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Monday, 11 May 2020

First batch of 10,000 UNICEF COVID-19 test kits handed over to Health & Sports Ministry

THE first batch of 10,000 test kits procured by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) with the support from GAVI (the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization), were handed over to the Ministry of Health and Sports shortly after arrival at the Yangon International Airport yesterday.

Ms. June Kunugi, UNICEF Representative to Myanmar, handed over the test kits to Dr Thar Tun Kyaw, Director-General of the Office of the Ministry of Health and Sports. "The test kits arrived today are for the COBAS 6800 machine equipped at the National Health Laboratory (Yangon). Today, we received 10,000 test kits. More will come soon," said Dr Thar Tun Kyaw. With the financial support of GAVI, the Vaccine Alliance, 30,000 test kits were brought by the government, under the UNICEF programme, and 10,000 test kits arrived so far.

The 10,000 test kits and other things arrived yesterday worth US\$155,913, according to Dr Thar Tun Kyaw.

As international commercial flights remain temporarily suspended as part of the measures to contain the spread of



Ms. June Kunugi, UNICEF Representative to Myanmar, hands over the test kits to Director-General Dr. Thar Tun Kyaw of Ministry of Health and Sports at the Yangon International Airport yesterday. **PHOTO: KYAW ZEYA**

the COVID-19, the World Food Programme (WFP), on behalf of the United Nations in Myanmar, is launching a series of humanitarian flights linking Yangon and Kuala Lumpur to bring in hu-

manitarian cargo and personnel. Financial support from the European Union and Switzerland has made it possible for WFP to establish the first stage of the humanitarian flight service linking

Yangon with Kuala Lumpur on a weekly basis. Each flight can bring to Myanmar up to two metric tons of humanitarian cargo.

Similarly, to prevent, contain and give treatment on the

COVID-19 disease, India, China, the Republic of Korea, Singapore and Japan also provided medicines, medical equipment and health related assistance to Myanmar. —Zaw Gyi

Myanmar nationals stranded in UAE brought back home

MYANMAR migrant workers including seamen totalling 148 stranded in the United Arab Emirates-UAE and Dubai Port were returned home by Fly Dubai Airlines yesterday. When they arrived at the airport, officials from the Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population, Ministry of Health and Sports, and Yangon Region Government car-

ried out measures to ensure the returnees receive 21-day quarantine at designated places and hotels in complying with the directives and health guidelines of the ministries concerned.

Under the directives of the National-Level Central Committee on Prevention, Containment and Treatment on COVID-19 Disease, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has worked in

... the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has worked in coordination with ministries concerned and Myanmar embassies in foreign countries on bringing back the Myanmar nationals from respective countries, and so far, 113 Myanmar nationals from foreign countries including Japan, India, the Republic of Korea, Thailand, Bangladesh, Singapore, USA, Britain, Indonesia and UAE returned home.

coordination with ministries concerned and Myanmar embassies in foreign countries on bringing back the Myanmar nationals from respective countries, and so far, 113 Myanmar nationals from foreign countries including Japan, India, the Republic of Korea, Thailand, Bangladesh, Singapore, USA, Britain, Indonesia and UAE returned home. — MNA

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Public announcement by Financial Regulatory Department

1. The Ministry of Planning, Finance and Industry has issued directives for microfinance organizations to limit the number of staff physically working in their offices to a maximum of 4 persons. The directive intends to adhere to guidelines set by the Ministry of Health and Sports to protect and contain the spread of COVID-19.

2. The Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population issued a notification on 3 May 2020 regarding the operation of factories, workshops and departments during the spread of COVID-19. The notification states that businesses offering financial and insurance services are public service companies and are allowed to remain open as long as they prepare themselves in line with guidelines issued by the Ministry of Health and Sports aimed at mitigating the spread of COVID-19.

3. This being the case, the Financial Regulatory Department has been instructed to collaborate with regional administrative bodies to ensure microfinance and insurance companies comply with COVID-19 directives and guidelines set by the Ministry of Health and Sports.

Financial Regulatory Department
Ministry of Planning, Finance and Industry
(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)

Myanmar nationals stranded in UAE brought back home



Myanmar citizens stranded in UAE line up for immigration process at the Yangon International Airport on their return yesterday. **PHOTO: ZAW GYI (NEWS ON PAGE-1)**

44 Myanmar nationals return through Myanmar-Thai Friendship Bridge (2)



Myanmar nationals returned from Thailand yesterday making their immigration processes. **PHOTO: HTEIN LIN AUNG (IPRD)**

A total of 44 Myanmar migrant workers returned from Thailand through the Myawady Friendship Bridge (2) on 10 May, according to local authorities.

Kayin State Hluttaw Representative U Thant Zin Aung, the district administrator, township administrator, district police force and respective officials have arranged diagnostic processes for the Myanmar migrant

workers.

Since opening the bridge for Myanmar migrant workers to return from Thailand, 60 Myanmar workers returned on 1 May, 54 on 2 May, one on 3 May, 44 on 4 May, 23 on 5 May, 100 on 8 May and 44 yesterday, adding up to 326 returnees.

There were no returnees on 6, 7 and 9 May.

Out of the 44 migrant work-

ers who arrived yesterday, one is from Kayah State, another one from Kayin State, two from Mon State, another one from Sagaing Region, 17 people from Bago Region, nine from Magway Region, three from Mandalay Region, five from Yangon Region and another five from Ayeyawady Region, according to an official report. —Htein Lin Aung (IPRD) (Translated by Kyaw Zin Lin)

Gale-force winds damage buildings in Mandalay, Shan State

STRONG wind began blowing throughout Myanmar in early April as the nation enters the annual season for gales, lightning and hails.

Strong winds blew off the roofs and partially damaged over a hundred houses in Yamethin Township and over 50 houses in Pyawbwe Township, Mandalay Region, while also uprooting trees and felling utility poles.

Similarly, over a hundred houses were also damaged by strong winds in Namsang, Langkho, Hsihseng and Monghsat townships of Shan State.

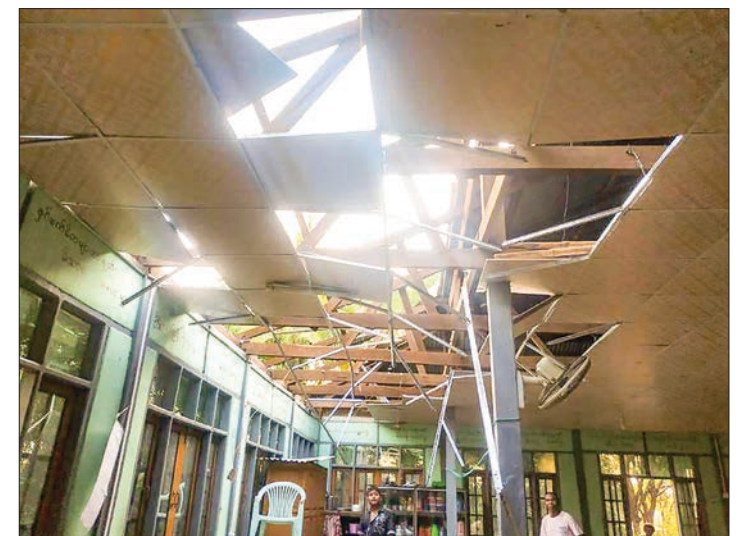
Strong wind between 9 April to 9 May have so far destroyed 407 houses and 14 religious edifices, partially

damaged 6625 houses and 135 religious edifices, and killed 2 people across Myanmar.

The Department of Disaster Management, under the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement, has provided over K335.7 million for purchasing food, construction materials and rescue equipment in addition to supporting the deceased.

The public has been advised to exercise caution for strong winds, heavy rains, lightning strikes and hail during this season. In case of natural disasters, the public can contact the ministry's hotlines at 067-3404666 and 067-3404777.—MNA

(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)



A strong wind destroys the roof of a building in Yamethin. **PHOTO: MNA**

THE ASEAN INSTITUTE FOR PEACE AND RECONCILIATION (ASEAN-IPR) INVITES ASEAN NATIONALS TO APPLY FOR THE POSITION OF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation (ASEAN-IPR) based in Jakarta, Indonesia is seeking for an Executive Director to lead the Institute's efforts as ASEAN'S research institute for the term of three years from 19-10-2020 to 18-10-2023. Detail information including responsibilities and qualifications are available at <https://asean-aipr.org/resources/vacancy-executive-director/> and <https://asean.org/opportunities/vacancies-asec/>.

“People are the key”

Ministry of Construction reviews projects in Taninthayi Region

UNION Minister for Construction U Han Zaw held a video conference with project areas the ministry is involved in on 9 May.

Firstly, Director U Kyaw Myo Tun of Construction Team (4), under the Department of Bridges, displayed a Power-Point presentation on projects in Taninthayi Region including Tamote-Lut Lut bridge, Taninthayi bridge, Pulone Tone Tone bridge, safely dismantling old Taninthayi bridges, ensuring proper prevention methods for COVID-19 are implemented in the project areas, and cooperating with the Ministry of Health and Sports in spreading awareness. A video clip on the ongoing process with the bridges and future plan was then played.

Next, the Union Minister said it was encouraging to see bridge construction completed during the COVID-19 situation. He then urged unity and cooperation to complete the remaining projects. He said the President’s guidance during this Taninthayi bridge was to use 50 per cent of the old Taninthayi bridge in



Union Minister U Han Zaw discusses construction of roads and bridges in Taninthayi Region via video conferencing. **PHOTO: MNA**

building rural bridges and to store the other 50 per cent in case of natural disasters. The Union Minister and Deputy Minister then inspected the load test results of the completed bridges and made decisions.

Tamote-Lut Lut is one of three bridges in Taninthayi Region located along the Dawei-Myeik highway each measuring 1287 feet long, 24 feet wide and 3 feet of sidewalks on both sides of the bridge. It has a horizontal clear-

ance of 164 feet, vertical clearance of 15 feet, and can withstand load of AASHTO HS 25. They are all 93 per cent complete.

The Taninthayi bridge is located on the Myeik-Taninthayi-Bokpyin-Kawthoung highway and measures 1444 feet long, 28 feet wide and 4 feet of sidewalks on both sides. The bridge has a horizontal clearance of 164 feet, vertical clearance of 33 feet and can withstand vehicle load of AASHTO HS 25. The bridge is 95

per cent complete.

The Pulone Tone Tone bridge is located on the road connecting to Kawthoung-Pulone Tone Tone and measures 2400 feet long, 24 feet wide and 5.6 feet of sidewalks on both sides. It is also 80 feet above the water surface, 3 feet high and has a permitted vehicle load of AASHTO HS 25. It is 93 per cent complete.

Next, Director (Civil) for Taninthayi Region U Thet Zaw Win explained the accompany-

ing processes of the bridge constructions, working with 3 district groups and 2 road groups within Taninthayi Region for each financial year, completed and ongoing tasks, and action plans for preventing the spread of COVID-19.

This was followed by a presentation from Director (Civil) U Zaw Moe Oo of the regional Rural Road Development Department. He said the temporary Bailey bridges used during the construction of the Taninthayi bridge will be recycled in the three bridges being built on the Tagu-Tarabwin-Kyar Khaung Taung-Theindaw-Kaumapyin road. He also talked about other ongoing road and bridge construction projects.

After this, the Union Minister and attendees watched a video clip on the ongoing and future processes of the road and bridge projects in Taninthayi Region. The Union Minister and Deputy Minister then gave guidance on completing the projects on time and preventing the spread of COVID-19. — MNA

(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)

Two more COVID-19 cases on Sunday, total cases reach 180

THE Ministry of Health and Sports reported two more confirmed cases of COVID-19 on Sunday, bringing the total number of people tested positive to 180.

The two newly infected persons were a twenty-one

year-old female from Mayangon Township, Yangon Region, and a twenty-one year-old male from Insein Township, Yangon Region.

Out of the 180 confirmed cases, six patients have

died while 72 have recovered, and 55 were allowed to be discharged from respective hospitals, according to the statement issued by the Ministry of Health and Sports. —MNA (Translated by Kyaw Zin Lin)

Update on COVID-19 at 8 pm, 10 May 2020

- The National Health Laboratory (Yangon) tested 90 samples, and the Department of Medical Research tested 115 samples, totaling 205, on 10 May 2020. The results showed that two lab specimens tested positive for COVID-19.
- There have been a total of 180 confirmed cases in Myanmar up to 8:00 pm on 10 May.
- Out of the old confirmed cases, four new cases (Case-98,141,142,144) were tested negative for two times, bringing the total number of recovered persons to 72 on 10 May.
- Six positive patients have died.
- There are a total of 78 new persons under investigation in the past 24 hours from 12 noon of 10 May.

Ministry of Health and Sports
(Translated by Kyaw Zin Lin)

New confirmed case of COVID-19 issued at 8pm, 10 May

Case no.	Age	Gender	Address	Contact with COVID-19 positive patients	History of travel abroad	Name of hospital transferred	COVID-19 lab test result	Remark
179	21	Male	Insein Township, Yangon Region.	Yes (Case-177)	No	Waibargi Specialist Hospital	Positive	Person who is quarantined in designated location.
180	21	Female	Mayangon Township, Yangon Region.	Yes (Case-86)	No	Waibargi Specialist Hospital	Positive	Person who is quarantined in designated location.

COVID-19 Laboratory results at 8 pm, 10 May 2020

Samples tested at the National Health Laboratory on 10 May	90
Samples tested at the Department of Medical Research on 10 May	115
COVID-19 (SARS-CoV-2) (new confirmed case) (positive)	2

Latest confirmed cases, recovered cases, and deaths at 8pm, 10 May

	New cases	Total cases
Confirmed cases of COVID-19	2	180
Recovered patients	4	72
Deaths	0	6

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MoSWRR distributes healthcare items at IDP camps in Kachin, Shan



An official from Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement distributes healthcare items to a person at an IDP camp. **PHOTO: MNA**

THE MINISTRY of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement has provided healthcare items to the camps of internally displaced persons in the battle against COVID-19 in Kachin

and Shan states.

The 15 IDP camps in Myitkyina, Mohnyin and Putao townships of Kachin State received 494 bottles of hand sanitizer, 50 bags of lime powder, 536 soaps, 11 sets of hand washing basin, 152 surgical masks, 3180 masks made by cloth, 10 thermometers, 10 loudspeakers, 10 memory sticks with audio files of COVID-19 awareness campaign and 10 vinyl sheets printed COVID-19 awareness campaign.

Similarly, the 10 IDP camps in Namtu, Namhkam townships of Shan State received 30 bags of lime powder, 5408 soaps and 10 thermometers.

The ministry is providing both material and immaterial supports in Nay Pyi Taw Council, regions and states to prevent and control of COVID-19 diseases. — MNA (Translated by TTN)

Fuel oil import up by 400,000 tonnes in current FY

MYANMAR has imported nearly US\$1.8 billion worth 3.3 million tonnes of diesel and gasoline over the past seven months of the current financial year, showing an increase of 400,000 tonnes valued \$56 million compared to the corresponding period of last year, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

Between October and April of the current fiscal, Myanmar has imported \$1.14 billion worth 2 million tonnes of diesel and 1.3 million tonnes of gasoline with an estimated value of over \$740 million, as per data of the Commerce Ministry.

Domestic oil prices have registered a downward trend since January-end on the back of falling prices in the global markets, and it is expected to remain on the low side, said a market observer.

The oil and gas sector has been crashed during coronavirus outbreak. Oil price went negative on 20 April as there is no place to store all the crude the world is producing, but not using. The global market remains broken, leading domestic oil price plunge to more than 50 per cent in April against January's prices.

In the global markets, oil prices dipped to \$16.8 per barrel for Brent oil and \$11.24 per barrel for WTI crude oil on 22 April 2020.

Brent crude oil price on 9 May ranged \$30.97 per barrel while WTI crude was priced around \$24.74 a barrel, according to global oil markets.

Consequently, 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 22 April 2020, the oil prices touched a low of K290-330 per litre for Octane 92, K430-455 for Octane 95, K435-465 for diesel and K445-475 for premium diesel, according to the domestic oil market. At present, fuel oil was pegged at around at K310-345 for Octane 92, K450-480 for Octane 95, K405-480 for diesel and K415-490 for premium diesel yesterday in the domestic retail market, according to the local fuel oil market.

"Sure, the drivers have been happy for months now as the price drops by half. However, the majority of the people in the city stay at home due to coronavirus threats. The oil demand is

extremely low and the oil market has collapsed across the globe," 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 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.

Normally, 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)

Jaggery powder, NCS plant in Magway Region to start operation after 15 May

THE 555 Shwe Hintha Co., Ltd, supported by Denmark's Responsible Business Fund, will produce non-centrifugal cane sugar (NCS) and jaggery powder with the use of the machine in Kyatsukyin Village, Yesagy Township of Magway Region after 15 May.

"Jaggery powder, products and NCS will be manufactured by jaggery plant. They will no longer use traditional manufacturing process as they can earn foreign

currency. The construction of the plant began on 6 July 2019 after the construction contract was signed on 2 May 2019. The capacity of the plant is estimated 1,500 visses (a viss equals to 1.6 kg) per 12 hours. The plant will prioritize NCS. Denmark's RBF contributed half of the construction cost. The plant was earlier set to run in March. But it was postponed to late May, due to the precaution measures of coronavirus pandemic and water

shortage problem, said U Tin Oo, in charge of plant construction, who lives in Yangon. This kind of manufacturing can help save energy and time, boost productivity, enhance the quality and ensure cleaning, hygiene and food safety, he continued.

"At present, NCS and jaggery powder with Royal Jaggery brand are sent to both local and foreign markets. They are shipped to Japan and Indonesia. They are also underway to pene-

trate markets of South Korea and China. There is a shortage of water in Yesagy. This being so, the operator has submitted the problem to the regional government. Once there is an adequate water supply, they will produce further value-added healthy products for the children in coordination with Japanese experts in nutrition, said CEO U Kaung Sett Naing of the 555 Shwe Hintha Co., Ltd.—Thant Sin Win

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

Over 800 companies struck off register due to the absence of AR: DICA

A total of 810 companies have been struck off the register as they fail to submit an annual return (AR) on the online registry system, MyCO, according to the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration (DICA).

The DICA has notified any company which fails to submit its AR within 13 months will be notified of its suspension (I-9A). If it fails to submit the AR within 28 days of receiving the notice, the system will show the company's status as suspended. Companies can restore their status only after shelling out a fine of K50,000 for late filing of AR, K100,000 for the restoration of the company on the Register, and K100,000 for late filing of documents.

If a company fails to restore its status within six months of suspension, the registrar will strike its name off the register, according to the DICA notice.

All registered companies need to file annual returns (AR) on the MyCO registry system within two months of

incorporation, and at least once every year (not later than one month after the anniversary of the incorporation), according to Section 97 of the law.

According to Section 266 (A) of the Myanmar Companies Law 2017, public companies must submit annual returns and financial statements (G-5) simultaneously.

All overseas corporations must submit ARs in the prescribed format on MyCO within 28 days of the financial year ending, as per Section 53 (A-1) of the Myanmar Companies Law 2017.

As per DICA's April report, a total of 11,848 companies were suspended for failing to submit AR forms within the due date. Newly established companies are required to submit ARs within two months of incorporation or face a fine of K100,000 for filing late returns.

The number of companies registered on the MyCO has touched 66,558 in April 2020 since the establishment of the online platform, according to

the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration (DICA).

The registration and re-registration of companies on the MyCO website commenced on 1 August 2018, in keeping with the Myanmar Companies Law 2017. Since then, more than 20,000 new companies and 40,000 existing companies have registered and re-registered on MyCO, bringing the total number of registered companies to 66,558 by April-end. At present, 100 per cent of the applicants are using the online registration platform, according to data provided by the DICA.

Normally, MyCO is receiving more than 1,000 applications from new companies every month. This year, the figures of registered companies stood at 1,415 in January, 1,298 in February and 1,015 in March, but only 348 companies were registered in April, as per data of the DICA. — GNLM

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

FDI up \$900 mln in seven months (Oct-Apr)

By Nyein Nyein

MYANMAR attracted more than US\$3.3 billion in foreign direct investments in the seven months of the current fiscal, an increase of \$900 million compared with the corresponding period of the previous FY, said DICA Director-General U Thant Sin Lwin.

Between 1 October and 30 April, FDI of \$3.35 billion flowed into the country, including the expansion of capital by existing enterprises. According to a press statement issued by the DICA, 162 foreign enterprises obtained permits from the Myanmar Investment Commission (MIC) and endorsements from regional and state Investment Committees in the current fiscal.

In the year-ago period, FDI of \$2.4 billion had flowed in from 150 enterprises.

"The number of permitted or endorsed enterprises this year was 12 higher than last year. Additionally, the COVID-19 consequences have not affected the foreign investments", said U Thant Sin Lwin. The proposals submitted to MIC include CMP businesses. At present, such kind of labour-intensive enterprises is facing financial hardship, disputes between the employers

and employees and the closure of factories.

The manufacturing enterprises and businesses that need large labour force are prioritized. MIC is endeavouring to clear those kinds of projects so fast that they can start running in the post-coronavirus period, he continued.

Moreover, MIC showed readiness to accept the projects regarding the production of the mask, pharmaceuticals and medical equipment, in responding to the activities of prevention, control and treatment of coronavirus disease. Myanmar targets to attract \$5.8 billion of FDIs in the current financial year. The Ministry of Investment and Foreign Economic Relations is inviting responsible businesses so the country benefits, he said.

"The Myanmar Investment Promotion Plan (MIPP) was drawn up with the assistance of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), and it is being implemented. As per the MIPP, Myanmar aims to reach an FDI target of \$200 billion in 20 years," said Union Minister U Thaung Tun of the Ministry of Investment and Foreign Economic Relations.

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

Myanmar exports over 600,000 tonnes of corns in current fiscal H1



Farmers unloading the corns from the truck. PHOTO: KO HTEIN

MYANMAR has exported more than 600,000 tonnes of corns to China and Thailand through borders in the H1 of the current financial year 2019-2020, the Com-

merce Ministry's data indicated. Over 500,000 tonnes of corns were sent to Thailand through Tachilek and Myawady borders, whereas Myanmar exported over

100,000 tonnes of corns via five Sino-Myanmar borders — Muse, Lwejel, Chinshwehaw, Kampaiti and Kengtung.

Earlier, China is the major

purchaser of Myanmar's corn. Later, Myanmar traders turned to the Thailand border market. Additionally, Myanmar exports corn to India, Viet Nam, Malaysia, Singapore and the Philippines through maritime trade. Yet, the volume of corn exports to those markets is quite small.

It has been one year since China suspended the importation of some agro products through the borders. Besides, corn is not listed in China's legitimate goods for border trade. Therefore, the ministry is making an effort to seek China's AQSIQ registration and to reach an agreement with China for legal trade.

Now, the coronavirus consequences slow the trade. The price is positively related to demand from the neighbouring countries. Therefore, traders are struggling with the falling price due to blockage, coupled with old stocks being piled up in the border market.

Myanmar intends to reach the corn export target of over a million tonnes in the

current fiscal.

Myanmar has shipped 1.5 million tonnes of corn, worth US\$270 million, to foreign countries in the previous financial year. During the previous fiscal, 200,000 tonnes of corn, worth over \$40 million, was shipped through maritime trade, while 1.3 million tonnes of corn, with an estimated value of \$230 million, was sent through the borders, according to the data released by the Ministry of Commerce.

As per data from the Ministry of Commerce, Myanmar has exported 1.4 million tonnes of corn, worth over \$290 million, in the 2017-2018FY; 1.2 million tons of corn, worth \$250 million, in the 2016-2017FY; and, 1.1 million tons of corn, worth \$300 million, in the 2015-2016FY.

There are over 1.9 million acres of corn plantations, primarily in Sagaing and Magway regions, and Chin, Kayin, Shan, and Kayah states. — GNLM

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

SIRI, ALEXA AND CO

Pandemic gives fresh momentum to digital voice technology

IN a world suddenly fearful of touch, voice technology is getting a fresh look.

Voice-activated systems such as Google Assistant, Amazon Alexa and Apple's Siri have seen strong growth in recent years, and the virus pandemic could accelerate that, analysts say.

Voice assistants are not only answering queries and shopping, but also being used for smart home control and for a range of business and medical applications which could see increased interest as people seek to limit personal contact.

"Voice has already made significant inroads into the smart home space and voice control can mean avoiding commonly touched surfaces around the home from smartphones, to TV remotes, light switches, thermostats, door handles and more," said analyst Jonathan Collins of ABI Research.

The pandemic is likely to provide "additional motivation and incentive for voice control in the home that will help drive awareness and adoption for a range of additional smart home devices

and applications," Collins said.

ABI estimates that voice control device shipments for smart home devices hit 141 million last year, and in 2020 will grow globally by close to 30 percent.

For the broader market of voice assistants, Juniper Research estimates 4.2 billion devices in use this year, growing to 8.4 billion by 2024, with much of the interactions on smartphones.

Smart locks, doorbells

Collins said he expected to see growing interest in smart locks and doorbells, along with other smart home systems, to eliminate the need for personal contact and face-to-face interaction as a result of the pandemic.

Avi Greengart, a technology analyst and consultant with Techsponential, said data is not yet available but that "anecdotally, voice assistant usage is way up" as a result of lockdowns.

Greengart said he expects a wider range of business applications for voice technologies in response to health and safety concerns.

"Looking forward, office spaces will need move towards

more touch-free controls; voice can be a solution, although motion triggers for lighting is often easier and more friction-free," he said.

"However, I do expect smart speakers -- along with an emailed list of commands -- to be a common feature at hotels and other rental properties. The fewer touch points, the better."

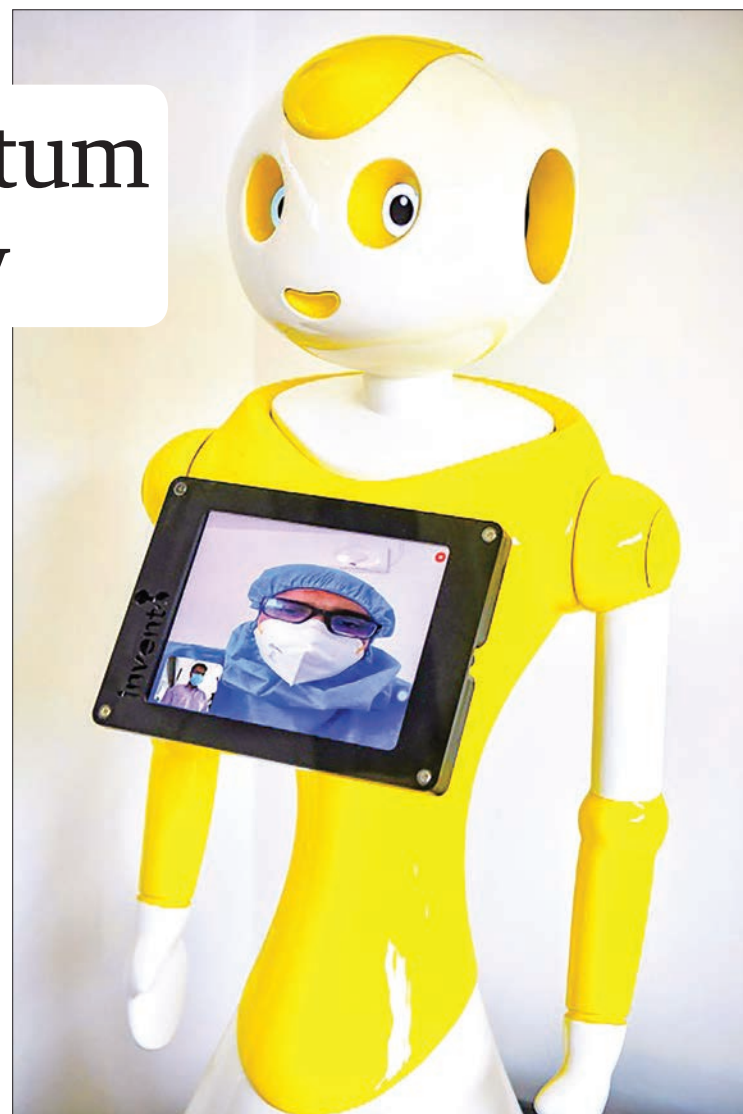
Post-pandemic outlook

Julian Issa of Futuresource Consulting said there appears to be "an uptick in the use of voice assistants since the virus outbreak" during the pandemic.

"Whilst avoiding touching surfaces may play a small part in this, it is mainly due to consumers spending far more time at home with their devices," Issa said.

Chris Pennell, another Futuresource analyst, said he expects adoption of digital assistants is likely to accelerate, "especially in client facing areas such as healthcare, retail and entertainment."

One example of this already in use is a Mayo Clinic tool using Amazon Alexa which allows people to assess their symptoms and



Robots are already being deployed in medical situations in the pandemic, but researchers say improved voice technologies could enable them to play an even greater role. **PHOTO: AFP**

access information on the virus.

Other medical applications are also in the works for voice technologies.

Veton Kepuska, a Florida Tech computer engineering professor who specializes in speech recognition technologies, is seeking to develop voice-activated

medical robots that can help limit physical contact and contagion.

"If we had this infrastructure in place, we would have been better off today," said Kepuska, who was spurred by the COVID-19 outbreak to seek funding for the research effort.

SOURCE: AFP

Tests show UVC lamps could light the way in virus fight

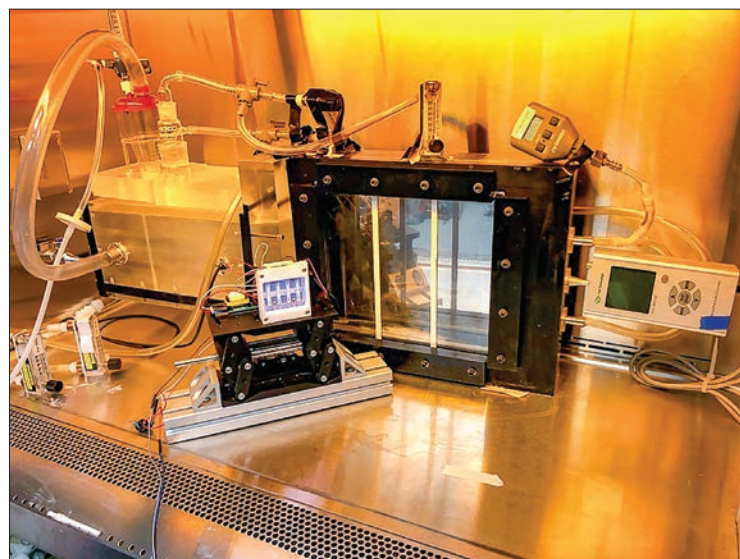
COULD a new type of ultraviolet lamp be used in stations, airplanes and schools to kill dangerous viruses, becoming a gamechanger in the COVID-19 fight?

Researchers at Columbia University have been working on such uses for years, and the current pandemic could confirm the value of their efforts.

UVC lamps have long been used to kill bacteria, viruses and molds, notably in hospitals and in the food-processing industry. As the coronavirus pandemic knocks world economies on their heels, this technology is experiencing a boom.

But UVC (for Ultraviolet-C) rays are dangerous, causing skin cancer and eye problems, and can be used only when no one is present.

The New York subway system, following the example of



This photo taken on March 26, 2020 by Columbia University researcher Manuela Buonanno shows an experiment being conducted on the use of a special kind of ultraviolet rays against the coronavirus. **PHOTO: AFP**

Chinese subways, plans to use ultraviolet lamps to disinfect its trains, but only during nighttime closures.

A team at Columbia's

Center for Radiological Research is experimenting with so-called far-UVC, rays whose wavelength of 222 nanometers makes them safe for humans

but still lethal to viruses, the center's director, David Brenner, told AFP.

At those frequencies, he explained, the rays cannot penetrate the surface of the skin nor of the eye.

That means they could be used in closed and crowded spaces where contamination risks run high, with potentially huge promise for use during the current pandemic.

In late April, President Donald Trump offered confusing remarks about somehow projecting ultraviolet rays into people's bodies to kill the coronavirus.

He appeared to be inspired by federal research on the effects of natural light on the virus -- but natural light has no UVC rays.

In 2013, the Columbia team began studying the effectiveness of far-UVC against drug-resist-

ant bacteria. It next examined the rays' use against viruses, including the flu virus. Only recently did it turn its attention to the coronavirus.

"We were thinking, how can we apply what we are doing to the current situation," Brenner said.

But to test the impact of UVC on the extremely contagious coronavirus, the team had to move its equipment into a highly bio-secure laboratory at Columbia.

Experiments carried out starting "three-four weeks ago," Brenner said, have already made clear that UVC rays destroy the virus on surfaces within minutes.

The team next plans to test the lamps on viruses suspended in the air, as when an infected person coughs or sneezes.

SOURCE: AFP

\$70k for Zoom classes? Virus crisis leaves US students miffed



Two people wearing masks walk on the campus of Georgetown University in Washington. PHOTO: AFP

THE cost of a university education in the United States has long been eye-watering, with a year costing tens of thousands of dollars.

But as the coronavirus crisis settles in, students — many of whom take out huge loans to finance their degrees — are wondering how to justify spending \$70,000 a year on.... Zoom classes.

They feel like they're getting the raw end of the deal, and are demanding that their colleges be held to account.

"We're paying for other ser-

vices that the campus offers that aren't digitized," says Dhrumil Shah, who is doing a Master's degree in public health at George Washington University.

The 24-year-old relied in part on loans to pay for his two-year program in the US capital. In a few days, he will earn his diploma, but there will be no traditional graduation ceremony.

Shah has signed one of several petitions demanding some kind of reimbursement from the school.

"I think the quality of service

has decreased," Shah, a native of Chicago, told AFP.

He complains that the shift to distance learning due to stay-at-home orders in effect in Washington to curb the spread of the deadly virus has resulted in a loss of structure and supervision.

"It sets up the person going through that experience for failure," he says, admitting he's become "drastically" unproductive without the accountability of in-person classes.

Shah is not alone. Many students have lamented that their

quintessential American college experience has been lost -- no sunny afternoons on college quads playing frisbee, no classes in high-tech labs, no crazy nights out.

Molly Riddick also signed a petition demanding that her school, New York University, make some kind of gesture to compensate its students.

"No matter how much NYU insists to the contrary, it is simply not possible to provide a full performing arts education via Zoom," she said in a comment on change.org.

Some students have taken their grievances to court. In one complaint seen by AFP, Adelaide Dixon accuses the University of Miami of awarding her a diploma with a "diminished" value because of the nature of online and pass/fail courses.

She has sued the school for several million dollars, on behalf of about 100 students.

At least 50 US colleges and universities have been sued by students on similar grounds.

- What happens in the fall? -

Universities have generally remained mum in public about court action.

But those who have spoken out insist they are caught in a difficult and unprecedented situation sparked by the pandemic.

While some have partially

reimbursed students for room and board, given that many left campuses in mid-March, none have gone so far as to refund any tuition for the spring semester.

And the problems could get worse. What happens in the late summer or early fall when classes would usually resume? Will 20 million students return to American campuses?

In university circles, debate is raging.

"I hope I'll be able to go back," says 19-year-old Ashwath Narayanan, who attends George Washington University.

He says school officials promised to give him better guidance in the next 10 days, but admitted: "I'm preparing mentally to not go back."

It is somewhat hard to imagine how campus life could return to anything resembling normal, as if the virus crisis did not happen.

"Dorms and cafeterias would have to be treated like grocery stores right now," with social distancing in effect and plenty of hand sanitizer, says Shah.

Pamella Oliver, the provost and vice president of academic affairs at California State University, Fullerton, told a virtual town hall: "We are assuming that in the fall, we will be virtual."

SOURCE: AFP

SUPPORT FOR HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Chocolate gift initiative comforts medical workers battling virus

TO express gratitude and give comfort to frontline health care workers battling the novel coronavirus epidemic, a Kyoto-based chocolatier has launched a unique gift initiative that is also aimed at sustaining its business and supporting cacao farmers.

Dari K Co., which markets chocolates made from Indonesian cacao targeting high-end customers, launched in late April the "Pay it Forward" initiative, under which it offers chocolate gifts to hospital workers valued at the sales amount of special sets starting from 2,000 yen (\$19).

"With chocolate gifts, health care workers may be able to relax even for a moment, while customers anxious to do something for them can contribute as they enjoy chocolates by themselves," Dari K said on its website.

The chocolatier said the scheme would "build a win-win

relationship" for those involved, as it will also help reduce the company's inventories that had piled up due to business closures amid the nationwide state of emergency and struggling cacao farmers affected by price drops of their products caused by demand reduction.

So far, Dari K has sold via its online shop a total of some 1,700 sets priced at up to 8,000 yen, with their sales equal to the value of about 35,000 chocolate gifts. Customers can choose whether they buy the items for themselves, their designated gift receivers or send them altogether as gifts to medical workers.

On April 30, the company delivered a total of 10,800 chocolates to four hospitals in Kyoto, a western Japan city. Last Thursday, it provided 450 chocolates to a medical institution in Saitama Prefecture, north of Tokyo.

Even though Dari K staff could not directly see the health care workers' reactions, some

posted comments on social media, saying they were "surprised" to receive chocolate gifts and "glad" to feel support, according to Momo Kamisaka, a spokeswoman for the company.

Aiming to deliver chocolate gifts to wide areas of Japan, the company has tied up with non-profit body Mamoruwomamoru that offers support to medical workers nationwide and has ties with a group of clinical engineers who operate ventilators for COVID-19 patients.

As the state of emergency was expanded to cover the whole of Japan on April 16, many of Dari K's sales outlets such as department stores and hotels were shut and a sharp fall in the number of visitors to the ancient Japanese capital left the company with stocks equal to more than three months' sales, the chocolatier said.

Indonesian cacao producers have seen a 20 percent decline in prices of the farm item between



※画像はイメージです

Photo shows one of special sets sold online for Dari K's "Pay it Forward" initiative to support health care workers. PHOTO: KYODO

February and April and are wary about the amount the Japanese company will buy in the upcoming

harvest season in May and June, Dari K said.

SOURCE: Kyodo

The public's cooperation is the key in winning the battle against COVID-19

AMIDST the global COVID-19 outbreak, those citizens facing difficulties in foreign countries are returning to the Motherland with great hope for protection.

It is heartening to see that the authorities have welcomed them with healthcare programmes and arrangements by authorities, to the best of their abilities, in order to prevent the spread of coronavirus throughout the country.

So far, 1,223 Myanmar citizens stranded in foreign countries, including Japan, India, the Republic of Korea, Thailand, Bangladesh, Singapore, the USA, Britain, Indonesia and UAE, have been flown back to Myanmar.

Our dear brethren, you are now in the Motherland and feel safe and secure. According to the health guidelines, all returnees coming home on flights or via land borders need to go through temperature checks upon entry. If they have no fever, and are not persons under investigation or persons under surveillance, they would still need a medical check-up.

Those with medical problems would be referred to a hospital, while those free of infection would be sent to designated places for quarantine.

If those entering the country have fevers, they will be taken directly to a hospital.

In this time of crisis, all returnees are responsible to abide by the directives and health guidelines on COVID-19 issued by the authorities.

The total number of COVID-19 cases, which reached 180 on Sunday, cannot be considered "high", in comparison with other countries. This means that, so far, we have contained the spread of the coronavirus.

We have achieved success in containing COVID-19 due to sacrifices made by all people, along with relentless administrative actions.

But, we are annoyed over reports of some violations by people, upon their return in different parts of the country, who are supposed to be under quarantine.

Legal action has been initiated against those who do not abide by orders and do not comply with mandatory quarantine regulations.

The best way we can protect ourselves and our family members is to abide by COVID-19 orders and health guidelines.

All we can do is comply and help our families and neighbors, as much as possible.

Let us again convey the message from the State Counsellor to all of our people.

The people cooperating is the key. This situation is not easy for anyone.

Fourth-Year Performances of Taninthayi Region Government

By **Thi Thi Min**
Photo: **Nay Min**

Taninthayi Region with the mission for socio-economic and regional development



Taninthayi Region Chief Minister U Myint Maung.

TANINTHAYI Region in the southernmost part of Myanmar possesses natural beauties, valuable natural resources, and the Taninthayi Region government has reached the fourth year in its drive for multiple developments of the people and the region.

The following is an interview with Chief Minister U Myint Maung of Taninthayi Region:

Q: The main part of the development drive

A: Transport is one of the main sectors of the development drive. The other one is administration. As regards the transport, we are upgrading the Union highway for ensuring smooth transport. We are also concentrating on building

and improving rural roads and intra-village roads. Then our attention will be on paving roads connecting the rural areas and the Union highway. The main goal is to narrow the gap between the rural and the urban. Our follow-up programs involve the task of further improving the education, health, trade sectors.

We have special development programs for roads and bridges. The region government increased the provisional amount of the budget for road transport. Between 25% and 26% of the budget is spent for the rural areas, with the goal of accelerating the regional development drive covering multiple sectors.

Q: Construction projects of the main bridges in Taninthayi Region

A: The region government is rebuilding the three main bridges - Thamoklutlut Bridge, Taninthayi Bridge and Pulontontone Bridge. Completion of the bridges will cut the travelling time between Dawei and Kawthong via Myeik. Pulontontone Bridge will become a land mark and tourist attraction of Kawthong area in the far south. The three bridges will be completed in fiscal year 2019-2020. The targeted completion dates of



The 1287 feet long Thamoklutlut Bridge, seen under construction in Taninthayi Region.

the remaining bridges - Bawdikan Bridge, Minthanlonghlaw Bridge, Ohndawkan Bridge, in Bokpyin are in fiscal year 2020-2021.

Q: Dawei Special Economic Zone (SEZ)

A: Chairman of the Central Committee for Development of Special Economic Zones Vice President U Henry Van Thio and central committee members are

working hard for the progress of the Dawei Special Economic Zone (SEZ). The region government is also playing its role with might and main. Unlike the Thilawa SEZ, the Dawei SEZ lacks infrastructure, and it is its disadvantage. It has transport and electricity problems. There is only Hteekhee road which was previously built. But we will build more roads under the NEDA loan, and their standard will be really high. We will take into account the movement and migration paths of wildlife in building the roads. We hope to start the work in 2020 and complete in 2023.

After the completion of the road sector, we have to deal with power supply. The target dates for the completion of the power supply network are in 2021. The power supply project will be implemented under the ADB loan. We hope that investor interest in the Dawei SEZ will increase only after the completion of the road and power supply projects.

Q: Tourism development in the region

A: Myeik, Dawei and Kawthong of Taninthayi Region have many differences, which create advantages as well as disadvantages for the local tourism industry. We have island tours, pilgrimage

thanks to the participation of the Government, the public and the NGOs. We will have to maintain this success. Unity and harmony between the Government and the people will ensure greater success of our sustainable tourism. Some islands have villages. The Government is conducting an awareness program for waste management at the villages. It is teaching them to understand the dos and don'ts, with the help of civil organizations. We are enjoying the results of the coordinated efforts. We also have the community based tourism (CBT). Normally, hotel business needs a large amount of capital. The State and the region government are encouraging the CBT.

Q: Progress of community based tourism (CBT) in Taninthayi

A: We have three main CBT projects. Dawei has the Sanhlan CBT sponsored by the Government. Actually, it is a G plus P project. We have built a concrete jetty for the convenience of visitors. Myeik has the Donnyaunthmaing CBT. The region government is providing assistance for infrastructure development. Funds were allotted for a flooding jetty which will ensure transport facilitation. Kalonhtato CBT in Yaybyu is being implemented with the participation of INGOs. The CBT projects generate job opportunities, tourism knowledge and new experiences for locals. So, these are the goals of CBT.

Q: Socio-economic development of Salon (Mawkin) people

A: According to our list over 2000 Salon people still live in our region. For various reasons, their population is decreasing gradually. The population decrease is partly caused by drugs abuse and natural disasters, and they lack health knowledge. We are thinking from various angles for the safety of their life and traditions.

The State Counsellor gave us an instruction in connection with the matter in all seriousness.

We won those two awards,



Fish farming processes running in Kyunsu Township, Taninthayi Region.



Myanmar Daily Weather Report
(Issued at 7:00 pm Sunday 10th May, 2020)

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

FORECAST VALID UNTIL NOON OF THE 11th May, 2020: Rain or thundershowers will be scattered in (Southern and Eastern) Shan and Kayah States, isolated in Nay Pyi Taw, Mandalay, Magway, Bago and Taninthayi Regions, Northern Shan, Kayin and Mon States. Degree of certainty is (80%). Weather will be partly cloudy in the remaining Regions and States.

STATE OF THE SEA: Sea will be moderate in Myanmar waters. Wave height will be about (5-7) feet off and along Myanmar Coasts.

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Likelihood of isolated to scattered rain or thundershowers in Taninthayi Region, Shan, Kayah, Kayin and Mon States.

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 11th May, 2020: Likelihood of isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (60%).

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 11th May, 2020: Partly cloudy.

FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 11th May, 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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SEE PAGE-10

Fourth-Year Performances of Taninthayi Region Government



The 784.44 feet long Bawdikan Bridge seen under construction in Taninthayi Region.

FROM PAGE-9

The region government set up an annual fund of K 100 million for improving their health, education and living conditions to the best of its ability. First, the region government provides them with rice and fishing rods and boats. Beginning this year, the region government is con-

ducting various courses for providing health knowledge to locals and midwifery course and other public health courses in Myeik. The courses are prioritizing the local youths. The related government bodies are giving practical lectures for three months and theoretical lessons for another three months.

Q: Undertakings of development affairs bodies

A: The region government allotted funds for the development undertakings. It is also providing all necessary gear for the development affairs bodies and enforcing the rules. Thanks to the harmonious efforts of the region government, the bodies, NGOs and CSOs, the region won two awards – the Clean Tourist City Award and the Sustainable Tourism Award. In the past, development affairs are relying only on the tax income, but they now have the fund annually provided by the government, apart from tax revenues in carrying out their work.

Q: Problem solving in con-

nection with seized farmland

A: The region government is working in accord with the 52 land records principles issued by the State. It is accelerating the work to return the confiscated land back to the original owner. We are exerting more energy as the President has also urged us to find a comprehensive and fair solution.

Q: Education undertakings

A: The region government upgraded eight high schools, 21 affiliated high schools, 33 middle schools, 34 affiliated middle schools, 22 post primary schools, 17 primary schools and 13 affiliated primary schools totaling 148 schools during the fourth year. During the academic years 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 it provided school text books, exercise books and school uniforms for students.

Q: Health undertakings

A: The region government collects all the public requirements and proposals during meetings at different levels, scrutinizes them and presented to the Union Government which fulfills most of them. But some of them can be dealt only through long-term plans.

Q: About the public services

A: Lack of comprehensive knowledge about the public services and programs among the local people in the past had generated difficulties. In order to solve this problem, the

Government in office issued the Standard Operation Procedures (SOP). Public services become smoother thanks to the coordination between the people and the relevant departments. Especially, the departments must follow the SOP.

Q: COVID-19 prevention, and containment in the region

We are strictly observing the instructions issued by the President's Office. So, we are urging people to avoid crowded places and gatherings. As we are bordering Thailand, we have laid down programs to systematically check and admit migrant workers coming back from the other country. We let them enter Myanmar only after the health staff have measured their body temperature and made necessary checks.

Q: Additional information

A: The region government has been realizing its pledges for socio-economic development and ensuring a corruption free administration. It adopted the Standard Operation Procedures (SOP) for every government body to precisely follow. This procedure has further cemented mutual understanding between the people and the government and facilitated the work. SOP can be obtained through mobile applications. We are also paving way for greater public involvement in the government functions and programs, as the success of a government depends much on public participation.

(Translated by TMT)



Rubber nursery seen in Thayetchaung Township, Taninthayi Region.



Oil palm nursery seen in Thayetchaung.



Shrimp farming seen in Kyunsu Township, Taninthayi Region.

US Supreme Court to take on Trump taxes and presidential immunity



Manhattan prosecutor Cyrus Vance enters a federal courthouse in New York on October 23, 2019.
PHOTO: AFP/FILE

WASHINGTON — Can Donald Trump refuse to turn over his tax returns and financial records to Congress and New York prosecu-

tors? The Supreme Court takes up this politically charged question on Tuesday, and it may use the occasion to better define the

limits of presidential immunity. The high court's nine justices, confined at home by the novel coronavirus pandemic, will ques-

tion lawyers for both sides by telephone in a highly anticipated session to be broadcast live.

The hearing, initially set for late March, is being held now to allow time for the justices to render a decision before the presidential election in November, as Trump seeks a second term.

The former real estate magnate, who used his fortune as an argument in his 2016 election campaign, is the first president since Richard Nixon in the 1970s to refuse to release his tax returns — prompting speculation about his true worth and his possible financial entanglements.

“There is clearly something in these documents that the president does not want us to see,” Steven Mazie, an author and educator, said during a webinar.

Since retaking control of the House of Representatives in midterm elections in 2018, the Democratic opposition has been eager to find out just what that

“something” might be.

Several congressional committees have issued subpoenas to Trump's longtime accounting firm, Mazars, as well as to Deutsche Bank and Capital One bank, demanding Trump's financial records for the 2011-2018 period.

Manhattan prosecutor Cyrus Vance, a Democrat, meantime made a similar demand to Mazars as part of an investigation into payments to the porn actress known as Stormy Daniels to buy her silence about an alleged liaison with the billionaire.

Trump immediately sued to block the documents' release.

“What they are doing is not legal,” he said on Twitter, adding, “the Witch Hunt continues.”

Having lost his argument in the lower courts, Trump turned to the nation's highest legal body. With two conservative Trump appointees on the nine-justice panel, the high court has taken a clear turn to the right.—AFP ■

Zero turnout as Poland holds bizarre ghost election

WARSAW — Poland's election day Sunday will be one for the history books as polling stations remain closed and turnout will clock in at zero due to a political crisis set off by the coronavirus pandemic.

The EU member of 38 million people has found itself in the bizarre “Twilight Zone” predicament in which the presidential ballot is formally neither postponed nor cancelled, because the government and opposition were unable to agree on a constitutional and safe solution.

“We're in a fog of legal ab-

surdity,” Warsaw-based political scientist Stanislaw Mocek told AFP, echoing the widespread head-scratching and concern.

The government “should have declared a natural disaster to lawfully postpone the election” under the constitution.

The right-wing Law and Justice (PiS) party has explained away its refusal to do so by saying Poland's coronavirus situation is not severe enough to warrant the move.

The party has also implied that were it to declare a natural disaster, multinational corpora-

tions present in Poland would claim huge sums in compensation that the state would be hard-pressed to pay. But the liberal opposition and many observers also see another rationale for why the government was set on the May 10 date, despite opinion surveys showing that three out of four Poles wanted a deferral.

The opposition, which has long called for a delay over concerns that a free, fair and safe election is impossible under lockdown, believes the PiS wants the ballot held as soon as possible so that its ally and incumbent



The opposition has long called for a delay over concerns that a free, fair and safe election is impossible under lockdown. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

Andrzej Duda wins.

The president is the current frontrunner and could secure a second term in the first round

with 50 percent of the vote, but his support would likely drop once the economic effects of the pandemic are felt.—AFP ■

Slamming Trump's coronavirus response, Obama stresses urgency for Democrats to retake White House

WASHINGTON — Former US President Barack Obama in a recent private conversation blasted the response to the coronavirus pandemic by the current administration of President Donald Trump as “absolute chaotic disaster,” vowing to tirelessly help unseat the incumbent president in the upcoming general election.

A tape recording of Obama's remarks, rendered during a chat with members of the Obama Alumni Association on Friday

and obtained and first reported by Yahoo News, showed that the former president said the current occupant of the White House has made selfishness, tribalism, division and animosity “a stronger impulse in American life,” which has impeded the containment of the coronavirus pandemic globally.

“What we're fighting against is these long-term trends in which being tribal, being divided, and seeing others as an enemy - that has become a stronger

impulse in American life,” Obama said. “And by the way, we're seeing that internationally as well. It's part of the reason why the response to this global crisis has been so anemic and spotty.”

Obama continued: “It would have been bad even with the best of governments. It has been an absolute chaotic disaster when that mindset - of ‘what's in it for me’ and ‘to heck with everybody else’ — when that mindset is operationalized in our government.”—Xinhua ■



In this file photo former US President Barack Obama speaks during the “Bits & Pretzels” start-ups and founder congress in Munich, Germany, September 29, 2019, © Christof Stache. **PHOTO AFP**

Asia virus latest: Seoul shuts bars and clubs, anti-lockdown clashes in Melbourne



A man wearing a face mask walks past a mural at Leishenshan Hospital in Wuhan in April. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

Here are the latest developments in Asia related to the novel coronavirus pandemic:

Seoul bars and clubs shut after new cases

South Korea's capital ordered the closure of all clubs and bars after a burst of new cases sparked fears of a second coronavirus wave, and President Moon Jae-in urged the public to remain vigilant.

More than 50 cases so far have been linked to a 29-year-old man who tested positive after spending time at five clubs and bars in Itaewon – one of the city's busiest nightlife districts – last weekend.

Gyeonggi province – which surrounds Seoul with a population of around 12 million people – also ordered more than 5,700 entertainment facilities to suspend operations for two weeks starting Sunday.

Arrests at Melbourne anti-lockdown protest

Ten people were arrested and a police officer injured at an anti-lockdown protest in Melbourne, where demonstrators claimed coronavirus was a government-engineered conspiracy designed to control the population.

About 150 protesters rallied outside Victoria's state parliament to protest against a shutdown aimed at stemming the spread of COVID-19, while also peddling conspiracy theories about the virus.

In scenes reminiscent of anti-lockdown protests in the United States, demonstrators carried placards reading "fight for your freedom and rights", and directed their ire at the founder of Microsoft, chanting "arrest Bill Gates".

Sri Lanka to partially reopen from Monday

Sri Lanka will partially reopen from Monday, ending a 52-day lockdown as the community spread of the coronavirus had been brought under control, the health minister said.

Pavithra Wanniarachchi said state and private companies would be allowed to open, as authorities seek to revive the island's tourism-dependant economy that has been battered by lockdown since March 20.

Public transport will remain closed for two more weeks, however. Barbers and hairdressers will also be able to open from Monday, but they will not be allowed to offer facials, or trim beards and moustaches.

Indian evacuees arrive home on navy ship

A navy ship carrying almost 700 evacuees from the Maldives arrived in India as part of a massive effort to bring home hundreds of thousands of nationals stranded overseas due to the coronavirus lockdown.

Workers and students were unable to return home after India banned all incoming international flights in late March.

Another warship is expected

to arrive in the Maldives Sunday to pick up more stranded Indians. Around 4,000 of the 27,000 Indians living in the Maldives have registered to be taken home.

Malaysia extends inter-state travel ban

Malaysia extended curbs to fight the spread of the coronavirus until June 9th. They had originally been due to come to an end this coming Tuesday.

The measures had already been substantially eased at the start of this month, with most businesses allowed to reopen, as the country's outbreak slowed.

But restrictions remain in place on schools and business that typically see large groups of people gathering, such as cinemas. Travel between states in the Muslim-majority country is also banned, as authorities seek to avoid a mass exodus of people to their home towns and villages to mark the Eid holiday, which falls at the end of May after the holy month of Ramadan.

Youth deaths in China during P.E. exams

At least two junior high school students in China collapsed and died last month during physical exercise examinations while wearing face masks, local media reported by Sunday.

The deaths of the teens have prompted experts to point out the dangers of wearing high-grade masks during intense exercise, with a movement promoting the non-necessity of wearing pro-

TECTIVE masks in gym class now gaining traction.

The two students in Hunan and Henan provinces aged 14 and 15 were participating in events such as 1,500-meter runs when they died days apart in mid- to late April, according to the reports. Both were reportedly wearing N95 masks worn by health professionals treating coronavirus patients.

Hong Kong Mother's Day Protesters

Riot police chased protesters through Hong Kong shopping malls on Sunday as democracy activists launched Mother's Day flash mob rallies calling for independence and the city's unpopular leader to resign.

The semi-autonomous Chinese city was convulsed by seven straight months of often-violent pro-democracy protests last year with millions hitting the streets.

Mass arrests and the coronavirus pandemic ushered in a period of enforced calm.

But with the finance hub successfully tackling its outbreak small protests have bubbled up once more in the last fortnight.

Small flashmob demonstrations broke out in at least eight malls throughout Sunday afternoon prompting riot police to rush in and disperse heckling crowds of activists and shoppers.

At least three arrests were made while groups of officers conducted multiple stop and searches.

Iranians fearful as virus infections rise anew

While many residents in Iran's capital are taking advantage of loosened COVID-19 controls, some worry about a new spike in infections in what remains the Middle East's dead-

liest virus epicentre.

"The line of fools," muttered shopkeeper Manouchehr, peering disdainfully at a queue of customers outside a foreign currency dealer in the Sadeghieh district of western Tehran.

Many in the long line stood close to one another and did not wear masks.

A traffic policeman told AFP such queues have appeared regularly ever since the money changers re-opened. People rarely observe basic anti-contagion protocols, he complained.

The government began paring back coronavirus controls outside Tehran on April 11, arguing that the economy – already sagging under punitive US sanctions – needed to get back to bare bones operations.

It allowed small businesses to reopen in the capital a week later, before permitting malls to welcome customers on April 21 and barbers on Wednesday.

Vietnam records no new COVID-19 cases for 3 days

Vietnam reported no new COVID-19 cases on Sunday, the third consecutive day, with its total confirmed cases remaining at 288, according to its Ministry of Health.

Among a total of 288 infected cases, as many as 241 have totally recovered as of Sunday while there are 131 suspected cases and over 11,100 people being monitored and quarantined, with no deaths from the disease reported so far, said the ministry.

It has recorded no infection caused by community transmission in 24 days, according to the ministry. The latest cases, which were recorded on Thursday, were 17 people returning to the country from Dubai.

SOURCE: AFP



People in traditional Korean hanbok dresses wear face masks as they jump for a souvenir picture at Gyeongbokgung palace in Seoul. Jung Yeon-je. PHOTO: AFP

Investors not betting on V-shaped recovery despite US stock market gain: economist

WASHINGTON — Nobel laureate economist Paul Krugman on Saturday refuted reports that recent stock market gain indicated that investors are betting on a V-shaped recovery in the U.S. economy.

“I’m amazed at how many reports insist that the stock market rise means that investors are betting on a V-shaped recovery. No, they aren’t,” Krugman said in a series of tweets.

“If investors really believed in a V-shaped recovery, the steep decline in interest rates that took place as the COVID-19 threat became apparent would have reversed. It hasn’t -- not at all,” said Krugman, who is also a columnist for The New York Times.

The economist noted that when investors wrongly believed in a V-shaped recovery in 2009, “long-term rates sprang right back.”

Krugman’s comments came a few hours after the U.S. stock market posted its first weekly gain in three weeks, despite new data showing depression-level job losses. The Dow Jones Industrial Average and S&P 500 rose 2.5 percent and 3.5 percent for the week, respectively.

Meanwhile, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported Friday that U.S. employers cut a staggering 20.5 million jobs in

April, erasing a decade of job gains since the global financial crisis and pushing the unemployment rate to a record 14.7 percent.

“You have investors that seem to be able to look through the tsunami of negative economic data and earnings and towards the potential for a gradual reopening of the economy,” Art Hogan, chief market strategist at National Securities, was quoted by CNBC as saying.—Xinhua ■



US Bureau of Labor Statistics reported Friday that US employers cut a staggering 20.5 million jobs in April, erasing a decade of job gains since the global financial crisis and pushing the unemployment rate to a record 14.7 percent. PHOTO: AFP



Elon Musk, pictured in March 2020, has called coronavirus restrictions “fascist”. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

Musk threatens removing Tesla from California over virus restrictions

PALO ALTO — Tesla chief Elon Musk on Saturday threatened to pull his electric car headquarters and plant out of California after local authorities kept him from resuming production due to the coronavirus pandemic.

“Frankly, this is the

final straw. Tesla will now move its HQ and future programs to Texas/Nevada immediately,” Musk tweeted in a long diatribe, characteristic of past online rants which are not necessarily carried out.

Referring to the California city where the cars

are produced, Musk said that “if we even retain Fremont manufacturing activity at all” it will depend on “how Tesla is treated in the future.”

Tesla had hoped to reopen the California factory, its only in the United States, in the beginning

of May, but had been prevented by local authorities.

Musk highlighted the company’s experience in China, where production of electric cars resumed after the country’s COVID-19 epidemic was brought under control.—AFP ■

Emirates predicts 18-month lull in air demand

DUBAI — Gulf aviation giant Emirates said Sunday it would take at least 18 months for travel demand to return to “a semblance of normality”, despite re-

porting bumper pre-pandemic profits.

The Dubai carrier, the largest in the Middle East, posted 1.1 billion dirhams (\$288 million) in net profit

for the financial year ending March, up from \$237 million the previous year.

It was the 32nd straight year of profit for Emirates, which operates

a fleet of 115 Airbus A-380 superjumbos and 155 Boeing-777 airliners. It had suspended flights on March 22 before resuming some services two weeks later.

Emirates Group chief Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al-Maktoum said the airline had performed strongly in the first 11 months of the fiscal year.

“However, from mid-February things changed rapidly as the COVID-19 pandemic swept across the world,” he said in a statement.

This caused “a sudden and tremendous drop in demand for international air travel as countries closed their borders and imposed stringent travel restrictions.”—AFP ■



An Emirates A380 sits grounded at Dubai after the airline suspended all passenger operations amid the coronavirus pandemic. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

China to maintain stability of yuan exchange rate: central bank

BEIJING — China’s central bank said Sunday it would further deepen the reform of the yuan’s exchange rate formation mechanism and maintain the basic stability of the exchange rate at a reasonable and balanced level.

The country will deepen the market-oriented reform of the yuan’s exchange rate mechanism, improve the managed floating exchange rate system based on market supply and demand and adjusted with reference to

a basket of currencies, and maintain the exchange rate flexibility, the People’s Bank of China (PBOC) said in its first-quarter monetary policy report.

The PBOC vowed to strengthen domestic and foreign currency policy

coordination, and seek a balance between maintaining yuan exchange rate flexibility, improving macro-prudential policy on cross-border capital flows and enhancing global macroeconomic policy coordination.—Xinhua ■

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V YANTRA BHUM VOY. NO. (718W/E)

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V YANTRA BHUM VOY. NO. (718W/E) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 11-5-2020 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 SINAR BANDA VOY. NO. (184 N/S)

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V SINAR BANDA VOY. NO. (184 N/S) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 11-5-2020 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.

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SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S SAMUDERA SHIPPING LINE
Phone No: 2301185

THE author has been to PyinOoLwin for several times, but all places of interest there can't be visited yet, accordingly, worth-visiting places still remain and seem to be new ones for him with these reasons pushing him into loving PyinOoLwin more and more. Though it is said the weather of PyinOoLwin is hotter than the past, it is still providing the travelling people from all parts of the country with coolness and refreshment for the reason that all pine forests have not been totally destroyed. Only now people come to realize the value of the pine forests. The author said, "In the past, we felt the cold when we reached Ohnchaw en route from Mandalay to PyinOoLwin. Now we can't feel the cold even we reach Anisakhan. I went trekking pine forests this time in order to feel the taste of PyinOoLwin once."

"Pomegranates and strawberries

Rich cherries and pine forest
A flower town with gold mohur trees
Small houses are seen
When I heard of the sayings
I wanted to come
I would like the damsel like a pretty flower
To look forward to seeing me
From the town with steps of mountain"

I had a wonderful time during my trek tour seeing all things except pomegranates just like the lyrics expressed in this song mentioned above.



The photo shows a plantation of vegetables in a village.

A trek to pine forest in PyinOoLwin aka May Myo

By Thiha, the Traveller @ Thiha Lulin

Does trekking make feel frightened?

Travels are different. Some are fond of adventure type including unusual, exciting and

dangerous experiences. Some like to take things easy when they travel, for example, they will freely go and eat meals avoiding worries and hurries. People

travel of their own way and so there is no need to criticize. The youths of today are taking great interest in trekking. All parts of Shan State are the best for trek-

king. The visitors don't go trekking very much. Previously going trekking could be seen, but local visitors don't know much about it. Local people are still thinking



Macadamia plant.



Pine fruit.

PyinOoLwin is a town of flowers. As a matter of fact, there are many places of interest—forests, mountains, waterfall and villages in and around PyinOoLwin. Now trekking to pine forests has appeared in PyinOoLwin. I had to go trekking to pine forests and it is not a fatigued journey. It is a trek that even those don't want tiredness should try, according to the author.

Detour road pine forest has been visited, is it the same thing?

It is not the same as the new trek to pine forest. Unlike the detour road pine forest, the visitors can spot different taste of uphill and downhill trek, Shan villages and traditions, plantations and pretty flowers.



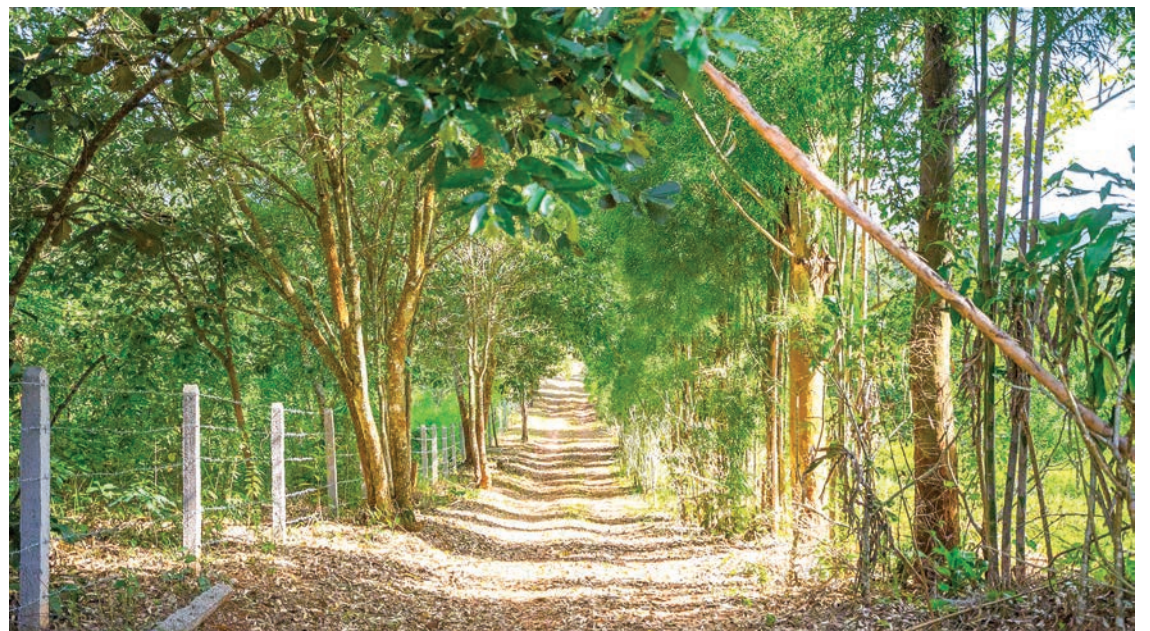
tour takes about half day and the visitors can continue other places of interest. As soon as the trekking tour is finished, there is somewhere else to visit. There are a big rose garden called a royal rose garden with multiple colours of flowers and Sitha coffee farm. The visitors can do the sightseeing on foot until the end of the farm and the garden. The local guide will bring you to Croft Organic Farm and the entrance fee will have to be paid by the visitor. If the visitor goes to Sitha coffee shop only, there is no need to pay entrance fee. The entrance fee costs K2,000.

Personal experience of pine forest trekking

The author had breakfast arranged by the hotel at about 9 o'clock in the morning, washed and then set off by hotel car. From the start to the end, local tour guide Ko Sai Kyaw helped the author to show directions



The photo shows a track to the pine forest in PyinOoLwin.



Access to the village.



Pine resin extraction.

How to go trekking to pine forests in PyinOoLwin?

Every time I come to PyinOoLwin, I put up Thiha Bala Hotel. The author saw a new schedule of going trekking to pine forests arranged by Cherry Hill May Myo Tours and he made it while asking Thiha Bala Hotel about a new plan. If the visitors are interested in going trekking to pine forests, they can contact Thiha Bala Hotel.

Only one person costs K30,000. If you go in group of two to five persons, it will be K25,000 per person. If you go in group of more than five persons, it will be K20,000 exclusive of local guide and lunch. The service includes car ferry as well. The trekking

throughout the journey. He has a good social dealing skill and is clever at giving explanations. The author did not reach the pine forests immediately, but he arrived at small villages ahead. He went trekking on his way to the forests and mountains while studying socio-economic life of the rural people. He thought himself that going through pine forests would be boring. Actually, he entered the villages crossing the pine forests and he also saw strawberry and vegetables plantations. He spotted macadamia nuts whose seeds are put into chocolate on the way and it is meant for knowledge. He had to walk along the beautiful road with the blossoms of yellow sunflower.



Walking in the another pine forest.

Cherries were not in blossoms yet when he was visiting. If the cherries were in blossoms, it would be sure that he would be walking along the roads with the blossoms of cherries. Cherries are in blossoms in December. It is a trekking tour capable of studying varieties including damson trees plantations. They had lunch naturally in the pine forests. After that they had to feel the advantages of the pines sitting under their cool shades while ending the trek tour

to pine forests.

Pine trees are being conserved and a form of scratching turpentine from pine trees can be seen. Drops of turpentine falling down to the pack give fragrance, thereby refreshing mind and body. Seeing singeing pine trees to produce turpentine look heart-broken. It takes 30 years to establish the pine forest. Local people have to seek basic needs for living regardless of climate and ecosystems.

The author likes to make a visit to PyinOoLwin and he has visited there very often. He doesn't like to go to common places of interest any more. He left a message to those who are wishing to post photographs during the trip, saying that a trek to pine forest in PyinOoLwin will be all right. The author wishes all a safe and sound journey with happiness and good health. *Translated by Htut Htut (Twan-tay)*

Fans assist Myanmar Lethwei referees amid coronavirus pandemic

MYANMAR traditional lethwei fans provided necessary assistance to referees of Myanmar traditional lethwei in Thaketa Township yesterday, according to the statement issued by the Myanmar Lethwei.

The donations were received by Yangon-based lethwei referees U Myar Lay, U Kyaw Tin Oo, U Bamar Lay, U Kyaw San, U Khun Shwe, U Mya Thwin and U Daung Ni.

"I am sorry to hear that Myanmar Lethwei referees and former fighters of Myanmar lethwei

are facing hard times during the outbreak of global pandemic coronavirus infection. Thus we arranged for the donation. Today, we donated necessary foodstuffs and fund to seven referees from Yangon, another seven from Mandalay and two other monks who were formerly served in Myanmar Traditional Lethwei. Thus we can donate essential things and cash assistance to 16 people," said U Myint Lwin (a) U Lay Kyar, an official from GTG Lethwei event fight.—Lynn Thit (Tgi)

Roland Garros could be behind closed doors, says French tennis boss

PARIS — French tennis chief Bernard Guidicelli admitted Sunday that Roland Garros, already controversially pushed back four months due to the coronavirus, could be staged behind closed doors.

Guidicelli, who said that the French federation (FFT) had "no regrets" over its unilateral decision to move the clay court Grand Slam from May 24-June 7 to September 20-October 4, insisted all options remain on the table.

"We haven't ruled out any option. Roland Garros is first and foremost a story of matches

and players," he told the *Journal du Dimanche*.

"There is the tournament taking place in the stadium, and the tournament on TV screens.

"Millions of viewers around the world are waiting. Organising it behind closed doors would allow part of the business model -- television rights (which account for more than a third of the tournament's revenues) -- to go ahead. This cannot be overlooked."

The spread of the coronavirus has halted all tennis since mid-March and will not resume until July 13 at the earliest.

Wimbledon has already been cancelled for the first time since the Second World War.

The US Open, due to take place in New York from Aug 31-Sept 13, is also in question with a decision expected in mid-June.

Close to 500,000 fans regularly attend Roland Garros every year.

However, an indication as to the thinking around the 2020 edition came on Thursday when the FFT decided to reimburse all tickets bought for the original date of the tournament rather than transfer them.—AFP

US PGA's Memorial to track fans to maintain COVID-19 social distancing

LOS ANGELES — The US PGA Tour's Memorial Tournament will use radio frequency identification (RFID) chips in spectator badges to ensure fans maintain social distance at the July 16-19 event, *Golf Digest* reported Saturday.

Dan Sullivan, director of the tournament hosted by 18-time major champion Jack Nicklaus in Ohio, said on a Zoom presentation conducted by the Greater Columbus Sports Commission that the high-tech badges were just one measure that will be used to maintain safety amid the coronavirus pandemic.

"At any time we can know around the golf course how many people are collecting in a certain area," Sullivan said of the benefits of the tracking technology.

"We're going to use that technology to make sure that we're protecting everyone around us, protecting the folks

that are inside those various venues and make sure that we're monitoring effectively and producing a tournament that everyone can be comfortable with."

In a phone interview with *Golf Digest* Sullivan explained that a small group of marshals on the grounds would have access to the tracking information and if areas become congested people will be asked to disperse.

Sullivan said less high-tech measures, such as elimination of grandstands and wearing of masks by staff and volunteers, would also be employed.

The number of fans allowed on the course will also be limited, and those who attend will have their temperatures taken.

Hand sanitizer will be widely available, draft beer and fountain drinks won't be offered and all monetary transactions will be handled by credit or debit card, not cash.—AFP

Gaethje dominates in UFC's return as Trump congratulates promoters



Justin Gaethje (left) of the United States delivers a punch to Tony Ferguson in a interim lightweight title fight during UFC 249 in Florida. PHOTO: AFP

JACKSONVILLE — The Ultimate Fighting Championship Saturday became the first major American sporting event held since the US coronavirus outbreak, with President Donald Trump congratulating the promoter.

The controversial card put the UFC in the spotlight like never before, but did not go off without a hitch after middleweight Ronaldo 'Jacare' Souza was dropped when he and two of his cornermen tested positive for COVID-19 on Friday.

The main event saw Justin Gaethje dominate Tony Ferguson with a fifth-round technical

knockout victory in the lightweight division. Gaethje finished his opponent off three minutes and 39 seconds into the fifth to earn the interim lightweight crown.

"It worked out great," said promoter Dana White. "I am happy with the way it went tonight."

In a pre-recorded video shown during the undercard fights, Trump — who in November attended a UFC card — congratulated White for the sport's return. "Get the sports leagues back, let's play," the president said. "You do the social distancing and whatever else you have to do, but we need sports. We want our

sports back."

The fights were staged in an empty 15,000-seat VyStar Veterans Memorial arena in Jacksonville, Florida, after earlier attempts to hold it in New York and California failed due to pandemic restrictions on live sporting events.

The global outbreak has largely shut down the American economy, but Florida authorities have deemed professional sports — including mixed martial arts — essential businesses.

White downplayed the negative impact of Souza's positive test and insisted it showed they were on top of things.—AFP



Fans look on as Patrick Cantlay putts in the final round on the way to victory in the 2019 US PGA Tour Memorial Tournament. PHOTO: AFP