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Social and economic needs of Myanmar must be assessed and planned not only for the coming months but also for the post COVID world: State Counsellor

STATE Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi wrote on her Facebook page yesterday that the social and economic needs of Myanmar must be assessed and planned not only for the coming months but also for the post COVID world.

The State Counsellor wrote that in reviewing the COVID related rules and regulations issued up to 15 May, taking into account the current situation of the disease, they had to take into account the extent of public participation as the main factor.

That was why she wanted to say words of encouragement to the people. Five months into the COVID period, many experts from the world have given

advice as to the kind of planning that needed to be done to prevent and contain this disease. It turned out that action had already been taken on most of the points given in the recommendations and that they could be proud of this fact.

On the part of the people, they needed to be alert and active with the understanding that “people’s participation was a must” and assist in overcoming the challenges.

However, what was more important was to prepare for the future, rather than take pride for past actions. She said the social and economic needs of Myanmar must be assessed and planned not only for the coming months but also for the post COVID world. She added that

in moving forward, it was necessary to take into consideration the needs of the people and their resilience.

Furthermore, in certain areas, restrictions have been relaxed and it was needed to constantly monitor the resulting consequences. There needed to be a correct balance in giving relaxations and imposing restrictions. On the part of the people, they needed to be alert and active with the understanding that “people’s participation was a must” and assist in overcoming the challenges. She ended by saying that she believed strength and maturity can be attained by facing new experiences.

(Translated by Kyaw Myaing)

391 former Myanmar detainees arrive back from Malaysia

A total of 391 Myanmar detainees who have served their punishments in Malaysia arrived back home yesterday.

They landed at the Yangon International Airport at 10:25 am and 3:03 pm by two planes of Malaysia Airlines arranged by its government.

The Myanmar embassy in Kuala Lumpur issued certificates of identify (CoI) after scrutinizing their citizenship before sending them back to the home land.

In coordination with relevant ministries in Malaysia, the Myanmar embassy in Kuala Lumpur, ministries of Myanmar and Region/State governments, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs arranged the return of Myanmar citizens under the directive of National-Level Central Committee on Prevention, Control and Treatment of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19).

When they arrived at the Yangon International Airport, the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement and the Ministry of Health and Sports worked for immigration processes and medical checks.

The respective Region/State governments are facilitating transportations from the airport to their homes and the 21 days community based facility quarantine in line with the guidelines of MoHS in respective areas.—MNA

(Translated by Aung Khin)



Former Myanmar detainees arrived at Yangon International Airport by Malaysia Airlines yesterday. PHOTO: MNA

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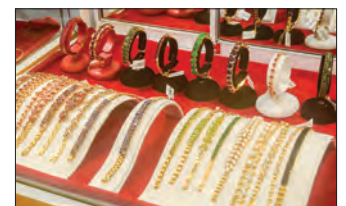
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Senior General inspects installation of COVID-19 testing machine, meets with NDAA (Mongla), UWSA (Wa) representatives

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing arrived at the military hospital in Kengtung Township in eastern Shan State to inspect the installation of COVID-19 testing machine RT-PCR (Thermocycler ROTOR GENE-6000) on 10 May.

The machine is set up at the bio-molecule laboratory of the hospital. It could test 34 samples for COVID-19 in three hours and about 200 in 24 hours. Thanks to the machine, the swabs of suspected patients will not be required to send to the National Health Laboratory in Yangon, saving times and manpower for the laboratory process.

For the Kengtung People's Hospital, the Senior General handed over 1,000 PPEs, 10,000 surgical masks, 100 goggles, 3,000 pairs of surgical gloves, 3 boxes of bleaching powder, 50 non-contact thermometers, 250 bottles of hand gel, 500 N95 masks and food items.

The Senior General and party also paid homage to Abhaya Raza Muni Buddha Image kept in the Buddha Park near Pankwe Village, about 15 miles southeast



Senior General Min Aung Hlaing (r) presents medical supplies to a representative of Wa ethnic group at the headquarters of Golden Triangle Avenue of Triangle Region Command. **PHOTO: MNA**

of Kengtung.

In the afternoon, the Senior General held separate meetings with the representatives of NDAA

(Mongla) Group and UWSA (Wa) Group at the headquarters of Golden Triangle Avenue of Triangle Region Command.

At the meeting, he offered sending medics of Defence Services to the Mongla area for healthcare services amid COVID-19 disease.

ID-19 disease.

NDAA and UWSA reported back that there is no COVID-19 positive case in their areas, but local authorities have prepared for healthcare centres in case infection occurs, formation of inspection teams and closures of border crossings since January.

The Senior General presented 500 PPEs, 10,000 surgical masks, 100 goggles, 1,000 pairs of surgical gloves, two boxes of bleaching powder, 50 non-contact thermometers, 250 bottles of hand gel, 500 N95 masks and foodstuffs each for the NDAA (Mongla) and the UWSA (Wa) groups.

He held a meeting in the afternoon with town elders and departmental personnel from Kengtung at the Amazing Keng Tong Hotel and discussed local development programmes.

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing also presented 10,000 surgical masks, 3 boxes of bleaching powder, 50 non-contact thermometers, 250 bottles of hand gel, 500 N95 masks, foodstuffs and gifts to the town elders.—MNA

(Translated by Aung Khin)

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Joint Bill Committee holds meeting

PYIDAUNGSSU HLUTTAW Joint Bill Committee held a meeting on allotment of the additional Union Budget for 2019-2020FY at the Building D of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

The meeting was attended by Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Deputy Speaker and Chairman of Joint Bill Committee and Public Accounts Committee U Tun Aung (a) U Tun Tun Hein, Deputy Minister for Planning,

Finance and Industry U Maung Maung Win, deputy chairmen, secretaries, joint secretary and members of the Joint Bill Committee, deputy chairmen, secretaries and members of the Joint Public Accounts Committee, and officials from the Ministry of Planning, Finance and Industry, Union Attorney General Office and Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Office. —MNA

(Translated by Kyaw Zin Tun)

Myanmar National Human Rights Commission (MNHRC) releases statement on the announcement to enforce ceasefire

Statement No (4/2020)

11 May 2020

1. In its Statement issued on 9 May 2020, the Tatmadaw announced that it will enforce ceasefire from 10 May to 31 August 2020 in areas except those where the Government designated terrorist groups are situated. According to the statement, reasons are being twofold. The first is to be able to effectively carry out the measures on the containment, prevention and treatment of COVID-19 in Myanmar and the second is to restore eternal peace.
2. While the entire country is actively engaged in addressing the most threatening health issue ever confronted by Myanmar and its negative impact on the social and economic life of the country, this initiative of the Tatmadaw is timely and should be welcome as it will contribute to the eventual success of our current struggle against COVID-19 as well as that of national peace process.
3. The most immediate effect is that the conflict areas will witness peace, though temporary, and the communities in those areas will, consequently, be able to concentrate more on measures against COVID-19. In addition, in the view of the MNHRC, peaceful conditions in conflict-affected areas will, for the time being, render more easier the provision of humanitarian assistance urgently needed by the communities therein.
4. The MNHRC expects positive impact during the ceasefire. When it is achieved and appreciated by all concerned quarters, we can hope for further ceasefires initiatives to emerge in the immediate future and will pave the way for momentous peace process.

The Myanmar National Human Rights Commission

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“People are the key”

MoRA&C designates religious buildings as community based quarantine centres

THE Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture held a coordination meeting on preparedness of religious buildings and public property for the community based quarantine centres for the COVID-19 measures.

Union Minister Thura U Aung Ko chaired the meeting on 8 April morning, and discussed the temporary quarantine centres for the Buddhist monks, nuns and laypersons who have returned from foreign countries.

Myanmar has brought back 258 monks, nuns and laypersons from India on 22 April, 96 from Korea on 30 April.

Arrangements have been made to carry those of 175 monks and nuns (including 14 laypersons from the Maldives)



Union Minister Thura U Aung Ko presided over a meeting with officials on preparations for facility quarantines. PHOTO: MNA

on 16 May.

The ministry has a total of 191 religious buildings to be used as the community based quarantine centres to accom-

modate an estimated 9,178 persons, with the contributions of religious and social organizations for foods.

The Myanmar Thera-

vada Buddhism Association and the Myanmar Border and Hilly Regions Theravada Buddhist Sasana Nuggaha Association (Central) has donated

K 355,450,000 for the meals of a total of 6,024 monasteries and nunneries in regions and states. -MNA

(Translated by Aung Khin)



Deputy Minister for Commerce U Aung Htoo chaired a meeting on “Doing Business” cooperation. PHOTO: MNA

Commerce Ministry holds video conference on “Doing Business” cooperation

THE Ministry of Commerce convened a video conference on “Doing Business” cooperation at the ministry yesterday.

At the video-meeting, leader of the Ease of Doing Business Ranking Development Team and Deputy Minister for Commerce U Aung Htoo highlighted ongoing implementation of the plan of action for relevant ministries amid COVID-19 crisis.

He also said that Myanmar’s Doing Business Index Team and aid groups had already explained the transformations for Doing Business Report 2020 to the World Bank’s Doing Business Team via video conferences on 4, 5 and 7 May.

The necessary data update will be sent until 15 May, and the implementation of the tasks must be continued, said the Deputy Minister.

If the current crisis is over, Doing Business Reform will be on focus. Currently, the reform processes have achieved some success, he added.

The meeting was attended by the Directors-General, Doing Business Index Team’s leaders and aid groups, International Finance Corporation (IFC)’s Senior Private Sector Specialist Mr Jose Ricardo Silva and Consultant Mr Antony Dickinson and private businesspersons.—MNA

(Translate by Kyaw Zin Tun)

COVID-19 Cases: National tally stands at 180

Situation Report of Myanmar at 8:00 pm on 11 May 2020

1. Laboratory tests of the National Health Laboratory (Yangon) on the 187 samples and 166 samples by the Department of Medical Research, totalling 353, on 11 May afternoon have showed NO new case.
2. There are a total of 180 confirmed cases in Myanmar up to 8:00 pm on 11 May.
3. Two old cases (Case 30 and 97) were tested negative two consecutive times, and that a total of 74 persons have recovered up to 11 May. Among them, 59 persons have been discharged from the hospital and they will be kept isolation at the designated places.
4. 6 positive patients have died until now.
5. There are a total of 81 new persons under investigation in the past 24 hours from 12 noon of 11 May.

COVID-19 laboratory results at 8 pm, 11 May 2020

Samples tested at Medical Research Department on 11 May	166
Samples tested at National Health Laboratory on 11 May	187
COVID-19(SARS-CoV-2)	0

COVID-19 Situation Report at 8 pm 11 May 2020

	New	Total
Confirmed Cases	0	180
Recovered Cases	2	74
Death	0	6

(Translated by Aung Khin)

MoLIP, UN agencies sign exchange of letters for IDP repatriation

THE Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population signed the exchange of letters with the UNDP and the UNHCR to support the repatriation programmes of internally displaced persons from Rakhine State.

The signing ceremony was held at the ministry's headquarters in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday in the presence of its Union Minister U Thein Swe, Deputy Minister for the Office of State Counsellor U Khin Maung Tin, Deputy Minister for MoLIP U Soe Aung, Permanent Secretary of Ministry of Foreign Affairs U Soe Han, Permanent Secretary of MoLIP U Aye Lwin, departmental officials, Ms Dawn Del Rio, Acting Resident Representative for UNDP Myanmar Country Office and Ms Cecile Fradot, Acting Resident Representative of the UNHCR in Myanmar.

Union Minister U Thein Swe said that the MoLIP, the UNDP and the UNHCR signed an MoU on 6 June 2018 for supporting repatriation programme of IDPs



Union Minister for Labour, Immigration and Population U Thein Swe attends signing ceremony with UNDP, UNHCR to support for repatriation programmes in Rakhine State. **PHOTO: MNA**

from Rakhine State; implementation of this MoU was continued with the one-year exchange of letters signed on 28 May 2019 for the period from 6 June 2019 to 5

June 2020; this is another one year extension of the existing MoU for the second time from 6 June 2020 to 5 June 2021.

Myanmar and Bangladesh

has formed a joint work group with 13 representatives each from the foreign affairs ministries of both countries and they have met four times.

The Union Minister added his office has scrutinized the list of IDPs sent by Bangladesh's foreign affairs ministry and returned it through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Myanmar; the Technical Working Group has held 12 meetings and staff members of UNDP and UNHCR has made seven field trips to Buthidaung and Maungtaw in Rakhine; a total of 45 projects have been permitted based on the findings for immediate results, including the new projects in Nyaung Chaung and Padin villages in April.

Myanmar government has facilitated the field visits of foreign staff of UNDP, UNHCR and partner organizations, and extension of their visas.

Permanent Secretary of MoLIP U Aye Lwin and acting resident representatives UNDP and UNHCR signed exchange of letters in the presence of the Union Minister and senior officials of the ministry.—MNA

(Translated by Aung Khin)

Govt land surveyor facing corruption charges in Taungdwingyi Tsp

THE Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) received a report to take action against the Department of Agricultural Land Management and Statistics regarding necessitated payments related to rights and the right to use vacant, fallow and virgin lands within Taungdwingyi Township.

The ACC looked into the matter and discovered that a surveyor named U Min Min Latt of the Taungdwingyi Township

Department of Agricultural Land Management and Statistics, Magway Region, solicited K2,220,000 as bribery from people seeking permits to work on vacant, fallow and virgin lands within the township.

The ACC has opened a case under Article 56 of the Anti-Corruption Law for his misuse of authority at Taungdwingyi police station yesterday. —MNA

(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)

Ministries discuss progress of schoolbook production, distribution



Deputy Minister for Information U Aung Hla Tun attends video conference checking on progress of production and distribution of schoolbooks in Nay Pyi Taw. **PHOTO: MNA**

THE Ministry of Information and the Ministry of Education held the 2/2020 coordination meeting yesterday on the progress of production and distribution of schoolbooks for 2020-2021 academic year.

At the meeting through video conferencing, Deputy Minister for Information U Aung Hla Tun, in his capacity as the chair-

man of Schoolbooks Printing and Production Sub-Committee, discussed the timely completion of works with private sector as the sub-contractors.

Deputy Minister for Education and the chairman of Schoolbooks Distribution Sub-Committee U Win Maw Tun also made discussions.

Permanent Secretary

U Myo Myint Maung, as the vice-chairman of Schoolbooks Printing and Production Sub-Committee, reported on the progress of works.

The senior officials from the two sub-committees also presented their reports on respective sectors.—MNA

(Translated by Aung Khin)

COVID-19 Call Centre opens daily

In efforts to speed up the prevention, containment and treatment of the COVID-19 disease, the call centre is established by four communications operators and the Blue Ocean Company with the coordination of the Medical Research Department of the Health and Sports Ministry and Post and Telecommunications Department from 8 am to 8 pm daily at the Medical Research Department in Yangon.

Over 43 staff members from the Medical Research Department and 17 volunteers from the Myanmar Medical Association totally 60 workers have been working at the centre since 8th April.—MNA

Govt committee discusses COVID-19 prevention with KNU

THE Government's Committee for Coordinating and Cooperating with Ethnic Armed Organizations regarding prevention, control and treatment of COVID-19 held an online video conference with the Karen National Union (KNU) yesterday morning.

Firstly, Committee Chairman Dr Tin Myo Win and KNU General-Secretary Pado Saw Tah Do Mu delivered opening speeches after which the meeting began.

Committee Vice-Chairman Lt-Gen (retd) Khin Zaw Oo said the meeting mainly discussed in detail the seven topics of discussion held between them and the 10 NCA-S EAOs on 8 May. He said it involved solutions to challenges and obstacles, pre-negotiations, avoiding unintentional conflict, and rules for both sides to adhere to.

He said they briefly discussed forming a joint-committee related to international assistance and the World Bank and options thought up by the



Representatives of government and ethnic armed organizations discuss solutions to challenges and obstacles in carrying out COVID-19 measures. PHOTO:MNA

government's side and the KNU.

The Committee will hold a COVID-19 coordination meeting with the New Mon State Party (NMSP) on 12 May and another meeting with the KNU on similar topics in the third week of May.

Khin Zaw Oo said they will discuss assistance from the World Bank in the coming weeks and go into detail on how EAOs can effectively assist in preventing the spread of COVID-19. He said this meeting was fruitful

with discussions becoming more like action plans and increased understanding between each group. He believed these elements will support the peace process.

Khin Zaw Oo also said they

will negotiate with the joint-committee to open centres for COVID-19 prevention in undefined territories and they have proposed to work with medical professionals and medical teams if possible.

He said they discussed what people going there would wear without uniforms or weapons and how processes should take place, such as the Red Cross armband for example. He said they will send a detailed list of areas they are comfortable on working in that regard later and the government will coordinate with all relevant entities to execute the process.

Attending the online meeting were government representatives led by Dr Tin Myo Win and invited guests and KNU General-Secretary Pado Saw Tah Do Mu, KNU COVID-19 Prevention and Containment Committee Chairman Pado Saw Sel Pwe and KNU representatives.—Ye Khaung Nyunt (Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)



Posh Company presents multi-purpose virus killers to the Coordination Committee of Ethnic Armed Organizations. PHOTO:MNA

Posh Company donates multi-purpose virus killers to EAOs committee

THE Posh Company contributed multi-purpose virus killers to the Coordination Committee of Ethnic Armed Organizations at the National Reconciliation and Peace Centre (NRPC) in Shweli Street, Yangon yesterday to fight against the COVID-19.

Chair of the Peace Commission Dr Tin Myo Win received 100 bottles of multi-purpose virus killers handed over by the officials from the Posh Company, and returned certificates of honour to them. —Nyunt Ko Ko

(Translated by Kyaw Zin Tun)

Correction

PLEASE read "1,113 Myanmar nationals from foreign countries..." instead of "113 Myanmar nationals from foreign countries..." in the fifth line of the catchwords and twelfth sentence of the second paragraph of the news titled "Myanmar nationals stranded in UAE brought back home" on page-1 of the 11 May Issue of the Global New Light of Myanmar.—Ed.

Well-wishers contribute donations to national COVID-19 committee, MoHS

DONORS presented cash funds and medical supplies to the National-Level Central Committee on Prevention, Control and Treatment of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) and the Ministry of Health and Sports at the Pyidungsu Hall of the Kyaikkasan Stadium in Tamway Township, Yangon yesterday.

On behalf of the donors and Myanmar Gems and Jewellery Entrepreneurs Association, U Nay Win Tun explained the purpose of the donation.

Director General of the Public Health Department Dr Tha Tun Kyaw expressed words of thanks to the donors.

The director-general received the donations handed over by the well-wishers, and returned certificates of honour to them.

At the ceremony, 12 well-wishers donated a total of K 2,593 million and US\$ 11,400 worth of cash funds and medical supplies. Myanmar Gems and Jewellery Entrepreneurs Association donated K 2,100 million worth of 50,000 PPEs and eight accessories, Myanmar Shwe Nagar Agricultural Group Co., Ltd and China Merchants Group 4,000 PPEs, 4,000 glasses and 4,500 masks, and UPG Paint & Coating Co., Ltd six ventilators. Jade Mountain Gem Co., Ltd.



Private sector donates funds and medical supplies for measures against COVID-19. PHOTO:MNA

contributed K100 million, Lighthouse Enterprise Limited K50 million, Daw Khin Yone and family two ventilators, and Myanmar Club (Singapore) K13.2 million.

Telecom International Company Limited donated K 22.4 million, alumni of Geology 1979 Batch RASU K2.6 million, Advanced Synergy Co., Ltd 60 PPEs, 60 long gloves, 60 glasses, 60 shoes and 60 N95 masks, Pure White Group K 2.778 million, and Myanmar Labour Social Welfare Centre (ROK) US\$ 11,400 worth of 1,100 COVID-19 RT-PCR Test Kits.—Min Thit (MNA)

(Translated by Kyaw Zin Tun)

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

RTAD resumes initial vehicle registration service at four offices

THE Road and Transport Administration Department (RTAD), which was temporarily closed in light of coronavirus infection fears, has resumed the initial vehicle registration service from 11 May at its offices in Yangon, Mandalay and Nay Pyi Taw, said an official of Nay Pyi Taw RTAD.

"During this break, we run the operations with 50 per cent of employees. At such time, the registration process is not regularly done. Yet, initial vehicle registration service for new vehicles has resumed. There are two offices in Htaukkyant and Ywathargyi in Yangon, one in Nay Pyi Taw and another one in Mandalay. The initial vehicle registration process and vehicle evaluation will be done," Yangon RTAD Director U Thein Htut said.

The department will grant relief and not consider the period from 26 March to 10



Vehicles are being checked at the vehicle inspection department (head office) in Yangon. **PHOTO: MYINT MAUNG**

May for fine payment regarding a delay claim.

However, those who come to process initial vehicle registration after 31 August are not eligible for that exemption. And, they are liable to pay the fines, according to the RTAD.

In a bid to avoid mass gath-

ering and contain the spread of the coronavirus disease, registration processes were temporarily stopped from 25 March under the guidance of Yangon Region Government, he said.

So far, services for transfer ownership, renewal of vehicle registration, driver licence and

inspection of other vehicles are still suspended at the RTAD.

At present, there are about 1.1 million vehicles registered across the country, and about half of them (540,000 vehicles) are registered in Yangon. —Myint Maung

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

IDP camps receive COVID-19 protective items

THE MINISTRY of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement is distributing healthcare items for prevention of COVID-19 at the camps of internally displaced persons.

A total of 12 camps in Mogaung, Namtee and Phakant townships received 6,496 cloth masks, 857 bottles of hand sanitizers, 40 bags of lime powder, 16 thermometers, 12 hand-speakers, 12 memory sticks with COVID-19 awareness campaign audio files, 1,101 hard soaps, 17 hand washing basins and 12 vinyl posters.

The ministry also provided 10,600 cloth masks, 1,750 bottle of hand sanitizer, 30 bags of lime powder, 2 hand speakers and 2 memory sticks to the



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

two IDP camps in Hlaingbwe Township, Kayin State: 10 bags of lime powder, 1 thermometer and 1,272 hard soaps at Panku camp in Kutkai Township, Shan State; 63,714 cloth masks, 1,286

bottles of hand sanitizer, 47 bags of lime powder, 7 thermometers, 1,149 bars of hard soaps, 6 hand washing basins and 6 vinyl posters.

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 Aung Khin)

Coronavirus call centre to include ethnic languages

THE National Call Centre for COVID-19 in Myanmar will soon be adding 7 ethnic languages to its services said U Htun Htun Naing, Chairman of Blue Ocean Investment Limited.

Opened on 9 April this year, the COVID-19 National Call Centre began answering public inquiries into the virus

in Myanmar language and has responded to about 5 million calls so far. Calls to the centre are provided as a free service by domestic telecom operators.

The centre is incorporating ethnic languages to reach a wider demographic in Myanmar and the new array of languages will include Kachin, Kayah, Kayin, Chin, Mon, Ra-

khine and Shan.

Members of the public can directly discuss with doctors about the coronavirus by dialing 2019 and pressing "0" at the extension. Due to the high quantity of incoming calls, each caller is limited to 6 minutes of discussion.

Callers can also, at the extension, dial "1" for information

on coronavirus symptoms, "2" for virus transmission methods, "3" for prevention techniques, "4" for information on quarantines, and "5" for the latest number and news of confirmed COVID-19 cases. All five extensions have automated answers. —Aung Thura

(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)

Domestic gold market remains closed despite global rally

By Nyein Nyein

THE coronavirus impacts shut down the domestic gold market and the price also fell, although the gold price is rising in the global market, said Chairperson U Myo Myint of Yangon Region Gold Entrepreneurs Association (YGEA).

“Local market remained closed amid coronavirus pandemic. Earlier, Myanmar has conducted gold trade with India and China through border areas. Now, the market has been cool due to trade suspension at border areas,” he stated.

At present, the domestic gold prices fetch only above K1,170,000 per tical (0.578 ounces, or 0.016 kilograms), while global gold price touches a high of above \$1,700 per ounce, he continued.

“If domestic gold would be priced at above K1.2 million per tical if it is evaluated on the



Gold jewellery on display at a shop in Yangon. PHOTO: PHOE KHWAR

prices in the global market,” he explained.

In early September last year, the price of pure gold reached an all-time record of above K1,300,000 per tical in the domestic market, while the price

of gold was pegged at US\$1,550 per ounce in the global market, as per market data.

Currently, Yangon and Mandalay gold markets are temporarily closed, yet some gold and jewellery shops are still open for

trade to help those gold traders who want to sell and buy the gold during coronavirus crisis.

Additionally, to open the market, the YGEA stated it has been discussing with the officials of the relevant departments.

There are over 10,000 gold shops in Yangon Region, with daily trading of about 50 visses. The market has been closed amid coronavirus pandemic.

With global gold prices on the uptick, the domestic price hit fresh highs last year, reaching K1,000,000 per tical between 17 January and 21 February, crossing K1,100,000 (22 June to 7 August), climbing to 1,200,000 (7 August-4 September), and then reaching a fresh peak of K1,300,000 on 5 September.

According to gold traders, during the past three months, the local gold price moved in the range of, K1,214,100 on 5 February and K1,234,200 on 28 February. In March, it reached the lowest level of K1,148,000 (31 March) and the highest level of K1,218,600 (4 March). Last month, the global coronavirus risks shut down the gold market, according to gold traders.

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

Muse trade down by \$123 mln as of 1 May

THE value of Sino-Myanmar border trade through the Muse border plunged to US\$2.9 billion between 1 October and 1 May in the current financial year 2019-2020, a decrease of \$123 million compared to the corresponding period of the previous fiscal, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

Exports through the Muse border were worth \$1.89 billion, while imports were valued at \$1.02 billion. During a-year ago period, Muse border witnessed trade worth \$3.03 billion.

Muse is an important border in Myanmar and handles the largest volume of trade. But at times, it has experienced a sharp drop in trade on account of China clamping down on illegal goods, resulting in a halt in the trade of agricultural products. Moreover, the coronavirus impacts slow the trade this year.

Following the coronavirus consequences, trading at Muse border did not reach a monthly target in the past months. The trade values were registered about \$370 million in January, \$260 million in February, \$300 million in March and over \$290 million in April, while the monthly target was aimed at above \$400 million.

Myanmar intends to reach trade target of over \$5 billion at Muse border for the current fiscal. Border trade values at Muse stood at \$5.4 billion in the 2016-2017FY, \$5.8 billion in the 2017-2018FY and \$4.8 billion in the 2018-2019FY respectively, as per data of the Commerce Ministry.

At present, China has been stepping up border control measures to contain the spread of the coronavirus pandemic. Therefore, Chinese buyers do not come to Myanmar borders in light of coronavirus fears, forcing Myanmar truck drivers to leave for Wanding area to sell the goods.

Next, the export of agricultural products is often halted, on account of China clamping down on illegal goods. Myanmar merchants are facing difficulties in exporting goods to China through the legitimate channel as they find the tax levied by China is too high. Therefore, rice confiscation and price manipulation are occurring often at the border.

In a bid to lower trade barriers and offer relief to Myanmar traders through the border trade channel, the Ministry of Commerce, the relevant departments and Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry have been negotiating with China counterparts.

The two countries are making efforts to set up more border economic cooperation zones and promote border trade.

Myanmar exports rice, sugar, pulses, sesame seeds, corn, dried tea leaves, fishery products, minerals, and animal products to China, while it imports agricultural machinery, electrical appliances, iron and steel-related materials, raw industrial goods, and consumer goods from the neighbouring country. — Ko Htet

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

Mineral exports exceed \$1 bln in 2019-2020 FY

MYANMAR'S mineral exports have shown a marked increase this fiscal, touching US\$1.16 billion between 1 October and 1 May, an increase of \$282 million compared with the year-ago period, according to the data from the Ministry of Commerce.

In the corresponding period of the previous financial year, mineral exports were pegged at just \$878 million.

Both private and public sector mineral exports have recorded an increase in the current fiscal, with private sector exports valued at \$705.26 million and public sector exports estimated at \$454.87 million.

So far, excavation of over 1,250 mining blocks has been permitted on a manageable, small, medium, and large scale, according to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation.

Due to the limited extraction of natural resources, exports of forest products and minerals had dropped significantly in the previous years. Permits for mining blocks were suspended in 2016, but after a period of two years, Myanmar's mining sector has now been opened to local and foreign investors, according to the ministry.

Within two years of the implementation of the Myanmar Mines Law, the Mines Department has approved 144 out of 3,000 proposed mining blocks and many more blocks will soon be

granted the permit.

At present, evaluation teams in Kachin, Kayah, Shan, and Kayin states and Sagaing, Taninthayi, and Magway regions are screening mining applications, based on the opinions of the respective departments and the region and state governments.

The Myanmar Mines Law was enacted on 24 December 2015, but the law came into force when the rules were issued on 13 February 2018.

The ministry undertakes the screening process of the proposals for medium and large-scale mining blocks, while regional and state governments are allowed to process applications for small-scale mining blocks.

Under the new regulations, foreign firms can invest in large blocks which cover up to 500,000 acres (about 202,000 hectares), while local firms can invest in all kinds of blocks. Investors can seek a permit to mine for minerals such as gold, copper, lead and tin. The permits cover prospecting, exploration, and production.

Myanmar'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 has been lessening. — Ko Htet

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

Addressing COVID-19 impacts on Agriculture is a must

NO sector has escaped from the impact of COVID-19. Its impact on agriculture is complex and varied across diverse segments that form the agricultural value chain. Even among the different segments, its impact varies widely among different regions and among producers and agricultural wage labourers.

It is a welcome action that the Myanmar Agriculture Development Bank (MADB) has reduced its interest rates on agricultural loans amidst the COVID-19 crisis.

However, with the restrictions on travel, prices for farmers' products, especially seasonal crops and fruits which attracted travellers, have collapsed, and some farmers cannot find a buyer at any price.

Meanwhile, due to transportation problems and other issues, prices have declined for vegetables and other crops, yet consumers are often paying more.

Another short-term problem is that with everything from school cafeterias to restaurants closed, food processors who serve those markets have curtailed buying from farmers.

Farms have long been under stress from price declines for their products. The action we need to take now is to keep supply chains functioning well and to find alternative ways with safety measures for selling the products.

Smooth functioning of the supply chain, with adequate safety measures for the people involved, is of paramount importance.

Distribution of commodities to the vulnerable population, while maintaining prescribed guidelines and relevant protocols, particularly of social distancing, must be effectively monitored by respective regional authorities.

The economic crisis caused by the COVID-19 is not the farmers' fault. The issue we anticipated since the coronavirus outbreak in China has finally posed a national-level challenge for our country.

The poor sections of society are always the hardest hit in any disaster or pandemic situation. With about seventy per cent of Myanmar's population live in rural areas and their main business is agriculture. The agricultural sector contributes 22.5 per cent to the nation's GDP. The agricultural sector developed at a rate of 2.1 per cent in 2018-2019 financial year and the agricultural ministry is working to increase the development rate to 2.5 per cent in 2019-2020 financial year.

We are confident that we can overcome this challenge through the united efforts of central government, regional governments and farmers associations.

Fourth-Year Performances of the Ministry of Information

By **Khin Yadanar and Zin Zo**
Photo: **Thiha Sithu**

Elected by the people for the people, the incumbent Government has assumed the administrative duty that passed the fourth-year period. All the ministries dutifully shouldered the tasks for the greater good of the Nation and the People with aspiration towards the Democratic Federal Union.

While bridging the people and the three pillars of the nation namely the legislative, the administrative, and the judiciary; the MOI informs the public about government policy plans and implementation and supports improvements to knowledge and education of the public. The Union Minister; the Deputy Minister; and the Departmental Heads have offered interviews reflecting the functions, the hurdles, the challenges, and the future aspiration; and that the records are submitted to the esteemed readers and the people.

Dr Pe Myint, Union Minister

Q: Kindly share us with the aims and objective of the MOI.

A: The MOI is bridging the people and the three pillars of the Nation. Even this interview is part of the bridging task. The MOI has compiled and featured the performances of the Government and the three pillars through the TV programmes and the newspapers, and submitted to the people.

First and foremost duty of the MOI is to inform the people with the news. Imparting knowledge to the people is the second obligation of the MOI. Presenting entertaining and performances of the government ministry. Four departments

under the umbrella of MOI are undertaking these assignments and missions.

Q: Kindly tell us on the functions of the departments.

A: Coming up first is the Myanmar Radio and Television Department (MRTV), which aired in Myanmar language as well as in the languages of ethnic nationalities, and also in English language. Shouldering the three responsibilities, the MRTV is providing news, imparting knowledge, and entertaining to the people.

Up next is the News and Periodical Enterprise (NPE) that concentrates on news media. Circulated in Myanmar language, "The Mirror" and "Myanmar Alin" are under the wings of the NPE. English language newspaper "The Global New Light of Myanmar" is rolling out with the collaboration of a private company. Newspapers are presented in the printing format, while the MRTV transmitted the audio and video signals.

In modern days, as the technology improved day by day, the media has shifted to "Online Media" and "Digital Media", and that the newspapers and the MRTV have also shifted in the same direction in presenting news to the people.

Printing and Publishing Department (PPD)

Imparting and transmitting knowledge to the people, the PPD has been upkeeping the activities and performances of the government departments through print-

ing. All the documents with regard to the Union Government and the ministries are being printed and published by the PPD.

Since the advent of Information Department, the performances of the government departments and the official gazettes were being compiled, printed and published. Therefore, the PPD is the body that shoulders the foremost responsibility of the MOI. Implementing the main obligation of printing, the PPD is now printing the school text books for the Ministry of Education.

Moreover, the voters' lists and the ballots for the General Elections are being handled by the PPD. Under its care, "Sar Pay Beik Man Book Centre" is working for the development of the literature. Another department is the Information and Public Relations Department (IPRD), which deals directly with the public.

Q: Kindly explain how the departments bridge the people and the three state pillars.

A: Linking up between the people and the three state pillars, the MRTV and the NPE are keeping in touch with the public through the video images and the printed papers, and that the IPRD is interacting directly with the public. Each and every township has IPRD and the Public Library, which has been transformed into "Community Centre" where public meets and convened the public talks, the literary discussions, and the community development meetings. It is a venue where the

people could voice their desire and wishes to the authorities.

In addition to knowledge propagation tasks, the IPRD is holding "Children's Literature Festivals" and "Youth All-Round Development Festivals".

Q: Kindly share us on the ways and means of cooperation among the departments.

A: There are four departments, and that they are working together in the same direction. For instance, the Myanmar News Agency (MNA) collects news which is used by the MRTV and the newspapers. In the future, with the development of electronic media, more cooperation and coordination among the departments are imminent.

Scenario in the future is that the IPRD would be shouldering the news reporting of its jurisdiction to the public.

Literary discussions and the paper reading sessions are convened by the PPD as well as the IPRD, and that the MRTV is also working on literary development and the cultural development. The state owned newspapers are also featuring on literature development.

Q: Please tell us on the external linkage with other bodies.

A: Departments under the MOI are also collaborating with other ministries, and also keeping in touch with the states / regions governments; the Hluttaw Representatives; other organizations; and the public.

Working hand in hand with the ministries

For instance, when organizing "Children's Literature Festivals", it needs to work with the local authorities and also with the Ministry of Education.

In convening "Youth All-Round Development Festivals", cooperation is being carried out with the Ministry of Home Affairs; the Ministry of Religious and Culture; the Ministry of Planning, Finance and Industry; the Ministry of Health and Sports; the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement; the General Administration Department; and other departments. Working together with the Hluttaw Representatives is most beneficial and promising. Teaming up with all the stakeholders, the MOI could bring best results in the performances in the fourth year period.

U Aung Hla Tun, Deputy Minister

Q: Please tell us on the main duty of MOI and other related obligations.

A: The main duty and mission of the MOI are to inform, to educate, and to entertain. Moreover, it has the obligation to work on the literature and the motion picture. Printing and publishing of all the school text books is the responsibility of the MOI.

At the time of COVID - 19 world pandemic and with the fast moving digital technology, most people have get themselves

involved in the media domain. With these backdrops, I would like to share my view what we should do including the MOI.

Challenges

COVID - 19 pandemic is threatening all the nations on this planet, and that the relevant governments are trying their best to overcome the catastrophe and calamity. At this juncture, our nation is also facing many challenges including the internal armed conflicts.

At this stage, the worst challenge is the hate speech and fake news. Hate speech is defined as "public speech that expresses hate or encourages violence towards a person or group based on something such as race, religion, sex, or sexual orientation. Hatred and suspicion comes in the form of fake news, wrong news and fabricated news. As the public is mostly attached to the Internet, the spread of fake news is easy.

Flow of news crucial

Q: How could we block the fake news?

A: We need to curb and expose the fake news and fabricated news, and at the same time we need to release and inform the right news with accountability in a timely manner. The correct news must reach the public in time to striking out the fake news, and that we need to think for a way out.

Making a decision

We need to come together and work in a collective manner, not as one individual of its own. Responsible bodies must release the news in time, and that the responsible departments must make public immediately. Above all, the public should think twice before making any comment or sharing of the news.

UNESCO and other similar bodies are doing its job in media ethics. The responsible authorities for the Facebook are also curbing the fake news through the "Community Standard" system. Our MOI is also doing the same



Dr Pe Myint (Union Minister)

though cooperation with the media partners namely the FMs and the TV channels.

Q: Kindly share us the measures to curb the fake news and hate speech.

A: Removing, elimination and getting rid of the fake news and the hate speech are the duty-bound task of all people, which is very crucial that needs cooperation. While our MOI is dealing with the fake news, the unexpected challenge of COVID - 19 pandemic has emerged. Even the developed countries are facing enormous challenges, and that the world pandemic causes negative impact on us.

We are trying our best in shouldering our duty in eliminating fake news, and that our media partners are also doing the same. That means we are doing what it should be done, and that we would continue our campaign.

U Myo Myint Maung, Permanent Secretary, MOI Director-General (Joint) at MRTV during fourth-year period

Q: Kindly explain us the system aired at the MRTV for the public.

A: We are rendering service to the public through the MRTV and the Myanmar Radio in conventional and regular system, and that we are also providing through online media such as Website Facebook Youtube and SoundCloud.

We have the news channel, the Hluttaw channel, the ethnic nationalities' channel, the farmers' channel, English language

Myanmar International Television (MITV); and partner media, totalling (19) channels through digital and analogue systems free to air transmission.

Analogue system covers (92) per cent of the population, and the digital system embraces (88) per cent of the country.

Q: Kindly tell us MRTV programs.

A: For the daily broadcasting programmes, we have MRTV (Tat Kone Head Office); two news bureau; ethnic nationalities' TV channel (11) branch offices; Myanmar Radio ethnic nationalities' bureau (17) branch offices; and (250) relay stations in (9) zones across the country. The fourth-year period is witnessed with success due to the collective efforts of the employees.

Q: Please tell us on the changes in the production and transmission.

A: Through the cooperation of the MRTV and the JICA, we have established modern studio at MRTV (Pyay Road), where we could produce quality filming through High-Definition (HD).

With the project, we have three units of "Digital Satellite News Gathering (DSNG) Van", and that we could cover more news in the future through "DSNG Van" and "Outside Broadcasting (OB) Van" on broader aspects. Now MRTV is broadcasting through HD video resolution beginning 15 February 2020.

Q: Kindly share us on the remarkable performances of the MRTV.

A: Total of (67,780) radio sets have been distributed free to people in some townships through the Rakhine State Government to let the people know the stability tasks and the development endeavors. We are also making "Content Reform" through the hard work and the creation in the production, for which the people appreciated the changes.

We have presented the changes and reform undertakings of the government for the interest of the people and the endeavours of the government employees serving in the most remote areas with hardship.

Long journey of the dream road and documentary films

SEE PAGE-10



MRTV's engineers working in production control room.



The Global New Light of Myanmar Press in Bahan Township, Yangon.



Fourth-Year Performances of the Ministry of Information

FROM PAGE-9

The filming on the endeavours of the teachers serving in “Khaung Lan Hpu Areas” at northernmost part of Myanmar dubbed as “Long Journey of the Dream Road” and other filming on the performances of the artistes have been presented to the public, which earned appreciations.

Q: Tell us the future programme of the MRTV.

A: Plan to establish “Direct to Home (DTH)” is on the agenda, and at the same time, we intend to dismantle the “Analogue System” similar to ASEAN countries. We are trying our best to the serve the people.

U Ye Naing, Director-General, MRTV Served as Director-General of IPRD during fourth-year period

Q: Kindly tell us the performances of IPRD during the fourth-year period.

A: Our officers and the staff members across the country collect news in their jurisdiction and report to the public through the state owned media. They have been imparted and tutored with news related training courses, and as a result the “MOI Web Portal” could transmit (150) news items including audio and video news files. We have (417) offices across the country providing “WiFi” access to the public free of charge.

Q: Tell us on knowledge sharing plans for the public.



U Aung Hla Tun (Deputy Minister)

A: Total of (16) IPRD offices have been selected and upgraded with the cooperation of Daw Khin Kyi Foundation, where knowledge sharing programmes are implemented using mobile library and computer training courses. The Daw Khin Kyi Foundation has entrusted knowledge related items and expertise worth MMK (1,000) millions including (17) mobile libraries, computers and books on 15 September 2019.

Community Centre

In Bahan Township, we have constructed “Community Centre” with modern design equipped with many facilities, which was opened on 8 February 2020. More community centres are on the agenda across the country.

Q: Tell us more about “Community Centre”.

A: We have convened over (3,000) events of “Public Talk”, and over (3,000) rounds of “Book Club Dis-

cussions” at book lovers’ circle.

Q: Please tell us on “Children’s Literature Festival” and “Youth All-Round Development Festival”.

A: These festivals are held with the cooperation of the MOI, the Ministry of Education and the States / Regions Governments.

Q: Kindly tell us other educational measures.

A: Through the publications of journals such as “Doe Kyay Ywar Journal”,

we are imparting knowledge to the farmers. In addition, the world affairs, the nationalities’ affairs, and other handouts and pamphlets are distributed.

Q: Please tell us on the development of movie world.

A: We are striving in cooperation with the “Myanmar Naing Ngan Motion Picture and Theatrical Asiayone” for the development of the movie industry. The movie estate in the Golden Valley has been transformed into “Film Development Centre” (FDC), where (170) events of filming have taken place. Workshops and seminars are also held. So far, we have coordinated in presenting (13) Myanmar movies into the world arena. We have successfully put the movie “Mya Ga Naing” in the UNESCO movie collection list.

U Ko Ko Naing, Acting Director-General, PPD

Q: Kindly tell us the main function of the PPD.

A: The PPD is shouldering the two main tasks such as that of quality products in government printing and that of the development of literature. The first task is to handle the works of the Union Government and the ministries including text books, and the other task is print and published books for the devel-



U Myo Myint Maung (Permanent Secretary)

opment of literature. We have (7) printing houses.

We are under taking weekly, monthly journals, magazines, and motley assortments of books, especially the school text books.

Q: Kindly explain the performances during the fourth-year period.

A: For the 2020 – 2021 academic years, basic education school text books on six categories have been printed according to the orders of (41 point 698) million copies. Books of records with regard to the State Leaders were also printed. For the ministries, total of (919,590) books and brochures were printed in addition to (27,670,219) blank sheet of forms.

In the literature development tasks, our department has presented (10) Myanmar National Literature Awards in cash, and (24) Sar Pay Beik Man Literature Awards also in cash. Myanmar Encyclopedia containing (15) volumes printed in 1954 are being revised for printing again, and that “100 Myanmar classic book series” are rolling out regularly in the fourth year period with volume (4) (5) and (6).

Q: Kindly tell us other performances in connection with the Myanmar literature development.

A: Paper reading sessions have been convened for (3) rounds on Myanmar literature development campaign that included

multidimensional aspects on Myanma culture.

U Thet Swe, Acting Managing Director, NPE

Q: Please tell us on the hard work for distributing news in ethnic nationalities’ languages.

A: Distribution of news in ethnic nationalities’ language is ongoing. In October 2019, we have distributed (4) pages news sup-



U Ye Naing (Director-General of MRTV)

plements printed in Shan ethnic nationality in collaboration with Shan State Government every Thursdays. Earlier, we have published and distributed other ethnic nationalities’ languages.

Q: Kindly share us the new features that are covered in the supplement.

A: Beginning 29 May 2019, the activities of the Hluttaw Representatives working for the Nation and the people are being featured with the heading “Hluttaws implementation for the Nation and the People” in Myanmar Alin newspaper; and with the topic “Hluttaws fulfillment of People’s wishes” in “Mirror Dailies” every Wednesdays.

For the kids, knowledge on ethics and civics as well as travelogue is featured in the newspapers.

Q: Please share us on the future programmes of NPE.

A: At the moment news about COVID -19 pandemic are being submitted to the esteemed readers such as that of the news from the Ministry of Health and Sports; that of other ministries; that of interviews and roundtable talks; and that of news from foreign countries. All in all, we would try our best in fulfilling the needs of the people with new features and stays on with the reputation as People’s Newspapers.



Union Minister Dr Pe Myint and Yangon Region Chief Minister U Phyo Min Thein, together with MOI senior officials, open Community Centre of Information and Public Relations Department in Bahan, Yangon.

International coronavirus news updates

Cheers and tears as Europe's kids go back to school

Excited children greeted their friends and weary parents got used to early starts again as schools in several European countries reopened after a nearly two-month coronavirus break.

Pupils toted their backpacks for the first time since March in France and the Netherlands as primary schools partially reopened, with strict measures in place to prevent a second wave of the pandemic.

As wider lockdown measures eased across the continent, schools also reopened their doors in Switzerland and the Balkans, while secondary schools in Greece were coming back to life.

"The children were really looking forward to coming back to school. They were jumping with joy when they saw their friends again, they were very happy," 43-year-old Manon told AFP as she dropped off her three children at Willemspark primary school in The Hague.

Benfica's Tavares tests positive for coronavirus

Portugal's reigning champions Benfica have confirmed that midfielder David Tavares tested positive for coronavirus on Friday, taking the tally for positive cases to at least eight players in Primeira Liga.

The Portugese top flight is planning to restart behind closed doors towards the end of the month after the government announced on April 30 that games could resume, pending approval from the health authorities.

Benfica said 21-year-old Tavares, who is not a regular first-team player, was asymptomatic and in quarantine. His positive test comes after Vitoria Guimaraes confirmed three positive cases on Saturday and Moreirense one more.

EU, Britain restart push on post-Brexit ties amid virus gloom

Britain and Brussels embark on a third round of trade talks Monday with little hope for a breakthrough, amid the far more urgent challenge of dealing with the coronavirus crisis.

The new negotiations will begin with a virtual head-to-head between Michel Barnier, the EU's chief negotiator, and his UK counterpart, David Frost — both of whom have recovered from a bout with the virus.

That will be followed by videoconferences involving hundreds of officials throughout the week. The UK left the European Union on 31 January and both sides have until the end of the year to forge a new basis for relations, barring an extension that British Prime Minister Boris Johnson refuses to consider.

The previous round of virtual UK-EU talks broke up on 24 April with little or no progress. This followed a first session — and so far the only in-person talks — in Brussels in March. The EU side accuse Britain of focusing only on issues dear to them and ignoring those essential for EU members, such as fishing, or on agreeing on minimum standards for health and the environment — known as a "level playing field".

'A little unreal': Wary French venture out as lockdown eases

French streets filled with traffic for the first time in two months on Monday as authorities began lifting the coronavirus lockdown, though daily life looked very different for those returning cautiously to shops and offices.

"I'm a little stressed out," Fatma Chouria, who cooks at a daycare centre, told AFP at the Gare Saint-Lazare railway station in Paris. "I'm happy to be going back to work, but we're not in a rush, we're trying to stay calm and crossing our fingers," she said from behind a face mask, now compulsory on public transport across France. Others avoided mass transit altogether, and the roads bustled with drivers as well as cyclists taking advantage of new dedicated lanes in many



If no deal is reached by 31 December, then WTO trade rules come into force, with high tariffs and customs barriers between the UK and EU. **PHOTO: AFP**

cities to encourage bike use.

Beijing school students trial temperature-tracking bracelets

Temperature-monitoring bracelets that alert an app if a student has a fever were being trialled at Beijing schools on Monday — China's latest use of high-tech to track its population's possible exposure to the novel coronavirus.

China has deployed thermal cameras in public areas and most places require people to show an app with green, yellow and red ratings that determine a person's infection risk based on travel history.

The bracelets were rolled out in five Beijing districts for the first classes for middle school students in months.

Stocks rally as restrictions are eased and death rates drop

Asian equity markets rallied

Monday as traders looked past a staggering jump in US job losses to focus on governments easing their virus lockdown measures and data showing the rate of deaths falling in some of the world's worst-hit countries.

However, observers warned that with the outlook still murky traders could be getting ahead of themselves, while there are concerns of a second wave hitting South Korea and China, which had been slowly reopening their economies.

Official figures on Friday showed a record 20.5 million people were laid off in April, sending unemployment soaring to 14.7 per cent, the highest since the Great Depression.

However, the reading was slightly lower than forecasts and Wall Street ended a healthy week with strong gains as focus turned to plans to lift restrictions in the US and the rest of the world that have kept billions of people stuck at home for months.

Coronavirus interrupts world's longest-running cartoon

Production of the world's longest-running cartoon and a mainstay of the Japanese weekend has been interrupted by the coronavirus, forcing the broadcast of re-runs for the first time in decades. "Sazae-san", which first aired in 1969, revolves around the life of Mrs Sazae, a cheerful but klutzy full-time housewife who lives with her parents, husband, son, brother and sister.

The 30-minute episodes aired Sunday nights are very popular, and for many in Japan have come to denote the end of the weekend.

But the cartoon, recognized as the longest-running animated TV series by Guinness World Records, has been hampered by the outbreak of the virus, with animation dubbing halted to keep staff safe, broadcaster Fuji Television Network said.

Pakistani parliament resumes work

With Pakistan gradually moving out of its COVID-19 pandemic lockdown, its National Assembly began its first session Monday after a nearly two-month hiatus to debate the outbreak of the infectious disease and government's handling of the situation.

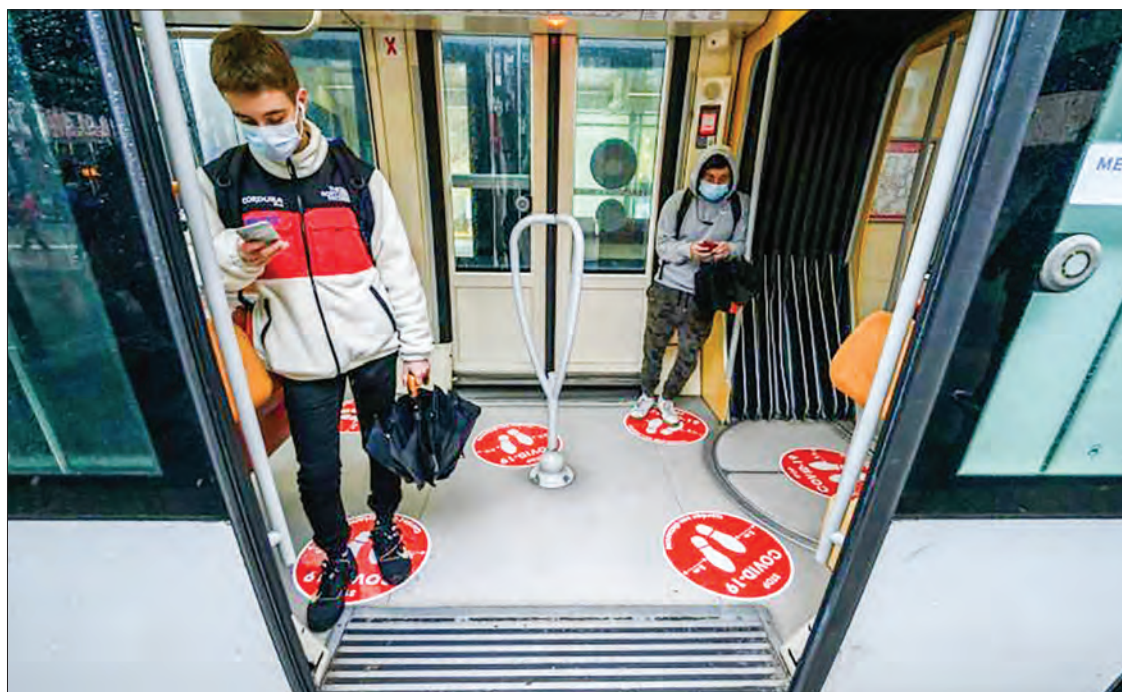
Deputy Speaker Qasim Suri presided over the meeting in the absence of Speaker Asad Qaiser, who is suffering from the infection and is in quarantine. Two other members of the lower house of parliament and three of its staffers have also tested positive.

The government initially wanted a "virtual session" of the assembly, but the opposition was adamant about convening a physical session. The two sides finally agreed to convene a five-day session from Monday.

Under the deal, neither side would point out the shortage of minimum quorum for the session to be held. Pakistan's Constitution requires the presence of 86 legislators, one-fourth members of the 342-member assembly, for it to carry out its business.

Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi opened the debate by recalling the progress made by Pakistan in fighting against the disease. He said the country now has the best testing capacity in South Asia, with the capacity to undertake 20,000 tests per day.

SOURCE: AFP, Kyodo News



Masks are now mandatory on public transport in France, and commuters must observe social distancing guidelines. **PHOTO: AFP**

Italy industrial output tumbles nearly 30% in March

ROME — Italy's industrial production tumbled nearly 30 per cent in March as the country shuttered many businesses to contain the spread of the new coronavirus, the nation's statistics agency said Monday.

Production fell by 28.4 per cent compared to February using seasonally adjusted figures and by 29.3 per cent compared to March 2019 adjusting for the different number of working days, Istat said.

"The Italian industry recorded a historically weak March," Oxford Economics said in a note.

The decline hit all sectors, "but the 50 per cent drop in transport equipment was just aston-



Italian output data make for grim reading. PHOTO: AFP

ishing", it said.

Industrial production was

likely to have collapsed again in April, probably by half compared

to a year earlier.

Oxford Economics also predicted a downward revision for first-quarter GDP which provisional figures released last month showed declining by 4.7 per cent.

Italy's national consumers association said industrial production had been brought down by "an earthquake" bigger than anything seen since 2009, the height of the global financial crisis. Italy, home to the eurozone's third-largest economy, has been hard-hit with over 30,000 deaths due to the virus.

The provisional 4.7 per cent contraction in the first quarter compared to a eurozone average of 3.8 per cent.— AFP ■

NEWS In BRIEF

S Korea's initial jobless claims post double-digit growth in April

SEOUL — South Korea's initial jobless claims posted a double-digit growth last month as job losses increased on the back of the COVID-19 outbreak, a government report showed Monday.

The number of those who newly applied for job-seeking benefits in April was 129,000, according to the Ministry of Employment and Labour. It was up 33.0 per cent, or 32,000, from the same month of last year.

The job-seeking benefits are offered by the government to help the unemployed seek jobs, accounting for a majority of unemployment benefits. It is financed by the state employment insurance funds.

The number of job-seeking benefit receivers totalled 651,000 in April, up 25.2 per cent, or 131,000, from a year ago. An average 1,526,000 won (1,250 US dollars) was paid to the beneficiaries.

It came as companies encouraged employees to go on an unpaid leave or be laid off amid rising worry about the economic fallout from the coronavirus pandemic.—Xinhua ■

Saudi triples VAT, suspends handouts in virus-led austerity drive

RIYADH — Saudi Arabia unveiled plans Monday to triple its value added tax and halt monthly allowances to citizens as part of a series of austerity measures amid record low oil prices and a coronavirus-led economic slump.

The measures, which state media said would boost state coffers by 100 billion riyals (\$26.6 billion), come as the government steps up emergency plans to slash spending to deal with the twin economic blow.

The austerity drive could stir public resentment amid an already high cost of living and intensify scrutiny of lavish multi-billion dollar state projects and expenditure including the proposed purchase of English football club Newcastle United.

"It has been decided the cost of living allowance will be halted

from June 2020 and VAT will be raised from 5 per cent to 15 per cent from 1 July," Finance Minister Mohammed al-Jadaan said in a statement released by the official Saudi Press Agency.

Jadaan insisted the measures were necessary to shore up state finances amid a "sharp decline" in oil revenue as the coronavirus pandemic saps global demand for crude.

The government was also "cancelling, extending or postponing" expenditure for some government agencies and cutting spending on projects introduced as part of the ambitious "Vision 2030" reform programme to diversify the oil-reliant economy, the minister added.

In an apparent effort to sweeten the bitter pill, state energy giant Aramco slashed do-



Saudi is raising VAT from 5 per cent to 15 per cent as the kingdom seeks to generate revenue due to the slump in oil prices. PHOTO: AFP

mestic fuel prices by nearly half starting from Monday.

The savings from the austerity measures are unlikely to plug the kingdom's huge budget deficit, which the Saudi Jadwa Investment group forecast would

rise to a record \$112 billion this year. The finance minister last week warned of "painful" and "drastic" steps to deal with the double shock of the novel coronavirus and record low oil prices.— AFP ■

Indonesia eyes \$1.0 bn rescue for virus-hit carrier Garuda

JAKARTA — Indonesia is drawing up a \$1.0 billion rescue plan for struggling national airline Garuda after the coronavirus forced the company to ground most of its planes, Bloomberg News reported Monday.

Under the plan, some \$500 million in Garuda debt would be restructured with another \$500 million in new loans to help the airline meet operational needs for the next six months, the report said, citing Deputy State-Owned Enterprises Minister Kartika Wirjoatmodjo.

The company was facing the prospect of defaulting on Islamic bonds known as sukuk due next month, the report said, adding

that investors would be offered the option of extending maturities on their investment by three years or a staggered repayment scheme. "Garuda remains a good company with bright prospects," Wirjoatmodjo was quoted as saying. "Its business will remain robust after the outbreak ends."

The ministry did not respond to requests for comment.

In a reply via WhatsApp, Garuda's president director Irfan Setiাপutra said: "This is still an ongoing discussion. It's not confirmed yet."

State-controlled Garuda — which operates a fleet of more than 200 aircraft with its Citilink subsidiary — has temporarily



Garuda has temporarily cut salaries to help cope with an air travel slump sparked by the global pandemic. PHOTO: AFP

cut salaries to help cope with a travel slump sparked by the global pandemic. Coronavirus has dealt a crushing blow to the

global aviation industry, which has been hard-hit by confinement measures and travel restrictions.— AFP ■

OPEC daily basket price stands at 22.21 USD per barrel

VIENNA — The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) daily basket price stood at 22.21 U.S. dollars a barrel last Friday, compared with 22.91 dollars on Thursday, according to OPEC Secretariat calculations released on Monday.

The OPEC basket, also known as the OPEC reference basket of crude oil (ORB), is a weighted average of oil prices from different OPEC members around the world and an important benchmark for crude oil prices.

It currently averages the oil prices of 13 countries, namely Algeria, Angola, the Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Venezuela.—Xinhua ■

Italian rice puts pasta in the shade during pandemic

ROME — Europe's top rice producer Italy has seen consumption of the staple rise throughout the coronavirus pandemic, putting even pasta in the shade.

It's not just popular at home either — China itself has even signed a deal to import Italian rice.

The Chinese have their eyes on varieties used to make typical risotto dishes such as medium-grained Carnaroli, Arborio, Roma or Baldo.

"It is because our rice is better quality than that cultivated in China," says Stefano Greppi, Pavia province president at Italy's main agricultural union Coldiretti.

Himself the owner of a nearby rice farm, Greppi



Such has been the demand for rice at home — never mind from China — that fellow Italian staple pasta has been left in the shade in recent weeks. PHOTO: AFP

welcomes the recent signing, during the pandemic, of an agreement allowing Italy, which produces more than half of European rice output, to export rice to China.

That is a boon for producers in the provinces of Pavia, Lombardy, Ver-

celli and Novara (both in Piedmont) which account between them for 95 per cent of national production.

"It's a bit like selling ice cream to the eskimos," quipped daily *Il Corriere della Sera* the day after the export protocol was signed in April. "The doors of the

huge Chinese market are opening to rice (and risotto) cultivated in the countryside around Pavia," added the newspaper, explaining that "native imitations of Italian risotto" already exist in China.

Spread over 220,000 hectares (545,000 acres) and cultivated by 4,200 producers in all, Italian rice production totals an annual 1.5 million tonnes.

The country boasts more than 200 varieties in all, each with its own peculiarities.

Even so, Europe is a mere lightweight when it comes to global production. It has just 0.4 per cent of the total world output of 500 million tonnes a year, 90 per cent of that Asia-based. —AFP ■

Sinopec builds up world's largest mask material production base

NANJING — Sinopec Yizheng Chemical Fibre Co., Ltd., a subsidiary of China's largest oil refiner Sinopec, put into operation the 12th of its 12 melt-blown non-woven fabric production lines Saturday to meet the brisk demand of face mask producers.

Sinopec has now completed the construction of all its 16 production lines of such fabric.

After the full operation of the 16 production lines and together with Sinopec's joint venture enterprises that can produce seven tonnes of meltblown non-woven fabric every day, the daily production capacity of

the company is expected to reach 37 tonnes, and its annual production capacity will exceed 13,500 tonnes, which can be used in making 13.5 billion medical masks.

As the essential material to make masks, the non-woven fabric is the core raw material that serves as the filtering layer in the middle part of masks to absorb dust, bacteria and pollen.

Sinopec has spent 76 days to construct the world's largest meltblown non-woven fabric production base since it launched its construction plan on 24 February, according to the company.—Xinhua ■

With prices down and jobs leaving, US oil workers learn patience

CARLSBAD — Wait for an upturn, or pick up stakes and look for work elsewhere? That's the dilemma facing oil workers around Carlsbad in New Mexico, where a brutal drop in petroleum prices has hit the local economy hard.

Many oil workers in the arid southwestern state have already left the campgrounds where they had parked their RVs, after being drawn here by exceptionally high salaries.

In this dusty town in the Permian Basin — site of the planet's largest oil and natural gas deposits,

astride the Texas-New Mexico border — a worker can earn \$100,000 or even \$150,000 a year, twice or more than the average private sector wage there.

Salary cuts

Clenon Weaver, a 34-year-old welder sitting in the shade outside his camper, said he had told his wife back in Texas, "I'm bummed that I'm not going to work, but I'm excited to get to come home and see y'all." Weaver, who is trying to take things in stride — "laughing and cutting up (making jokes) makes

everything easier," he said — plans to take a few weeks to enjoy being with his wife, their daughters and new baby girl in their home near Houston, a 10-hour drive away.

After that, he plans to start looking for work again. Thousands of people in the Carlsbad region work in the oil business — drilling or operating wells, or building or maintaining pipelines.

Like Weaver, many of them live in "man camps" just outside the city. In a region where real estate prices have soared after a

decade of booming oil prices, they pay \$600 to \$900 a month for a spot to park their camper and pickup truck.

Many of these oil workers — known colloquially as "roughnecks" because of their grueling, physical outdoor work — have lost their jobs in recent weeks.

On 20 April, the price of a barrel of American crude oil fell so sharply that it even moved briefly below zero, as storage tanks filled up amid the collapse in demand occasioned by the coronavirus pandemic.—AFP ■

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V PACAO VOY. NO. (089 N/S)

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V PACAO VOY. NO. (089 N/S) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 13-5-2020 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 LINES

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V POAVOSA WISOM III V.91

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V POAVOSA WISOM III VOY NO.(91) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 13-5-2020 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of TMIT-2 where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S BEN LINE AGENCIES (SINGAPORE) PTE,LTD

Phone No: 2301928

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V VAST OCEAN 5 V.20054

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V VAST OCEAN 5 VOY.NO (20054) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 12-5-2020 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of MITT-3 where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S GLOBAL MARS SHIPPING

Phone No: 2301928

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V PANVISION V.05/02

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V PANVISION VOY.NO.(05/02) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 11-5-2020 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of MIPL 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 HIGHEST SHIPPING PTE,LTD

Phone No: 2301928

China's ground zero reports virus infections

WUHAN — China reported a new cluster of coronavirus cases in Wuhan Monday after a month without fresh infections at the pandemic's global epicentre, as a northeastern city was placed under lockdown.

The cases added to fears China could be facing a new wave of infections, even as restrictions continued to ease in some other parts of the country.

Five new infections were confirmed in one residential district of Wuhan, the central Chinese city where the virus was initially detected late last year and which emerged from its own lockdown roughly four weeks ago, following dramatically dwindling numbers.

Authorities also issued stay-at-home orders and travel bans in Shulan, a city of around 670,000 people in northeastern China, after three new infections were confirmed there.



The deadly coronavirus first emerged in the central Chinese city of Wuhan late last year. PHOTO: AFP

The disease first emerged late last year, sweeping through Wuhan city and surrounding Hubei province, killing thousands and sickening many more.

Authorities in Wuhan imposed draconian restrictions on travel and movement in

what appeared to have been a successful bid to quash the outbreak.

That lockdown eased in recent weeks as officials said the disease was under control, with travel to and from the city allowed.

But on Sunday authorities acknowledged one person had tested positive for the virus in Wuhan, followed by another five on Monday.

Local authorities said all new cases were from the same residential compound, mostly older people, and an official from the affected district has been dismissed for "insufficient" virus containment efforts.

There were also 11 new "asymptomatic" cases reported in wider Hubei province. China is recording symptomatic and asymptomatic cases separately. —AFP ■

India to 'gradually' restart rail operations in lockdown easing



Since early May some 366 special trains in India have operated to help stranded rural migrant workers who lost their city jobs return home. PHOTO: AFP

NEW DELHI — One of the world's largest train networks will "gradually" restart operations from Tuesday as India eases its coronavirus lockdown, as the number of cases passed 60,000 with more than 2,000 deaths.

Some 30 train journeys -- 15 pairs of return trips -- will run from the capital New Delhi to other cities including Mumbai, Bangalore and Chennai, Indian Railways said late Sunday.

"Indian Railways plans to

gradually restart passenger train operations from 12th May, 2020... Thereafter, Indian Railways shall start more special services on new routes," the railways ministry added in a statement.

"It will be mandatory for the passengers to wear face cover and undergo screening at departure and only asymptomatic passengers will be allowed to board the train."

The vast train network, which had carried more than

20 million passengers daily, was halted in late March as India imposed a strict lockdown to stem the spread of the deadly novel coronavirus.

Trains for migrants

Since early May, the government said some 366 special trains carrying up to 1,200 passengers on each service have operated to help stranded poor, rural migrant workers who lost their jobs in cities in the lockdown to return to their villages.—AFP ■

230 arrested in Hong Kong's first major protests since virus began

HONG KONG — Hong Kong police arrested hundreds of people during weekend democracy protests — including a 12-year-old boy — officials said Monday, in the first major political unrest since the coronavirus outbreak began.

The disclosure came as the financial hub's pro-Beijing leader Carrie Lam vowed to overhaul the city's education system, arguing its liberal studies curriculum helped fuel last year's huge protests.

On Sunday — two days after virus restrictions on gatherings were eased and bars and gyms allowed to reopen — riot police chased flash-mob protesters through multiple shopping malls.

They later used pepper spray and batons against protesters,

bystanders and journalists in the district of Mong Kok.

Police said 230 people between the ages of 12 and 65 were arrested on various charges including unlawful assembly, assaulting a police officer and failing to produce identity documents. Others were also fined for breaching anti-coronavirus measures banning more than eight people gathering in public.

Hospital authorities said 18 people received treatment for injuries.

In an interview with pro-government Ta Kung Pao newspaper published Monday, Lam described the current secondary school programme as a "chicken coop without a roof" and said her government would soon unveil their plans.—AFP ■ "In terms



Many of Hong Kong's protesters are youngsters. PHOTO: AFP

19 dead as Iran warship hit by 'friendly fire' in tense Gulf

TEHRAN — An Iranian warship was hit by a friendly fire missile during naval exercises, killing 19 sailors, state media and the army said Monday, amid tensions with the US in Gulf waters.

The incident involving the Konarak vessel occurred on Sunday afternoon near Bandar-e Jask, off the southern coast of the Islamic republic, state television's website said.

"The vessel was hit after moving a practice target to its destination and not creating enough distance between itself and the target," said the channel.

Nineteen crewmen were killed and 15 injured in an "accident" during the exercises, the armed forces said, without elaborating.

The vessel had been towed ashore for "technical investigations", it said in a statement, calling on people to "avoid spec-



Iranian frigate "Jamaran" is seen during naval drills in December 2019. PHOTO: AFP

ulation" until further information is released.

Tasnim news agency said in an English-language tweet that the Konarak was hit by the

missile fired by another Iranian warship.

The vessel had been hit by "friendly fire" after Moudge-class frigate 'Jamaran' acciden-

tally shot (it) with a missile during live firing exercise in Jask area of Persian Gulf waters".

The 15 injured were hospitalized in Sistan and Baluch-

istan, said Mohammad-Mehran Aminifard, head of the province's medical university.

Two of the sailors were in intensive care, he told the semi-official news agency ISNA.

Iran's army chief and foreign minister offered their condolences to the sailors' families in separate statements.

Trump 'shoot down' threat

The Konarak is a logistical support vessel made in the Netherlands and purchased by Iran before the 1979 Islamic revolution.

Weighing 447 tonnes and 47 metres (154 feet) long, the Hendijan-class vessel is equipped with four cruise missiles, according to state television.

It was not immediately clear how many crew members had been on board the warship at the time of the accident. —AFP ■

Rise in German virus infections spurs concern



Most shops and playgrounds have reopened in Germany, children are gradually returning to classrooms and states are to varying degrees reopening restaurants, gyms and places of worship. PHOTO: AFP

BERLIN — Germany's coronavirus spread appears to be picking up speed again, official data showed Sunday, just days after Chancellor Angela Merkel said the country could gradually return to normal.

The Robert Koch Institute for public health said Germany's closely watched reproduction rate (R0) had climbed

to 1.1, meaning 10 people with COVID-19 infect on average 11 others.

The RKI has warned that for the infection rate to be deemed under control and slowing down, the R0 has to stay below one.

As recently as Wednesday, Germany's number stood at 0.65.

But since then the country has reported clusters of new

cases at slaughterhouses and at care homes for the elderly.

The RKI cautioned it was too soon to draw conclusions but said the number of new infections "would need to be watched very closely in the coming days".

The latest data raised alarm after Merkel only on Wednesday declared that Germany had left the "first phase" of the pandemic behind it and federal states announced relaxations of social restrictions.

Most shops and playgrounds have reopened, children are gradually returning to classrooms and states are to varying degrees reopening restaurants, gyms and places of worship.

German local authorities have however agreed to pull an "emergency brake" and reimpose social curbs if the infection rate rises above 50 cases per 100,000 residents over a week.

That has already happened in at least three districts in recent days, according to the RKI.—AFP ■

Maltese envoy resigns after comparing Merkel to Hitler

VALLETTA — Malta's ambassador to Finland has resigned after a Facebook post in which he compared German Chancellor Angela Merkel to Adolf Hitler, The Times of Malta reported.

"75 years ago we stopped hitler. Who will stop Angela

merkel? She has fulfilled hitlers dream! To control Europe," envoy Michael Zammit Tabona wrote in the post which has since been deleted.

The Maltese foreign ministry told him to remove the message and the diplomat, who

served as ambassador to Finland since 2014, had resigned, the newspaper said Sunday.

Foreign Affairs Minister Evarist Bartolo told the Times of Malta that an apology would be sent to the German embassy.—AFP ■

New Zealand to end coronavirus lockdown

WELLINGTON — New Zealand will phase out its coronavirus lockdown over the next 10 days after successfully containing the virus, although some restrictions will remain, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern announced Monday.

Ardern said that from Thursday shopping malls, restaurants, cinemas and playgrounds will reopen — with the country moving to Level Two on its four-tier system.

The 39-year-old leader warned "none of us can assume COVID is not with us" but said New Zealand currently had only 90 active cases after a seven-week lockdown.

"Your efforts New Zealand have got us to this place ahead of most of the world and with-

out the carnage that COVID has inflicted in many other places," she said in a televised address.

"But there are risks ahead, so please be vigilant."

New Zealand, with a population of five million has recorded 1,147 coronavirus cases, including 21 deaths.

The number of new cases has been in single digits since mid-April, with three new infections recorded on Monday.

Under Level Two restrictions, international borders remain closed but life domestically will return to something approaching normality.

While social distancing must still be followed, the advice that people isolate themselves at home and "stick to your bubble" will no longer apply.—AFP ■



A woman (R) receives her order outside a small shop on the first day of the easing of restrictions in Wellington on 28 April, 2020, following the COVID-19 coronavirus outbreak. PHOTO: AFP

MFF's senior officials donate foodstuffs to staff, coaches

MYANMAR Football Federation (MFF)'s senior officials supplied rice, cooking oil, and canned fish to 229 staff and 40

coaches at the Thuwunna Stadium in Yangon yesterday.

MFF's general secretary U Ko Ko Thein, de-

partmental heads, and managers have collectively donated the necessities items.

— Kyaw Khin ■



Staff and coaches of Myanmar Football Federation waiting for receiving donated foodstuffs at the Thuwunna Stadium in Yangon on 11 May 2020. PHOTO: MFF

Premier League presses on with 'Project Restart' despite mounting problems

LONDON—Premier League clubs meet on Monday for further talks on "Project Restart" despite growing disquiet among players over safety issues and

divisions over proposals on how to end the season.

The English top flight has a huge number of hurdles to clear if it is to follow Germany's Bun-

desliga, which plans to return from a two-month coronavirus shutdown later this week.

A return to training in small groups is seen as the next step and clubs hope to get more guidance from the British government on Monday over when this will be possible after the lockdown in England was eased by Prime Minister Boris Johnson.

Players, coaches and staff will need to be tested at least twice a week at a significant cost to the clubs, with tests being privately sourced.

Protocols also need to be agreed on what would happen in the event of a positive test, an issue that was brought into sharp focus when Brighton confirmed on Sunday that a third member of their squad had tested positive.

Cases have also been found in squads in Germany, Italy and Spain in recent days, but have been met with different responses. German second-tier side Dynamo Dresden placed their entire squad into a 14-day quarantine on Saturday after discovering two new cases of the virus.—AFP ■



Norwich's Todd Cantwell is one of a number of players to express concerns over a return to playing matches. PHOTO: AFP

World Cup winner Ellis perfect for England - 'and pay her same as Southgate'

LONDON—Jill Ellis, who led the United States to the 2015 and 2019 World Cup titles, was Sunday hailed as the ideal candidate to take charge of the England women's team and should be paid the same as Gareth Southgate, the men's team coach, said a former player. Ellis was endorsed by former England international Eni Aluko as the best coach to replace Phil Neville who will leave his position when his contract expires in July 2021.

"I think the only problem would be with Jill Ellis is the contract she's probably going to command is going to be very,

very high and it's whether the FA are willing to invest that amount of money," Aluko, who played over 100 times for the national team, told Sky Sports. "I'm talking about commensurate to what Gareth Southgate's paid. They're coming from that equal-pay expectation. So I think the contractual issue will be a big one."

Neville's deal was set to take in the Women's European Championship, but UEFA's confirmation of the tournament being delayed until 2022 due to the coronavirus crisis means he will no longer be in the hotseat for it.—AFP ■

Pique 'pessimistic' over Davis Cup finals



Champions: Rafael Nadal takes a selfie with teammates after Spain won the 2019 Davis Cup in Madrid. PHOTO: AFP

BARCELONA—Barcelona football star Gerard Pique said Sunday he was "pessimistic" that the Davis Cup Finals, which his company finances, would be held in Madrid this year.

Pique's Kosmos investment group has a 25-year deal worth \$3 billion with the International Tennis Federation.

However, he believes that the November 23-29 finals in the Spanish capital could fall victim to the coronavirus.

"There is a lot of uncertainty, we try to be aware of what the government says regarding sports and to whether we can put spectators inside the Caja Magica," Pique told Movistar television.

"I would say I am a bit pessimistic, because a Davis Cup without fans is difficult. "I think that nobody at the moment has the certainty that we can put fans in or if it will have to be behind closed doors. As the days go by, I suppose we will have a little more clarity." Spain, one of the worst-affected countries by the pandemic, started a four-phase plan last week to relax the strict confinement rules applied since mid-March.

In the more advanced phases of the plan, a maximum of 400 people will be allowed to attend open-air events and just 50 if they are held indoors. Spain won the first edition of the new-look Davis Cup in 2019, beating Canada 2-0 in the final in Madrid.

All professional tennis has been in cold storage since mid-March with Wimbledon cancelled for the first time since the Second World War and Roland Garros moved back to September and October.—AFP ■