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Tuesday, 8 September 2020

State Counsellor holds videoconference with frontline officials of quarantine centres



State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi meets frontline officials of quarantine centres via videoconference on 7 September 2020. PHOTO:MNA

CHAIRPERSON of the National-Level Central Committee on Prevention, Control and Treatment of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi held a videoconference from the Presidential Palace in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday morning at 10 am with frontline officials of quarantine centres.

Those who participated in

the videoconference were: U Maung Maung Aye, EC member of "We Love Yangon", Dr Chit Ko Han, Deputy Head of the Yangon Region Department of Public Health and U Nyi Tun, member of the Nay Pyi Taw Council.

In her introductory remarks the State Counsellor said that first of all she would like to say something about a

personal matter; she wanted to apologize for the fact that one positive case was found in her compound in Yangon; as a Government we do not wish to blame any person for COVID infection; the important thing is to search and identify those who are infected and give them prompt treatment; only then would we be able to contain this disease; we have already

published in the newspapers the list of those who came back by plane from Rakhine to Yangon; although we have asked them to contact the relevant authorities about half of them have not contacted; therefore we are going to republish these lists in the newspapers together with their addresses; only then would their neighbours and friends know who they are; we cannot let this

matter go away lightly; a certain number of days will be given and if they did not contact the authorities voluntarily, action would be taken against those people if found out later; in taking action this is not as a punishment but as a reminder; if we do not take this kind of action, the disease could spread very quickly in a place like Yangon.

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Advice to people who returned from Rakhine State

1. The names of people who came back from Rakhine by air after 10 August 2020 have been published in the newspapers. Although they were informed to relevant departments, about half of them have not made their report. Therefore, their names will be published again together with their addresses. And that, they would be known by their neighbours and friends. There will be a specific period for the report. If they failed to make the report voluntarily during this period, legal actions will be filed against them.
2. About half of those who travelled from Rakhine State have not made reports until now, and more than 4,500 people, still need to do so.
3. They need to make a voluntary report to the nearby health centres and administrative organizations in consideration of themselves, their family members, their wards/villages, their townships and regions and their citizens.

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"People are the key"

Republic of the Union of Myanmar Ministry of Planning, Finance and Industry Notification 3/2020

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In accordance with a decision of the coordination meeting of the National-Level Central Committee on Prevention, Control and Treatment of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), held on 26 August 2020, the Ministry of Planning, Finance and Industry will continue its relaxation on financial issues, relaxation of taxes and financial support until the end of December 2020 to boost morale of the general public amidst COVID-19 crisis.

Regarding income taxes levied once in three months and monthly commercial taxes to be paid by CMP businesses, hotel and tourism businesses, and small and medium-sized enterprises for 2019-2020 Financial Year,

The income taxes for the second quarter of the 2019-2020 Financial Year (which will end on 31 March 2020), for the third quarter of the Financial Year (which will end on 30 June 2020), and for the fourth quarter of the Financial Year (which will end on 30 September 2020) can be paid by 31 December 2020.

The monthly commercial taxes for the period from March in 2019-2020 Financial Year to November in 2020-2021 Financial Year can be paid by 31 December 2020.

MoHS urges passengers returned from Rakhine to undergo COVID tests

The passenger lists of domestic flights to Yangon from Rakhine State since 10 August 2020 were published on the dailies of Myanma Alinn and Kyemon with supplements on 30 and 31 August.

The Ministry of Health and Sports (MoHS) has warned the passengers of reporting immediately about it of their own volition to the nearest health centres and administrative organizations in regions and states. —MNA

(Translated by Kyaw Zin Tun)

Election campaign of political parties to be broadcast, published

Election campaign of political parties will be broadcast on MRTV, Hluttaw Channel, Myanma Radio and MRTV Facebook page at 7 pm on 8 September; and will be published in state-owned newspapers the Myanma Alinn, the Mirror and the Global New Light of Myanmar on 9 September.—MNA

Returnees from Thailand quarantined in Kawthoung

A total of 86 Myanmar migrant workers returned from Thailand – 78 males and 8 females – arrived in Kawthoung via waterway yesterday.

The returnees, who were charged with various offences in Thailand amid COVID-19, came back home with the coordination and supervision of Taninthayi Region Myanmar Migrant Workers Scrutinizing and Transportation Committee.

Kawthoung District and Township COVID-19 Prevention, Control and Emergency Response Committee, departmental officials and NGOs scrutinized them and provided them with foods and other assistance.

They all are undergoing quarantine for 21 days at the community-based facility quarantine



Myanmar migrant workers returned from Thailand conduct immigration process in Kawthoung on 7 September 2020. PHOTO: KYAW SOE (KAWTHOUNG)

centres in Kawthoung.

After 21-day quarantine, those from other regions and states will be transported back to their natives and have to undergo home quarantine for seven days

at their natives, and those who from Kawthoung will also have to undergo 7-day home quarantine. — Kyaw Soe (Kawthoung)

(Translated by Kyaw Zin Tun)

Relief flight arranged from Tokyo to Yangon on 10 Sept

A relief flight will bring stranded Myanmar nationals back home from Narita International Airport in Tokyo, Japan, to Yangon International Airport, Myanmar, on 10 September, according to Myanmar Embassy in Tokyo.

The relief flight NH 813 Boeing 767 will leave Narita

Airport at 12:20 pm and arrive at Yangon Airport at 5:00 pm.

Myanmar citizens and families who will return with the flight will have to undergo a total of 28 days quarantine, 21-day community-based facility quarantine and 7-day home quarantine, in accordance with the Ministry of Health and

Sports health guidelines.

The seventh batch of repatriation will be conducted with the permission of National-Level Central Committee on Prevention, Control and Treatment of COVID-19.—Aung Thura

(Translated by Kyaw Zin Tun)

99 more new cases of COVID-19 reported on 7 September, total figure rises to 1,518

MYANMAR'S COVID-19 positive cases rise to 1,518 after 99 new cases were reported on 7 September according to Ministry of Health and Sports. Among these 1,518 confirmed cases, 8 died, 388 have recovered, 369 have been discharged from hospitals and 129 were held under investigation.—MNA

Updated at 8 pm, 7 September 2020



New Persons under Investigation from the past 24 hours to 12 noon of 7 September 2020



2020 MULTIPARTY DEMOCRACY GENERAL ELECTION



The General Election will be held on 8 November 2020.

- Union Election Commission has announced the first edition of eligible voter lists at local offices of the commission in respective wards/village-tracts, in the villages from 25 July 2020 to 7 November 2020.
- If the name of any eligible voter is not included in the list, voter registration can be requested by filling in Form 3.
- Objection can be filed against any ineligible voter in the list by using Form 4.
- Correction for voter list can be requested by using Form 4 (c).
- Voters can cast their votes only if their names are included in the voters list.
- Cooperation is requested for at least one member of each family to check their names without fail to ensure a complete and correct voters list.
- Check the voters lists not to lose voting rights by filling up discrepancies, deleting and making corrections.

2020

General Election
Sunday, 8 November 2020

DAYS

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State Counsellor holds videoconference with frontline officials of quarantine centres

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At this time, all of us need to be very vigilant; in her case she had plans to go to Yangon in the evening to go to Kawhmu which is her constituency and also go to Seikkyi Kanaungto Township for some official business; however the Union Minister for Health and Sports did not approve of this idea so this trip has been cancelled; we need to follow strictly the instructions of this ministry and refrain from doing anything which does not have their approval; the governmental machinery should not come to a standstill because of COVID, the machinery must keep on running; and at the same time we should be able to contain COVID-19.

We can assume that we have begun to contain the COVID disease in Rakhine State; the cases of infection have not increased and seem to have reached a plateau; however the spread of infections in Yangon Region is very high; it may not be wrong to say that Yangon is a commercial city;



State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi meets frontline officials of quarantine centres via videoconference on 7 September 2020.

PHOTO: MNA

the majority of foreign embassies and foreign organizations have their offices in Yangon; Yangon is very important and has a large population; she wanted all participants of the videoconference to think of how Yangon could overcome the COVID challenge.

Discussions of U Maung Maung Aye, the EC member of We Love Yangon

There are many volunteers in the civil society organization We Love Yangon which was formed on 5 March; both Myanmar nationals at home and abroad contributed their cash

donations; the We Love Yangon systematically managed the funds, including necessary food supplies to the urban areas, medicines and medical supplies to the South Okkalapa hospital and Warbargi hospital; they also worked for sharing the relief items to Rakhine

State in coordination with the Yangon Region government; the We Love Yangon is also making free distribution of facial masks, conducting healthcare awareness in the markets, carrying out disinfection in and around the lockdown areas.

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Advice to people in Yangon Region

1. About 6,000 people have been quarantined in Yangon. Within two days, quarantine spaces were arranged for 1,000 people who came back from Rakhine State. Now, the number of people who had contacts with COVID-19 patients has increased, so seven new quarantine centres have been established for 1,000 more people. The civil society organizations and volunteers are invited to help the persons at the quarantine centres.
2. People in Yangon need to send the persons who had contacts with confirmed cases in the contact tracing to the quarantine centres without making them worried.
3. People should adhere to the required rules and regulations in the quarantine centres. When sending food to people in quarantine centres, alcohol and cigarettes should not be included in the delivery.
4. People in Yangon have lots of difficulties, challenges and burdens. Therefore, they need to strictly follow the rules by staying at home in two to three weeks during this period. In going outside for necessary reasons, they must wear masks. As Yangon City has a large population, people are also advised to abide by the rules of Ministry of Health and Sports amidst the increasing number of confirmed cases.



Community Security

The problems that exist in Rakhine State were many; in 2016 the ARSA terrorist group started their armed conflicts; because of this there were so many challenges in Rakhine State; more challenges had to be confronted because ARSA initiated attacks on 4th January 2019; the people suffered greatly; innocent people were harmed because of these armed conflicts; we had to protect peace and stability to protect our people; community security is related to peace and tranquillity; health is also included in this matter; if we are to have concerns and anxieties with respect to health, we have concerns all the time because there was no security in the community; we have issued health rules and regulations and reminded repeatedly with respect to COVID-19.

(Excerpt from State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's discussions with stakeholders for prevention, control and treatment of COVID-19 in Rakhine State on 28 August 2020)

State Counsellor holds videoconference with frontline officials...

FROM PAGE-3

Dr Chit Ko Han, the Deputy Head of Public Health Department in Yangon Region

He explained medical tests and diagnosis at the quarantine centre; 1,000 persons who returned from Rakhine State have been quarantined, informing the returnees from this state from 10 to 20 August for their report to the health departments, and they were put under 'stay at home' programme instead of bringing them to the quarantine centres; further managements were made depending on their results in coordination with the regional government.

He also requested for further assistance of transportation teams, and the requirements of these teams would be fulfilled in coordination with the regional government.

About half of the passengers from Rakhine State have not made contact, and they would probably fear quarantine; over 4,500 of them are needed for the report; they would be kept under home quarantine; depending on their possible infection rate, medical tests will be conducted.

The death toll is not high, although more positive cases were found; they need to review treatments and quarantine systems of confirmed cases.

In relations to the status of its severity, damage of internal organs and inflammation of blood vessels would occur, and that the directive of health department needs to be followed.

Member of Nay Pyi Taw Council U Nyi Tun

Access to Nay Pyi Taw was tightened at 12 entry gates beginning 2 September; however,

some persons tried to enter the capital from other ways through inter-village roads connected to the highway; although more entry points were guarded in coordination with the members of Myanmar Police Force; village administrators were asked to monitor those who illegally come into the area and send them to the quarantine centres.

Limit of access to Nay Pyi Taw was announced on the website, Facebook and media on 2 September; the coming in and out of travellers have returned to regular situations; most of them were people for necessary travelling, civil service staff and the residents who came back to home; those who have arrived in Nay Pyi Taw were sent to the quarantine centres and their swabs were tested on the second day of quarantine centres; if they tested negative, they were

allowed to continue to the destinations; as they have to live only three days at the quarantine centres, the authorities could manage their quarantine well.

Although 500 to 600 trucks are running on the Yangon-Mandalay old highway road, just 20 to 30 trucks entered Nay Pyi Taw; meanwhile, the remaining cargo vehicles led to Mandalay and Taunggyi; these vehicles were managed to move directly to the exit gate; the commodity flow is in the normal condition in Nay Pyi Taw.

There are eight quarantine centres in Nay Pyi Taw; the main centre is the city development committee guesthouse; 159 staff members and 273 people are under quarantine there; 412 returnees from foreign countries are kept at the Tatmadaw transit centre; hospitals are also set up as the quarantine centres for contact persons, and 66 persons are at the four hospitals.

Some 50 persons from the health department, the General Administration Department, the Myanmar Police Force, and the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement, and the volunteers are providing healthcare services, including medical tests twice a day.

Public awareness campaigns are also being conducted in the capital, including surprise checks at the restaurants; the expenses for control measures are used from the national central committee; the Nay Pyi Taw Council Area has received over 169.3 million kyats from private donors and 44.8 million kyats from the national committee.

Discussions of the State Counsellor

Regarding the discussions, the State Counsellor said that

'fear' is not good, but as she has repeatedly said, there was no such thing as an excess of vigilance, and she wanted the people to be vigilant; COVID-19 would not be a problem if each individual kept the discipline; at present, the source of spreading remains unknown, the government is not finding fault with anyone; it needs to be considered how to encourage the individual to live in solitude; "We Love Yangon" is requested to provide information; some persons think that giving information is causing problems for someone; that is not the case, but it was for the public good; although someone has recovered from the disease, two points need to be considered; the first thing is another person infected from the someone might not be as lucky, and that it needed to consider that the other person could get infected.

The second thing is that the long-term results of COVID-19 are still not yet known; some say that this disease would leave respiratory diseases and some other weaknesses; however, these conclusions have not been confirmed until now.

The whole country is encountering lots of economic challenges; well-wishers who made donations in COVID-19 measures have not been able to run their businesses in the normal manner for the past 4 or 5 months; the Union Government will provide possible assistance from the state revenue as needed; support from the public would be greatly appreciated; no one should make an illegal entry into Nay Pyi Taw; it is also required to report on the returns from other

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Advice to people in Nay Pyi Taw

1. People should not illegally come to Nay Pyi Taw. If a person comes back from other places to Nay Pyi Taw, he/she needs to inform and receive medical examination. The charge for COVID-19 tests has been considerably reduced.
2. It has been learnt that some people get out of the cars on the Yangon-Mandalay Expressway and some old roads, and then they entered into Nay Pyi Taw via motorcycle roads and inter-village roads. So, authorities are cooperating with the Myanmar Police Force to take strict measures to control these illegal entries.
3. The ward/village administrators have been instructed to report, manage and send individuals who entered or came back to the ward/village to the quarantine centres.
4. To make the flow of goods smooth, truck drivers will be given the slip at the entrance gate. From the entrance gate, the drivers must drive their trucks directly to the exit gate, where the slip must be returned. The truck drivers are not allowed to go to other places between the entrance gate and the exit gate.
5. Face mask rule has been imposed in Nay Pyi Taw townships and COVID-19 awareness has been raised via loudspeakers. A dusk-to-dawn curfew has been in force, and surprise checks have been carried out on restaurants.

State Counsellor holds videoconference with frontline officials...

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areas; charges for medical tests have been reduced significantly; people should be able to afford healthcare services, and that they should not try to enter Nay Pyi Taw secretly; their family members or their neighbours must not allow this; providing information to authorities about this means helping others from having problems.

All people who came from Rakhine to Yangon by flights are not residents of Yangon; they could have come from Rakhine State to Yangon and have gone from Yangon to other areas; it would be a great success if the disease could be controlled in Yangon; the country is facing against two major challenges at the same time; the first one is to control the COVID-19 and the second one is to hold the 2020 General Election successfully; these two issues have arisen at the same time; all the matters must be handled successfully; the strength of a country is her ability to accomplish the tasks successfully; although Myanmar is not a rich country, any problem could be overcome if she is rich in spiritual strength and capacity for work; if these two major issues could be handled at the same time, the country would get great encouragement; people should develop confidence to overcome any challenge in the future; as she grew up during the early independence period, she had heard about struggles for independence since her childhood;

Myanmar fought against Japanese occupation and regained independence from the British empire; people of the country are filled with the spirit of firm determination to overcome any challenge; therefore, Myanmar was seen in her childhood as a very intelligent and wealthy country in the world; it was assumed that the whole world know Myanmar language; her generation regarded that Myanmar achieved a dominant position in the world; this was because of the success of their parents.

As the ancestors of Myanmar people could struggle for independence, their generations have firm confidence to achieve success in any circumstances; people have an opportunity to prove their capacity in this ongoing issue.

Individuals are responsible for controlling COVID-19; informing about the suspected symptoms to authorities is a step to control the disease; the assistance of civil service organizations such as "We Love Yangon" is needed for this; the Ministry of Health and Sports is doing their best; the Union Government will also provide assistance, while volunteer service and financial assistance from the people will be an encouragement for the Union Government.

Discussions of Dr Chit Ko Han

Yangon Region's Public Health Department Deputy Chief Dr Chit Ko Han said that about 6,000 people had been

quarantined in Yangon. He added that quarantine spaces were arranged for 1,000 people who came back from the Rakhine State. Seven new quarantine centres have also been opened within five days, he said. Regional Ministers Daw Moe Moe Su Kyi, U Naing Ngan Lin and Daw Nilar Kyaw and health officials provided necessary assistance for quarantine centres, he said.

He said that volunteers, Yangon Region Red Cross members and the Students' Union of the University of Medicine - 2 are volunteering for quarantine centres.

He also invited other organizations to provide assistance for quarantine centres in Yangon. The people who had contact with COVID-19 patients need to be immediately brought to quarantine centres, he said.

He pointed out that the numbers of volunteers and personal protective equipment (PPE) are limited, so all stakeholders need coordination in bringing suspected patients to quarantine centres.

He said that donations for prevention, control and treatment of COVID-19 are not enough, so the regional government has been struggling for effectively arranging facilities for quarantine centres.

He also urged the quarantined people to obey the guidelines and instructions in their quarantine centres strictly. The food sent to quarantined people by their relatives and friends should not include alcohol and

cigarettes, he said.

He said that there are significant challenges to control the COVID-19 in Yangon because the city has a large population. And he urged the residents in Yangon to stay home for two or three weeks in accordance with the necessary guidelines and instructions in order to control the spread of the disease.

He highlighted that he learnt that the ministry is planning to reduce the quarantine period to 14 days, and the period is enough according to international experiences. He concluded that if balanced efforts are made, the spread of the disease in Yangon can be controlled.

Concluding speech of the State Counsellor

She said she wanted to explain why it had to be 14-days so people could understand; the quarantine period was set for 14 days in the early days of the outbreak; the period was expanded to 21 for effective investigation; the period has been reduced to 14 days as the disease could not spread to other persons after this period and it does not mean it has turned into negative; according to this conclusion of the World Health Organization, people can go outside without causing problems; there would be more space at the quarantine centre if only the people under investigation were quarantined for only two weeks, while health workers and volunteers could manage the centres; there was over 90 per cent chance for the

success of this plan; it will be officially announced soon.

Discussions on videoconferencing are published in state-owned newspapers and on television broadcasts; the discussions of Dr Chit Ko Han for Yangon will be published separately in the newspapers; these discussions will be broadcast on television for public information for possible public contribution; even if material supports could not be given, self-control will also be useful for this measure; problems should not be made at the quarantine centres by adhering to the rules; people are requested to help others with these discussions at least, even if other assistance could not be given; causing problems must be avoided.

COVID-19 could be put under control through collective strength; if collaborative efforts are made, people could be relieved from worries in three weeks; participation of people in Yangon is needed in controlling the COVID-19; it is very important for Yangon to contain this pandemic.

She also said that she trusted the collective strength of people; 'People are the key' is more than words, it is a practical idea; People are the key is very fundamental; it has been proven that public participation could lead to success in facing against any challenge; people are urged to participate not only for their well-being, but also for the interest of the country.—MNA

(Translated by Kyaw Myaing, Aung Khin)

489 Myanmar migrant workers return home through Myawady border

A TOTAL of 489 Myanmar migrant workers - 332 men and 157 women - came back home through the Thai-Myanmar Friendship Bridge No 2 in Myawady yesterday.

Kayin State Hluttaw Representative U Thant Zin Aung, Myawady District Administrator U Tay Zar Aung, Deputy District Administrator U Aung Chan Nyein, and

officials helped the returnees with medical tests and other supplies.

A total of 75,359 returnees including 11,680 in May, 25,338 in June, 18,597 in July, 15,998 in August and 3,746 in September so far have come back home through the border since 1 May. —Htein Lin Aung (IPRD) (Translated by Kyaw Zin Tun)



Elections are the foundation of democracy.

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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.

ASEAN Senior Officials' Meeting and Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone Commission held via videoconference

U Soe Han, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs participated in the ASEAN Senior Officials' Meeting and Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone Commission (SEANWFZ Commission) which were held via video conference yesterday at 8:00 am from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Nay Pyi Taw.

The ASEAN Senior Officials' Meeting and Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone Commission (SEANWFZ Commission) were chaired by Mr Nguyen Quoc Dung, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam as ASEAN Chair and attended by ASEAN Senior Officials and the Deputy Secretary-General of ASEAN.

At the ASEAN Senior Officials' Meeting, the Senior Officials discussed and exchanged views on matters pertaining to key deliverables of Viet Nam's ASEAN Chairmanship 2020, follow up to the Special ASEAN Summits on COVID-19 and Special ASEAN plus Three Summit on COVID-19, applications of external partners to accede to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia



Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs U Soe Han participates in ASEAN Senior Officials' Meeting and Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone Commission on 7 September 2020. **PHOTO: MNA**

(TAC) and ASEAN's external relations, relations between ASEAN and Sectoral Dialogue Partners/ Development Partners as well as preparations for the 53rd ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting, Meeting of the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone (SEANWFZ) Commission, ASEAN Post Ministerial Conference (PMC) 10+1 Sessions with ASEAN's Dialogue Partners, 21st ASEAN Plus Three Foreign Ministers' Meeting, 10th East Asia Summit Foreign Ministers' Meeting, 27th ASEAN Regional Forum, ASEAN Foreign

Ministers' Meeting Interface with ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights Representatives, Special Session of the ASEAN Coordinating Council Meeting on Sub-Regional Development, ASEAN Ministerial Dialogue on Strengthening Women's role for Sustainable Peace and Security and the 37th ASEAN Summit and related Summits.

Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone Commission was held at 11:30 a.m on the same day. In the Meeting, the Senior Offi-

cialists discussed and exchanged views on reviewing the implementation of the Plan of Action of the SEANWFZ Treaty, Memorandum on Activities relating to the Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone to the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and Protocols to the SEANWFZ Treaty.

Director-General and officials from the ASEAN Affairs Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs also attended the Meetings. —MNA

Myanmar receives donation of COVID-19 prevention items from Turkey



Government of the Republic of Turkey donates COVID-19 prevention items to MoHS on 7 September 2020. **PHOTO: MNA**

Government of the Republic of Turkey donated COVID-19 prevention items to Ministry of Health and Sports of Myanmar for the effective response to the pandemic yesterday.

The donation ceremony was held at the headquarters of Department Medical Research on Ziwaka Road in Dagon Township, Yangon.

Turkish ambassador to Myanmar Mr Kerem Divanlioglu explained the donation and Director-General of Department of

Medical Research Professor Dr Zaw Than Tun expressed thanks for the donation.

Deputy Director-General Dr Hlaing Myat Thu and Project Coordinator of the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA) Office Mr Fahri Burak Aydogdu signed the donation worth about US\$55,000. The Director-General received the donation items handed over by the Ambassador, and returned the certificate of honour.—MNA

(Translated by Aung Khin)

COVID-19 Call Centre opens daily

In efforts to speed up the prevention, containment and treatment of the COVID-19 disease, the call centre (phone number 2019) is established by four communications operators and the Blue Ocean Company with the coordination of the Medical Research Department of the Health and Sports Ministry and Post and Telecommunications Department from 9 am to 5 pm daily at the Medical Research Department in Yangon.

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

Black bean price drops by K30,000 per tonne within one week

By Nyein Nyein

THE price of black bean on 7 September plummeted to K919,000 per tonne, which is a decrease of K30,000 compared with the price in the previous week, according to bean market data.

The black bean fetched K950,000 per tonne on 1 September.

Nevertheless, the pigeon pea price is stable at K815,000 per tonne.

India, the leading buyer of Myanmar's black bean and pigeon peas, has been delaying to buy the beans amid the COVID-19 crisis, regardless of requirement in its supply, the traders said.

On 22 May, India rapidly changed the import period of black bean to three months by August-end 2020 from the earlier set deadline of March 2021, as per their official notice.

Although the bean body asked to extend the August-end



Pulses are kept on display for sale at a market in Yangon.
PHOTO: SUPPLIED

deadline, India still has not responded to the request.

At present, Myanmar has exported about 100,000 tonnes of black beans out of 400,000 tonnes to India.

With the changes in India's policy on bean importation, Myanmar still falls short of the target, and it has stockpiled around 200,000 tonnes of black beans, Myanmar Pul-

ses, Beans and Sesame Seeds Merchants Association stated.

Myanmar is the top producing country of black bean that India demands. Besides Myanmar, other beans such as pigeon peas, green grams and yellow peas, are also grown in Australia and Africa, the association stated.

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

Myanmar sets 4 mln tonnes of rice export target in next FY

By Nyein Nyein

MYANMAR targets to export four million tonnes of rice and broken rice in the coming financial year 2020-2021, said Vice President U Aung Than Oo of Myanmar Rice Federation (MRF).

"We intend to reach the rice export target at four million tonnes. At present, we see an increase in our production. Moreover, there are no erratic weather records this year. Therefore, the country has planned to export four million tonnes for next FY," he added.

MRF expected to ship 2.4 million tonnes of rice, and broken rice in the current FY and the country meet the export target before the financial year-end. Between 1 October and 21 August, Myanmar sent over 625,214 metric tons to neighbouring countries through border trade, while over 1.8 million tonnes of rice and broken rice were shipped to foreign trade partners via maritime trade,

totalling over 2.4 million tonnes.

A surge in rice exports through sea trade was contributed to meeting year's export target, MRF stated.

Border trade sharply dropped due to China clamping down on illegal trade and China's precautionary measures to contain the spread of coronavirus, he highlighted.

"Illegal trade is highly witnessed between Myanmar and China borders in the previous years. This year, traders sent the goods via legitimate trade route, and trading volume sharply fell," he stressed.

Over the past eleven months, the value of Myanmar rice and broken export was estimated at US\$738.329 million.

Myanmar has shipped rice to 66 foreign markets. China is the main buyer of Myanmar rice, followed by Malaysia and Madagascar. Philippines is the fourth-largest buyer and Guinea the fifth-largest buyer of Myanmar rice.

In the current FY, Myan-

mar has exported broken rice mostly to Belgium, followed by China, Senegal, Indonesia and the Netherlands. Broken rice has been placed in 60 foreign markets.

ASEAN countries constitute 18 per cent of Myanmar total rice exports with over 440,560 tonnes. In comparison, 29 per cent of total rice exports in Myanmar goes to China with over 694,222 tonnes, followed by African countries with 27 per cent after exports of around 652,378 tonnes. The European Union countries account for over 20 per cent of rice exports with over 489,478 tonnes while other countries represent six per cent of exports with over 151,708 tonnes.

Myanmar shipped 3.6 million tonnes of rice in the 2017-2018 financial year, which was an all-time record in rice exports. The export volume plunged to 2.3 million tonnes, in the 2018-2019FY.

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

Hteekhee border trade falls by \$545.8 mln in 11 months

BILATERAL trade between Thailand and Myanmar through the Hteekhee border over the past eleven months reflected a decrease of \$545.8 million as against a year-ago period.

Between 1 October and 28 August in the 2019-2020 financial year, the figures sharply fell to US\$1.84 billion from \$2.38 billion registered in the year-ago period, according to the data from the Commerce Ministry.

During October-August, exports through the Hteekhee border stood at \$1.8 billion, while imports fell short of \$39.99 million.

Exports of natural gas from Taninthayi Region have contributed to the enormous increase in trade through the Hteekhee border since the previous FY, said an official from the ministry.

Earlier, the Myawady checkpoint sees the most extensive trading among the Myanmar-Thailand borders. The rise in exports through the Hteekhee border had boosted the value of the Myanmar-Thailand border trade in the 2018-2019FY. In the current FY, trade values via Hteekhee also surpassed those registered at Myawady border crossing.

However, Myanmar exports of natural gas to Thailand over the past eight months of the current financial year 2019-2020 showed a decrease of about \$400 million compared with the corresponding period of 2018-2019 budget year, according to the Commerce Ministry. Of the seven border checkpoints between Myanmar and Thailand, Myeik, Mawtaung and Hteekhee have witnessed a decrease in trade in the current financial year. In contrast, the remaining borders (Tachilek, Myawady, Kawthoung and Maese) have reported an increase.

Myanmar primarily exports natural gas, fishery products, coal, tin concentrate (SN 71.58 per cent), coconut (fresh and dry), beans, corns and bamboo shoots to Thailand. This year, corn exports to Thailand rose significantly compared with the previous years, yet natural gas export drastically plunged. It imports capital goods such as machinery, raw industrial goods such as cement and fertilizers, and consumer goods such as cosmetics and food products from the neighbouring country. — Ko Htet

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

Agricultural exports increase remarkably amid coronavirus impacts

MYANMAR exports of farm products significantly soared to US\$3.5 billion between 1 October and 28 August in the current financial year from \$3 billion in the corresponding period of the 2017-2018FY, according to the trade figures released by the Ministry of Commerce.

During nearly the past eleven months, the agro-export figures reflect an increase of \$498.5 million against a year-ago period.

Myanmar agricultural exports rose regardless of the impact of the coronavirus on foreign demand. In the exports sector, the agriculture industry performed the best along, accounting for 22 per cent of overall exports. The chief items of export in the agricultural industry are rice and broken rice, pulses and beans and maize. Myanmar ships fruits and vegetables, sesame, dried tea leaves, sugar, and other agro-products to other countries.

Myanmar primarily exports agro-products to China, Singa-

pore, Malaysia, the Philippines, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka. Sometimes, the export market remains uncertain due to unsteady global demand.

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

The Commerce Ministry is working to help farmers deal with challenges such as high input costs, procurement of pedigree seeds, high cultivation costs, and unpredictable weather conditions. In a bid to remedy the businesses stricken by the COVID-19, the Government is providing the agricultural loan of K150,000 per acre of paddy. — Ko Htet

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

Contact tracing a key to beat back second Coronavirus wave

THE number of people diagnosed with coronavirus in Myanmar is rising, having reached over 1500 cases on Monday. The vast majority of cases is in the Yangon Region, and most are either people who have travelled to Rakhine State, where the second wave outbreak began, or people who have been in close contact with those who travelled to Rakhine State after 10 August. Now, the fast-spreading second wave has been contained, to a certain extent, in Rakhine State, but Yangon Region is seeing rising numbers daily.

Those who did not contact the local health authorities after returning from Rakhine are to be identified, together with their detailed address published in the state-run media, so their neighbours can proceed with caution.

This is not meant to bring harm, but to provide them with warnings. This is a part of our efforts to slow the fast-spreading virus infection in Yangon, and other parts of the country.

Those who still ignore the government's request are urged again to contact the authorities of their own volition or they will face action under the law.

COVID-19 is a pernicious asymptomatic infection, and carriers can spread the disease far and wide without ever realizing they're ill.

And we need contact tracing, lots of it, to be able to contact people whom COVID-19 carriers might have passed on the disease, get them tested and have them quarantined until we're sure they aren't sick too.

This health crisis is like nothing we have ever experienced before. Everybody must avoid putting themselves and

communities at an unacceptable risk.

State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi cancelled her trip to her constituency in southern Yangon following advice given by the health authorities. Meanwhile, during the second wave of infections, the Ministry of Health and Sports has scaled up contact tracing and testing capacity and adopted tougher rules. These measures are reflecting that the Union Government is taking all precautions extremely seriously.

There is no coronavirus vaccine. Medications for COVID-19 are still being tested. Contact tracing is a key way to slow COVID-19. Until we have a vaccine, testing, contact tracing and quarantine are the most effective pandemic stoppers in existence.

We need an "all hands on deck" approach to beat back the second wave of COVID-19.

The Pandemic Of Uncertainty

Kenneth Rogoff

THE next few months will tell us a lot about the shape of the coming global recovery. Despite ebullient stock markets, uncertainty about COVID-19 remains pervasive. Regardless of the pandemic's course, therefore, the world's struggle with the virus so far is likely to affect growth, employment, and politics for a very long time.

Let's start with the possible good news. In an optimistic scenario, regulators will have approved at least two leading first-generation COVID-19 vaccines by the end of this year.

Thanks to extraordinary government regulatory and financial support, these vaccines are going into production even before the conclusion of human clinical trials. Assuming they are effective, biotech firms will already have some 200 million doses on hand by the end of 2020, and will be on track to produce billions more. Distributing them will be a huge undertaking in itself, in part because the public will need to be convinced that a fast-tracked vaccine is safe.

With luck, rich-country citizens who want the vaccine will have received it by the end of 2021. In China, virtually everyone will have been vaccinated by then. A couple of years after that, so will the bulk of the world's population, including

those living in emerging and developing economies.

This scenario is credible, but realizing it is far from assured. The coronavirus could prove more stubborn than expected, and the first-generation vaccines may be effective only for a short period, or have worse-than-anticipated side effects.

Even in that case, improved testing protocols, the development of more effective anti-viral treatments, and better adherence by the public and (one hopes) politicians to behavioural guidelines would lead to gradual normalization of economic conditions. It's worth recalling that the horrible 1918-20 influenza pandemic, which killed at least 50 million people worldwide – many in a deadly second wave of the kind we currently fear today with COVID-19 – eventually faded and disappeared without any vaccine.

But in a more pessimistic scenario, other crises – a sharp uptick in US-China trade frictions, a cyberterrorist attack or cyberwar, a climate-related natural catastrophe, or a massive earthquake – could occur before this one ends. Moreover, even the optimistic scenario does not necessarily imply a rapid return to end-2019 income levels. The post-pandemic expansion – if there is one – may take years to



meet the modern definition of recovery (a return to initial per capita income) in the aftermath of a deep recession.

Although the pandemic has underscored the huge problem of inequality in advanced economies, poor countries are suffering far more. Many emerging markets and developing economies will likely be struggling with COVID-19 for years to come, and face the real possibility of a lost decade of development. After all, few governments have the capacity to provide emergency fiscal support on the scale that the United States (US), Europe, and Japan are doing. Prolonged recessions in lower-income countries will likely lead to an epidemic of

debt and inflation crises.

But the COVID-19 crisis could leave deep and lasting scars in advanced economies, too. Businesses may be more skittish about investing and hiring, owing to concerns about a public-health relapse or another pandemic, not to mention the huge political volatility that the crisis has amplified.

Although there may be an initial "catch-up" surge of consumer spending in advanced economies, in the longer run, consumers are likely to save more. In an interesting paper presented at the recent annual Jackson Hole symposium, Julian Kozlowski, Laura Veldkamp, and Venky Venkateswaran argue that the

pandemic's cumulative long-term costs for the US economy are likely to be an order of magnitude greater than the short-term effects, partly because of a long-lasting heightened sense of unease among the public.

Their analysis, which I discussed at the symposium, is especially convincing with respect to consumers. Anyone with a parent or grandparent who lived through the Great Depression of the 1930s knows that this scarring experience affected their lifelong behaviour.

In addition to its direct impact on investment and hiring, COVID-19 will impose longer-term productivity costs. By the time the pandemic is over, a generation of children, particularly those from lower-income households, will in effect have lost a year of schooling. Young adults who struggle to find their first job in a still-moribund labour market can expect to earn less in the future than they might otherwise have done.

There are some bright spots. Although the pandemic

has triggered a collapse in the value of commercial real estate in many cities, it could lead to a huge wave of new building and investment in suburban areas, as well as in long-suffering small and midsize cities. In general, businesses that had been loath to allow telecommuting are now recognizing that it can work well and has many benefits.

And although we shouldn't hold our breath, the pandemic could spur policymakers to find ways to provide universal broadband internet and give less privileged children much better access to personal computers.

The global economy is now at a fork in the road. Policymakers' most important task is to try to reduce the massive lingering uncertainty while continuing to provide emergency relief to the hardest-hit individuals and economic sectors. But the insecurity fuelled by COVID-19 is likely to weigh on the global economy long after the worst is in the past.



Kenneth Rogoff, is Professor of Economics and Public Policy at Harvard University and recipient of the 2011 Deutsche Bank Prize in Financial Economics. He was chief economist of the International Monetary Fund from 2001 to 2003.

Roundup: A Week In COVID-19

AN increase in cases in Israel, France and Indonesia, a decline in South Africa: here is a weekly roundup of developments in the coronavirus crisis:

Most New Cases

India, the United States (US) and Brazil remain the three countries recording the greatest number of new cases over the past seven days, with 77,596, 40,875 and 40,035 cases respectively per day on average, according to an AFP count on Friday.

While the number of cases was on the increase in India (15 per cent more cases compared with the previous seven-day period), and Brazil (eight percent more), the situation is more or less stable in the US with -1 percent.

Next in line come Argentina (10,129 per day), Colombia (8,507), Spain (8,429) and Peru (6,878).

The number of confirmed cases only reflects a fraction of the actual number of infections, with countries having differing

counting practices and levels of testing.

Biggest Increases

Israel is the country where the number of cases is picking up most, with its average of new cases per day representing a 57 per cent rise, the biggest such jump among countries recording at least 1,000 cases per day on average over the past week.

France follows with 36 per cent or 5,783 more daily cases, Indonesia (36 per cent, 3,054), Nepal (25 per cent, 1,049) and the United Kingdom (UK) (24 percent, 1,434).

Biggest Drops

At the other end of the spectrum, the biggest drops have taken place in South Africa (-20 per cent, 2,104 new cases per day) the Philippines (-17 per cent, 3,260) Ethiopia (-17 per cent, 1,258) and Iran (-15 per cent, 1,850), as well as Colombia (-13 percent, 8,507).

By Region

There was a pickup in the number of cases in Europe and Asia, with 12 percent more each compared to the previous seven-day period, and also in the

Middle East (six per cent) and Latin America and the Caribbean (three per cent).

On other continents there was a decrease in Oceania (-26 per cent), Africa (-12 per cent), and slightly in North America (-1 per cent).

At the global level the pandemic is slightly picking up steam by six per cent with an average of 265,688 daily cases,

Deaths

India registered the most deaths over the past week, with

6,904, ahead of the US (6,171), Brazil (5,965), Mexico (3,735), Colombia (2,150), Argentina (1,311) and Peru (1,128).

Global Toll

The pandemic has killed at least 869,718 people around the world since late December, out of 26.5 million confirmed cases.

The US has recorded by far the highest number of deaths with 186,806, followed by Brazil with 124,614, India 68,472 and Mexico 66,329. —AFP

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

THE Office of the President has issued Press Release 33 /2020 yesterday, publicly announcing the Ministry of Home Affairs' arrests and seizures in the fight against illicit drug trafficking up till 5 September.

The ministry made the arrests, acting on information, sent to the Drug Activity Special Complaint Department of the Office of the President as of 5 September.

The full text of the press release will be reported in the 9 September issue of *The Global New Light of Myanmar*. —GNLM

World First Aid Day

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VACCINE PRODUCTION

China shows off COVID-19 vaccines for first time



(FILES) In this file photo taken on 27 June 2020 a scientist works at the Neurobiology laboratory of the Cayetano Heredia University in Lima. **PHOTO: AFP**

BEIJING (China) — China has put its homegrown coronavirus vaccines on display for the first time, as the country where the contagion was discovered looks to shape the narrative surrounding the pandemic.

High hopes hang on the small vials of liquid on show at a Beijing trade fair this week — vaccine candidates produced by Chinese companies Sinovac Biotech and Sinopharm.

Neither has hit the market

yet but the makers hope they will be approved after all-important phase 3 trials as early as year-end.

A Sinovac representative told AFP his firm has already “completed the construction of a

vaccine factory” able to produce 300 million doses a year.

On Monday, people at the trade fair crowded around booths showing the potential game-changing vaccines.

China, which is facing a storm of foreign criticism over its early handling of the pandemic, has been trying to repurpose the story of Covid-19.

State media and officials are now emphasizing the revival of Wuhan, the central Chinese city where the deadly pathogen surfaced, as a success story in the fight against the virus.

They are also touting progress on domestic vaccines as a sign of Chinese leadership and resilience in the face of an unprecedented health threat that has pummeled the global economy.

In May, President Xi Jinping pledged to make any potential vaccine developed by China a “global public good”.

The potential vaccines on display are among nearly 10 worldwide to enter phase 3 trials, typically the last step ahead of regulatory approval, as countries

race to stub out the virus and reboot battered economies.

Sinopharm said it anticipates the antibodies from its jab to last between one and three years — although the final result will only be known after the trials.

China’s nationalistic tabloid Global Times reported last month that “the price of the vaccines will not be high”.

Every two doses should cost below 1,000 yuan (\$146), the report said, citing Sinopharm’s chairman, who told media he has already been injected with one of the candidate vaccines.

China’s official Xinhua news agency reported Monday that another vaccine candidate, developed by Chinese military scientists, can deal with mutations in the coronavirus.

As of last month, at least 5.7 billion doses of the vaccines under development around the world had been pre-ordered. But the World Health Organization has warned that widespread immunisation against Covid-19 may not be on the cards until the middle of next year. —AFP ■

SCHOOLS REOPENING

Pakistan schools begin reopening from Sept. 15

ISLAMABAD — Educational institutions in Pakistan will begin reopening from Sept. 15 in a phased manner after remaining closed for nearly six months due to COVID-19 pandemic, senior officials said on Monday.

Education Minister Shafqat-Mahmood, at a media briefing, said, the decision to reopen “was taken after carefully evaluating the situation”.

“We will continue monitoring the situation and all institutions would hopefully be open for students in the next 15 days,” he said.

In the first phase, universities, colleges and higher secondary schools will open from Sept. 15. Students of lower secondary schools are scheduled to be back on Sept. 23, whereas the primary schools will resume schooling from Sept 30.

The educational institutions were closed on Mar. 13 at the start of the outbreak, initially for three weeks. However, the closure was extended in view of the

worsening pandemic situation.

The situation has improved significantly over the past few weeks. The number of daily new cases has been below 1,000 since the start of the month, and for the past fortnight, it has been consistently less than 500, with 394 new cases reported on Monday.

Faisal Sultan, the special assistant for the prime minister on health, said the trends were closely monitored before the decision. “In view of the very low positivity rates, we are confident that the schools can be opened stage wise,” he maintained.

Mahmood said the institutions have been instructed to strictly enforce the precautionary measures, especially wearing of the masks, and violators will face punitive action.

The government has also asked the institutions to keep the number of students in classes low by splitting them up. There will also be testing in select schools.—Kyodo News ■

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Virus-hit Morocco locks down Casablanca, shuts schools

RABAT (Morocco) — Morocco imposed a lockdown on Casablanca and shut its schools Monday, the day pupils were due to return to classes, in a bid to stop the spread of COVID-19.

The new measures, which include restrictions on movement and a night-time curfew, would be in place for two weeks in the commercial capital, the authorities said a statement issued late Sunday.

“We risk being overwhelmed by the virus,” said Health Minister Khalid Ait Taleb.

“Therefore, drastic measures are required, otherwise the situation may get out of control in the coming days,” the official MAP news agency quoted him as saying.

Morocco has seen a spike in coronavirus cases in recent weeks. It recorded 2,234 new infections on Sunday, a record for a single day, with 42 per cent of them in Casablanca, home to 3.3 million people.

Since detecting its first case



Students attend the first day of classes amid measures put in place by Moroccan authorities in bid to stop the spread of Covid-19, in the city of Sale on 7 September 2020. **PHOTO: AFP**

in early March, Morocco has recorded 72,394 cases of Covid-19 infection, including 1,361 deaths.

The authorities blame the spread of Covid-19 on people’s failure to adhere to health protocols.

Casablanca, along with Marrakesh, had already been subject to a series of restrictions three weeks ago, including beach closures and shortened business

hours.

Authorities decided on Monday to close educational institutions including primary, middle and high schools as well as universities.

That came after epidemiologists voiced concern over the health system’s capacity to respond to the crisis, and the additional risks posed by the start of the school year.—AFP ■

Sudan to ink 'final' peace deal with rebels on Oct 2: chief mediator

KHARTOUM (Sudan) — The "final signing" of a peace agreement between Sudan's government and rebel groups is set for October 2 in the South Sudanese capital Juba, the talks' chief mediator announced Sunday.

"The second of October is the date for the final signing of the peace agreement between the government and the 'parties to the peace process,'" Tut Gatluak, head of the mediation team and South Sudan's presidential adviser on security affairs wrote on Twitter.

Gatluak did not elaborate and further details were not immediately available.

Sudanese authorities and leaders from the Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF), a coalition of rebel groups, initialled a historic peace agreement on August 31 in Juba aimed at ending nearly two decades of conflict that has killed hundreds of thousands of people, particularly in western Darfur.

Established in 2011, the SRF brings together rebels from the war-ravaged western Darfur region, as well as the southern states of Blue Nile and South Kordofan.

Prime Minister Abdallah-Hamdok signed a separate



South Sudan President Salva Kiir (C) holds up the document of the signing between the rebel groups and the government during the signing of the Sudan peace deal with the rebel groups in Juba, South Sudan, on 31 August 2020. PHOTO: AFP

agreement in Ethiopia with a faction of the rebel Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N), which had refused to agree to the deal struck in Juba, officials on both sides said on Friday.

Reaching a peace accord with rebel groups has been a priority of Sudan's transitional government, which came to

power after the April 2019 ouster of long-time autocrat Omar al-Bashir following months of mass protests.

The deal covers key issues around security, land ownership, transitional justice, power sharing and the return of people who fled their homes because of fighting.

It also provides for the dis-

mantling of rebel forces and the integration of their fighters into the national army.

Fighting in Darfur alone left around 300,000 people dead after rebels took up arms in 2003.

Conflict in South Kordofan and Blue Nile erupted in 2011 as South Sudan seceded from Sudan, resuming a war that had raged from 1983 to 2005.—AFP ■

Emirates airline says returned \$1.4 bn in pandemic refunds

DUBAI (United Arab Emirates) — Emirates, the largest airline in the Middle East, said Monday it had so far returned \$1.4 billion in refunds to customers

amid sharply reduced global travel due to the coronavirus pandemic.

"Emirates reveals that it has returned over 5 billion dir-

hams in Covid-19 related travel refunds," the aviation giant said in a statement.

"More than 1.4 million refunds requests have been completed since March, representing 90 per cent of the airline's backlog."

The Dubai-based carrier posted 1.1 billion dirhams (\$288 million) in net profit for the financial year ending March, up from \$237 million the previous year.

It was the 32nd straight year of profit for Emirates, but the sharp downturn in global travel in 2020 may result in a loss.

Emirates said it serves 80 destinations -- down from 157 before the pandemic -- but has gradually been expanding its

network again after Dubai eased travel restriction to revive its tourism industry.

Its chief operating officer, Adel al-Redha, said last month that the airline expects to resume flights to all "network destinations" by summer 2021.

The airline has announced several rounds of layoffs, without disclosing numbers.

Before the virus hit, Emirates employed some 60,000 staff, including 4,300 pilots and nearly 22,000 cabin crew, according to its annual report.

Tourism has long been an economic mainstay of Dubai, which welcomed more than 16 million visitors last year. Before the pandemic, the aim was to reach 20 million this year.—AFP ■



An Emirates Airbus A380-842 aircraft is pictured grounded at Dubai International Airport in Dubai after Emirates suspended all passenger operations amid the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic, on 24 March 2020 in Dubai. PHOTO: AFP

NEWS IN BRIEF

Helicopters rescue over 200 trapped in California wildfire

LOS ANGELES (United States) — More than 200 people were airlifted to safety after being trapped by a fast-moving wildfire near a popular recreation area in northern California, officials said Sunday.

The evacuees climbed aboard military helicopters after the blaze, in bone-dry conditions, cut off ground escape routes from Mammoth Pool Reservoir in the Sierra National Forest, about 45 miles (70 kilometres) northeast of Fresno.—AFP ■

India resumes its metro rail service after over 5 months

NEW DELHI — Metro rail services gradually resumed across India in different cities on Monday, after coming to halt for over five months due to coronavirus outbreak in the country.

In New Delhi, the national capital, the Delhi Metro rail service witnessed only approximately 7,500 commuters in its first four hours of operation from 7 am to 11 am.

—Kyodo News ■

Iran rejects Russia's mediation offer for direct talks with U.S.

TEHRAN — Iran's Foreign Ministry on Monday ruled out the likelihood of direct negotiations with the United States.

Saeed Khatibzadeh, the Foreign Ministry Spokesman, made the remarks after the Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov recently expressed readiness for mediation of direct negotiations between Tehran and Washington.

"The course of our policies on the United States has not changed," Khatibzadeh said during his weekly press conference.—Xinhua ■

Swiss top diplomat holds 'fruitful' talks in Iran on peace, rights



Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif (R) receives his Swiss counterpart Ignazio Cassis in the Iranian capital Tehran on 7 September 2020. **PHOTO: AFP**

TEHRAN (Iran) — Switzerland's Foreign Minister Ignazio Cassis said he had "fruitful" talks on Monday with his Iranian counterpart Mohammad Javad Zarif regarding "peace, economic development and human rights". The Swiss embassy in Tehran handles US interests in Iran,

since ties were cut in the aftermath of the 1979 Islamic revolution.

Cassis is also expected to meet President Hassan Rouhani as part of a three-day visit to Tehran, celebrating a century of diplomatic relations between Switzerland and Iran.

Tensions between Iran and the US have escalated since 2018, after President Donald Trump withdrew the US from an international nuclear agreement and reimposed tough sanctions on Iran.

"Peace, economic development and human rights - fruitful discussion with my counterpart," Cassis wrote on Twitter following the talks.

Switzerland has also played a major role in prisoner swaps between Tehran and Washington.

Zarif called the talks "excellent" on Twitter and said "while appreciating Swiss efforts to mit-

igate US sabotage, a return to normal trade is global priority."

According to the US Department of State, Secretary Mike Pompeo had a phone call with Cassis before his Tehran visit, raising speculation the visit involved talks on Tehran-Washington relations.

Iran's foreign ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh denied the "speculations" on Monday, saying it was a planned visit delayed over the novel coronavirus outbreak and "not related to Iran and the US".

"I'm glad we could establish together the Swiss Humanitarian Channel for the transfer of food and medical supplies to the people of Iran," Cassis said on Twitter. Known by its acronym SHTA, the Swiss channel is a payment mechanism aimed to enable food, medicine and other humanitarian aid to be sent to Iran without breaking US sanctions. — AFP ■

24 killed in clashes in northern Yemen

DUBAI (United Arab Emirates) — More than 20 people were killed in clashes in Yemen's northern province of Al-Jawf late Sunday as government troops tried to reclaim positions lost months ago to Huthi rebels.

Yemen's internationally recognized government has been fighting the Iran-allied insurgents since 2014, when the Huthis seized much of the north including the capital Sanaa.

A Saudi-led military coalition intervened on the side of the government the following year.

A government military source said 16 Huthis and eight loyalists were killed in clashes Sunday night.

Government troops captured more than 40 rebels, the source told AFP.

Meanwhile, the insurgents advanced in the neighbouring Marib governorate, in particular the Mahliya district, after heavy fighting that also resulted in casualties.

Huthi rebels took control of the capital of Al-Jawf earlier this year in a strategic advance that means they now threaten

oil-producing Marib province.

Tens of thousands of people have been killed in the Yemen conflict, which the United Nations has described as the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

Fighting has carried on despite repeated calls for a ceasefire to help combat coronavirus, which health agencies fear could be disastrous in impoverished Yemen.

More than 1,900 cases of COVID-19 have been confirmed in the country, including 572 deaths. —AFP ■

Assange extradition hearing resumes in London

LONDON (United Kingdom) — WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange returned to court in London on Monday for a hearing to decide whether he should be extradited to the United States for leaking secrets about the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Supporters protested as the 49-year-old Australian was brought to the Old Bailey, brandishing placards reading "Don't Extradite Assange" and "Stop this political trial".

Fashion designer Vivienne Westwood said the former hacker was "shining the light on all the corruption in the world" while his father told the crowd the hearing was an "abuse trial".

Earlier, Assange's partner, Stella Moris, delivered an 80,000-strong petition opposing his extradition to Prime Minister Boris Johnson's Downing Street office. In an interview published in *The Times* newspaper on Saturday, Moris, 37, said she feared he would take his own life, and their two young sons, who were conceived during his asylum in Ecuador's London embassy, would grow up without a father.

The clean-shaven Assange appeared in the dock wearing a dark suit and maroon tie -- the first time he has been seen in public since the first part of the hearing in February. —AFP ■

Tunisia arrests 7 after stabbing attack

TUNIS (Tunisia) — Tunisian authorities said Monday they had arrested seven people over a knife attack the previous day that killed a National Guard officer and wounded another.

The attackers struck early Sunday morning in the tourist district of Sousse, ramming the officers with a vehicle and then assailing them with knives.

Three assailants were later shot dead in a firefight, the National Guard said, labelling the attack a "terrorist" act.

The wounded officer was "in a stable condition", interior ministry spokesman Khaled Hayouni told AFP.

Since Sunday, "43 people have been questioned and seven of them arrested," Guard spokesman Houcem Eddine Jebabli told private station Radio Shems.

They included "the wife of one of the assailants, who described her husband as a 'martyr' during the interrogation," he said.

Two brothers of one of the attackers and a person suspected of recruiting them were also arrested, he added.

He said the attackers were a pair of twins and a third man from the marginalised north-western region of Siliana, he

said, without confirming or denying reports of a fourth attacker.

Jebabli said the twins had visited Facebook pages dealing with "explosive and armed attacks" but had stayed under the radar of the authorities.

Tunisia, since its 2011 revolution, has been hit by a string of jihadist attacks that have killed dozens of security personnel, civilians and foreign tourists. Sunday's attack took place close to the site of the deadliest attack, when 38 people, most of them Britons, were killed in a 2015 beachside shooting rampage. —AFP ■



(FILES) In this file photo taken on 1 May 2019 WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange gestures from the window of a prison van as he is driven out of Southwark Crown Court in London, after having been sentenced to 50 weeks in prison for breaching his bail conditions in 2012. **PHOTO: AFP**

Sterling sinks as Johnson resurrects spectre of no-deal Brexit

LONDON (United Kingdom) — The British pound sank Monday after Prime Minister Boris Johnson appeared to revive investor fears of a no-deal Brexit, dealers said.

Heading into the half-way point in London, sterling deepened losses to shed 1.0 per cent versus the dollar. It was also down 0.8 per cent against the European single currency.

Johnson has given an October 15 deadline for a post-Brexit trade agreement with the European Union, brushing off fears about “no-deal” chaos if talks fail.

“If we can’t agree by then, then I do not see that there will be a free-trade agreement between us,”

Johnson said, insisting it would still be a “good outcome” for Britain.

The Financial Times meanwhile reported that Johnson is planning legislation to override parts of the withdrawal treaty that Britain and the EU agreed last year.

The report cited three people close to the plans as saying a bill to be put before parliament this week would undermine agreements relating to Northern Ireland customs and state aid.

‘Negotiation tactics?’

“Judging by today’s price action in the pound, investors appear to believe that Johnson has indeed resurrected the spectre of



A counting machine tallies British pound notes at a currency exchange in Kuala Lumpur on 16 January 2017. PHOTO: AFP

a no-deal Brexit,” ThinkMarkets analyst Fawad Razaqzada told AFP.

“However, I reckon it is all part of negotiation tactics -- and in the end

a cliff-edge Brexit will probably be avoided as it is not in either party’s

interests.”

In response to the report, Downing Street said only that it was still “working hard to resolve outstanding issues with the Northern Ireland Protocol” but was considering “fall-back options”.

EU leader Ursula von der Leyen warned that Britain is legally obliged to respect the Brexit withdrawal agreement, which must form the basis of bilateral relations going forward.

The eighth round of negotiations resume in London this week, with both sides talking increasingly tough, amid accusations of intransigence and political brinkmanship. —AFP ■

Nissan received record 130 bil. yen loan guaranteed by Japan gov’t

TOKYO — The Development Bank of Japan extended a record 130 billion

yen (\$1.2 billion) to Nissan Motor Co. in May with a guarantee that the gov-

ernment will repay most of it in case of a default by the struggling automaker, sources familiar with the matter said Monday.

The guarantee is part of the 180 billion yen loan that Nissan received from the state-affiliated financial institution to weather the impact of the novel coronavirus pandemic. Under the arrangement, if the automaker defaults on the loan, the government will shoulder up to 80 per cent, or about 100 billion yen, of the guaranteed portion, using taxpayers’ money.

The pandemic has

dealt a further blow to sales at Nissan -- already hurt by restructuring following the expansion pursued by former boss Carlos Ghosn, who was ousted amid allegations of financial misconduct. The DBJ judged that the loan should be extended swiftly due to the potential impact from Nissan’s woes on local economies such as jobs at suppliers, according to the sources.

Nissan reported a net loss of 671.22 billion yen in the business year that ended in March, the first full-year red ink in 11 years. —Kyodo News ■

Key index suggests Japan economy slumping for record-long period

TOKYO — Japan’s economy continued to deteriorate in July amid the continued impact of the coronavirus pandemic, the government said Monday, citing a key index that signalled it had stagnated for a longer period than in the 2008-09 global financial crisis.

The Cabinet Office’s coincident index of business conditions rose 1.8 points from June to 76.2 against the 2015 base of 100, up for the second consecutive month. But the office continued to rate the economy as “worsen-

ing” for the 12th straight month, the longest on record.

That is longer than the 11-month period through April 2009, during which the office employed the same expression largely due to the global economic slowdown following the collapse of Lehman Brothers the previous year.

The monthly assessment is derived from the latest three- and seven-month moving averages of the index. “Worsening” is the office’s most pessimistic expression. —Kyodo News ■



Photo taken on 14 July 2020 in Yokohama near Tokyo shows the new Nissan Motor Co. logo on its new electric vehicle Ariya, scheduled to be launched in mid-2021. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

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Dated: September 8, 2020

UK police charge 51 over Extinction Rebellion protest



Policemen carry away Extinction Rebellion activists taking part in a street blockade in Warsaw, demanding an announcement of Climate Alert for Poland, on 7 September 2020. Several hundreds activists blocked traffic as they sat down on the street. **PHOTO: AFP**

LONDON (United Kingdom) — British police have charged 51 people after a protest by Extinction Rebellion outside a printing works that caused delays to the deliveries of several national newspapers.

Hertfordshire Police said

the protesters were all charged with obstruction of the highway after the protest in Waltham Cross, north of London, on Friday night.

One woman was remanded in custody to appear in court on Monday. The others were bailed

until a hearing on November 27, it said in a statement late on Sunday.

Extinction Rebellion, which is conducting 10 days of protests, accuses the newspapers' owners of "failing to report accurately on the climate and

ecological emergency".

Protesters blocked the road with vehicles and chained themselves to obstacles to prevent delivery lorries leaving the plant.

Deliveries of newspapers including The Times and its tabloid stablemate The Sun were affected.

A separate protest at another plant in northwest England saw 26 people charged with aggravated trespass, Merseyside Police said on Sunday.

The Times and The Sun are owned by News Corp, controlled by media magnate Rupert Murdoch who has been accused of denying climate change.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson, a former newspaper reporter and columnist, led criticism of the protests, accusing demonstrators of trying to stifle free speech.

Home Secretary Priti Patel has reportedly ordered a review of legislation including the possibility of reclassifying Extinction Rebellion as an organized crime group.

She wrote in the Daily Mail on Monday that activists should "face the full force of the law" because of "guerrilla tactics" that disrupt daily life. —AFP ■

Italy arrests four after deadly assault on good samaritan

ROME (Italy) — Italian police have arrested four suspects after a young man of Cape Verdean descent was beaten to death near Rome at the weekend, in a case which hit the headlines on Monday.

Willy Monteiro Duarte, 21, was assaulted after he apparently came to the rescue of a school friend during an altercation on Sunday, Italian newspaper reports said.

As Duarte and his friends were walking home in Collefiro, a small town about 50 kilometres (30 miles) east of Rome, a car pulled up and four men jumped out, witnesses told the *Il Messaggero* newspaper.

His friends were able to flee but when they later returned to the scene, they found Duarte dying in a pool of blood.

Police arrested four suspects at a nearby pub "with blood still on their hands", *Il Messaggero* said. The suspects are said to be two brothers who are specialized in mixed martial-arts combat and two associates. —AFP ■

Saudi king calls for 'fair' Palestinian solution in Trump call

RIYADH (Saudi Arabia) — Saudi Arabia supports a "fair" solution for the Palestinian cause, King Salman has told Donald Trump in a phone call, as the US President praised the kingdom for opening its airspace to Israel-UAE flights.

Saudi Arabia has said it will not follow the United Arab Emirates, which announced last month it would establish diplomatic ties with Israel, until the Jewish state has signed an internationally recognized peace accord with the Palestinians.

In a phone call to Trump on Sunday, King Salman affirmed the "kingdom's keenness to reach a lasting and fair solution to the Palestinian cause to bring peace", the official Saudi Press Agency reported.

Last week, Saudi Arabia agreed to permit UAE flights to "all countries" to overfly the

kingdom, as Israeli premier Benjamin Netanyahu announced the launch of regular direct flights linking the UAE with the Jewish state.

The announcement came just days after the first direct commercial flight from Tel Aviv to Abu Dhabi passed through Saudi airspace, marking the normalization of Israel-UAE ties under a US-backed deal known as the Abraham Accords.

Riyadh's decision marked another concrete sign of Saudi Arabia's cooperation with Israel even after it publicly refused to follow the UAE's move.

"President Trump... welcomed the opening of Saudi airspace to flights between Israel and the United Arab Emirates, beginning with last week's historic commercial flight from Tel Aviv to Abu Dhabi," said a White House readout of the phone call.

"President Trump highlighted the significance of the Abraham Accords and discussed ways to enhance regional security and prosperity."

Allowing flights between Israel and the Emirates to cross Saudi airspace saves long detours around the Arabian peninsula.

Saudi Arabia, the Arab world's biggest economy and home to Islam's holiest sites, faces more sensitive political calculations than the UAE.

Despite its clandestine relations with Israel, a formal recognition of the Jewish state would be seen by Palestinians and their supporters as a betrayal of their cause and hurt the kingdom's image as the leader of the Islamic world, analysts say.

Trump also urged Saudi Arabia to "negotiate with other Gulf countries" to resolve a re-



A handout picture provided by the Saudi Press Agency (SPA) authorities on 22 July 2020, shows King Salman bin Abdulaziz chairing a virtual cabinet meeting from his office at the King Faisal Specialist Hospital in Riyadh. **PHOTO: AFP**

gional rift with Qatar, the White House added.

Riyadh and its allies severed ties with Doha in a shock move in 2017, accusing the gas-rich emirate of backing extremists

and siding with Saudi Arabia's regional rival Iran. Qatar denies the charges.

The crisis shows no sign of relenting despite rising international pressure. —AFP ■

India passes Brazil for world's second most virus cases

NEW DELHI (India)—India overtook Brazil on Monday as the country with the second highest number of confirmed coronavirus cases, even as key metro train lines re-opened as part of efforts to boost the South Asian nation's battered economy.

India has emerged in recent weeks as the new global pandemic hotspot, although cases continue to soar across the globe with reported infections worldwide nearing 27 million and deaths surpassing 880,000.

France, Israel and Australia were among the nations forced in recent days to extend travel restrictions or impose new ones to try and contain fresh surges.

India, home to some of the world's most densely populated cities, has been reporting the highest single-day rises in the world and on Monday it confirmed a new record of nearly 91,000 new cases.

Infections have now risen above 4.2 million, surpassing Brazil's total and making India's tally the second-highest behind the United States' 6.25 million.

However, with India's economy imploding following months of travel restrictions, authorities pressed on with risky reignition plans.



A man cycle past a deserted road during a day-long state-imposed lockdown as a preventive measure against the surge in Covid-19 coronavirus cases in Siliguri on 7 September 2020. PHOTO: AFP

The metro in the capital New Delhi began reopening on Monday after a five-month shutdown and 12 other cities restarted subway services.

"For our lives to move on, we have to get out of our homes... so this is a good move by the government," passenger Deepak Kumar, who took the Delhi subway to work, told AFP.

Authorities imposed strict rules on the trains, with masks, social distancing and temperature checks mandatory.

During peak hour in New Delhi on Monday morning, car-

riages were sparsely filled as people followed guidelines dictating that only alternate seats could be occupied.

New European spikes

For total deaths worldwide, the United States has the most with more than 188,000, followed by Brazil with 126,000. India is next with about 71,000 fatalities.

Britain, one of the worst-hit countries at the start of the pandemic, is also battling another spike.

The number of daily cases hit nearly 3,000 on Sunday, a level not

seen since late May, according to health ministry figures.

Health Secretary Matt Hancock said the latest sufferers were predominantly young people.

"It's important that people don't allow this illness to infect their grandparents and to lead to the sort of problems that we saw earlier in the year," he said.

The British government said it would tighten local restrictions in areas showing sharp rises in cases, rather than impose a second national lockdown, for fear of its impacts on the economy.

In France authorities placed seven more regions covering several major cities on high alert Sunday.

The curbs came after France reported a record of nearly 9,000 daily cases on Friday. In Paris masks are now mandatory in all public spaces.

Lockdowns have also been imposed or extended in Israel and Australia in recent days.

Israel decided Sunday to begin "a nightly closure" of 40 cities and towns with the highest infection rates.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said "educational institutions" would be closed and gatherings limited from Monday.—AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Typhoon hits South Korea after triggering landslides in Japan

SOKCHO (South Korea) — A powerful typhoon lashed South Korea on Monday after smashing into southern Japan with record winds and heavy rains that left up to eight people dead or missing. More than 300,000 households were still without power Monday afternoon after Typhoon Haishen roared past Japan's southern island of Kyushu, ripping off roofs and dumping half a metre (20 inches) of water in just a day.—AFP ■

Philippines president pardons US marine in transgender killing

MANILA (Philippines)—Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte has granted an absolute pardon to a US marine convicted of killing a transgender woman, officials said Monday, drawing condemnation from rights groups. Lance Corporal Joseph Scott Pemberton has been in prison since the October 2014 killing of Jennifer Laude, whom he met at a bar while on a break from military exercises in the northern city of Olongapo.—AFP ■

2 civilians killed in improvised bomb blasts in southern Afghanistan

KANDAHAR—Two Improvised Explosive Device (IED) explosions killed two civilians and injured two others in southern Afghanistan, officials said Monday. In one incident, a civilian was killed and another wounded early on Monday after a tricycle was hit by an IED in Zharay district of Kandahar province, Jamal Barekzay, provincial police spokesman, told Xinhua.—Xinhua ■

Typhoon leaves 1 dead, 4 missing, over 100 injured in Japan

TOKYO — A powerful typhoon left 1 person dead, four missing and 108 injured Monday in Japan as it battered almost the whole of the country's southwestern main island of Kyushu with violent winds, causing massive blackouts, and disrupting transportation and some mobile networks.

A woman in her 70s in Kagoshima Prefecture died in a hospital after falling in a street gutter Sunday as she tried to evacuate to the house of an acquaintance, according to local authorities.

About 23,000 people in 11 prefectures were taking shelter Monday afternoon, while some 200,000 households on the southwestern main island continued to be without electricity.

Even as Typhoon Haishen headed for the Korean Peninsula, the Japan Meteorological Agency warned of torrential rain, strong winds and tidal surges in some areas, urging people across a wide area to remain vigilant.

In the village of Shiiba, Miyazaki Prefecture, where rainfall of over 400 millimetres was recorded on Sunday, police officers were searching for a woman in her 60s, her son in his 30s and two Vietnamese male interns who were reported missing after a mudslide struck a construction firm office, which

was also used as a residence.

The woman's husband in his 70s, who runs the company, suffered broken ribs, according to police.

Elsewhere in the region, a man in his 40s



Broken pieces of the exterior wall of a gymnasium are seen scattered on the ground in Nagasaki, southwestern Japan, on 7 September 2020, after they were blown off by strong winds brought by powerful Typhoon Haishen. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

fractured his skull after falling from the roof of a garage in Yufu, Oita Prefecture, while four people suffered slight injuries at an evacuation center in Goto, Nagasaki Prefecture, after a window shattered, according to authorities.

Major mobile carriers NTT Docomo Inc., KDDI Corp. and SoftBank Corp. said their networks were disrupted in areas of Kyushu, as well as the western regions of Shikoku and Chugoku.

Kyushu Railway Co., which canceled its shinkansen and other train services, is planning to restart them Tuesday in areas where it has been confirmed that they can operate safely.

West Japan Railway Co. also halted its Sanyo Shinkansen bullet train services between Hiroshima and Hakata, while a number of flights were canceled. Tokaido Shinkansen bullet train services were temporarily suspended as well due to heavy rain, according to Central Japan Railway Co.

Many department stores, supermarkets and shops in Kyushu were closed temporarily.

Many people spent the night at evacuation shelters and hotels across Kyushu and the southern Japan islands of Okinawa Prefecture as they waited for the typhoon to pass.—Kyodo News ■

Shan United beats Hantharwady United 4-2 in MNL Week-14

Shan United FC won Hantharwady United 4-2 in Week-14 of MPT Myanmar National League (MNL) 2020 at the Yangon United Sports Complex yesterday.

The goals for Shan United were scored by Zwe Thet Paing at 13th minute, Maximin at 35th minute, Dway Ko Ko at 70th minute, and Hein Phyo Win at 86th minute, while the goals for Hantharwady United were

scored by Donald Bissa at 25th minute and Hein Htet Aung at 63rd minute.

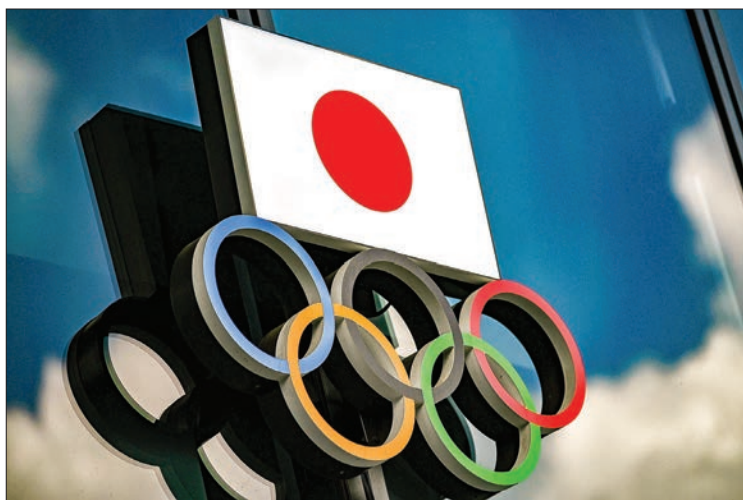
On the same day, Yangon United won Magwe United 3-1 at Thuwunna Stadium and Rakhine United beat Sagaing United 1-0 at Padonmar Stadium.

In Week-14, Yadanarbon FC will play against Ayeyawady United at Yangon United Sport Complex at 1:30 pm today (8 September 2020). — Kyaw Khin



Players from Shan United and Hantharwady United vie for the ball during a Week-14 match of MPT MNL 2020 at the Yangon United Sports Complex on 7 September 2020. **PHOTO: MNL**

Tokyo Olympics will go ahead 'with or without Covid' - IOC's Coates



(FILES) This file photo taken on August 24, 2020 shows the Olympic Rings and the Japanese flag outside the Olympic Museum in Tokyo. Tokyo's postponed Olympics will go ahead next year regardless of the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic, IOC vice president John Coates told AFP on 7 September 2020, saying they would be the "Games that conquered Covid". **PHOTO: AFP**

SYDNEY (Australia)— Tokyo's postponed Olympics will go ahead next year regardless of the coronavirus pandemic, IOC vice president John Coates told AFP Monday, vowing they will be the "Games that conquered Covid".

The Olympics have never been cancelled outside of the world wars and Coates, speaking in a phone interview, was adamant that the Tokyo Games will start on their revised date.

"It will take place with or without Covid. The Games will start on July 23 next year," said Coates, who heads the International Olympic Committee's Coordination Commission for the Tokyo Games.

"The Games were going to be, their theme, the Reconstruction Games after the devastation of the tsunami," he said,

referring to a catastrophic earthquake and tsunami in northeastern Japan in 2011.

"Now very much these will be the Games that conquered Covid, the light at the end of the tunnel."

In a landmark decision, the 2020 Olympics were postponed because of the global march of the pandemic and they are now set to open on July 23, 2021.

But Japan's borders are still largely closed to foreign visitors and a vaccine is months or even years away, feeding speculation about whether the Games are feasible at all.

Japanese officials have made clear they would not delay them a second time beyond 2021.

There are signs that public enthusiasm in Japan is waning after a recent poll found just one in four Japanese want them to go

ahead next year, with most backing either another postponement or a cancellation.

'Monumental task'

Coates said the Japanese government "haven't dropped the baton at all" following the postponement, despite the "monumental task" of putting the event back a year.

"Before Covid, (IOC president) Thomas Bach said this is the best prepared Games we've ever seen, the venues were almost all finished, they are now finished, the village is amazing, all the transport arrangements, everything is fine," he said.

"Now it's been postponed by one year, that's presented a monumental task in terms of re-securing all the venues... something like 43 hotels we had to get out of those contracts and re-negotiate for a year later.

"Sponsorships had to be extended a year, broadcast rights."

With much of that work underway, or accomplished, a task force has been set up to look at the different scenarios in 2021 — from how border controls will affect the movement of athletes, to whether fans can pack venues and how to keep stadiums safe. The group, comprising Japanese and IOC officials, met for the first time last week.

"Their job now is to look at all the different counter-measures that will be required for the Games to take place," said Coates, the long-time president of the Australian Olympic Committee.—AFP

Novak Djokovic 'extremely sorry' after US Open disqualification

NEW YORK (United States)— Novak Djokovic apologized for his US Open disqualification on Sunday, declaring himself "extremely sorry" for the moment of madness which saw him defaulted from the tournament.

In a statement on Instagram just hours after his sensational exit in New York, the Serbian world number one said he had been left "really sad and empty" by the controversy.

The 33-year-old was tossed from the tournament after accidentally hitting a tennis ball into the throat of a line official during his fourth round match with Spain's Pablo Carreno Busta.

"This whole situation has left me really sad and empty," Djokovic said in a statement on Instagram. "I checked on the

lines person and the tournament told me that thank God she is feeling ok.

"I'm extremely sorry to have caused her such stress. So unintended. So wrong." Djokovic, who left Flushing Meadows without speaking to reporters following his exit, said he would try to learn from the incident.

"As for the disqualification, I need to go back within and work on my disappointment and turn this all into a lesson for my growth and evolution as a player and human being," he said.

"I apologize to the @usopen tournament and everyone associated for my behaviour. I'm very grateful to my team and family for being my rock support, and my fans for always being there with me. —AFP



(FILES) In this file photo Novak Djokovic of Serbia celebrates his win over Milos Raonic of Canada in the men's singles final of the Western & Southern Open at the USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Centre on 29 August 2020 in the Queens borough of New York City. **PHOTO: AFP**