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Tuesday, 9 June 2020

Not to get the COVID, is to distance ourselves from infected persons; this is the first thing we learnt regarding COVID: State Counsellor



STATE Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi wrote on her Facebook page yesterday that it was important to distance ourselves from infected persons if we wished to protect ourselves from getting infected and that this was the first thing the people learnt regarding COVID. As it was impossible to know who had been infected, it became necessary for us to stay at a distance from everyone. This was what she wrote:

I feel bad for having to remind the people again and again regarding COVID. However, the reason I am using Facebook is because of the COVID issue. Furthermore, the psychologist said that it is necessary to repeat about 200 times to make something sink into the head of a person. I don't think I have repeated 200 times already.

What I am about to say now comes from the Minister for Health and Sports and not from me. This issue is about something that the Minister for Health and Sports and civil service personnel from his ministry feel that they need the most for protection against COVID and something that they are really worried. This is also something which is the most difficult.

All of us became familiar with the term "social distancing" during this year. There needs to be

Some think that instead of social distancing, "physical distancing" which meant "keeping a physical distance from each other" was more appropriate.

some discussion regarding the use of words. It was important to distance ourselves from infected persons if we wished to protect ourselves from getting infected. This was the first thing we learnt regarding COVID. It was impossible to know who has been infected just by looking at that person. Therefore, it came about that we had to keep a distance from

everyone. Therefore, the slogan social distancing, which meant "in social relations, keep at a distance from each other" spread all over the world.

Some think that instead of social distancing, "physical distancing" which meant "keeping a physical distance from each other" was more appropriate. Whichever term we used, this is not something very easy to do. Human beings, because their lifelong habits, wish to "touch and feel", in their relations with each other. This is something the Ministry of Health and Sports has to worry as their duty is to take care of our health. Especially in the markets and bazaars people are pushing and shoving without paying any heed to social or physical distancing as if encouraging the spread of infection of the disease.

I want all of you to keep a distance from each other by following the instructions of the Ministry of Health and Sports to give some ease of mind to the Health Minister. Those who go to sell and those who go to the markets, please take special care. And don't forget to wear your mask and wash your hands.

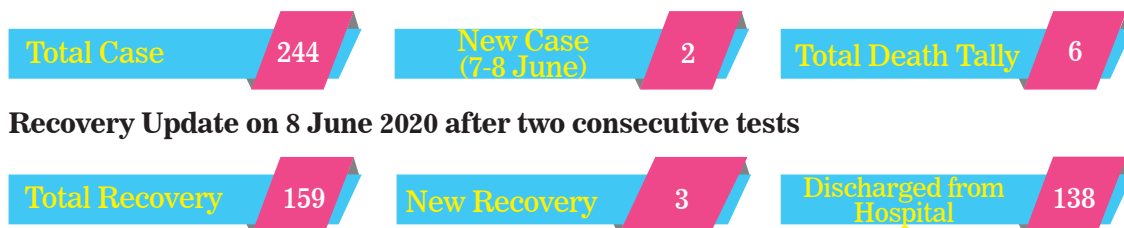
Only 201 times...

(Translated by Kyaw Myaing)



Two new cases of COVID-19 in Myanmar on 8 June, total figure reaches 244

Updated at 8 pm, 8 June 2020



New Persons under Investigation from the past 24 hours to 12 noon of 8 June 2020

New PUI

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“People are the key”

Union Supreme Court hears criminal, civil cases

THE Union Supreme Court heard two miscellaneous criminal cases and two miscellaneous civil cases yesterday.

Chief Justice of the Union Supreme Court U Htun Htun Oo and Union Supreme Court Judges U Myint Aung and U Khin

Maung Kyi led the judgments at Union Supreme Court room number 1. — MNA
(Translated by TTN)

Two ministries to organize press briefings tomorrow

The Ministry of Transport and Communications and the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture will hold press

briefings on their fourth-year performances on 10 June. The event will take place at the Office No. 7

of the Ministry of Information in Nay Pyi Taw, beginning 1pm.—MNA

China makes fourth donation against COVID-19 to Myanmar



Union Minister Dr Myint Htwe (right) presents the certificate of honour to Chinese Ambassador Mr Chen Hai (centre) at the Ministry of Health and Sports in Nay Pyi Taw on 8 June 2020. **PHOTO: MNA**

THE government of China made donations for COVID-19 measures to the Ministry of Health and Sports in Myanmar for the

fourth time yesterday.

At the handing over ceremony held at the ministry in Nay Pyi Taw, the Chinese Am-

bassador Mr Chen Hai first said this 8 June marks the 70th anniversary of diplomatic relations between China and Myanmar.

He said both nations have established themselves with mutual respect, support, assistance and development through numerous hardships and are continuing this support during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Ambassador said that the overall situation is heading towards a positive note as the State Counsellor is leading the prevention, treatment and control measures for COVID-19. He said he hoped this donation, handed over on behalf of the government of China, would support Myanmar's efforts against the disease and further strengthen the bilateral relations between the two nations.

Next, Union Minister Dr Myint Htwe spoke words of gratitude and mentioned that China had supported the ministry during the 2017 seasonal influenza as well. He said the success of controlling the disease to some degree is due to the public heeding the announcements of the ministry and actively partici-

pating along.

The Union Minister said that China has donated medicines, medical and laboratory equipment worth US\$ 6.3 million, including this fourth donation, to Myanmar so far. He said Alibaba Foundation and Jack Ma Foundation have also made donations worth \$ 142,500 as well.

The Union Minister thanked the government of China for sending medical professionals, providing laboratory training, and making donations for measures against COVID-19 to Myanmar.

Next, the Union Minister accepted the donation from China and handed over a certificate of honour to Mr Chen Hai in return.

This fourth donation included 140,000 hospital face masks, 30,000 N95 masks, 30,000 goggles, and 12,000 PPE suits all worth \$ 1.06 million combined. —MNA

(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)

Korean relief flight brings 170 Myanmar citizens to home

THE seventh batch of Myanmar citizens facing difficulties abroad due to the suspension of international flights amid COVID-19 were transported by a Korean airline's relief flight from Incheon Airport to Myanmar yesterday.

The plane carrying 82 Myanmar citizens from South Korea and 88 Myanmar citizens from Belgium, Canada, Spain, Indonesia, Japan, the Philippines, France and

America landed at Yangon International Airport at 8 pm.

Upon arrival, the 170 passengers were subject to medical examinations and had their 21-day quarantine arrangements made for them by the Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population, the Ministry of Health and Sports, and the Yangon Region government.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been

working accordingly with guidelines set by the National Central Committee on Prevention, Control and Treatment of COVID-19 to arrange special flights and relief flights for Myanmar citizens stuck abroad.

With the cooperation of relevant ministries and Myanmar embassies overseas, the ministry has successfully brought back 3,356 citizens back home.— MNA (Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)



Myanmar citizens making their immigration processes at the Yangon International Airport. **PHOTO: MNA**

VP U Henry Van Thio discusses post-COVID activities for PWDs

THE National Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities held its first meeting for 2020 in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

Vice President U Henry Van Thio, in his capacity as the chairman of the committee, delivered a speech at the meeting held at the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement, attended by union ministers, deputy ministers, members of the Nay Pyi Taw Council, regional and state ministers for social affairs, departmental officials, officials from the Myanmar Federation of Persons with Disabilities, representatives from organizations affiliated with persons living with disabilities (PLWDs), and other officials.

In his opening remark, the Vice President explained the government's continuous efforts on protecting the rights of PWDs like other issues during the COVID-19 crisis, the use of special languages for PWDs and creation of video clips for the awareness programme for ensuring 'right to information, access to information' in Nay Pyi Taw Council area and other states and regions in collaboration with relevant organizations.

The Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement has coordinated the requests of the Emergency Response Joint Committee for COVID-19, comprising the Myanmar Federation of Persons with Disabilities and the organizations affiliated with persons living with disabilities (PLWDs) on these issues of low-income families of PWDs, those who were kept under home quarantine



Vice President U Henry Van Thio delivers the speech at the meeting of the National Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Nay Pyi Taw. **PHOTO: MNA**

and facility quarantine, and the PWDs who were tested positive. The ministry has provided financial assistance to the PWDs in coordination with the joint committee.

The Vice President added a national-level meeting of employment opportunities for the PWDs will be held in the post-COVID-19 period.

Barrier-free infrastructures have been set up for PWDs at the Nay Pyi Taw Water Fountain Garden and the Myoma Market as these structures would be models for respective regions and states.

The hoteliers, tour agencies and the MFPD held a meeting on 3 March this year and decided to implement a 'barrier-free tourism pilot project'.

The Deputy Minister for Information has managed to produce a report on the performance of the National Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities from 2017 to 2019, and its has been printed. It is a milestone of the present

government. The committee has aimed to publish the report in the English version and annual report in upcoming years as the yearly report could support in preparing a document to be submitted to the UN's Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Its provisions in the Concluding Observation released on 22 October 2019 is being implemented by the national committee. Collaboration and coordination of ministries, Hluttaws, region and state governments, organizations for the PWDs are required in the implementation, together with the participation of experts in education, health and legal sectors.

Myanmar is preparing for submitting second, third and fourth reports altogether to the UN's Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on 7 January 2025. The report will include the recommendations and implementations on the concluding observations of the UN.

Myanmar has already pre-

sented an initial report to the UN committee in 2015. The pilot project for categorization and registration on the level of disabilities has been conducted in Hlinethaya, Nyaunglebin and Hpa-an townships beginning September last year. The project will be extended to Kya-in-Seikkyi township at the request of Kayin State government, in addition to the existing areas.

The government has decided to allocate K3 billion as capital for spending for the welfare of PWDs.

The Vice President also called for efforts to finalize the five-year strategic plan that links with the Myanmar Sustainable Development Plan which was based on the ASEAN Enabling Master Plan, and he finally suggested all the stakeholders contribute their financial and technical resources for effective implementation of the national committee.

Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Dr Win Myat Aye, the

vice-chairman of the national committee, discussed the COVID-19 measures for the PWDs, financial and relief aid for them, implementations for their rights, vocational trainings and employment opportunities for them.

U Aung Ko Myint, who is also the vice-chairman of the national committee, made discussions on drafting the laws of PWDs for easy connections with the various levels of governments.

Deputy Minister U Soe Aung, secretary of the national committee, presented the status of implementing the committee resolutions.

Union Minister for International Cooperation U Kyaw Tin briefed on the rights of PWDs, coordination with international organizations and preparations for the reports to be submitted to the UN. The committee members also discussed the status of work done for relevant sectors for PWDs.—MNA

(Translated by Aung Khin)

Two new cases of COVID-19 in Myanmar on 8 June, total figure reaches 244

2 new cases of COVID-19 on 8 June 2020: Updated at 8 pm

Case No	Age	Gender	Address	Contact with positive patient	Overseas travel history	Hospital for medical treatment	Lab result	Remark
243	35	Male	Thingangyun, Township, Yangon Region	No	Yes, Italy	South Okkalapa Special Hospital	Positive	Held under quarantine (Hline Township)
244	25	Male	Maungtaw Township, Rakhine State	No	Yes, Bangladesh	District People's Hospital	Positive	Held under quarantine (Maungtaw Township)

Ministry of Health and Sports

Myanmar COVID-19 cases reach 244 as two more cases reported on 8 June 2020

TWO more positive cases of COVID-19 were found in Myanmar on 8 June 2020, and the country's tally has reached 244.

These two persons returned from Italy and Bangladesh. Out of 244 positive cases in Myanmar, six died, 159 persons have recovered and 138 have been discharged from the hospitals, according to the report of the Ministry of Health and Sports.—MNA

(Translated by YHT)

OAGU, MOEE, MOBA hold press briefings in Nay Pyi Taw

THE Office of Auditor General of the Union, the Ministry of Electricity and Energy, and the Ministry of Border Affairs held press briefings on their fourth-year performances yesterday.

At the press conference held at the Ministry of Information in Nay Pyi Taw, Deputy Minister for Information U Aung Hla Tun first delivered the opening speech. He said the incumbent government began working for national development starting from the day they assumed office on 30 March 2016.

The Deputy Minister said they have shared the performances of the Union Government transparently through the media for their first 100 days, first year, second year, and third year. He said they have also recently published the fourth-year performance of the Union Government that took place in March.

The Deputy Minister then explained that the press conference only began on this date due to COVID-19 and will be held for 9 days with 3 Union-level institutions and ministries covered each day. He said the fourth year performances of the Union Government will be compiled and published into a logbook as in previous years. He concluded his speech by requesting members of the media to maintain their media ethics and ensure the performances of the government is disseminated to the public truthfully and transparently.

Office of the Auditor General of the Union

Auditor General of the Union U Maw Than initiated the press conference and explained his institution's performances. He said they have changed the organizational structure of the Office of the Auditor General of the Union (OAGU) to make full use of modern information technology in their line of work. He said they currently review 190 government departments at the headquarters level, 2,256 at the state/regional level, 3,010 at the district level, and 10,136 at the township level.

U Maw Than said they worked in line with Section 11-(o) of the Auditor General of the Union Law to review the national budget from April to



Auditor General of the Union U Maw Than explains the fourth-year performances of the Office of Auditor General of the Union. **PHOTO: MNA**

September 2018 and submit it to the President and the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw on 28 August 2019. He said they worked in line with Section-(o) of the same law and Section 10 of the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Development Fund Law to review the accounts of the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Development Fund for 2018-2019 financial year and submitting them to the President and Pyidaungsu Hluttaw.

U Maw Than said that the number of ministry projects funded by loans or as financial assistance from foreign nations and international organizations are increasing each year and the UAG Office reviews them upon the request of the Union ministries. He said they reviewed 47 projects in the government's fourth year in accord with Section 11-(j) of the Auditor-General of the Union Law.

U Maw Than said upon the request of the Ministry of Planning, Finance and Industry during the government's 4th year, they reviewed Myanmar's 5th EITI report and the EITI templates of the 10 departments and Myanma Gems Emporium Central Committee under the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation for the forestry sector reports of 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 financial years, 2 departments under the Ministry of Electricity and Energy, 4 departments under the Ministry of Planning, Finance and Industry, and a department under

the Ministry of Commerce.

U Maw Than said they have issued 257 notes commenting on the financial management of Union Ministries in the fourth year, an increase from previous years. He said they have notified regional auditor offices to review the budget used to distribute the five kinds of basic commodities across Nay Pyi Taw Council and the states and regions as directed by the National Central Committee on Prevention, Control and Treatment of COVID-19. He said they are beginning reviews in Nay Pyi Taw Council, Sagaing Region and Taninthayi Region as

they have received coordination letters from the relevant government.

The OAGU drew the Human Resource Plan for 2019-2021 to upgrade its own human resource, is currently drafting the Human Resource Policy, and will work on the Human Resource Strategy and Competency Framework in the near future, said U Maw Than.

He said the training school in Nay Pyi Taw has opened courses in beginner, intermediate and advanced levels of accountancy and office proficiency for staff of government ministries and institutions and

they are working to open these courses in the state/regional auditor offices as well.

U Maw Than said the Myanmar Accountancy Council has opened the first and second programmes of the Certified Public Accountant course in Yangon training school and the first and second programmes of the diploma accountant course in Nay Pyi Taw and Yangon simultaneously.

He said they are continuing collaboration with ASEAN Supreme Audit Institutions (ASEANSAI), Asian Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions (ASOSAI), International Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions (INTOSAI), World Bank, Asian Development Bank, and the European Union as part of the international cooperation sector.

U Maw Than said they will continue to work to strengthen the public finance management system and for long-term sustainability to ensure national budgets are utilized for the benefit of the public.

Next, Permanent Secretary Daw Naing Thet Oo replied to questions posed by the media on economic reviews of the state and regional government in the fourth year, difficulties faced and any unique cases, and directives to conduct private audits in line with financial rules and regulations.

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Permanent Secretary U Tin Maung Oo explains the fourth-year performances of the Ministry of Electricity and Energy. **PHOTO: MNA**

OAGU, MOEE, MOBA hold press briefings in Nay Pyi Taw

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She explained that the Auditor General of the Union and state/regional auditors-general can review contracts related to national land, water and air resources, systems, and joint-ventures related to the government. She said a private audit who offers public services is hired to review the joint-ventures of an economic nature between the private sector and government departments and the authority to hire them is exercised by the Union Auditor-General.

Daw Naing Thet Oo said the private accountant has to submit their findings to the OAGU who offers comments, suggestions and amendments to ensure there is no waste of funds and proper adherence to directives.

This was followed by Auditor General of the Union U Maw Than and Daw Naing Thet Oo responding to other questions from domestic and foreign news agencies concerning the OAGU performance in the fourth year of the incumbent government.

Ministry of Electricity and Energy

Permanent Secretary U Tin Maung Oo explained the fourth-year performances of the Ministry of Electricity and Energy. He talked about step-by-step nationwide electrification to complete in 2030.

The country's power generations were 6,034 MW in 2019-2020 FY, including 3,262 MW from hydro power (54 per cent), 2,469 MW from natural gas (41 per cent), 120 MW from coal (2 per cent), 116MW from diesel (2 per cent) and 40 MW from solar energy (1 per cent).

From April 2016 to April 2020, three hydropower plants generated 45.6 MW, 8 thermo-power plants 927 MW, one solar plant 40 MW, totalling 1,012.6 MW, and could sell out 80,345.645 million units during this period.

Power distribution is carried out through 418 national grid lines with the length of 9,521 miles for 424 sub-stations in 15,848 MVA. A total of 25,414 mile power lines and 17,773.2 MVA were constructed between April 2016 and April 2020.

The number of towns with electricity has increased from 448 in March 2016 to 489 in April 2020, villages increased from 30,383 to 36,220 in the same



Deputy Permanent Secretary U Sai Tun Nyo explains the fourth-year performances of the Ministry of Border Affairs. PHOTO: MNA

period, households increased 3,675,742 (34 per cent of the country) to 5,804,869 (53.3 per cent) in April 2020.

The ministry also electrified to 5,134 households of villages in Kachin state, 13,434 in Kayin state and 13,829 in Rakhine state.

A 170 MW renewable energy power plant project was set up in Minbu (Saku) Township of Magway Region, and the first phase of 40 MW was completed in June 2019 for power distribution.

The Energy Storage System was used to supply powers in Manaung Township which is an island in Rakhine State.

The Yangon Electricity Supply Corporation (YESC) managed the street lights which were formerly operated by the Yangon City Development Committee. From March 2016 to April 2020, 14,671 street lamps were replaced on 276.1 miles at the cost of K6.771 billion. The Mandalay City Development Committee also upgraded the street lights along the City Moat, with spending K241.166 million in the same period.

The sales of electricity in respective FYs were 15,355 million units in 2016-2017 FY, 17,115 million unit in 2017-2018 FY, 19,294 million unit in 2018-2019 FY and 11,108 million units FY up to April 2020.

Laws on energy, oil and its products could be adopted in four years, license orders for testing qualities for oil and petroleum projects could be issued, 53 blocks of inland projects and 51 offshore

projects could be explored.

The Total E&P Myanmar (France) Company which started in 1998 is now producing 790 million cubic ft of natural gas from its Yadana Project (M5 and M6), Yedagon project (M12, M13 and M 14) of the Petronas Carigali Myanmar (Malaysia) which started in 2010 is producing 60 million cubic ft; Shwe Project (A1 and A3) of the Posco Dawwoo Cooperation which began in 2013 is producing 345 million cubic ft of natural gas and Zawtika project (M9) of PTTEP (Thailand) which began in 2014 is producing 345 million cubic ft of natural gas.

The production of crude oil in four years were 4,297,377 US standard barrels, 396,668 barrels, 3,356,795 barrels and 3,168,751 barrels from 2016-2017 to 2018-2019.

Natural gas production in respective years were 670,008 million cubic ft, 667,583 million cubic ft, 627,007 million cubic ft and 670,362 million cubic ft in the same period.

New pipelines were also constructed.

In the refinery sector, 33.323 tonnes of LPG, 104,761.169 gallon of gasoline, 104,158.515 gallons of diesel, 50,555. 209 gallons of CGO, 13,503.215 gallon of jet oil and 434.241 tonnes of fertilizer.

The 85.9 per cent of natural gas were used for electricity generation, 5.3 per cent of CNG production, 4 per cent for fertilizer, 0.6 per cent for LPG, 0.6 per cent of factories, 0.6 per cent for refinery and 3.4 per cent for other

business.

A total of 26,970 vehicles were changed into CNG fuelled vehicles and over 23 million cubic ft of inland natural gas are sold for the vehicles every day.

Board of Directors member of YESC U Aung Kyaw Oo replied to the media questions about online bill payment for electricity for the whole country.

MoEE officials also answered the questions about technologies to be used in the 7 new projects, including the LNG to Power, to produce 1,166 MW electricity, rules and regulations, landing of LNG vessels to Yangon port for LNG to Power project, the percent of resources from water, coal and solar for power distribution and the long term plan, measures to reduce power loss, status for the formation of National Electricity Commission, revenue from electricity and calculation for each unit of electricity.

Ministry of Border Affairs

Deputy Permanent Secretary U Sai Tun Nyo from the Ministry of Border Affairs explained the two major tasks of the ministry for socioeconomic development at the border areas by promoting infrastructural sector and the human resource development of youth at the remote areas. The development programmes are aimed for over 19 million of people in 30,000 villages from 167 township of 7 states, 2 regions and 6 self-administered areas, reaching 37.87

per cent of the country's total population.

The ministry also constructed road upgrades including 230 miles and 3 furlong of earth road and widening 39 miles and 3 furlong of road, 5 miles and 3 furlong of concrete road and 155 miles of renovation in the fourth year.

One water collecting tank, 310 brick tank and 23 miles 6 furlong of power line, 179 sets of solar light and 277 low-cost houses were implemented in the same period.

Especially, the ministry is constructing 65/4 mile Magweza-Khaunglanpu in Putao District of Kachin State beginning 2017-2018 F, and 33 mile 6 furlong road section has been completed in 2018-2019 FY. In the fourth year, 43 miles 2 furlong has been constructed in the fourth year, promoting transportation efficiency on this road.

The 63-mile road project in the fur-flung areas in Putao District in northernmost Kachin State passed through icy Khakaborazi, and the construction of 15 miles began in 2018-2019 FY, and the 8-mile section has been completed in that period, and the construction of another 7-mile is underway in the 2019-2020 FY.

The ministry is also carrying out anti-narcotic drug efforts through pilot projects of management units for substituted developments, and they are led by the Deputy Minister in coordination with the relevant ministries. The projects includes road construction and electrification in the areas of Pa'O Self-Administered Zone.

The ministry is also focusing on vocational trainings and socioeconomic developments in promoting human resources, with upgrade of educations at the University for the Development of the National Races of the Union in Sagaing and Yangon.

Deputy Permanent Secretary U Sai Tun Nyo replied to the question about the Exchange Letter for Feasibility Study on 3-Year Development Plan of Border Areas signed between Myanmar and China during the visit of Chinese President.

He said the project is still at the status of survey. — Han Myo Soe, Kay Tar

(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo, Aung Khin)

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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.

946 migrant workers return from Thailand through Myawady border on 8 June

Myanmar returnees from Thailand queue at the Myawady Border yesterday. **PHOTO: HTEIN LIN AUNG (IPRD)**

MYANMAR has been making systematic arrangement for the return of migrant workers from Thailand since 1 May.

The total number of returnees through Myanmar-Thai Friendship Bridge (2) of

Myawady border town in Kayin State yesterday was 946.

Among them, the 35 persons have served penalties in the neighbouring country, and 911 persons came back home in their own schedules from various parts

of the kingdom with the approval of Myanmar embassy there.

Kayin State Hluttaw MP U Thant Zin Aung and local officials helped the returnees with medical tests and other supplies.

A total of 22,546 Myanmar

migrants have arrived back home through this route until now.

The latest group of returnees included 579 males and 367 females from different regions and states.—Htein Lin Aung (IPRD)

(Translated by Aung Khin)

High transport charges, weak Yuan plunge green gram, sesame prices

THE prices of green gram and sesame seeds are sharply falling due to the depreciation of Yuan, coupled with high transport charges, Mandalay bean traders said.

"In recent days, the trucks have to send only export items to Muse market, yet there is nothing to be unloaded back. As a result of this, the truck charges go higher. Moreover, the weakening of Yuan affects the prices of pulses

and beans. During the tight security measures and suspension of trade to contain the spread of coronavirus, green gram fetched K120,000 per three-basket bag. Despite the gradual resumption of trade, the price is drastically down by K20,000.

"Similarly, the price of sesame (Samone variety) plunges by K50,000 per bag and so does other varieties of sesame seeds such as white sesame, black ses-

ame," said an owner of U Soe Win Myint depot in Mandalay.

Despite the drop in price, more than 20,000 bags of green grams are daily entering the Mandalay market from various regions and states. It is highly traded at a low price for now.

"It is good that there is a steady demand in that situation. If the price goes lower than that, the growers will suffer a loss. Meanwhile, black bean and pi-

geon peas are regularly sent to India's market. The chickpeas and other beans are frequently traded in the domestic market as well," he continued.

The current price stands at K100,000 per bag for green gram, K160,000 for sesame (Samone variety), K93,000 per bag for black bean and K72,000 per bag for pigeon peas.—Min Htet Aung (Mandalay Sub-Printing House)
(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

DoC to deactivate unregistered SIM cards next month

THE Directorate of Communications under the Ministry of Transport and Communications has issued a reminder on systematic re-registration of SIM cards with the personal information of holders not later than 30 June. The earlier announcement has been made on state-owned newspapers and its websites and social media on 23 February that the SIM card registration can be obtained through online services of respective operators or at the sale centres.

According to the law, maxi-

mum two SIM cards have been allowed to each person, holding national identity card, citizen card, certified card, scrutiny card or passport (for foreigners).

The extra SIM cards of these persons or unsystematically registered SIM cards have been banned from outgoing call, except to Call Centres, since 30 April.

The DoC has also notified unregistered SIM cards will be totally deactivated as from 1 July.—GNLM

(Translated by Aung Khin)

The ASEAN Secretariat Invites Nationals from Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam to apply for the following post:
Deputy Secretary-General of ASEAN for Community and Cooperate Affairs

THE ASEAN Secretariat (ASEC) based in Jakarta, Indonesia is inviting qualified ASEAN nationals from Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam to apply for the position of Deputy Secretary-General of ASEAN for Community and Cooperate Affairs (DSG CCA). Detailed information including responsibilities and qualifications are available at <https://asean.org/opportunities/vacancies-asec/>.—MNA

Myanmar's mango market sees losses amid 30% drop in China's fruit demand

CHINA'S fruit demand falls by around 30 per cent amid the coronavirus pandemic and so, Myanmar fruit market is experiencing hurdles and losses, said a trader from Khwar Nyo fruit depot.

The prices of mango are on the decline. The low demand keeps market weak, he continued.

Seintalone mango fetches around 80-90 Yuan per basket, while Shwehintha mango was priced 35-65 Yuan per basket, according to the Muse market.

This year, the coronavirus risks lead to losses in fruit market due to transport difficulties and trade disruption, said a grower from Kyaukpadaung Township.

Concerning exports of watermelon, muskmelon and mango, it is important not to rely on the Chinese market alone, traders from Muse pointed out.

The mango growers are urged to supply the quality man-

go to maintain the market reputation.

Additionally, the mango farm-owners need to follow the Good Agricultural Practices (GAP).

They also need to obtain GAP certification. The Agriculture Department has been instituting criteria for long-term organic farming.

In the 2017-2018 financial year, Myanmar exported 50,000 tonnes of Seintalone mangoes. The country aims to raise the export volume of Seintalone to 100,000 tonnes in 2020, according to the online news released by the Ministry of Commerce.

Of about 200 mango varieties originated in Myanmar, Seintalone, Shwehintha, Padamyar Ngamauk, Yinkwe, Machitsu varieties are primarily grown. The foreign market prefers Seintalone variety.

Myanmar's mangoes are pri-



A woman evaluates the quality of mangoes at 105-mile trade zone Muse. PHOTO: THANT ZIN (MUSE)

marily shipped to China, and also, the small volume goes to India, Bangladesh, Thailand, the Republic of Korea, Singapore, and Japan markets.

Ayeyawady Region possess-

es the largest mango plantation acres, having about 46,000 acres. Bago Region is the second-largest producer with 43,000 acres and Mandalay has 29,000 acres of mango. There are over 24,000

acres in Kayin State, over 20,400 acres in Shan State and over 20,000 acres in Sagaing Region, according to the association.— Ko Htet ■

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

Price drops by K20,000 three weeks after reopening gold market

By Nyein Nyein

YANGON gold market has reopened on 18 May at K1.2 million per tical ((0.578 ounces, or 0.016 kilograms) and then, the price was registered a steep drop of K20,000 within three weeks, according to Yangon Region Gold Entrepreneurs Association.

On 8 June, the price of pure gold fetches around K1.21 million per tical.

The domestic gold market was closed on 29 March due to the coronavirus outbreak and the price of pure gold stood only above K1.1 million in March.

In April, the gold market remained closed amid the pandemic risks. On 18 May, the Yangon gold market reopened at K1,236,000 per tical.

Meanwhile, the global gold price currently crosses US\$1,692 per ounce.

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.

YGEA reopened the gold market on 18 May, yet the members of the association must strictly follow the health guidelines issued by the Ministry of Health and Sports. If they fail to comply with guidelines, they will be suspended one month to get access to the YGEA, it stated.

The YGEA office is open between 10 am and 3 pm. The members are advised to wear masks in the office, distance physically from others, prohibit food at work, and avoid the crowd in the office. Only one person has to use the stair at one time either.

There are over 10,000 gold shops in Yangon Region. Earlier, about 50 visses were daily traded, said YGEA Chair U Myo Myint. ■

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

Exports of cattle, animal products down by \$236.25 mln in current FY

MYANMAR'S exports of animal products between 1 October and 29 May in the current fiscal year 2019-2020 touched a low of US\$61.5 million, a sharp drop of \$236.25 million compared with the corresponding period of the 2018-2019FY when livestock trading was suspended by China.

In the previous fiscal, animal products exports were registered at \$297.5 million.

Animal products exports are solely driven by the private sector this year.

At present, cattle exports to China has been on the decline due to suspension of a trade by China since the pre-Chinese New Year period, said cattle exporters.

Normally, a large cow is valued at over K1.6-2.3 million, but last year, the suspension of trade led to Chinese traders resorting to price manipulation and offering a lower price of below K1 million.

Myanmar has held a series of negotiations with China at the Joint Border Trade Cooperation and Coordinating Committee (JBTC) meetings

on legal exports of cattle along with cross-border control of communicable diseases.

While cattle exports are legal in Myanmar, livestock trading is still not permitted by China, according to the Myanmar Livestock Federation.

Myanmar, which allowed livestock trading in late 2017, is now exploring new export markets for cattle.

To prevent from animal disease, the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation issued a notification on 11 March 2020 that the cattle are subject to special goods and procedures for movement of the cattle in the regions and states were mentioned, posing difficulties to those livestock farmers working on a manageable scale.

To transport the cattle within the country, the health certificate (AHD/PC-3) issued by the head of the relevant Livestock Breeding and Veterinary Department in the townships, districts and regions or states are required.

If the traders fail to comply with the notification, they

will face legal action under the Special Goods Tax Law.

At present, the pandemic consequences pose transport difficulties and it is hard to seek for approval from the related Livestock Breeding and Veterinary Department.

The country exports cattle that are above five years old, along with vaccination certificates, health certificates, and farming registration certificates. According to the 2018 cattle census, there are 11.5 million heads of cattle in the country.

Between the 2017-2018FY and the month of October in the current FY, over 460,000 heads of cattle, with an estimated value of over \$581 million, have been exported to China through Muse, according to trade figures.

The authorities have issued cattle export licences to more than 300 companies in the Magway region. There are around 5,000 companies holding cattle export licences across the country. — Ko Htet ■

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

Confronting double disasters with effective preparedness

WITH the monsoon season arriving, regional authorities are carrying out disaster preparedness, expecting that disasters during the monsoon season and COVID-19 period will exacerbate the situation for many vulnerable communities in our country.

Monsoon rain brings flooding and landslides to our country. The people in flood-prone areas are evacuated to shelters set up at local monasteries and schools in high-land areas every year. Nearly 60 people died in the landslide in Paung, Mon State, in August last year.

Therefore, the monsoon season is an extremely difficult time for our community and it will be very challenging to respond to disasters including floods and safely evacuate people.

When it comes to responding to disasters, situations in which safety and security in respective sectors should be included for consideration to ensure physical distancing.

Regarding the disaster preparedness in coming months, it is worth noting that the Taninthayi Region Government announced yesterday that nine committees have already been formed under the government to quickly respond to disasters.

Besides, the government has advised the township and district administrative bodies to remove the houses built in the possible landslide areas before they see loss of life and property as the region receives torrential rain every year.

Meanwhile, other regions and states governments are also conducting preparedness in anticipation of disasters including floods and landslides in the coming months.

Current flood response practices, such as seeking higher ground or retreating to flood shelters, are effective for saving lives from floods, but will result in physical crowding and could increase the spread of COVID-19. Congregating in confined spaces is the exact opposite of behaviors we are encouraged to adopt to slow the spread of the disease.

As the flood season arrives, practitioners should think through now how to minimize the risk of spreading the virus while also keeping people safe from floods.

Key to this will be ensuring that other means to limit the spread of infection are available where physical distancing isn't feasible, and that public health messages align with World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines.

Planning how to craft and disseminate warnings in the midst of the current disaster-pandemic situation is a critical step that communities and local governments need to take now to reduce risk, minimize impacts, and optimize outcomes.

There will also, inevitably, be natural hazards and disaster events in the coming months.

Local governments and communities are highly advised to draw from the world's Disaster Risks Reduction and apply the tenets of effective early warning and early action to this challenge.

Global cooperation urgently needed as COVID-19 cases worldwide top 7 mln

THE COVID-19 pandemic has reached a new grim milestone as global confirmed cases surpassed 7 million on Monday, according to data compiled by the Centre for Systems Science and Engineering (CSSE) at Johns Hopkins University.

As of 0233 GMT in the day, the global tally has reached 7,007,948, and 402,709 people worldwide have died of the disease, the data showed.

Facing a grave epidemic situation, world leaders and experts have stressed the significance of urgently-needed and strengthened international cooperation in the fight against the pandemic, especially on the coordination of vaccine research and development.

AMERICAS BECOME EPICENTRE

The United States has by far the highest coronavirus caseload and death toll in the world, and the situation remains grim in the country as its tally of confirmed cases is nearing 2 million -- now over 1,942,000 on the CSSE tally.

The number of COVID-19 deaths in the United States has topped 110,000 on Sunday, more than a quarter of the world's total, according to the CSSE.

Moreover, domestic outrage over the death of George Floyd, an unarmed black man, in the custody of Minneapolis police, has sparked waves of nationwide protests, triggering worries that the rallies may result in new outbreaks.

"Based on the way the disease spreads, there is every reason to expect that we will see new clusters and potentially new outbreaks moving forward," said U.S. Surgeon General Jerome Adams.

Meanwhile, in the region of Latin America and the Caribbean, daily infections have surpassed those in Europe and the United States, making it the new epicenter of the pandemic, Stephane Dujarric, spokesman for United Nations (UN) Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, said last week.

Brazil, with a population of over 210 million, is the worst-hit country by the pandemic in Latin America, and the second

hardest-hit in the world. Its death toll surpassed that of Italy to become the third highest globally on Thursday, following only the United States and Britain. The country so far has 691,758 cases and 36,455 deaths till press time, according to the CSSE.



Vendors sell disinfectant and personal protective equipment (PPE) in Brooklyn borough of New York, the United States, May 27, 2020. PHOTO: XINHUA

Peru, with the second largest caseload in Latin America after Brazil, surpassed France to host the eighth-highest number of infections in the world on Sunday. Its caseload has reached 196,515 so far, according to the CSSE.

Chile, Mexico, and Ecuador are also among the countries with high infections in the region.

Health and Food Safety Stella Kyriakides warned that "this summer will not be a summer like all the others, and we're going to have to adapt to the new reality."

In Italy, data on the coronavirus outbreak continued to trend in the right direction on Sunday, with new infections, intensive care patients, and deaths all lower than previous statistics despite the lifting of a wide array of restrictions related to the national lockdown.

Last week, Italy began allowing free movement between regions and the unrestricted arrival of travelers from most of the rest of Europe. Most shops, restaurants, and bars have reopened, albeit with strict restrictions on the use of masks and disinfectants, as well as on social distancing.

On Tuesday, France entered the second phase of de-confinement, allowing non-essential businesses to resume activities and free movement for the public, after the nation started a phased recovery plan on May 11.

Jean-Francois Delfraissy,

head of the scientific council that advises the French government on COVID-19, pointed out on Friday "a significant decrease" in virus circulation and strengthened capacity to test and isolate confirmed cases and trace their contacts to break the chain of contamination.

In Southeast Asia, countries such as Malaysia and the Philippines are further easing restrictive measures. For some countries in West Asia, the process of easing restrictions has not been smooth, as the numbers of confirmed cases continue to climb.

Both Iran and Turkey have seen their confirmed cases surpassing 170,000 on Sunday. Iran reported an overnight registration of 2,364 new infections, according to the official IRNA news agency.

Iran's health officials have urged people to wear face masks in public places, particularly in public transport vehicles as the country has started to restart businesses and social activities.

As Turkey on Friday announced the cancellation of an initially planned weekend lockdown, Turkish people rushed to the streets and parks over the weekend.

However, Turkish Health Minister Fahrettin Koca urged citizens to stick to social distancing. "Let's not overdo the normal-

ization," he tweeted.

CALL FOR COOPERATION

In a phone conversation with French President Emmanuel Macron, Chinese President Xi Jinping stressed that "solidarity and cooperation are the right way forward" as the spread of the coronavirus has not been effectively contained globally.

In phone calls or meetings with nearly 50 foreign leaders and heads of international organizations, Xi explained China's tactics and achievements in fighting the virus, and emphasized China's open, transparent and responsible approach toward releasing information and sharing its experience in virus control and the treatment of infected cases,

8.8 billion U.S. dollars from governments and organizations to fund the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation to ensure vaccine accessibility worldwide, far more than its target of 7.4 billion dollars.

"China, after its success in controlling the spread of COVID-19, has turned towards helping countries hit by the disease, and is working seriously to develop a vaccine for treatment," said Ahmad al-Marikhly, vice chairman of Egypt's state-run Television and Radio Magazine.

"Global cooperation is very important, so that the best vaccine is chosen and is available throughout the world," Stanley Perlman, professor of microbiology and immunology at the University of Iowa in the United States,



A staff member displays samples of the COVID-19 inactivated vaccine at Sinovac Biotech Ltd., in Beijing, capital of China, March 16, 2020. PHOTO: XINHUA

according to a white paper released by China's State Council Information Office on Sunday.

He called on all parties to build a global community of shared future, strengthen bilateral and multilateral cooperation, and support international organizations in order to work together to meet the challenge, said the white paper.

China will continue to support the core role of the World Health Organization (WHO) in coordinating vaccine research, while making its contribution to ensuring vaccine accessibility and affordability in developing countries, Chinese Premier Li Keqiang on Thursday told a virtual global vaccine summit hosted by Britain.

The summit drew pledges of

Appointment of Ambassador agreed on

THE Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has agreed to the proposed appointment of Ms Tatiana Josefina Pugh Moreno as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, with residence in Hanoi.

Ms Tatiana Josefina Pugh Moreno was born in 1963. She obtained Bachelor Degree in Agronomy in 1986, Master of Science in Agronomy in 1993 and PhD in Plant Genetic Resources and Biological Interactions in 2005 from Central University of Venezuela. She worked as a teacher-researcher in Faculty of Agronomy, Central University of Venezuela from 1993 to 2019. She was also the Vice Minister of Development of Agro Products and Agri Food Circuits, Ministry of People's Power for Agriculture and Land (MAT) from 2006 to 2008. She served as Dean of the Socialist School of Tropical Agriculture (ESAT) from 2008 to 2014. She was the President of the Venezuelan Cacao Socialist Cooperation from 2010 to 2011. She was assigned at the National Institute of Agricultural Research (INIA) as President from 2012 to 2014. She served as an Advisor at the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in 2015. Currently, she has been serving as the Ambassador of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to the Socialist Republic of Vietnam since 2019.—MNA

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

The Office of the President has issued Press Release 22/2020 yesterday, publicly announcing the Ministry of Home Affairs' arrests and seizures in the fight against illicit drug trafficking up till 6 June.

The ministry made the arrests, acting on information, sent to the Drug Activity Special Complaint Department of the Office of the President as of 6 June.

The full text of the press release will be reported in the 10 June issue of *The Global New Light of Myanmar*. —GNLM

Invitation to young writers for Sunday Special

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

South African schools reopen after March lockdown eased

TEMBISA (South Africa) — An hour before the gates opened, dozens of uniformed students wearing face masks stood silently in single file outside their schools in the dusty South African township of Tembisa.

“Have you seen how many are waiting to come in?” said Eddie Kekana, the headmaster of Winnie Mandela Secondary School, just north of Johannesburg.

“They have been longing to come to school,” he said.

Students across South Africa returned to classes on Monday after two and a half months of home-schooling to limit the spread of coronavirus.

The education department last week postponed the reopening, originally slated for June 1, to better prepare facilities and train staff.

Schools had been shut since March 19, two weeks after Africa’s most industrialised economy recorded its first coronavirus case and days before President Cyril Ramaphosa imposed one of the world’s strictest lockdowns.

As restrictions have been gradually eased, with more move-



Pupils at the Winnie Mandela Secondary School wait in line outside the school premises before classes resume in the Tembisa township, Ekurhuleni, on June 8, 2020. PHOTO: AFP

ment allowed and economic activity resuming, exam-year students were welcomed back to classes.

“I am very happy but at the same time I am very scared to come back to school,” said 21-year-old Lefa Ramoroka, dressed in the school uniform of grey trousers and an azure

blue blazer.

“I thought I would not see my friends again,” he said.

But he expressed concern about maintaining basic hygiene protocols expected in the fight against COVID-19.

“Often there is no water at school,” he said.

Maths via WhatsApp

The pipes are working, however, according to the headmaster Kekana, and two large tanks were available in case of water cuts.

At the entrance to the school, teachers took the temperature of each student, who answered a

quick health questionnaire.

For nearly three months, the teachers have been giving lessons remotely, though doing so by videoconference was out of the question.

“Videos take too much space and too much data,” said Steve Shaku, who taught maths via WhatsApp, audio messages and downloadable documents.

But some students did not have the technology to access the lessons.

“I could not see everything,” Eliza Manasse, who lives with her single mother and siblings.

“I have only a small phone. It was challenging to follow the classes,” she said. Other students borrowed phones from neighbours whenever possible.

“We are finally teaching at satisfactory standards,” said Shaku, installing a protective visor over his mask.

“We have to catch up,” warned one of his colleagues, Noko Matloa. “Our clock is ticking.” For the students’ return, Winnie Mandela Secondary School was divided into 14 classes, compared to the usual six. —AFP ■

No students in school without virus vaccine, Philippines says

MANILA (Philippines) — Tens of millions of children in the Philippines will not be allowed back to school until a coronavirus vaccine is available, officials announced Monday, saying they may have to broadcast lessons on TV.

Nations like France and South Korea began resuming face-to-face classes as they got their outbreaks under control, but Philippine authorities see the risk as too great.

President Rodrigo Duterte said last month that even if students could not graduate, they needed to stay out of school to fight the spread of the disease.

“We will comply with the president’s directive to postpone face-to-face classes until a vaccine is available,” education secretary Leonor Briones said in a statement on Monday.

Classes are to resume at the end of August and teachers will use distance learning methods via the internet or TV broadcasts where needed, Briones added.

Millions live in deep poverty in the Philippines and do not have access to computers at home, which is key to the viability of

online classes. “The teacher and the school will have to adjust... depending on the availability of communication,” Briones said in a press briefing.

There has been little public opposition to the postponement of face-to-face classes in the Philippines, where hundreds of new infections are being detected daily despite early and strict lockdown measures.

Children are generally not allowed outside their homes unless they are out getting essentials or headed to work. Online enrolment for over 25 million primary and secondary students started earlier this month for a delayed start to the school year, which normally runs from June to April in the Philippines.

Scientists around the world are racing to develop a coronavirus vaccine, but it is not clear when a viable candidate will be proven and distributed on a large scale. One of the contenders is from British pharma giant AstraZeneca, which said last week that it is “on track” to begin rolling out a vaccine in September if ongoing trials prove successful. —AFP ■

Minneapolis council vows police dismantling as protests continue

WASHINGTON (United States) — Councilors in the US city of Minneapolis pledged late Sunday to dismantle and rebuild the police department, after the death in custody of George Floyd sparked nationwide protests about racism in law enforcement, pushing the issue onto the national political agenda.

Floyd was killed on May 25 when white Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin pressed his knee on the unarmed black man’s neck for nearly nine minutes. Chauvin has been charged with second-degree murder and is to appear in court Monday.

“We committed to dismantling policing as we know it in the city of Minneapolis and to rebuild with our community a new model of public safety that actually keeps our community safe,” Council President Lisa Bender told CNN, after a majority of councilors committed to the effort.

Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey, however, is against getting rid of the department, and the

head of the city’s powerful police union, Bob Kroll, appeared on stage last year with President Donald Trump.

The vow by the majority of councilors came a day after Frey was booed at and asked to leave a “Defund the Police” rally. He later told AFP he supported “massive structural reform to revise this structurally racist system” but not “abolishing the entire police department.”

Bystander video of the incident — which captured Floyd calling for his mother and saying he could not breathe — has sparked two weeks of mostly peaceful demonstrations across the country.

On Sunday, protesters in cities including Washington, New York and Winter Park, Florida, began focusing their outrage over the death of Floyd onto demands for police reform and social justice.

But in Seattle a person was shot and wounded after a man armed with a gun drove into a crowd of protesters. The suspect was arrested, police said.

Mitt Romney, a Republican senator from Utah, joined a group of Christian protesters marching toward the White House. He tweeted photos of himself in the procession, along with the simple caption, “Black Lives Matter.”

Although Romney has been a rare Republican voice of opposition to Trump, he was joined last week by Republican Senator Lisa Murkowski, who said criticism of Trump was overdue.

Trump’s tough approach to putting down protests continued to draw exceptional rebukes from top retired military officers, a group normally loath to criticize a civilian leader.

Former Joint Chiefs of Staff chairman Colin Powell joined them Sunday, saying Trump had “drifted away” from the constitution. Powell, a Republican moderate, said Trump had weakened America’s position around the world and that in November’s presidential election he would support Democrat Joe Biden. —AFP ■

Trump plan to slash US troops sparks concern in Germany

FRANKFURT AM MAIN (Germany) — Germany on Sunday voiced concern at reports that President Donald Trump plans to cut the number of US troops stationed in Germany, amid fears it could weaken a key pillar of NATO defence in the region.

German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas said both countries stood to gain from close cooperation even if the transatlantic relationship had become “complicated” under Trump.

Other senior politicians in Berlin were more blunt, slamming the plan as the latest blow to US-German ties and a potential security risk.

“Should it come to the withdrawal of part of the US troops, we take note of this,” Maas told the *Bild am Sonntag* daily.

“We appreciate the cooperation with the US armed forces that has grown over decades. It is in the interest of both of our countries.”

Peter Beyer, Chancellor Angela Merkel’s coordinator for transatlantic relations, warned that “the German-US relationship could be severely affected” by Trump’s decision.

The *Wall Street Journal* and



Germany hosts more US troops than any other country in Europe, a legacy of the Allied occupation after World War II. PHOTO: AFP

other media reported on Friday that Trump had ordered the Pentagon to slash the number of US military personnel by 9,500 from the current 34,500 permanently assigned in Germany.

Such a move would significantly reduce the US commit-

ment to European defence under the NATO umbrella, and appeared to catch Berlin off guard.

‘Wake-up call’

But Maas admitted ties with the Trump administration had become strained.

“We are close partners in the transatlantic alliance. But it’s complicated,” Maas told *Bild*, in a nod to rows ranging from the Iranian nuclear deal to NATO contributions and Berlin’s support for a Russian gas pipeline.

There was no immediate

confirmation from US officials about the alleged plan to slash US troop numbers in Germany and cap them at 25,000 in future.

But Trump’s lukewarm support of longstanding cooperation agreements with European allies has long caused alarm on the continent.

The US leader been particularly scathing towards Germany in recent years, accusing the fellow NATO member of not spending enough on defence.

Germany hosts more US troops than any other country in Europe, a legacy of the Allied occupation after World War II.

Johann Wadephul, a senior member in Chancellor Angela Merkel’s conservative CDU party, said the troop reduction plan should show that the Trump administration was “neglecting an elementary leadership task: involving alliance partners in the decision-making process”.

It also served as another “wake-up call” for Europeans to take more responsibility for their own defence, he said in a statement on Saturday. Only China and Russia stood to gain from “discord” between NATO allies, Wadephul added. —AFP ■

South Korea court to rule on arrest warrant for Samsung heir

SEOUL (South Korea) — The heir to South Korea’s Samsung empire appeared in court Monday as judges deliberate on whether to detain him over a controversial merger of two business units seen as a key step to his succession.

Lee Jae-yong, vice chairman of Samsung Electronics, is already being re-tried on charges of bribery, embezzlement and other offences in connection with a corruption scandal that brought down former South Korean president Park Geun-hye.

Dressed in a dark suit and wearing a face mask due to the coronavirus, Lee appeared grim-faced as he entered the Seoul courthouse on Monday without answering questions from reporters.

Monday’s proceedings are separate from his ongoing retrial, but add to the difficulties for the Samsung group, by far the biggest of the family-controlled conglomerates, or chaebols, that dominate business in the world’s 12th-largest economy.



Samsung heir Lee Jae-yong arrives at court Monday in Seoul. PHOTO: AFP

Prosecutors are seeking an arrest warrant for Lee on suspicion he was involved in price manipulation and illegal trading during the 2015 merger of Cheil Industries and Samsung C&T.

The transaction was seen as helping ensure a smooth third-generational power transfer to Lee, a scion of Samsung’s founding family.

Chaebol families often have only a small ownership stake in their empires, but maintain control through complex webs

of cross-shareholdings between units.

Lee was the largest shareholder in Cheil Industries, and critics say Samsung sought to artificially lower the price of C&T to give him a bigger stake in the merged entity — a key part of the Samsung structure — consolidating his grip on the conglomerate.

In a statement, the Samsung group rejected media reports of price manipulation as “groundless”, adding Lee did not take part in “any illegal acts”. —AFP ■

Beyonce decries bigotry in message to graduates

NEW YORK (United States) — Beyonce on Sunday delivered a message to the graduating Class of 2020, marking their achievement with a speech amplifying messages of the Black Lives Matter movement and praising change-makers.

The superstar artist was among a roster of A-listers to participate in YouTube’s global virtual commencement ceremony “Dear Class of 2020.”

“You have arrived here in the middle of a global crisis, a racial pandemic and worldwide expression of outrage at the senseless killing of yet another unarmed black human being,” the 38-year-old mother of three said. “And you still made it. We’re so proud of you.”

Beyonce was referring to the anti-racism protests roiling the nation as thousands take to the streets decrying systemic white supremacy and police brutality.

“Thank you for using your collective voice in letting the world know that Black Lives

Matter,” she said.

“Real change has started with you, this new generation of high school and college graduates we celebrate today.”

The wildly popular artist also took the moment to lambast persistent sexism in the music industry and beyond.

“As a woman, I did not see enough female role models given the opportunity to do what I knew I had to do,” she related.

“To run my label and management company, to direct my tours, that meant ownership — owning my masters, owning my heart, owning my future and owning my own story.”

Beyonce wrapped her message that ignited social media with a message for those who feel left on the margins: “Your queerness is beautiful, your blackness is beautiful, your compassion, your understanding.”

“Your fight for people who may be different from you is beautiful.” —AFP ■

Coronavirus: latest global developments

PARIS (France) — Here are the latest developments in the coronavirus crisis.

More than 403,000 deaths

The pandemic has killed least 403,449 people worldwide since it surfaced in China late last year, according to an AFP tally at 1100 GMT on Monday, based on official sources.

More than seven million cases have been registered in 196 countries and territories.

The United States is the worst-hit country with 110,514 deaths, followed by Britain with 40,542, Brazil with 36,455, Italy with 33,899 and France with 29,155 fatalities.

Mainland China has to date declared 4,634 deaths and 83,040 infections.

India eases lockdown

Malls and temples reopen in several cities across India in a bid to ease the devastating blow to the economy of the 10-week lockdown, despite the country recording a record daily number of new infections.

The reported death toll of 7,135 in the country of 1.3 billion people is much lower than reported in other badly-hit countries, but the epidemic is only expected to peak locally in July.

More than 100,000 cases in Pakistan

Pakistan has recorded more than 100,000 cases of coronavirus, as hospitals warn they are run-



A vendor selling facemasks waits for customer along a street in Karachi on 8 June 2020. Pakistan has recorded more than 100,000 cases of coronavirus, health authorities said on 8 June as hospitals warned they are running out of beds to treat patients. **PHOTO: AFP**

ning out of beds to treat patients.

Pakistan, a country of 210 million which like India has lagged behind Western nations in virus tolls, has in recent weeks reported a sharp rise in new infections. 2,000 deaths have now been recorded.

Travellers to Britain quarantined

Britain introduces a two-week quarantine for most people arriving from abroad, in the face of loud protests by the ailing aviation sector.

The measure, which applies to both residents and visitors with

some exceptions, aims to prevent a second wave of contagion from abroad.

Russia eases borders

Russia announces the first steps to allow its citizens to travel beyond its borders. Russian citizens can leave the country to work, study or take care of sick relatives. Foreigners can also visit Russia to care for relatives.

Moscow's mayor says the capital's lockdown will end on Tuesday.

Irish go back to the shops

Ireland's shops -- except shopping centres -- are permit-

ted to trade and travel limits are massively relaxed. Employees able to maintain social distancing are also encouraged to return to their workplaces.

Rugby stadiums open in New Zealand

In a world first after the coronavirus, there will be no crowd restrictions when Super Rugby resumes in New Zealand this weekend, organizers announce.

New Zealand lifts all domestic coronavirus restrictions on Monday after its final patient is given the all clear and released from isolation.—AFP ■

Falling coronavirus cases in Japan cause delay in Avigan clinical tests

TOKYO — Fujifilm Holdings Corp. will continue clinical tests of its anti-flu drug Avigan, a candidate treatment for the novel coronavirus, beyond the initially scheduled end in June due to a

lack of sufficient data, a company source said Monday.

Fujifilm planned to finish the clinical tests it started in March in Japan by the end of this month but has seen a delay as recent

falls in the number of confirmed infections made it difficult to reach the enrollment target of 96 patients, the source said.

Fujifilm said it does not know when the clinical tests of the drug, developed by its unit Fujifilm Toyama Chemical Co. and also known as favipiravir, will finish.

The study is being conducted to test the safety and efficacy of the drug in treating COVID-19, the respiratory disease caused by the novel coronavirus.

The Japanese government last month gave up on its target for approval of the drug as a coronavirus treatment in May, after an interim analysis of a separate Avigan clinical study being conducted by a team led by Fujita Health University did not show clear efficacy in treating the disease.

Health minister Katsunobu Kato has said the government will continue to seek swift approval of the drug when its efficacy against the disease is confirmed through clinical tests and studies.

Fujifilm is ramping up production of Avigan, as the government has earmarked about 13.9 billion yen (\$127 million) in an extra budget for fiscal 2020 to triple the national stockpile of the drug, enough to treat 2 million people infected with the coronavirus.

As Avigan can inhibit the replication of the virus in cells, experts say it may bring about improvements in those with mild symptoms or those who have recently been infected.

The drug cannot be administered to expectant mothers or women who are likely to become pregnant as it may cause birth defects.—Kyodo News ■



Supplied photo shows tablets of the anti-influenza drug Avigan. **PHOTO: KYODO NEWS**

NEWS IN BRIEF

Two Zambian ministers discharged after recovering from COVID-19

LUSAKA — Two Zambian ministers who last month tested positive for COVID-19 had been discharged after recovering from the pandemic, a health ministry official said on Monday.

Health Minister Chitalu Chilufya and Information and Broadcasting Services Minister Dora Siliya had been recovering in isolation after they tested positive. They all had asymptomatic symptoms and were put in self-isolation. Ministry of Health's Permanent Secretary for administration Kakulubelwa Mulalelo said the two ministers were discharged after testing negative to COVID-19.—Xinhua ■

Surge in Latin America as global coronavirus toll pass 400,000

SANTIAGO (Chile) — Surging fatalities in Latin America helped push the global coronavirus death toll above 400,000 on Sunday, even as Europe emerged from its virus lockdown with infections increasingly under control there.

Pope Francis, addressing Catholics in Saint Peter's Square on Sunday for the first time since the health emergency began, said the worst was over in Italy and expressed sympathy for those in hard-hit Latin American countries.—AFP ■

Japan gov't submits to Diet record extra budget for virus relief

TOKYO — Japan's government submitted to parliament on Monday a draft second extra budget for fiscal 2020, totalling a record 31.91 trillion yen (\$291 billion), to implement additional measures to strengthen the medical system and help people hit hardest by the coronavirus pandemic.

With the supplementary budget, approved by the Cabinet on May 27, the government plans to roll out a new package of programmes focusing on support for small firms struggling since stay-at-home requests were imposed in April and medical staff at the forefront of the battle against the virus.—Kyodo News ■

How WTO chooses new chief

GENEVA (Switzerland) — Roberto Azevedo's surprise announcement last month that he will step down a year early has given the World Trade Organization three months to find a new boss, while the coronavirus crisis rages on.

As the month-long window for candidacy proposals opened on Monday to find a new WTO director-general before Azevedo leaves on August 31, here is an overview of the procedure ahead:

The in-tray

In the midst of a global economic downturn sparked by the COVID-19 pandemic, whoever takes

the helm of the WTO will have their work cut out.

Ahead lie arduous preparations for a 2021 ministerial conference — the topmost decision-making body of the WTO, which usually meets every two years.

The new chief will also need to kick-start trade negotiations that have laid all but dormant for decades, deal with demands for far-reaching reform and also find a strategy to handle increasing attacks from the United States.

Washington, which has threatened to withdraw from the global trade body "if we have to", is in



A sign of the World Trade Organization (WTO) is seen at the trade intergovernmental organization headquarters in Geneva on December 10, 2019. PHOTO: AFP

particular demanding a review of the WTO's legal arm, and a reassessment of China's status as a developing country, which gives Beijing certain advantages on the world trade stage.

Campaign

Candidates who are not frightened off by the towering tasks ahead can apply for the post from Monday until July 8. —AFP ■

Economy watcher sentiment up 1st time in 4 months, hovers near lows

TOKYO — Business sentiment among workers in Japan with jobs sensitive to economic trends rose in May for the first time in four months, as the country emerged from a coronavirus state of emergency, government data showed Monday.

The diffusion index of confidence among "economy watchers" such as taxi drivers and restaurant staff rose 7.6 points from the previous month to 15.5, the Cabinet Office said.

Still, it was the third-lowest reading since comparable data became available in January 2002, behind 7.9 in April this year and 14.2 in March as the pandemic hindered economic activities across the country.

The outlook, however, is positive, with the diffusion index gauging sentiment for the coming months increasing a re-

cord 19.9 points from April to 36.5. A reading below 50 indicates that more respondents reported worsening conditions than improving ones.

The Cabinet Office upgraded its assessment for the first time in 15 months, saying that while the economy remains in quite a severe state due to the pandemic, its rate of deterioration is slowing.

The recent indexes were far below around 20 marked in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis and after the massive earthquake and tsunami that devastated northeastern Japan in 2011.

The government had requested people to refrain from going out and nonessential businesses to shut under a state of emergency, initially issued on April 7 for Tokyo and six other areas and expanded nationwide about a week later. —Kyodo News ■

European stocks steady after strong gains

LONDON (United Kingdom) — European stock markets steadied on Monday after strong pre-weekend gains, while Asia rose further and oil prices won support from OPEC's move to prolong cuts to crude output.

World equities had rallied Friday on a blockbuster US jobs report that fanned optimism about the economic recovery from the coronavirus crisis.

"The risk appetite remains, especially after last Friday's US non-farm payrolls topped estimates and sparked hopes of a quick recovery in the second half of the year," said Pierre Veyret, analyst at trading group ActivTrades, adding

"that investors chose to take a bit of profit following last week".

As countries continue to ease lockdown measures and with trillions of dollars in stimulus and central bank support pledged, equities across the planet have surged since hitting a trough in March.

And the release of data Friday showing a staggering 2.5 million US jobs were created in May -- compared with an expected loss of more than eight million -- added to the optimism, pushing the Nasdaq and the S&P 500 on Wall Street to within spitting distance of record highs.

Canada also reported a surprise increase in employment, confounding forecasts of a big drop.

"While there are still significant uncertainties over the COVID-19 impact on corporate earnings, investors are encouraged by the reopening of economies that is likely to lead to a rebound in profitability later this year," said Iyad Abu Hweij of Allied Investment Partners PJSC.

Tokyo's stock market rose more than one percent Monday, while Wellington surged over three percent after New Zealand officials reported no active cases of coronavirus for the first time since the

pandemic began and said the country was free of the disease -- adding that restrictions would be lifted.

Crude futures advanced after OPEC members, led by Saudi Arabia, and other key oil producers agreed Saturday to extend historic output cuts of almost 10 million barrels a day for another month through to the end of July, as coronavirus lockdowns ease.

The 13-member cartel and its allies, notably Russia, decided to extend by a month deep May and June cuts agreed in April to boost prices, the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries said in a statement. —AFP ■



Commuters walk in front of JR Tokyo Station in May 2019. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

CLAIM'S DAY NOTICE

M.V BLPL TRUST VOY. NO. (2011S)

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V BLPL TRUST VOY. NO. (2011S) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 8-6-2020 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of AIPT 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 BLPL SHIPPING LINE

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIM'S DAY NOTICE

M.V WU YI SHAN

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V WU YI SHAN VOY. NO. (EM2004) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 10-6-2020 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of TMIT-1 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 A.N.T IMPEX PTE LTD

Phone No: 2301928

CLAIM'S DAY NOTICE

M.V TOVE MAERSK VOY. NO. (023W)

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V TOVE MAERSK VOY. NO. (023W) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 9-6-2020 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of MIP/MITT where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

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

Phone No: 2301185

Britain starts mandatory self-quarantine for arrivals

LONDON (United Kingdom) — Britain introduced a two-week quarantine on Monday for most people arriving from abroad to try to limit the spread of the coronavirus, sparking condemnation from the ailing aviation sector, which claims it could cost tens of thousands of jobs.

British residents and overseas visitors will have to comply with the 14-day self-isolation rules or face a £1,000 (\$1,250, 1,125-euro) fine or prosecution.

Critics question why Britain, which has been hardest hit by COVID-19 in Europe and is only gradually easing a lockdown, is inflicting more pain on hotels and airlines by reducing travel from countries with fewer virus cases.

British Airways and budget carriers EasyJet and Ryanair have launched joint legal proceedings against the government over what they called a “disproportionate and unfair” step.

Ryanair boss Michael



To enter Britain by plane, train, road or sea, travellers must provide details of their journey and the address where they will self-isolate. **PHOTO: AFP**

O’Leary told Sky News television on Monday the plan was “useless” and unenforceable, and said

it would “devastate thousands of jobs in British tourism”.

The chief executive of

London’s Heathrow, John Holland-Kaye, told the City AM newspaper it could lead to the loss

of potentially 25,000 jobs at his airport — a third of staff.

But Health Secretary Matt Hancock said the new rules made sense because “the proportion of infections that come from abroad increases” as Britain’s own case-load drops.

“We’ve got to take an approach that starts with caution,” he told Sky News.

To enter Britain by plane, train, road or sea, travellers must provide details of their journey and the address where they will self-isolate.

How the quarantine will be implemented differs between Britain’s devolved nations, and the measures will be assessed every three weeks.

Exemptions are being made in several cases — including for lorry drivers, “essential” health-care workers and people travelling from Ireland who have been there for at least two weeks. —AFP ■

Notre-Dame workers start removal of fire-damaged scaffolding

PARIS (France) — Workers at Notre-Dame cathedral in Paris on Monday began the delicate task of removing tons of metal scaffolding that melted together during the fire that destroyed the monument’s roof and spire last year, one of the riskiest operations in the rebuilding effort so far.

Around 40,000 tubes were fused into a tangled mass in the intense heat of the blaze, and must be removed without further damaging the limestone walls supporting the gothic vault. Half of the metal remains suspended some 40 metres (130 feet) above the church’s floor.

“When all this is taken care of, we’ll be extremely relieved because the cathedral will have been saved,” said Christophe Roussetot, director general of the Fondation Notre-Dame, the charity that is overseeing the collection of donations to the cathedral. “Pieces of the scaffolding could fall and weaken parts of the walls,” he said, describing the work as “very complicated, with a sizable degree of risk.”

A telescopic lift carried workers into the middle of the structure for a last evaluation, and a towering crane installed at the site brought up equipment.

Later this week, workers will be suspended by ropes to

start sawing apart the scaffolding, an operation expected to last through the summer, Roussetot said. The scaffolding had been installed for a renovation of the spire that was being carried out when the fire erupted on the evening of April 15, 2019.

Millions of people around the world watched as the fire tore through the church’s roof, causing its steeple to collapse and sending billowing fumes containing toxic molten lead into the air. Firefighters worked throughout the night to keep Notre-Dame from collapsing completely, though officials have said the structure remains at risk.

Five-year goal

Workers first had to install a new lattice of scaffolding to encompass the roughly 40 tonnes (88,000 pounds) of molten metal and stabilize it as well as the fire-scarred walls of the 13th-century masterpiece. Two teams of five will take turns cutting away the tubes one by one while hanging from rope harnesses.

Once the tubes are cleared a more durable temporary roof can be installed to protect the cathedral’s priceless artworks from rain, allowing actual restoration work to begin, though officials have said that might not start until next year.—AFP ■

Joyful PM Ardern declares New Zealand virus victory

WELLINGTON (New Zealand) — New Zealand lifted all domestic coronavirus restrictions on Monday after its final COVID-19 patient was given the all clear, with Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern revealing she danced around her living room when told about the milestone.

While strict border controls will remain in place, Ardern said restrictions such as social distancing and limits on public gatherings were no longer needed.

“We are confident we have eliminated transmission of the virus in New Zealand for now,” she said in a televised address, saying Kiwis had “united in unprecedented ways to crush the virus”. The South Pacific nation, with a population of five million, has had 1,154 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 22 deaths.

There have been no new infections for 17 days and, until Monday, just one active case for more than a week.

Details of the final patient were not released for privacy reasons but it is believed to be a woman aged in her 50s who was linked to a cluster at an Auckland nursing home. Ardern said the sacrifices made by New Zealanders, including a drastic seven-week lockdown that helped curb infection rates, had been rewarded now that there were no active cases in the country.

Asked about her reaction



New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said her government is confident that the country has ‘eliminated transmission’ of the coronavirus. **PHOTO: AFP**

upon hearing the news, she replied: “I did a little dance” with baby daughter Neve.

“She was caught a little by surprise but she joined in, having absolutely no idea why I was dancing around the lounge.”

New Zealand’s move down to Level 1, the lowest rating on its four-tier virus response system, means nightclubs can operate without dance floor restrictions and theatres will reopen.

It also means sporting events can proceed with crowds in the stands, a change New Zealand Rugby (NZR) said offered its Super Rugby Aotearoa competition the opportunity to achieve a world first when it kicks off this weekend. “We’re incredibly proud, and grateful, to be the first professional sports competition in the world

to be in a position to have our teams play in front of their fans again,” NZR chief executive Mark Robinson said. While many other sporting competitions around the globe have announced plans to restart, the vast majority will be played either with no crowds or with numbers severely restricted.

On a broader level, Ardern said easing restrictions would help New Zealand’s economy.

“We now have a head start on economic recovery because at level one we become one of the most open, if not the most open, economies in the world,” she said. The prime minister said modelling showed the economy would operate at just 3.8 per cent below normal at Level 1, compared with a 37 per cent impairment at Level 4 lockdown.—AFP ■

India reopens despite record virus infections

NEW DELHI (India)—Malls and temples opened across India on Monday after a 10-week lockdown, despite a record daily rise in new cases and predictions that the epidemic will worsen for weeks to come.

The government has risked easing restrictions in a bid to ease the devastating blow to the economy dealt by the coronavirus.

But the number of new cases rose by 9,983 to 256,611, according to government figures announced Monday, putting the country of 1.3 billion on course to quickly overtake Britain and Spain among nations with the highest number of infections.

The reported death toll of 7,135 is lower than other badly-hit countries, but India's epidemic is only expected to peak in July. Many experts say the toll is higher.

In the capital, Delhi, shopping malls, restaurants, temples and mosques reopened for the first time since March 25.

But highlighting the city's reputation as one of



Hindu devotees wait in lines to pray at the Jhandewala temple in New Delhi after certain lockdown restrictions were eased. PHOTO: AFP

India's worst coronavirus hotspots, one day after announcing the reopening, Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal went into isolation with virus symptoms including a fever.

'Rough it out'

The worst traffic jams in many weeks were seen in the city of 20 million people. But the public response to being able to shop and pray was tentative. There was only a

trickle of people at most places of worship. Businessman Mohit Budhira, wearing a mask and carrying sanitizer, went to his local temple in eastern Delhi for the first time since the lockdown. "It felt like something was missing when I couldn't come to the temple for all these weeks," he said. "I hope things improve, but now I will come every day." Many temples set up sanitization tunnels at entrances and

barred worshippers from bringing offerings.

"People are having their temperature tested twice before they get in," said Ravindra Goel, a trustee of the Jhandewalan temple, one of the oldest in Delhi. The 400-year-old Jama Masjid mosque, one of the biggest in India, planned only three prayers a day instead of the usual five for Muslims. Worshippers also had to bring their own prayer mats.—AFP ■

Thai PM calls on workers to prepare for overseas work after pandemic subsides

BANGKOK—Thai Prime Minister Prayut Chan-ocha, via spokeswoman Narumon Pinyosinwat, on Monday instructed Thai workers to prepare themselves for overseas work once the global COVID-19 pandemic subsides.

"Prime Minister Prayut Chan-ocha wants Thai labour workers to prepare themselves in terms of technical and language skills, physical fitness and paperwork so that when called upon, they will be able to trav-

el abroad once the host country is ready for the mass intake," said Narumon.

The spokeswoman quoted Prayut as saying that Thailand is among highly demanded labour sources of global markets including China's Taiwan, South Korea, Malaysia, Japan and Israel.

These markets have often lauded Thai workers' work ethics and disciplines as well as Thailand's successful COVID-19 control, she said.

Kuwaiti Ambassador to Thailand Abdullah Jomaa Abdullah AlSharhan earlier met Prayut and expressed his wish that Thai workers who had returned to Thailand in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic will return to Kuwait to assist in the construction of buildings and infrastructure.

"And so hence the prime minister had instructed the Labour Ministry's Employment Department and its private partners to prepare for

Thai labour export," said Narumon.

The Thai government is set to export about 100,000 workers which can generate approximately 140 billion baht (4.45 billion U.S. dollars) national income based on the workers' income, she said.

"Thai workers who are interested in legal overseas jobs should prepare their health and skills and the government will facilitate their job placement," Narumon said.—Xinhua ■

Afghan gov't forces kill 7 militants in northern province

FAIZABAD (Afghanistan)—The Afghan government forces have killed seven militants and cleared four villages in the restive Shahr-e-Bazarg district of the northern Badakhshan province, provincial police

spokesman Sanahullah Rohani said Monday.

In talks with Xinhua, the official said that four villages had been cleared since cleanup operation in the troubled Shahr-e-Bazarg district was launched

three days ago, during which, seven militants were killed and six others wounded.

No security personnel and civilians have been hurt during the ongoing operation, the official said,

adding that the crackdown would last until the district cleared from the insurgents. Taliban militants who are active in parts of Badakhshan province have yet to make comment.—Xinhua ■

Obituary

Dr. KHIN MAUNG SWE

Dy. Chairman, Myanmar Academy of Technology
Mathematics Professor (Retired)
(National Literary Award 2011)

Age 84 years

BEREAVEMENT

Son of (U Ba Aung-Daw Tin Mya) (Taungtha Township, Kyaukka Village), son-in-law of late honourable minister (Mahn Ba Khaing-Daw Khin Ni), husband of retired Mathematics Professor Daw Myint Myint Khaing, father of Ko Swe Khaing (TOTAL E&P MYANMAR)-Ma Toe Toe Nge, Ko Nyi Nyi Swe Khaing (THANLWIN DRAGON COMPANY)-Ma Khing Thazin, Ko Pyi Soe Swe Khaing (ACUTE BUSINESS SERVICES)-Ma Khaing Thazin Tun, and grand father of Nay Htet Hein, Moe Htet Hein, Mya Mhuu Khaing, Swe Thazin Khaing, passed away on 7-6-2020 morning.

Bereaved family

OBITUARY

Shri Shiv Das Verma

Age (79)

With great sorrow & grief it is informed that Shri Shiv Das Verma, a prominent Hindu leader, social worker and also a senior Karyakarta of Sanatan Dharma Swayamsevak Sangh.

He successfully held lots of responsibilities in various organizations and he dedicated his whole life for the upliftment of the society has passed away on 8th June 2020 at Yangon YGH. Funeral rites will be on 9th June 2020 at 3 pm at Bhaskar Pattan village, Zeyawadi, Phyu Township.

N. Korea vows to develop chemical sector for self-sufficient economy

BEIJING — North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has pledged to further develop a "self-sufficient" economy by promoting the chemical industry in a bid to reduce dependence on crude oil, state-run media reported Monday.

Kim made the pledge during a meeting of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Workers' Party that took place over two days through Sunday, the official Korean Central News Agency said.

"The chemical industrial field has to be activated first to propel and guarantee the economic development of the country," the party chairman was quoted by the news agency as saying.

Kim also emphasized the importance of diversifying the nation's energy sources, as crude oil exports to North Korea have

been restricted under international economic sanctions aimed at thwarting Pyongyang's nuclear and ballistic missile ambitions.

It marked Kim's first public appearance since May 24, when he hosted a military meeting of the ruling party to discuss new policies aimed at boosting the country's nuclear deterrence.

North Korea has cut off traffic to and from China since earlier this year amid the spread of the new coronavirus, while Pyongyang claims to have zero cases of coronavirus within its borders.

As trade with China, its closest and most influential ally, in economic terms, has become stagnant, North Korea's economy has apparently

faced a severe downturn, foreign affairs experts say.—Kyodo News ■

MFF's Finance & Market-Seeking Committee holds meeting (1/2020)



The meeting of MFF's Finance & Market-Seeking Committee is in progress at the MFF's meeting hall in Yangon on 8 June 2020. **PHOTO: MFF**

THE Myanmar Football Federation-MFF's Finance & Market-Seeking Committee organized the meeting (1/2020) at the MFF's meeting hall in Yangon yesterday, according to the federation.

The Committee's chairman and MFF's vice president Dr Sai Sam Tun made opening remarks at the meeting.

MFF's general secretary U Ko Ko Thein explained the federation's financial condition.

Meeting attendees discussed the conditions of the market seeking and current and future financial condition of the

federation.

The Committee's chairman also urged the members to try hard to successfully overcome the difficulties that have emerged from the coronavirus crisis.

The meeting was also attended by vice-chair of the committee U Than Zaw, members U Khun Naung Myint Wai and U Zaw Min Thein, U Bunny Tin Aung, in-charge of the accounting department Daw Ei Shwe Sin Myo Tun, and in-charge of the media department U Zaw Min Hteik. — Kyaw Khin ■

Crowded house: New Zealand's Super Rugby opens gates to fans

WELLINGTON (New Zealand) — Fans will be allowed to fill stadiums when top-flight rugby resumes in New Zealand this weekend, organisers said Monday, hailing the move as a world first after professional sport's coronavirus shutdown.

New Zealand Rugby made the announcement after Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern eased a range of virus-related restrictions, meaning social distancing requirements no longer apply.

It means packed stands are expected when New Zealand's Super Rugby teams open a domestic series, a temporary replacement for the suspended southern hem-

isphere competition, on Saturday.

"We're incredibly proud, and grateful, to be the first professional sports competition in the world to be in a position to have our teams play in front of their fans again," NZR chief Mark Robinson said.

"It's going to be a very special and unique competition and it's fitting that New Zealanders now have a chance to be part of it."

While many other sports competitions around the globe have announced plans to restart, the vast majority will be played either with no crowds or numbers severely restricted.

Some competitions have placed cardboard cutouts in seats to make the grounds appear less empty, and broadcasters have piped in canned crowd noises in a bid to create a big-match atmosphere.

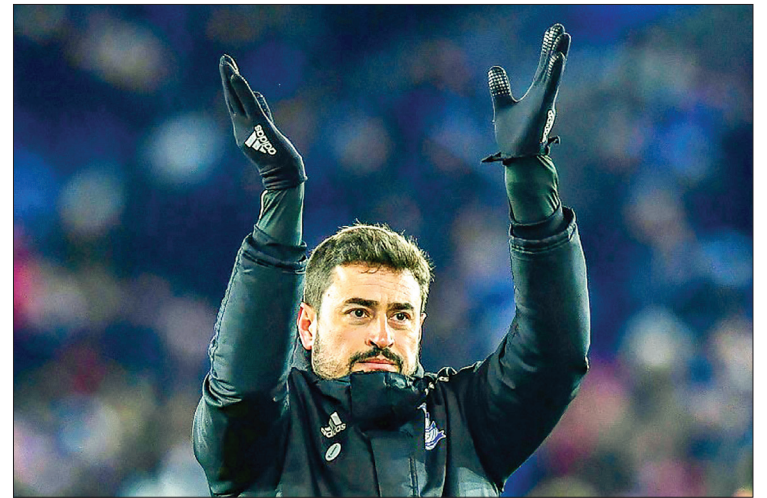
Super Rugby Aotearoa, involving New Zealand's five provincial teams, was originally slated to go ahead behind closed doors, starting with Otago Highlanders against Waikato Chiefs on Saturday.

Instead, when it kicks off under the roof at Dunedin's Forsyth Barr Stadium, the raucous support from home fans in "The Zoo" section is sure to generate an electric atmosphere.—AFP ■



Fans will be allowed at this weekend's Super Rugby Aotearoa games in New Zealand. **PHOTO: AFP**

Birmingham boss Clotet to leave at end of season



Birmingham manager Pep Clotet will leave at the end of the season. **PHOTO: AFP**

LONDON (United Kingdom) — Birmingham boss Pep Clotet will leave the Championship club at the end of this season after only a year in charge.

Clotet joined Birmingham as assistant to Garry Monk in March 2018 before replacing him as manager in June last year.

The 43-year-old Spaniard was initially given the job in a caretaker role before being appointed on a permanent basis in December.

The club said in a statement that they had "agreed to allow the 43-year-old to explore other coaching opportunities."

Clotet had been under pressure after a series of poor results earlier this season, but a 10-match unbeaten prior to the coronavirus suspension hauled Birmingham away from the relegation zone.

"It's been a really difficult decision to take because it's a privilege to be part of the Blues

family, but it's the best step for everyone and it allows the club to continue to move forward with their vision and strategy," Clotet said on Monday.

"I'm very grateful to the club, its board and the supporters for placing their faith in me to lead the team this season and to face up to the challenges involved in what's been a key transition under really demanding circumstances.

"It's now time for us to focus on the remainder of the season and for the club to continue building on these foundations."

Birmingham will resume the Championship season later this month in 16th place.

"Pep will depart with our very best wishes," Birmingham chief executive Dong Ren said.

"It's a decision that is filled with sadness for us both. We value Pep very highly and we know how much he loves this club." — AFP ■