just went away. Sit out here, and you can get rid of anything.”

The veteran was born in 1916. In other words, he also survived the Spanish flu in 1918. He was drafted by the US Army in 1943.

SOURCE:
AFP News Updates



TOPSHOT - Iraqi Kurdish musician Nujin Hasan plays his violin to residents of his apartment block, who are staying at home to combat the spread of the coronavirus, in Arbil, the capital of the northern Iraqi Kurdish autonomous region, on March 17, 2020. PHOTO: AFP

New Zealand can put COVID-19 under control: PM

WELLINGTON — WELLINGTON, April 5 (Xinhua) — New Zealand government believed that the country can put COVID-19 under control, as the country reported 89 new cases of COVID-19 on Sunday, making the total number of COVID-19 cases to 1,039 in the country.

Director-General of Health Dr. Ashley Bloomfield from New Zealand Ministry of Health gave the update at a daily COVID-19 press conference. According to Bloomfield, New Zealand reported 48 new confirmed and 41 new probable cases of COVID-19 on Sunday, bringing the total number of COVID-19 cases to 1,039 in the country. Fifteen people are currently in hospital, including three people in ICU. Altogether 156 people have re-

covered and one person died from the disease.

New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said the number of the COVID-19 cases in the country is steady. She believed the national lockdown is working and making a difference. "Going hard and going early appear to be paying off for us," Ardern said.

New Zealand broadened the case definition for COVID-19 from last Friday. However, there is not a big increase in the number of cases reported, indicating a "good thing", Ardern said.

Ardern also acknowledged New Zealanders for the sacrifice they have made during the lockdown period. She is confident that the country can put COVID-19 under control.—Xinhua



New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern speaks during covid-19 coronavirus media update in Wellington, New Zealand on April 5, 2020. New Zealand government believed that the country can put COVID-19 under control, as the country reported on Sunday the total number of COVID-19 cases reached 1,039 in the country. **PHOTO: XINHUA**

Trump warns 'toughest week' ahead as global virus deaths top 60,000



Worst-hit Italy saw intensive care virus patients drop for the first time this weekend. **PHOTO: AFP**

WASHINGTON — US President Donald Trump warned Americans to brace for a "very horrendous" number of coronavirus deaths in the coming days, ahead of a rare speech by Queen Elizabeth II on Sunday aimed at rallying hard-hit Britain.

Global deaths from the COVID-19 pandemic have soared past 60,000, with Europe continuing to bear the brunt of the virus which has left roughly half the planet confined at home.

There are now more than 1.2 million confirmed cases across the globe, and around 65,000 people have died since the virus first emerged in China

late last year, according to a Johns Hopkins University tally.

Trump said the United States was entering "a time that's going to be very horrendous" with "some really bad numbers."

"This will probably be the toughest week," he said at the White House. "There will be a lot of death." At the same time, the president stressed the US — where infections have surpassed 300,000 — cannot remain shut down forever.

"Mitigation does work but again, we're not going to destroy our country," he said. "I've said it from the beginning — the cure cannot be worse than the problem."—AFP

Ukraine battles forest fire in Chernobyl nuclear zone

KYIV — Ukraine on Sunday mobilised aircraft to battle a forest blaze in the restricted zone around Chernobyl, scene of the world's worst nuclear accident, authorities said.

They said two planes, a helicopter and around 100 firefighters have been deployed to fight a fire that broke out Saturday and spread over 20 hectares in a forested area near the Chernobyl power plant.

On Sunday morning, the fire was not visibly burning and no increase in radiation in the air had been detected, the emergencies service said in a statement.

However, the service pointed Saturday to some "difficulties" in fighting the fire due to an increase in radiation in some places, but stressed there was no danger to people living nearby.

Chernobyl polluted a big part of Europe when its fourth reactor

exploded in April 1986, with the area immediately around the power plant the worst affected.

A 30-kilometre radius around the power station is still an exclusion zone where people are not allowed to live.

The three other reactors at

Chernobyl continued to generate electricity until the power station finally closed in 2000. A giant protective dome was put in place over the fourth reactor in 2016.

Fires occur regularly in the forests near the Chernobyl power plant.—AFP



A 30-kilometre radius around the power station is still an exclusion zone where people are not allowed to live. **PHOTO: AFP**

Australia police to probe cruise ship virus deaths

CANBERRA — Australian police on Sunday launched a criminal investigation after thousands of passengers were allowed to disembark a coronavirus-stricken cruise ship in Sydney and 10 later died of the illness.

The government last month allowed 2,700 passengers to walk off the Carnival Australia-owned Ruby Princess and travel to their homes around the country — despite a ban on cruise ships docking in Australia being announced just days earlier.

New South Wales state police commissioner Mick Fuller said Sunday that the ship's operators would be investigated over alleged "absolute discrepancies" between information provided to authorities and the requirements of the law.

"The key question that remains unanswered, and a criminal or coronial investigation will need to be conducted, is were Carnival crew transparent in contextualising the true patient and crew health conditions rel-

evant to COVID-19?" he said.

"The international licence to enter a port is on the assurance from the captain to the authorities that the vessel is free from contagious disease."

Some passengers on the ship were displaying flu-like symptoms when it berthed in Sydney Harbour.

Hundreds later tested positive for COVID-19 and 10 people have so far died of the virus, including three in New South Wales overnight.—AFP

Coronavirus pandemic ‘amplifying’ poverty in UK

LONDON — The coronavirus pandemic is increasing poverty in Britain, where levels are already high after a decade of austerity triggered by the global financial crisis, according to experts.

Official data shows that more than 14 million people in the UK are classed as living in poverty, or nearly one-quarter of the population.

Some 4.2 million children are poor, or around 30 percent of the total, government figures show.

The situation is worsening with Britons losing jobs en masse as the UK experiences lockdown.

“The risk of poverty is particularly high for work-



People ‘suddenly’ find themselves poor. PHOTO: AFP

ers in sectors like hospitality and retail where people are more likely to be on low wages and in insecure

work,” said Dave Innes, head of economics at the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, an organisation for

social change. Over the past fortnight, almost one million adults in the UK have ap-

plied for Universal Credit, the government’s main form of state aid.

That is nearly 10 times the level in an average two-week period.

‘Education poverty’

“If families who were earning decent wages before the pandemic move on to the Universal Credit, they will very suddenly find themselves living in poverty,” said Louisa McGeehan, a director at Child Poverty Action Group UK.

As for families who were already classed as living in poverty prior to the outbreak – and whose children are stuck at home owing to schools being shut – the demands of online education add to the

problem, she said.

McGeehan noted that “a lot of schools are putting lessons on the Internet for children to do at home.

“If those children are in households who don’t have Internet or don’t have a computer, they are not able to do that learning.”

McGeehan told AFP: “We have a nation where a child poverty crisis has been amplified by the impact of coronavirus.”

But unlike the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis when the government slashed public spending, COVID-19 has sparked huge state stimulus, including a boost to Universal Credit.—AFP■

Iraqis rally to help needy families as virus hits, economy falters

BAGHDAD — On an abandoned sidewalk in Baghdad, under strict government curfew to contain the novel coronavirus, a handful of volunteers with masks and gloves make food packages for needy families.

“What we’re doing is a humanitarian duty towards society, and anyone who can afford it should do the same,” said Abu Hashim, an Iraqi businessman in his fifties packing non-perishable goods outside a lonely storefront in the Iraqi capital’s east.

The health ministry says COVID-19 has killed 56 Iraqis and infected more than 800 others. But many suspect the real numbers

to be much higher, as only a few thousand people from a population of 40 million have been tested.

In a bid to stop the spread of the novel coronavirus pandemic, authorities have imposed a countrywide lockdown, ordering schools and most shops shut.

While the government is still paying salaries and pensions to millions, Iraq’s modest private-sector economy has come to a grinding halt overnight.

Iraq is OPEC’s second-biggest oil producer, but is ranked among the 20 most corrupt countries in the world by Transparency International. The World Bank says one in five Ira-



In a bid to stop the spread of the virus, Iraqi authorities have imposed a countrywide lockdown, ordering schools and most shops shut. PHOTO: AFP

qis lives under the poverty line.

Sensing that relying on authorities would be unwise, young activists, community figures and local religious leaders have come together to try to support those with no

income.

Using donations to buy essentials, like lentils, beans, rice and sugar, they pack supplies in plastic bags, talk their way through checkpoints and distribute them across the city.—AFP■

UAE doubles stimulus to counter coronavirus impact

DUBAI — The Central Bank of the United Arab Emirates said Sunday it has doubled to \$70 billion a stimulus package to support the Gulf state’s economy amid the coronavirus pandemic.

“The aggregate value of all capital and liquidity measures adopted by the CBUAE since 14 March 2020 has reached 256 billion dirhams (\$70 billion),” the central bank said in a statement.

Last month, oil-rich UAE announced stimulus worth \$35 billion that included aid to the banking system, facilities for loans and injecting funds into the

bourses.

Most of the new measures focused on easing financial and liquidity requirements for banks to free up cash for lending.

In the new measures, the central bank reduced by half to 7.0 percent the reserves banks are required to keep for demand deposits, which can be withdrawn by clients anytime.

This will allow for some \$16.6 billion in liquidity to be used in new bank lending, the central bank said.

The regulator’s new measures also allow banks to defer payment of loans for companies and client—AFP■

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V GSS YANGON VOY. NO. (1117 S/N)

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V GSS YANGON VOY. NO. (1117 S/N) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 6-4-2020 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 SHIPPING
PTE LTD

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V MATHU BHUM VOY. NO. (257W)

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V MATHU BHUM VOY. NO. (257W) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 6-4-2020 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 ALS SUMIRE VOY. NO. (1026 W/E)

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V ALS SUMIRE VOY. NO. (1026 W/E) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 6-4-2020 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 OCEAN NETWORK EXPRESS
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Towards ancient Mongnai city

Maung Tha (Archaeology)

MONGNAI Township, included in the area of Langkhio District, is 100 miles from Taunggyi. Oral histories stated an ogress ruled the region. The title of town Mongnai derived from Mongphai called ogre town in Shan language. Some people said Mongnai means grandma or snow town.

Mongnai filled with beautiful scenes of Shan State possesses various kinds of evidences for ancient culture. Ancient brick walls of Mongnai can be seen at the exit to Langkhio.

Current Mongnai

Current Mongnai Township with 58 miles in length from the east to the west and 22 miles in width from the south to the north is located on 745.57 square miles of land with 0.56 square mile area for Mongnai. The township takes position between 20° 20' and 50' north latitude and between 97° 49' and 98° 29' east longitude.

Mongnai Township is sharing border with Mongpyin

Township in the east, Maukmai Township in the west, Langkhio Township in the south and Namsang and Kunhing townships in the north. Travellers have easy access to Mongnai from Taunggyi, Loilem, Namsang, Langkhio and Kholam through motor road. Mongnai is 30 miles to Namsang, 27 miles to Maukmai, 22 miles to Langkhio and 51 miles to Kengtawng.

Currently, Mongnai Township is constituted with two towns namely Mongnai and Kengtawng, 12 wards and 74 villages from 14 village-tracts. Langkhio District comprises Langkhio, Maukmai, Mongpan and Mongnai townships.

Mongnai Township is teeming with plentiful of hills such as Loimonmone, Loimahaw, Loikauk, Loimongmoung, Loitanin and Loiin. Mongnai Township at an altitude of 3,179 feet is crossed by Namting, Namtun and Namsalai creeks from the north to the south. Namting Creek from the land with 427 feet in height torrentially flows

down at Tatbon-aing waterfall near Kengtawng with 2,132 feet high above sea level.

Despite being a hilly area, Mongnai Township gets a lot of rainfall per year between 33 inches and 48 inches on 59-81 average raining days per year. The township is at 3° centigrade in minimum in the cold season and 38° centigrade in maximum in summer.

According to the statistics released on March 2018, Mongnai Township is home to 41,054 people, 23,851 of who are Shan ethnics, accounting for 72.55 per cent of the total population. Two basic education high schools, one high school branch, three middle schools and 40 primary schools scatter in the small township.

In order to provide health-care services to local people, one 25-bed government hospital each is operated in Mongnai and Kengtawng in addition to eight rural health branches. A total of 1,106 pagodas and 54 monasteries mushroom in Mongnai



Mongnai Mwedawsu Pagodas.

Township whereas two Christian churches, one Islamic mosque, two Hindu temples and one Chinese temple take positions in the township.

Ancient pagodas in Mongnai

Travellers can pay a visit to Mongnai, 35 miles south to Langkhio, via Namsang which is 70 miles from Taunggyi.

Two brick posts in shape of lotus buds on both sides of the road at the entrance to Mongnai become great symbols of the town.

Histories of the town mentioned Mongnai was established three times. The first Mongnai city was established in the place, 18 miles northeast of current town and the second four miles east of the current town. The third Mongnai city was established in 1557 in the reign of King Bayintnaung. Although the Mongnai Chieftain was loyalty to King Bayintnaung, King Nyaungyan occupied Mongnai in 1603. Such occupation cut off

the succession to the Mongnai Chieftain. In his reign, King Thailun appointed Sao Lah Hkam as the Chieftain of Mongnai. The religious edifices built in Mongnai in the time of Myanmar occupation showed mixed architectural works of Myanmar and Shan.

On arrival at Mongnai, I saw ancient pagodas in groups on right side of the road. Most of the pagodas were built in style of Myanmar architecture similar to the pagodas across the nation, not in shape of long stupas in Shan State. The group of pagodas is called Mongnai Mwedawsu Pagodas.

Buddhist Abbot U Pannapala who is maintaining these pagodas said there are 51 pagodas in the group. Some pagodas were renovated in current style, so original works of edifices could not be found. We supplicated to the abbot that maintenance of the pagodas in original style can show higher value of cultural heritages than painting and gilding the ancient pagodas.



Ancient brick wall of Mongnai.



Buddha statues at Mongnia Mwedawsu Pagoda

A large banyan tree is thriving near the pagodas. A large branch of tree is in shape of chamber where a Buddha image is kept.

U Shwe Aung Pagoda, assumed as the largest pagoda in Shan State, is located in a large fence in the centre of town. Despite no past information about the pagoda, we assumed title of the pagoda as name of well-wisher as the title is name of a person.

Mongnai Hnakeyeik Shithsu Pagoda is similar to works of Amarapura era at Shweyaung-taw Pagoda in ancient Makkhaya city in Singaing Township. The works of the pagoda are in style of Shan nationals. Likewise, works of Maung Khaing Maung Naing Pagoda are similar to that of Myatheintan Pagoda in Mingun.

Mongnai Haw (Chieftain Palace)

“Haw” is in Shan language. It means a palace of Shan Chief-

tain, according to Myanmar dictionary.

Mongnai Chieftain Palace was built in the downtown by Chieftain Sao Pyae in 1951. Sao Pyae succeeded to Mongnai Chieftain Sao Kyaw Hoe who passed away in 1948 and held a grand ceremony of housewarming in 1962. Mongnai Chieftain Palace was built in European style, flanked by Ottara hall on the northward and Dekkhina hall on the southward in addition to a large balcony.

The chieftain palace was originated in southern part of Nawngmo Lake. Mongnai Chieftain Sao Khun Nwam moved the palace to the present place in 1854. The chieftain palace reduced in ashes in 1898 was rebuilt again. In 1933 in the tenure of Mongnai Chieftain Sao Kyaw Hoe, the old palace was dissolved and then rebuilt but it was set on fire in Japanese occupation era in 1945.

A cream post erected by chieftains and a bronze cow

statue located in the compound of Mongnai Chieftain Palace became symbols of Mongnai. A lamp-post erected in front of the palace in 1891 can be seen till today.

Hills in Mongnai

Hsin Hill, Tagun Hill, Mya Hill, Sein Hill, Shwe Hill and Ngwe Hill are significant ones in Mongnai Township. Tagun Hill positions in southwest of Mon-

gnai, and the pagoda on the hill is called Taguntaung Pagoda. In the tenure of Mongnai Chieftain Sao Shwe Kyi, local people relayed pieces of gravels from Nawngkyaw Creek in the east of town onto the hill to build the pagoda.

Anyone taking position on Tagun Hill can view the scene of Mongnai town on the hillside in the east. It was reported that British erected the statue of Mongnai governor on Tagun Hill but local people demolished it later.

Myataung, Seintaung, Shwetaung and Ngwetaung pagodas are close to Tagun Hill. These pagodas were built by wealthy brothers Maung Khaing and Maung Naing. U Tha Khaung monastery was not far from Ngwetaung Pagoda but 27 pagodas can be seen now without monastery. Minthar Pagoda built by Major Prince Maung San of Mongnai is located in lower part of Hsin Hill. Chieftain Sao Khun Son hoisted an umbrella atop the pagoda in 1828.

Mongnai, an ancient town in southern Shan State, is plentiful of ancient buildings with original works. Preserving these ancient edifices means safeguarding the ancient city Mongnai.

(Translated by Than Tun Aung)

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Marlein posts



FFA suspends grassroots football amid COVID-19

FOOTBALL Federation of Australia (FFA) has recently suspended grassroots football tournaments and its related training until at least 31 May 2020, according to the statement with the FFA.

The decision was made by FFA in response to COVID-19 in consul-

tation with its member federations and their working committee of COVID-19.

FFA Chief Executive Officer James Johnson said: "We have determined, with the full backing of all Member Federations, that the temporary suspension to sanctioned

grassroots football competitions and associated training will remain in place until at least 31 May 2020. We will continue to stay in close communications with our Member Federations in the lead up to 31 May 2020, to ensure that the individual circumstances of each

state and territory in relation to the status of COVID-19 and the measures or restrictions imposed by individual State/Territory Governments are being considered.

"These are unprecedented times and at this moment, it is very difficult to predict what further

measures will be introduced, or for how much longer current measures will be in place.

As we have done with all our decisions to date, we will remain agile and responsive to the prevailing circumstances and still remain optimistic that our Member Federa-

tions, which are already considering what adjusted competitions will look like, will be able to complete the grassroots season this year, he continued.

FFA has also introduced "Play at Home and Stay at Home Challenge" for its football fans via online.—Lynn Thit (Tgi)

Liverpool blasted over virus furlough, players in £200m wage cut warning



Liverpool are 25 points clear of Manchester City at the top of the Premier League. PHOTO: AFP

LONDON — Liverpool were accused of betraying their "morals and values" on Saturday for their move to furlough non-playing staff during the coronavirus pandemic as Premier League stars warned of a £200 million (\$245 million) shortfall in government coffers if 30 percent wage cuts were introduced.

Premier League leaders Liverpool said they would top up the public money made available from the government to ensure staff on temporary leave received their full salaries.

It follows similar moves by Newcastle, Tottenham, Bournemouth and Norwich to take advantage of the scheme, under which employers can claim for 80 percent of furloughed employees' wages.

But former Reds players Jamie Carragher and Stan Collymore strongly criticised the move by the European champions, who in February announced pre-tax profits of £42 million (\$51 million) for 2018/19.

"(Manager) Jurgen Klopp showed compassion for all at the start of this pandemic, senior players heavily involved in @premierleague players taking wage cuts. Then all that respect & goodwill is lost, poor this @LFC," tweeted Carragher.

Collymore was even more forthright, tweeting: "I don't know of any Liverpool fan of any standing that won't be anything other than disgusted at the club for furloughing staff."

Another former Anfield star, Germany's Di-

etmar Hamann tweeted: "Astonished by the news that @LFC takes advantage of the furlough scheme to claim 80% of non-playing staff wages back off the government.

"That's not what the scheme was designed for. Contrary to the morals and values of the club I got to know."

Liverpool said staff would be paid 100 percent of their salaries to ensure nobody was financially disadvantaged.

A statement from the club said: "Even prior to the decision on staff furloughing, there was a collective commitment at senior levels of the club -- on and off the pitch -- with everyone working towards a solution that secures jobs for employees of the club during this unprecedented crisis."—AFP ■

Trump hopes virus-hit sport back 'sooner than later'

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump said Saturday he believed US sports leagues hit by the coronavirus pandemic would resume "sooner rather than later" but declined to set a timetable for their return.

On a conference call with the commissioners of the major professional sports leagues, Trump told National Football League commissioner Roger Goodell he believed the season would kick off as scheduled in September.

US sports have been upended by the coronavirus, with the NBA, Major League Baseball, Major League Soccer and National Hockey League

all halting or suspending their respective seasons last month as the pandemic erupted.

"I want fans back in the arenas...whenever we're ready," Trump told reporters at a White House briefing on Saturday.

"As soon as we can obviously. I can't tell you a date but I think it's going to be sooner rather than later."

Major League Baseball and NBA officials are reportedly studying plans to play games without spectators at neutral venues to minimise the risks of infection associated with crowded arenas.

Trump, however,

spoke optimistically of fans eventually being let back into stadiums.

"We're not going to have separation for the rest of our times on the planet," Trump said.

"We need it for this period of time. But eventually people are going to be able to occupy those seats next to each other. I'm not committing to it. It would be great if we could."

The NFL has so far made no plans to alter the start of its 2020-2021 season, with pre-season games usually starting in August. However California Governor Gavin Newsom was sceptical of the possibility of sports resuming in August or September.—AFP ■



FILE PHOTO: NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell talks during a press conference at the Hilton Hotel on September 19, 2014 in New York City. PHOTO: AFP