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THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

Vol. VII, No. 315, 14th Waxing of Tabodwe 1382 ME

www.gnlm.com.mm

Thursday, 25 February 2021

Announcement of UEC on findings of ballot papers 24 February 2021

THE Union Election Commission inspected the figure of ballot papers used for Pyithu Hluttaw elections in the multiparty democracy General Election on 8 November 2020, as per Article 53 of the Hluttaw Election Law, in 8 townships of Nay Pyi Taw, with the teams of election sub-commissions, police officers, officers of Immigration and Population Department and General Administrative Department of respective townships.

Figures found in the respective areas are as follow:

Sr	Township	Polling stations	Ballot papers taken out	Used ballot papers	Subtraction	Surplus ballot papers	Difference	
							Less	More
1	Zabuthiri Township	45	98,550	67,565	30,985	25,005	5,980	
2	Dekkhinathiri Township	20	35,153	24,465	10,688	10,485	203	
3	Zeyarthiri Township	74	90,549	72,092	18,457	18,313	438	294
4	Pubbathiri Township	79	108,959	78,576	30,383	30,316	978	911
5	Ottarathiri Township	49	60,590	46,158	14,432	14,197	235	
6	Tatkon Township	134	204,398	129,268	75,130	68,374	6,804	45
7	Lewei Township	144	245,611	164,017	81,594	81,628	274	308
8	Pyinmana Township	101	150,941	105,762	45,179	43,191	1,988	
	Total	646	994,751	687,903	306,848	291,509	16,900	1,558

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Union Minister for Foreign Affairs pays a visit to Thailand at the invitation of the Thai Prime Minister

AT the invitation of the Prime Minister of Thailand, General Prayut Chan-o-cha (Retd.), Union Minister for Foreign Affairs of Myanmar U Wunna Maung Lwin paid a visit to Thailand by special flight at 7 am and returned back to Nay Pyi Taw at 5 pm on 24 February 2021.

While in Thailand, the Union Minister had separate meetings with Thai Prime Minister General Prayut Chan-o-cha (Retd.) and Thai Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mr Don Pramudwinai.

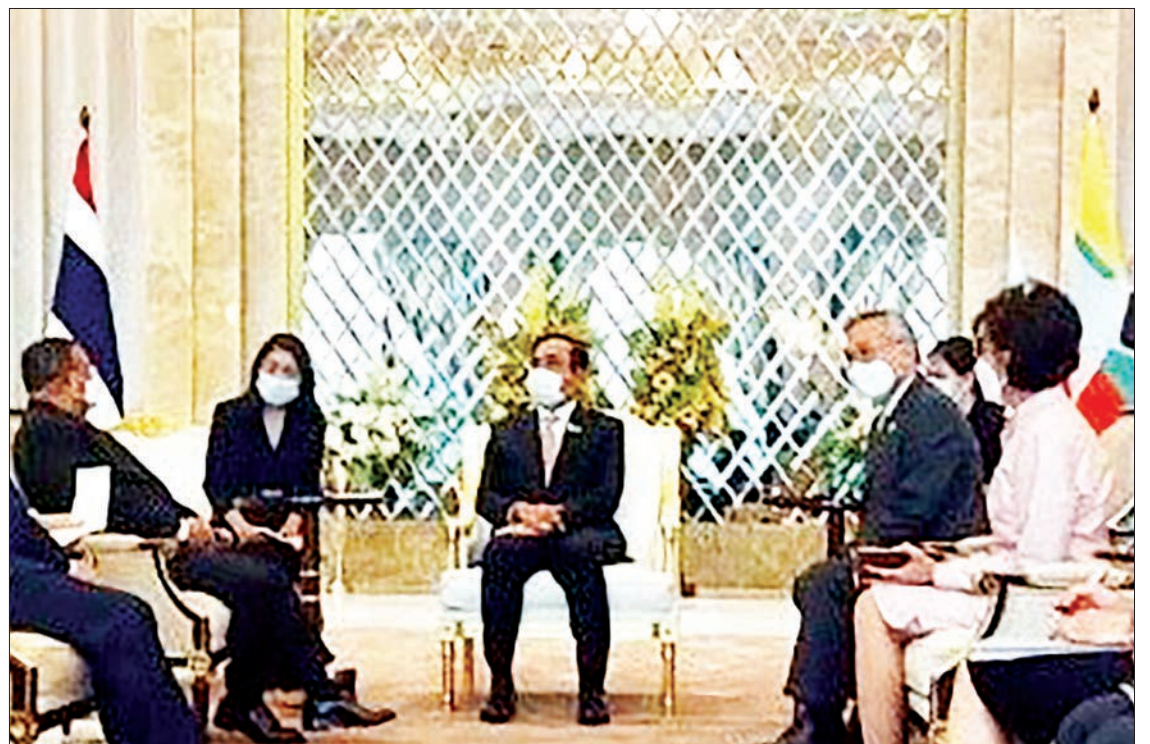
At the meetings, they cordially exchanged views on matters pertaining to the consolidation of the existing friendship and bilateral relations, sustaining the ongoing mutually beneficial cooperation between Myanmar and

Thailand, maintenance of security and stability along the border, attainment of legal status and ensuring rights of Myanmar workers in Thailand.

Furthermore, they also exchanged views on future work plans under the ASEAN cooperation frameworks on the basis of ASEAN family spirit and ASEAN solidarity.

The Union Minister also apprised the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Thailand of recent developments and foreign policy of Myanmar and political, economic and social objectives laid down by the State Administration Council.

Subsequently, the Union Minister met with Indonesian Foreign Minister Mrs Retno Marsudi, along with the Thai Deputy Prime Min-



Union Minister U Wunna Maung Lwin meets Thai Prime Minister General Prayut Chan-o-cha (Retd.) on 24 February 2021. PHOTO: MNA

ister and Foreign Minister of Myanmar-ASEAN cooperation and future cooperation with ASEAN on the basis of ASEAN unity and family spirit.—MNA

FROM PAGE-1

Findings of Pyithu Hluttaw ballot papers in Zabuthiri Township

Sr	Ballot papers	Ballot papers taken out	Used ballot papers	Subtraction	Surplus ballot papers	Difference	
						Less	More
1	Ward/village	96,200	67,175	29,025	23,064	5,961	
2	Advance voting in townships	500	390	110	91	19	
3	Surplus in townships	1,850	-	1,850	1,850		

Findings of Pyithu Hluttaw ballot papers in Dekkhinathiri Township

Sr	Ballot papers	Ballot papers taken out	Used ballot papers	Subtraction	Surplus ballot papers	Difference	
						Less	More
1	Ward/village	33,400	24,396	9,004	8,801	203	
2	Advance voting in townships	69	69				
3	Surplus in townships	1,684	-	1,684	1,684		

Findings of Pyithu Hluttaw ballot papers in Zeyathiri Township

Sr	Ballot papers	Ballot papers taken out	Used ballot papers	Subtraction	Surplus ballot papers	Difference	
						Less	More
1	Ward/village	83,505	68,822	14,683	14,245	438	
2	Advance voting in townships	3,270	3,270	-	-	-	
3	Surplus in townships	3,774	-	3,774	4,068		294

Findings of Pyithu Hluttaw ballot papers in Pubbathiri Township

Sr	Ballot papers	Ballot papers taken out	Used ballot papers	Subtraction	Surplus ballot papers	Difference	
						Less	More
1	Ward/village	99,250	77,265	21,985	21,007	978	
2	Advance voting in townships	1311	1311	-	-		
3	Surplus in townships	8398	-	8,398	9,309		911

Findings of Pyithu Hluttaw ballot papers in Ottarathiri Township

Sr	Ballot papers	Ballot papers taken out	Used ballot papers	Subtraction	Surplus ballot papers	Difference	
						Less	More
1	Ward/village	59,250	45,371	13,879	13,644	235	
2	Advance voting in townships	787	787	-	-		
3	Surplus in townships	553	-	553	553		

Findings of Pyithu Hluttaw ballot papers in Tatkon Township

Sr	Ballot papers	Ballot papers taken out	Used ballot papers	Subtraction	Surplus ballot papers	Difference	
						Less	More
1	Ward/village	194,750	127,618	67,132	60,328	6,804	
2	Advance voting in townships	1,647	1,650	3	-		3
3	Surplus in townships	8,001	-	8001	8,046		45

Findings of Pyithu Hluttaw ballot papers in Lewei Township

Sr	Ballot papers	Ballot papers taken out	Used ballot papers	Subtraction	Surplus ballot papers	Difference	
						Less	More
1	Ward/village	228161	162609	65552	65278	274	
2	Advance voting in townships	1300	1408	108	-		108
3	Surplus in townships	16150	-	16150	16350		200

Findings of Pyithu Hluttaw ballot papers in Pyinmana Township

Sr	Ballot papers	Ballot papers taken out	Used ballot papers	Subtraction	Surplus ballot papers	Difference	
						Less	More
1	Ward/village	145750	104818	40932	38944	1988	
2	Advance voting in townships	944	944	-	-		
3	Surplus in townships	4247	-	4247	4247		

Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Administration Council Nine Objectives

1. Political affairs

- (A) Building of a Union based on democracy and federalism in practising genuine disciplined multiparty democracy in a full fairness manner
- (B) Emphasizing of restoration of eternal peace for the entire nation in line with the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA)
- (C) Continuous practising of the “principle” of peaceful co-existence among countries by holding up the independent, active and non-aligned foreign policy

2. Economic affairs

- (A) Further development of production based on agriculture and livestock breeding through modern techniques and all-round development of other

sectors of the economy as well

- (B) Stability of market economy and inviting international investments to develop the economy of entire ethnic people
- (C) Encouragement of local businesses to create employment opportunities to be able to produce many products of the State

3. Social affairs

- (A) For ensuring of dynamism of Union spirit which is genuine patriotic spirit
- (B) Following customs and traditions of all ethnic nationalities and preservation and safeguarding of cultural heritage and national characters
- (C) Enhancement of health, fitness and education standards of the entire nation

Five future programmes of State Administration Council

1. The Union Election Commission will be reconstituted to carry out tasks that should be done, including inspection of voting lists in accordance with the law.
2. Effective measures will be taken for the prevention of current infectious COVID-19 with added momentum.
3. Efforts will be made to recover businesses that faced loss caused by COVID-19 in various ways as quickly as possible.
4. Emphasis will be placed on restoring eternal peace in the entire nation in line with agreements from the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) as much as possible.
5. When missions will be accomplished in accord with provisions of the state of emergency, a free and fair multiparty democracy election will be held in accordance with the Constitution (2008), and further tasks will be undertaken to hand over State duty to the winning party meeting the standards of democracy.

Union Minister for Foreign Affairs pays a visit to Thailand at the invitation of the Thai Prime Minister

NEWS ON PAGE-1



Union Minister U Wunna Maung Lwin holds talks with the Thai Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister yesterday.



Union Minister U Wunna Maung Lwin meets Mrs Retno Marsudi, Indonesian FM and Thai FM Mr Don Pramudwinai yesterday.

MoNREC discusses forestation works for upcoming monsoon

UNION MINISTER for Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation U Khin Maung Yi held a virtual coordination meeting with forest officers from states and regions yesterday.

The Union Minister discussed forestation, prevention of deforestation plans, illegal timber trade and law enforcement in this sector.

Myanmar has adopted the Myanmar Reforestation and Rehabilitation Programme from 2017 to 2027 financial years; selection of land areas for forestation has been complete for 21,540 acres under the



Union Minister U Khin Maung Yi joins the virtual coordination meeting with forest officers from states and regions on 24 February 2021.

Forest Department, 4,050 acres under the Dry Zone Greening Department, and 150 acres under the Forest Department, totally 25,740 acres. Eighty-four per cent of 26.39 million nursery plants have been grown, and 89

per cent of 10.7 million nursery plants from the department and public sector have been planted.

Union Minister U Khin Maung Yi said to conduct forestation works under the green

environment campaign and prevent the reasons if deforestation and illegal timber smuggling through the community monitoring and reporting system.

The Union Minister and senior officials from Myanmar

Timber Enterprise, the Dry Zone Greening Department, and the Forestry Department coordinated the discussions of officials from the respective departments via videoconferencing.—MNA

Republic of the Union of Myanmar
State Administration Council

Order No 88/2021
13 Waxing of Tabodwe 1382 ME
24 February 2021

Adding more members into Region/State
Administration Council

THE State Administration Council has added the Chairman of Yangon City Development Committee and Yangon Mayor as a member of the Yangon Region Administration Council, and the Chairman of Mandalay City Development Committee and Mandalay Mayor as a member of the Mandalay Region Administration Council respectively.

By order

Sd/
Aung Lin Dway
Lieutenant-General
Secretary
State Administration Council

MoPFI to provide short-term loans to small groceries

The Ministry of Planning, Finance and Industry will provide short-term loans to small groceries which suffered economic impacts from COVID-19.

Under the loan scheme, the small household commodity shops in the townships of Nay Pyi Taw Council and other regions and states can apply for a one-year loan with 2 per cent annual interest rate up to K5 million through microfinance organizations.

The list of townships and the names of microfinance organizations can be viewed on the website of the Financial Regulatory Department www.frd.gov.mm and its Facebook Page Financial Regulatory Department.—MNA

MoC continues trade promotion meeting with Myanmar commercial attachés abroad

THE Ministry of Commerce held the second-day meeting via videoconferencing on the promotion of trade and export of new commodities yesterday with Myanmar commercial attachés from the Republic of China (Beijing, Nanning, Hong Kong, Kunming), Singapore, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Switzerland and the World Trade Organization.

Union Minister Dr Pwint San instructed sharing experiences on difficulties in trade promotion and negotiation and analyzing trade data of countries where the commercial attachés are performing their duties.

Union Minister for Agriculture, Livestock and Irriga-



The second-day virtual meeting on trade promotion and export of new items is seen in progress on 24 February 2021.

tion U Tin Htut Oo discussed requirements of export norms such as the sanitary and phy-

tosanitary for the agricultural produce, providing assistance from the relevant departments,

practices of inspections online except physical inspection, the establishment of logistic

facilities such as processing industry and frozen warehouse to export more value-added items.

Union Minister for Foreign Investment and Foreign Economic Relations U Aung Naing Oo discussed to sign bilateral trade agreements with partner countries, analysis on the cost-benefit analysis of these countries to understand their trade volume and trade potential, making reports on the trade processes of member countries in the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) and the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP).—MNA

Union Minister Dr Thet Thet Khine attends national committee on rights of persons with disabilities' meeting



Union Minister Dr Thet Thet Khine chairs the national committee meeting on the rights of persons with disabilities yesterday.

THE Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement held the meeting to explain

the duties and responsibilities of the National Committee on the Rights of Persons with Dis-

abilities yesterday morning in Nay Pyi Taw.

The meeting was attended

by Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Dr Thet Thet Khine, the Permanent Secretary, Directors-General and Deputy Directors-General.

The Department of Resettlement explained the formation of the National Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, duties and responsibilities of the committee, procedures related to the committee and proposal to reform the committee to the Union Minister.

The Union Minister said it was necessary to continue the process of disability clas-

sification and registration of the persons with disabilities and make efforts to finalize the five-year strategic plan for the rights of persons with disabilities.

She continued the remaining decisions of the national committee will be made according to priority by adding the reformation of the national committee and continuing meetings, working together with the United Nations, INGOs and NGOs working on disability issues to ensure that the process continues unabated.—MNA/GNLM

Union Minister Dr Nyunt Pe inspects preparations on school reopening

UNION Minister for Education Dr Nyunt Pe, accompanied by Deputy Minister Dr Zaw Myint, U Zaw Win and other officials, inspected the preparations for reopening of schools in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

The Union Minister checked the preparedness of No (12) B.E.H.S in Ottarathiri, No (13) B.E.H.S and Yay Pyar Branch B.E.H.S in Pobbathiri.

During the inspection, Union Minister met the respective education officers, headmasters and teachers, and stressed the need to follow the COVID-19 health rules.

He also highlighted the preparedness of schools to reopen in accordance with the COVID-19 health rules, good image of the school, cleanliness of schools' surrounding, upgrade of class-



The MoE Union Minister, Deputy Ministers and officials inspect the preparations to reopen the schools in Nay Pyi Taw on 24 February 2021.

rooms, teaching aid materials and toilets to improve the wills of students in their study including plans to provide housings for

teachers.

He then emphasized the duties of teachers for being civil services, cooperation to promote the

education, capacity building plans for teachers, effective teaching methods and managements to reopen the schools.

The Union Minister and party inspected the schools' compounds and instructed the necessary things.—MNA



The Tatmadaw medical corps treat one of the patients at Tagaung Public Hospital in Thabeikkyin Township.

Tatmadaw medical corps provide healthcare services

THE Tatmadaw medical corps comprised of its doctors, specialists and nurses are providing necessary medical treatments to the patients at hospitals with no civilian medical workers.

The Tatmadaw medical team provided healthcare related to surgery, dental and oral healthcare, osteoporosis, obstetrics, gynaecology, hypertension and heart disease to the patients in Thazi Township Hospital, Hanzada hospital, Yinmabin hospital, Tagaung Public Hospital in Thabeikkyin Township, Kyauktaga Public Hospital, Donzayit hospital in Shwegyin Township, Bago Region.

Officials from respective commands also supported the patients and coordinated the conditions of preparation for healthcare services as well as generous donors provided 900,000 kyats to the Kyauktaga Public Hospital.—MNA

Lawsuit filed against former Union Minister

FORMER Union Minister Dr Win Myat Aye is facing a lawsuit allegedly incited and directed civilian disobedience movement to his staff members.

The police report said that the former minister was charged with Article 505 (a) of the Penal Code on 21 February 2021 for his role in incitement to the staff members to join CDM and protests, failing to perform the duties of civil service personnel.

The report also said to inform about the absconding former minister to the police stations and the phone numbers for making tip-off about him and those who hid him would also face legal actions.—MNA

Navy vessels carrying Myanmar citizens from Malaysia crossing international waters



Navy vessels that carry Myanmar citizens from Malaysia, are crossing the international waters.



Myanmar returnees are seen undergoing medical treatments onboard the Navy vessels.

ACCORDING to the directives of Chairman of the State Administration Council Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, the Myanmar Navy ships carrying a total of

1,086 Myanmar nationals from Malaysia reportedly left Lumut jetty at 5:40 pm of Malaysia Time on 23 February.

The officials of Myanmar

Navy ships provide the necessary things including safety, foods and healthcare services on the way. The medic team provided healthcare services to 59

people for general illnesses like sick and cough.

The officials of the Myanmar Navy will provide the needed things for the returnees like a

reunion with their family members and job opportunities. The navy ships carrying Myanmar nationals will arrive in Myanmar on 27 February.—MNA



Military personnel donate food aids to residents of Yangon, Mandalay, Magway

TATMADAW distributed rice, cooking oil and other foodstuffs to the people to ease the difficulties during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The military personnel of Yangon Region Command donated rice and cooking oil for a total of 5,500 households in Pan Chan Su Ward, Kyu San War, No-2 B Ward of Mingaladon Township of Yangon Region, Butar Zay Ward of Insein Township, Latpadansu Village, War Pa tau Village, War Net

Chaung Village, Kalar Gyi Gone Village and Tat Gyi Gone Village of Hmawby Township yesterday.

Similarly, the military personnel of Central Command also donated rice and cooking oil to a total of 600 households in Hnan Kyal Village in Patheingyi Township of Mandalay Region and another 600 households in Myin Saing Village tract, Koe Pin Kywae Village and Mi Chaung Ye Village of Magway Township of Magway Region.—MNA

Local people in Hmawby Township are receiving the foodstuffs donated by the military personnel.

Military hospitals continue providing healthcare services

MILITARY hospitals are providing medical treatments to the people in the townships of regions and states.

A total of 27,997 outpatients and 3,213 inpatients have undertaken medical treatments at these hospitals from 5 February to date.

Senior medical experts, medics and nurses have conducted 1,210 major operations and 633 minor operations, and the serious cases are treated by the senior doctors. These hospitals managed for the birth of 1,791 babies, while 1,791 pregnant women were taken to the

respective military hospitals.

Officials from the respective commands also provided the patients with foods. Chairman of the Shan State Administration Council Dr Kyaw Tun and party went to the military hospital in Aungban Township, Shan State and the local medical battalions yesterday. The Chairman and party provided K3 million to the military hospital and K1,660,000 for the medical workers, K2 million to the local medical battalions and foods to the patients.—MNA



A local patient undergoes treatments at the Tatmadaw hospital in Myitkyina.



Tatmadaw members clean school compounds, classrooms

THE Tatmadaw members of respective military commands conducted cleaning works at basic education school compounds before the schools are reopened.

They conducted cleaning works at BEHS, Branch BEHS, BEMS, Post BEPS, BEPS in Sittway, An, Taungup, Gwa, Thandwe, Maungtaw, Buthidaung, Ponnagyun, Yathedaung, Kyauktaw, MraukU and Minbya townships of Rakhine State, Taungoo, Pyay, Paukaung and Shwegyin townships of Bago Region yesterday.—MNA

Tatmadaw members are cleaning the compound of a basic education school in MraukU.

Call for Nominations: ASEAN Prize 2021

THE ASEAN Secretariat is calling for nominations for the ASEAN Prize 2021, a prestigious regional award which aims to acknowledge the inspiring and outstanding achievements of an individual or organization who have made contribution and shown exemplary work in strengthening the ASEAN Community building, promoting regional integration, fostering inclusivity and raising ASEAN awareness.

Nominees should have exceptional merit in contributing to the following designated focus areas taking into account the theme of ASEAN as designated by the ASEAN chair in the particular year:

- Outstanding collaboration between ASEAN Member States;
- Outstanding collaboration between ASEAN and the world;
- Outstanding people-to-people engagement among ASEAN Member States;
- Outstanding economic integration and promotion of standards between ASEAN Member States; or
- Other outstanding contribution to ASEAN Community building

A Judging Committee, consisting of eminent High-level members, including incumbent and former ASEAN Secretaries-General will select a recipient who will be awarded the ASEAN Prize Trophy and a cash prize of US\$20,000 at the 54th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting in Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei Darussalam.

Submissions for ASEAN Prize 2021 are open from now until 23 April 2021. The nominee must be an ASEAN citizen or an ASEAN-based organization; and must produce valid/verifiable documents, and highlight his/her achievements and impact on ASEAN since the launch of the ASEAN Community in 31 December 2015. The nominee must submit the duly filled-in form to the ASEAN Affairs Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Office No9, Nay Pyi Taw or dgasean@gmail.com no later than the dead line,

In the nomination form, the nominee need to elaborate within three to five pages in English highlighting the achievements that the nominee has contributed to the building of ASEAN Community and intra-ASEAN collaborative efforts. The nominee should also share future plans in continuing the work after winning the prize. The nomination form for ASEAN Prize 2021 can be downloaded at the ASEAN Secretariat website <https://asean.org/asean-prize/>.

Since its establishment in 2018, ASEAN Prize has been awarded to three recipients from the Philippines, Malaysia and Singapore. Myanmar citizens or organizations based in Myanmar are encouraged to seize this opportunity to showcase your outstanding efforts in ASEAN Community building. For further information, please visit the afore mentioned ASEAN Secretariat Website.

Tatmadaw distributes fundamental food items to military veterans, police, fire brigade members



Basic foodstuffs are provided to police members in Myawaddy town.

OFFICIALS of Thingan Nyi Naung region of East Command to police members in Myawaddy of Kayin State.

The four fundamental food items of rice, cooking oil, salt and peas, and COVID-19 protective gears were distributed to family members of military personnel who sacrificed their lives for the country and Tatmadaw, military veterans, police members, militia unit members and fire brigade members.

The Tatmadaw members and Myanmar Police Force members who served security measures were also supplied with medicines, food aids and awards by the respective military commands at their relevant housings and police stations.

The Commander of North-East Commander Brig-Gen Hla Moe and party distrib-

uted the food aids at Khay Nin military veteran housing, Tar Pone housing in Lashio and military veteran housing in Laukkai of Shan State (North) yesterday while Commander of Triangle Region Commander Brig-Gen Myo Min Tun distributed the assistances to militia unit members at Mine Khum village of Kengtung in eastern Shan State, officials of Thingan Nyi Naung region of East Command to police members in Myawaddy of Kayin State, Head of Shwe Kyin Command Colonel Tin Lin Oo to militia unit members at Chay Yar Taw village of Shwe Kyin in Bago Region.

Moreover, the officials also received the food aids donated by well-wishers for Tatmadaw, Myanmar Police Force and Fire Brigade members who serve security measures of the country.—MNA

Military medical corps conduct COVID-19 tests in Mawlamyine

THE Tatmadaw medical corps conducted COVID-19 tests for the returnees to Mon and Kayin states from foreign countries.

Medical doctors and nurses from the local military hospital under the Southeast Command, members of Township Administration Council and civil society organizations jointly performed the medical tests in Mawlamyine Township.—MNA



A baby is tested for COVID-19 by military medical corps in Mawlamyine.



Cargo vessel catches fire at sea near Bokpyin

A cargo vessel caught fire at about 7 miles from Kawt Ye Kyun in Bokpyin Township of Taninthayi Region at 12:45 pm on 23 February.

Then, the security force members of Myanmar waters inspected the incident and found out that a cargo

ship named Aung Phone Myat caught fire. The security force members extinguished the fire together with the local fishermen and saved eight crews. They also provided healthcare services, foods and transferred to the officials.—MNA

Eight local fishermen are saved and provided with foods and medical services.

Request to Public

1. Democracy practices have granted the public freedom of speech, practices and living. Such freedoms should not harm others. Diverse views of others should be understood, but should not be disturbed or harassed. However, with the reason for human rights, some persons are now pressured, harassed and threatened in breaching the laws. Undisciplined acts could lead to tarnish the image of democracy.
2. For preventing destructive actions against stability of the state, safety of the public and the rule of law, it is also required to take proper actions in line with the law.
3. All the people who favour justice, freedom, equality and safety are requested to oppose breaching the laws and prevent such actions for the benefit of the country and people.

Request to health workers

1. It is appreciated for the strenuous efforts of the medical doctors, nurses, medical experts and other health works at the respective departments under the Ministry of Health and Sports at the front-line in the fight against prevention, containment and treatment of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19).
2. As the vaccination programme of COVID-19 is being conducted for the public and the real-time healthcare services are required for the people, all the staff members at the respective departments under the Ministry of Health and Sports are strongly urged to return to their duties with taking the well-being of patients into consideration.

Ministry of Health and Sports
8 February 2021

Moderate earthquakes are wake-up call for building safety in cities

An earthquake measuring 4.3 on the Richter Scale hit Mawlaik, Sagaing Region, on 20 February. On 28 November, 2019, a 5.4-magnitude quake, with epicentre 23 miles northeast of Thabeikkyin, jolted Mandalay Region and caused some damage to homes, schools, and pagodas.

It is also worth noting that there are many concrete buildings in need of retrofitting to better withstand earthquakes. Future developers should also take the seismic safety of buildings into account.

People must be alerted to the risks of earthquakes although quakes are rare, unlike other natural disasters such as fires, floods, and storms, as experts have predicted that Myanmar is more likely to suffer from earthquakes than other natural disasters. People living along the fault line should take these warnings seriously and make necessary preparations, like making their homes disaster-ready, and ensuring family members have the necessary information on how to respond when earthquakes strike. The efforts of local governments to conduct earthquake drills and provide information about dealing with quakes are necessary and should be taken seriously. It is not enough to simply educate people and spread awareness about earthquakes. It is also worth noting that there are many concrete buildings in need of retrofitting to better withstand earthquakes. Future developers should also take the seismic safety of buildings into account. While material standards and building codes might be insufficient to protect against the damage from strong earthquakes, and these should be reviewed and updated as required. The time to act is now, before a catastrophic earthquake strikes.



IMF chief warns pandemic leaving some countries behind

The global pandemic death toll is approaching 2.5 million, according to Johns Hopkins University, and the shutdowns forced to control infections have devastated economies.

The crisis caused by the pandemic is leaving many economies lagging behind, increasing the plight of the poor, a problem made worse by "uneven" access to vaccines, IMF chief Kristalina Georgieva said Wednesday.

In a message to the Group of 20 meeting on Friday Georgieva urged governments to increase vaccine distribution, ensuring Covid-19 is brought under control.

"The economic arguments for coordinated action are overwhelming," she said in a blog post.

"Faster progress in ending the health crisis could raise global income cumulatively by \$9 trillion over 2020-25. That would benefit all countries."

She said that should include financing for vaccinations, reallocation of excess supply to countries with a shortage, and

scaling up of production.

The global pandemic death toll is approaching 2.5 million, according to Johns Hopkins University, and the shutdowns forced to control infections have devastated economies.

And while vaccine rollouts are raising hopes for a recovery this year, the IMF forecasts job losses in the G20 alone to total more than 25 million this year.

By the end of 2022, emerging market and developing nations -- excluding China -- will see per capital incomes 22 per cent below pre-crisis levels, compared to just 13 per cent lower for advanced economies, which will throw millions more into extreme poverty, Georgieva warned.

"That is why we need much stronger international collaboration to accelerate the vaccine rollout in poorer countries," she said.

G20 finance ministers and central bank chiefs led by Rome will meet by videoconference to discuss the state of the recovery and how best to attack the problem.

The Washington-based crisis lender estimated more than half of the world's 110 emerging and developing countries will see their incomes fall further behind advanced economies through the end of next year.

And the virus-driven economic crisis also will widen income gaps within developing nations, especially as millions of children are still facing disruptions to education.

"Allowing them to become a lost generation would be an unforgivable mistake. It would also deepen the long-term economic scars of the crisis," she warned.

SOURCE: AFP



IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva urged G20 officials to accelerate vaccine rollout to poor countries. PHOTO: AFP

First vaccines delivered under global Covax scheme

The 600,000 doses delivered to Ghana are the Oxford/AstraZeneca formula, made under licence by the world's largest vaccine manufacturer, the Serum Institute of India.

Ghana on Wednesday became the first country to receive vaccines from Covax, a global scheme to procure and distribute Covid inoculations free for poorer countries.

Launched last April, Covax said it planned to ship two billion doses by year's end.

"The next phase in the fight against this disease can begin -- the ramping up of the largest immunization campaign in history," UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta Fore declared in a statement.

"At last!" World Health Organization (WHO), Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, whose organization also backs the Covax initiative, said in a tweet.

"A day to celebrate, but it's just the first step."



The Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccines were flown from India, where they are made under licence. PHOTO: AFP

The 600,000 doses delivered to Ghana are the Oxford/AstraZeneca formula, made under licence by the world's largest vaccine manufacturer, the Serum Institute of India.

They are part of an initial tranche of deliveries headed to several low and middle-income countries.

An Emirates flight carrying the vaccines touched down at Ac-

cra's Kotoka International Airport shortly after 0740 GMT, where a government delegation led by the Minister for Health Designate Kwaku Agyeman Manu received them, in images broadcast on television.

Ghana's food and drug authority has already authorized the use of the Indian-made vaccines as well as Russia's Sputnik V, according to local media.

The West African nation has recorded 80,759 Covid-19 cases and 582 deaths since the start of the pandemic, although the true figure is believed to be higher because of lack of testing.

Vaccinations are scheduled to start on Tuesday in Accra, Kumasi and Obuasi.

They will begin with health workers and other frontline staff,

adults over 60 and people with underlying health conditions, Information Minister Kojo Opong Nkrumah said.

The first who will get the vaccines also include "frontline executive, legislature, judiciary and their related staff, frontline security personnel, some religious leaders, essential workers, teachers and other personalities," he said.

The government said it was making "frantic efforts" to acquire enough vaccines to inoculate all of Ghana's 30 million people and urged people to take part in the drive.

New variants

Covax, led by Gavi the Vaccine Alliance, the WHO and the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), had

expected a first round of deliveries in March with some early shipments occurring in late February.

For Ghana, it aims to deliver 2,412,000 doses.

Africa has been relatively spared by the pandemic.

It was the last continent except Oceania to reach the threshold of 100,000 deaths, which Europe crossed in April 2020.

To help speed immunisation of the continent's 1.3 billion people, the African Union said it had secured 270 million doses of anti-Covid vaccines for delivery this year.

The WHO on Monday accused wealthy countries of hogging Covid vaccines and hindering the pathway for poorer nations to get them too.

SOURCE: AFP

Appointment of Slovak Ambassador to Myanmar agreed on

THE Republic of the Union of Myanmar has agreed to the proposed appointment of Mr Jaroslav Auxt as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Republic to the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, with residence in Bangkok, in succession to Mr Stanislav Opiela.

Mr Jaroslav Auxt was born in July, 1960. He studied at the Technical University Košice in Slovakia and attended the Oxford University Foreign Service Programme in the United Kingdom. From 1993 to 2013, he served in various capacities at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic. From 2013 to 2017, he served as Slovak Ambassador to the Kingdom of Sweden, and from 2017, he was Head of the EU Policies Department prior to his current appointment. He speaks English, German, French and Russian languages.

He is married and has two children.



Myanmar Daily Weather Report

(Issued at 7:00 pm Wednesday 24 February, 2021)

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

FORECAST VALID UNTIL NOON OF THE 25 February, 2021: Light rain or thundershowers are likely to be isolated in Upper Sagaing Region and Kachin State. Degree of certainty is (60%). Weather will be partly cloudy in Taninthayi Region and Shan, Kayah, Kayin, Mon states and generally fair in the remaining regions and States.

STATE OF THE SEA: Seas will be moderate in Myanmar waters. Wave height will be about (4-7) feet off and along Myanmar Coasts.

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Likelihood of slight decrease of night temperatures in Bago, Yangon regions and Shan, Kayah, Kayin states.

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 25 February, 2021: Generally fair weather.

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 25 February, 2021: Generally fair weather.

FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 25 February, 2021: Generally fair weather.

THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR
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Onion growers expect good price



The high demand by foreign markets and a remarkable price rise prompted the growers to expand the onion cultivation in 2020.

ONION growers from Shwetapin village of Minbu Township, Magway Region, expect a fair price in mid-March and April as they cultivated onions on a large scale this winter.

"It is suitable for the consumers to buy onions at K100-150 per viss (a viss equals 1.6 kg) in Minbu wholesale centres. Nevertheless, the growers are battered by a drastic drop in price. Some halted onion cultivation, whereas some have grown large acres in high hopes of price gain.

A grower with 10 acres cost approximately K800,000 for cultivation, excluding the cost of onion seeds. That's why they can do well in financial term only when onion fetches K600-700 per viss," said a grower U Shwe Myint.

The onion growers have been facing extreme losses on a bear market trend due to the lack of foreign demand amid the COVID-19 containment measures.

The prolonged price declines led some growers in Yesagyo Township, Magway Region,

to leave their onions unharvested. They cannot cover the labour wages and transportation charges. The stockpiles in the market have exacerbated with the fresh bulk supply of onions. The old onions fetched only K100-200 per viss in the wholesale market, whereas the new onion prices stand at K200-400 per viss.

"Now, some farmers are leaving the onions in the farms unharvested. This occurrence is sporadic. I hope we will not face this devastating situation in future," said an onion grower from Yesagyo Township.

"In early 2020, the onion fetched K1,200-1,300 per viss. The price drastically fell, and the growers cannot even cover the input cost," said U Tun, a grower.

"The prevailing prices of onions are around K400 per viss in the retail market. The lower demand brings down the cost to the lowest level," said U Thar Paw, a warehouse owner.

The prices of onions sharply dropped due to the bulk supply and the western border's closure

amid the coronavirus impacts.

Earlier, onions were highly demanded by Bangladesh and India. Now, the trade with Bangladesh and India is halted to contain the spread of the coronavirus. Therefore, the price is on a downward trend. The onion growers and traders are experiencing market fallouts due to the COVID-19 impacts, said wholesale onion dealer from Mandalay.

Next, Bangladesh's demand for Myanmar's onions coupled with high demand in the local market hiked up prices, soaring up to K4,000 per viss on 15 November 2019, according to the Mandalay commodity depot.

The high demand by foreign markets and a remarkable price rise prompted the growers to expand the onion cultivation in 2020. The prices of domestic onions exceeded K3,000 per viss in 2015, 2018, and 2019.

The onions are primarily grown in Mandalay, Magway and Yangon regions, Nay Pyi Taw and Shan State. — Zeyar Htet/Htet Myat/GNLM

Hteekhee border trade drops by \$210 mln as of 12 February

BILATERAL trade between Thailand and Myanmar through the Hteekhee border over the past four months reflected a decrease of \$210 million as against a year-ago period.

Between 1 October and 12 February in the current financial year 2020-2021, the figures sharply fell to US\$473 million from \$683 million registered in the previous financial year, according to the data from the Commerce Ministry.

The surge in coronavirus cases in Myanmar led Thailand to close the border areas and limit truck drivers' working hours at the border posts. Consequently, the trade via land border sharply fell in the current FY.

Exports of natural gas from the Taninthayi Region have contributed to the enormous trade increase through the Hteekhee border during the previous years.

Earlier, the Myawady border sees the most extensive trade among the Myanmar-Thailand checkpoints. The rise in exports through the Hteekhee border had boosted the value of the Myanmar-Thailand border trade since the 2018-2019FY.

The border trade between Myanmar and Thailand through all land borders -- Tachilek, Myawady, Myeik, Kawthoung, Mawtaung, Hteekhee and Maese declined as of 27 November.

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. 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 neighbouring countries. — KK/GNLM

High price drives Phaungpyin growers to cultivate more tomatoes

MORE tomatoes are being cultivated in Phaungpyin township, Sagaing region, because of the high price of tomatoes this year, according to the local growers.

The tomato price was K600 per viss in the harvest season. Now, the tomato is priced at K450 per viss in the market. So, the local people are growing more tomatoes so far because it could make more profit.

"I have grown the tomato loyar 909 species. It could fetch a high price and make more profit since it is the yield season. Even if we sell the tomato for K150 per viss, we do not lose but make less profit. Now, we are selling the tomato for K450 per viss. Now, I have cultivated more tomatoes, and they will yield in April and hope to have a good price," said U Nyo Lin, a tomato grower from Yarbin village.

The growers from Paungbyin township are annually cultivating the tomatoes in September. The nursery plants are transplanted to the ground after 15 days, and the fruits could yield after three months. The fruits could be harvested for up to 6 months. The tomato plantations can generate an income of K1.5 million per 1,000 trees, and the cultivation costs K100,000. —Ko Tun (Paungbyin)/GNLM



The growers from Paungbyin township are annually cultivating the tomatoes in September. PHOTO: KO TUN

Myanmar raw rubber prices remain unchanged

MYANMAR raw rubber prices remained unchanged and undisturbed in the market, according to the fixed cost of the Myanmar Rubber Planters and Producers Association (MRPPA).

Although there is no rubber export to foreign market so far, the prevailing price of International Rubber -- Ribbed Smoked Sheets (RSS) and Myanmar Standard Rubber (MSR) remains stable.

Currently, the rubber price for one tonne of RSS (1) type is ranging US\$1900-1950, RSS (2) type for \$1850-1900, RSS (3) type for \$1800-1800, RSS (4) type for \$1750-1800, RSS (5) type for \$1700-1750, M.S.R (CV) type for \$1750-1800, M.S.R (L) type for

\$1700-1750, M.S.R (3L) type for \$1650-1750, M.S.R (5) type for \$1600-1650, M.S.R (10) type for \$1550-1600, M.S.R (20) type for \$1500-1550 and M.S.R (50) type for \$1450-1500, according to the fixed price of MRPPA.

Rubber is primarily cultivated in Mon and Kayin states and Taninthayi, Bago, and Yangon regions in Myanmar. As per 2018-2019 rubber seasons' data, there are over 1.628 million acres of rubber plantations in Myanmar, with Mon State accounting for 497,153 acres, followed by Taninthayi Region 348,344 acres and Kayin State with 270,760 acres, according to the MRPPA.

Further, about 300,000 tonnes of rubber are produced

annually across the country. Seventy per cent of rubber made in Myanmar goes to China. In addition to China, Myanmar also shipped rubber to Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, Viet Nam, the Republic of Korea, India, Japan, and other countries.

Thailand is also offering Myanmar raw rubber at a high price through the illicit market in Payathonezu, Kawthoung and Myeik towns. Hence, the government authorities need to stop the illegal export of raw rubber to Thailand, according to MRPPA.

Myanmar annually exports over 200,000 tonnes of raw rubber to foreign countries generating over \$200 million. —NN/GNLM

IMF economists expect tourism scars from pandemic will linger



After a disastrous 2020 for tourism caused by the coronavirus pandemic, industry planners hope that clear signs of green shoots will emerge in the international travel trade sometime this year. PHOTO: XINHUA

AFTER a disastrous 2020 for tourism caused by the coronavirus pandemic, industry planners hope that clear signs of green shoots will emerge in the international travel trade sometime this year.

But International Monetary Fund (IMF) economists warn that a return to pre-pandemic levels could take multiple years.

“The recovery in international travel and tourism will be protracted and subject to a high degree of uncertainty,” they say in a newly published paper on tourism in a post-pandemic world

that focuses mainly on the Asia Pacific region and the western hemisphere where the sector plays a crucial economic role.

The task before the industry was highlighted in January when the United Nations World Tourism Organization reported that global tourism suffered its worst year on record last year, with international arrivals dropping by 74 per cent. That translated to one billion fewer arrivals as lockdowns and entry restrictions took hold in the fight against COVID-19, the disease caused by the coronavirus. Hopes are

rising that vaccine rollouts will encourage more people to think about travelling abroad again.

In Britain, after Prime Minister Boris Johnson outlined a plan this week to exit the country’s lockdown, airlines and tour operators reported a surge in bookings and inquiries.

The IMF paper acknowledges that pent-up demand for tourism following lockdowns and smooth vaccine operation could trigger the start of a recovery if enough herd immunity is achieved by the second half of 2021. — Xinhua ■

AstraZeneca EU supply chain shortfall continues in second quarter

PHARMACEUTICAL giant AstraZeneca said Tuesday its EU supply chains would only be able to deliver half of an expected supply of Covid-19 vaccines to the bloc in the second quarter – but that it would look to make up the shortfall from elsewhere.

A spokesman for the British drugs group told AFP AstraZeneca was “working to increase

productivity in its EU supply chain” and would use its “global capability in order to achieve delivery of 180 million doses to the EU in the second quarter”.

“Approximately half of the expected volume is due to come from the EU supply chain” while the remainder would come from its international supply network, he added.

The announcement follows controversy over deliveries of the AstraZeneca-Oxford University jab to the European Union in the first quarter, which has caused tension between the bloc and the pharmaceutical company.

Ahead of the EU’s approval of the vaccine at the end of January, the British-Swedish company sparked fury among European leaders by announcing that it would miss its target of supplying the EU with 400 million doses, due to a shortfall at the firm’s European plants.

The disagreement also caused diplomatic tensions with Britain, which definitively left the EU after 40 years of membership following a transmission period at the end of 2020 – with Brussels implicitly accusing AstraZeneca of giving preferential treatment to Britain at the expense of the EU.

The UK government has vaccinated millions of Britons with the AstraZeneca jab since late last year. —AFP ■



AstraZeneca’s EU supply chains will only be able to provide half of the expected doses for the second quarter, but the shortfall will be made up from its global capacity. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

Youngest American to go into space is also a cancer survivor

BY the end of the year, Hayley Arceneaux will be the youngest American in space and one of the first tourists to enter orbit unaccompanied by professional astronauts.

It is a feat made all the more remarkable by her battle to overcome a childhood cancer that robbed the 29 year old of her dream of becoming an astronaut herself.

Due to the bone cancer she overcame, Arceneaux has steel rods in her left leg – which until recently were enough to shatter her hopes of going into space.

Enter Jared Isaacman, a young American billionaire with a passion for space exploration who chartered a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket at his own expense and

decided to take three people with him, including Arceneaux.

Arceneaux said she hopes to be an inspiration with “this precedent that it’s going to set and what it’s going to show these other kids going through cancer treatment.”

The first person chosen for this unprecedented mission, named Inspiration4 and set to take off at the end of 2021, was in fact Arceneaux.

The young woman was treated as a child at St Jude’s Children’s Research Hospital in Memphis, Tennessee, which specializes in childhood diseases, including cancer.

Isaacman hopes to raise \$200 million for the hospital on his space mission. —AFP ■

Why the US has the highest Covid-19 death toll



Several COVID-19 testing options are available to City of Miami residents. PHOTO: AFP

THE United States crossed the grim milestone of 500,000 deaths from Covid-19 on Monday, a year since announcing its first known death from the virus on February 29, 2020 in the Seattle area.

Why does the world’s leading power have the highest death toll and what lessons are American health specialists learning from the past year?

Here, infectious disease experts Joseph Masci and Michele Halpern provide answers to some of the key questions.

Masci, 70, is one of the leaders of Elmhurst Hospital in Queens, which was at the heart of New York’s epidemic.

Halpern is a specialist at the Montefiore hospital group in New Rochelle, a New York suburb where the epidemic arrived in force in February 2020.

Why has the United States been hit so hard?

Prior to this pandemic, the United States observed coronaviruses “from a distance,” explained Masci.

“There was SARS in Canada but very little or none in this country. There was no MERS here at all,” he said.

“There was a lot of preparation made for Ebola coming to the United States, and it never really did.

“Suddenly this (coronavirus) was a problem where the United States was the epicentre.”

Masci said it was difficult to compare the United States with other countries.

“I think smaller countries that had structured health care services had a good chance of bringing things into play quickly. — Xinhua ■

Senior Iraq MP target of international extortion bid

POLICE in Australia and Canada arrested four people accused of trying to extort a senior Iraqi politician, after what was described Wednesday as a year-long campaign of intimidation.

Dual raids were launched after a string of attacks on a Sydney home and online extortion attempts linked to an address in Canada.

The target was the family of a “very senior politician” who is a dual Australian and Iraqi citizen and “spends almost all of his time in Iraq”, Australian police said.

The attacks are believed to have begun in December 2019, when masked and armed assailants broke into a home in western Sydney, assaulting a 16-year-old boy and stealing cash. Months later, shots were fired at the house while two adults, two teenagers and a

child were inside. A window was smashed in a separate incident.

Earlier this month, the front porch was set on fire in the dead of night and a threatening note was left outside.

“Throughout this time, the family received various demands for money and threats to their welfare via social media and letters left at their home,” police said.

Australian media named the member of parliament as Ahmed Assadi – a senior figure in the Hashed al-Shaabi, a powerful state-sponsored paramilitary network formed from mostly-Shiite armed groups.

Police did not confirm the man’s identity.

Two men in their twenties were arrested in Sydney and a woman and a man in their thirties were arrested in Edmonton, Canada. —AFP ■



Police in Australia and Canada have arrested four people accused of trying to extort a member of Iraq’s parliament. PHOTO: AFP

Russian fugitive nabbed in Bali after dramatic escape

A Russian fugitive whose dramatic sprint out of an Indonesian immigration office was captured on CCTV has been caught again after two weeks on the run, authorities said Wednesday.

Andrey Kovalenko fled the office on Indonesia’s resort island of Bali to avoid deportation, with the surveillance footage showing him keeping pace on foot with a motorcycle as he escaped. Authorities fanned out across the island in the hunt for Kovalenko, who was nabbed early Wednesday at a villa in tourist hub Kuta along with girlfriend Ekaterina Trubkina, who was wanted for allegedly assisting his escape. His dash for freedom on February 11 came as officials readied to deport Kovalenko back to Russia on an Interpol warrant.

The 32-year-old had just fin-

ished a prison term following a 2019 arrest for selling hashish to tourists in Bali.

The Interpol warrant was linked to a drugs case back in Kovalenko’s home country, said Eko Budianto, head of the immigration division at Bali’s justice and legal agency. Trubkina, 31, also Russian, could face up to nine months in prison if convicted of assisting Kovalenko’s escape, authorities said.

Indonesian authorities have previously caught international fugitives wanted by Interpol who sought to hide in Bali. In July last year, Bali police arrested Marcus Beam, an American fugitive accused of scamming \$500,000 from women he met online between 2015 and 2019. Beam had been hiding in Bali with his girlfriend where he worked as a porn actor-director. —AFP ■

Italy seeks UN probe into DRC envoy’s killing

ITALY said Wednesday it has asked the United Nations to launch an investigation into the killing of its ambassador to the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The envoy, Luca Attanasio, 43, died on Monday after a World Food Programme (WFP) convoy was ambushed in a dangerous part of the eastern DRC near the border with Rwanda.

Attanasio’s Italian bodyguard and a Congolese driver were also killed.

“We have formally asked WFP (World Food Programme) and the UN to open an investigation to clarify what happened, the reasons behind the security arrangements used and who was responsible for these decisions,” Italian Foreign Minister Luigi Di Maio told parliament.

Di Maio’s comments came the morning after the bodies of the two Italians were returned by military plane to Rome.



The convoy was ambushed in a dangerous part of the eastern DRC near the border with Rwanda. PHOTO: AFP

“We expect, in the briefest possible time, clear and exhaustive answers,” Di Maio said.

On Monday, the DRC’s interior ministry blamed the killings on the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), a Rwandan Hutu rebel group.

But the FDLR rejected the

allegation and instead blamed the Rwandan and DRC militaries.

Di Maio said the party was on a trip from the capital Kinshasa to Goma, some 2,500 kilometres (1,550 miles) east, but that Attanasio had “full power” to decide how and where to move within the DRC. —AFP ■

Ecuador prison riot toll rises to 79

AT least 79 inmates died in simultaneous riots blamed on gang warfare at four prisons in Ecuador, officials said Wednesday.

Updating the toll from Tuesday’s violent uprising, the SNAI prison authority said it had retaken control of the prisons which jointly hold more than two-thirds of the South American country’s inmate population.

The military had been deployed to help quell the uprising.

The SNAI said in a statement 37 prisoners had died at two jails in the western port city of Guayaquil, 34 at a prison in Cuenca in the south, and eight in the central Andean town of Latacunga. Several more were injured, as were a number of po-

lice officials.

The SNAI said no warders or police were killed, adding it was “working on the collection of information on human losses and other aspects related to the clashes” authorities have blamed on rival gangs fighting for control. The office of Ecuador’s public defender – an entity akin to an ombudsman defending human rights – called the violence “an unprecedented massacre” and expressed “concern over the lack of security in the country, which is reflected in the increase in crime and violence inside these prison facilities.”

President Lenin Moreno, meanwhile, has ordered the defence ministry to “exercise strict control of arms, munitions

and explosives” at the country’s prisons.

Last year, he had declared a 90-day state of emergency in the country’s jails to try to bring gang activity under control and reduce the violence.

Yet 103 inmates were killed in prisons last year, according to the ombudsman’s office.

In order to reduce prisoner numbers amid the coronavirus epidemic, the government commuted the sentences of people convicted of minor offences, reducing overcrowding from 42 per cent to 30 per cent.

This still left Ecuador’s prison system, with a capacity to house 29,000 inmates in 60-odd facilities, with a prisoner population of 38,000. —AFP ■



Officials say 37 prisoners died at two jails in the western port city of Guayaquil, 34 at a prison in Cuenca in the south, and eight in the central Andean town of Latacunga. PHOTO: AFP

Hong Kong hikes stock stamp duty for first time since 1993

HONG KONG hiked stamp duty on stock trades Wednesday for the first time in almost three decades as it tries to plug a pandemic-induced record budget deficit, sending the local equity market tumbling.

The business-friendly financial hub, which prides itself on low taxes and no capital gains tax, has been battered for two years by long-running political unrest and then the coronavirus, putting a huge strain on government coffers.

In a bid to shore up finances, finance chief Paul Chan said he would lift the levy on share transactions to 0.13 per cent from 0.1 per cent, the first increase since 1993.

The news sent the Hang Seng Index plunging more than three per cent, while bourse operator HKEx collapsed more than 11 per cent at one point.

“Whilst we are disappointed about the Government’s decision to raise stamp duty for stock transactions, we recognize that such a levy is an important source of Government revenue,” a spokesperson for HKEX said.

The economy contacted a record 6.1 percent in 2020 but Hong Kong was already suffering going into the year, having been hit by months of sometimes violent pro-democracy protests that caused much of the city to be shut



Hong Kong’s government has been forced to shore up its coffers after protests and pandemic hammered the city’s economy. PHOTO: AFP

down for extended periods.

The pandemic’s impact was compounded by

geopolitical tensions as Beijing sought to stamp out dissent in the city by introducing a controver-

sial security law that has led to questions being asked about its future as a global financial hub.

The government went into the pandemic with one of the healthiest fiscal reserves in the world but fell into a record deficit of HK\$258 billion (\$33 billion) last year as officials splurged to prop up the economy.

However, the stock market has been one of the best performers this year, as global equities have soared on optimism that the rollout of vaccines, falling infection rates and the easing of lockdowns will fuel a strong economic recovery around the world.

And Chan struck an optimistic note for the economy this year, predicting it will expand between 3.5 and 5.5 per cent. —AFP ■

New York shuts cryptocurrency exchanges which hid losses



Two cryptocurrency trading platforms which hid hundreds of millions in losses agreed to halt activities following a probe by New York state officials. PHOTO: AFP

NEW YORK state authorities said they reached an agreement to shut down activities of two cryptocurrency trading platforms

which hid an estimated \$850 million in losses.

State Attorney-General Letitia James said the agreements this week

with Bitfinex and Tether would end all trading activity with New Yorkers and require penalties totalling \$18.5 million. James’s office began investigating the two companies in 2017 for their trading in “stablecoins,” which are supposed to maintain real-dollar value. The investigation found the two companies made false statements about the backing of the “tether” stablecoin, and about the movement of hundreds of millions of dollars between the two companies to cov-

er up losses. “Bitfinex and Tether recklessly and unlawfully covered-up massive financial losses to keep their scheme going and protect their bottom lines,” said James. “Tether’s claims that its virtual currency was fully backed by US dollars at all times was a lie. These companies obscured the true risk investors faced and were operated by unlicensed and unregulated individuals and entities dealing in the darkest corners of the financial system.” —AFP ■

South Africa sets out budget as economy reels from pandemic

THE South African government will unveil its fiscal 2021 spending plans Wednesday as the continent’s most industrialised economy grapples with the fallout from the coronavirus pandemic on top of a recession.

Finance Minister Tito Mboweni traditionally delivers his national budget speech alongside a potted aloe vera plant, highly resistant to drought, as a symbol of South Africa’s economic resilience.

Resilience will be

needed after a year of rolling restrictions on movement and business to curb the coronavirus outbreak.

“There’s not a lot of money and we need to have a pro-poor and pro-growth balance,” University of Johannesburg business lecturer Daniel Meyer told AFP.

Increasing taxes won’t be an option, however, given the pandemic-induced losses and with local elections due this year.

Unemployment in South Africa soared to a



Finance Minister Tito Mboweni usually delivers his budget speech alongside a potted aloe vera plant, highly resistant to drought, to symbolise economic resilience. PHOTO: AFP

record 32.5 per cent in the fourth quarter of last year, the highest since records began in 2008.

Mboweni “will have to take more loans to finance the budget,” Meyer said. —AFP ■

Chair of Japan automaker Suzuki to step down

SUZUKI’S chairman Osamu Suzuki will retire after more than four decades at the helm of the Japanese carmaker, the company said Wednesday.

The 91-year-old, who married into the firm’s founding family, will leave the post after a shareholder meeting in June and become an adviser, it said.

After he became company president in 1978, Suzuki expanded the automaker’s business in India, where it

has had enormous success, and steadily increased its share in Japan’s small car market.

He became chairman in 2000 and his eldest son, Toshihiro Suzuki, assumed the role of president in 2015.

The carmaker, which had once tied up with General Motors and Volkswagen, forged a capital alliance with Toyota in 2019.

No one will replace him for now, while Toshihiro Suzuki will remain president.—AFP ■

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE M.V SEASTAR EMPRESS

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V SEASTAR EMPRESS VOY. NO. (202002)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **25-2-2021** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **WILMAR** where it will lie at the consignee’s risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

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Mexico begins application of Chinese Sinovac vaccine

MEXICAN health authorities on Monday began to vaccinate older adults with a COVID-19 vaccine developed by Chinese pharmaceutical company Sinovac, after a shipment of doses arrived on Saturday.

Mexico's government designated the first shipment of the Sinovac vaccine to arrive in Ecatepec, a city in central State of Mexico that lies on the outskirts of the capital Mexico City.

Early in the day, brigades of healthcare workers began to administer the vaccine to hundreds of residents aged 60 and over who went to the Las Americas cultural and sports

centre to get vaccinated.

"The first call was very important because it lets us know there is interest on the part of the citizens and, above all, that they are hopeful this issue can now be eradicated from our population," Ecatepec Mayor Fernando Vilchis told reporters at the vaccination site.

Mexican health authorities announced on Sunday that Ecatepec would receive the first batch of the Sinovac vaccine as the country's second-most populous municipality has COVID-19 mortality rates that are above the national average. — Xinhua ■



Staff members unload a temperature-controlled cargo container with COVID-19 vaccines from Chinese company Sinovac inside from a plane at the airport in Mexico City, Mexico, Feb. 20, 2021. PHOTO: AFP

NEWS IN BRIEF

Victory for 'net neutrality' law in California

A federal judge late Tuesday cleared the way for California to begin enforcing a net neutrality law opposed by US telecom titans. THE judge denied a request by cable and telecom service companies to stop implementation of the law, which is intended to prevent them from favouring their own services and blocking or slowing rival services like Netflix.

"THE federal court just rejected the effort by telecom and cable companies to block enforcement of the net neutrality law I authored," state senator Mark Wiener said in a tweet.

"CALIFORNIA can now fully protect an open internet."

AN alliance of telecom firms sued California, arguing the state overstepped its authority in passing the law because such regulatory power is the purview of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC).

THE judge refused to issue a preliminary injunction to stop the law from being enforced while the case works its way through court, where it was not expected to prevail.

"WHEN the FCC, over my objection, rolled back its #net neutrality policies, states like California sought to fill the void with their own laws," FCC acting chairwoman Jessica Rosenworcel said in a tweet.

"TONIGHT a court in California decided that the state law can go into effect. This is big news for #openinternet policy".

ROSENWORCEL'S predecessor, Ajit Pai, departed the post when President Joe Biden took office, clearing the way for a shift in oversight of the internet.

PAI'S tenure as chair of the FCC had been defined by a pro-industry stance, particularly in regard to "net neutrality," leaving telecommunications firms free to block or throttle traffic. —AFP ■

U.S. should fix its energy delivery system in caution against future disasters: media



Photo taken on Feb. 19, 2021 shows empty fruit shelves at a Tom Thumb grocery store in Plano, northern suburban city of Dallas, Texas, the United States. PHOTO: XINHUA

THE United State's energy delivery system, not just in Texas but everywhere, needs a radical overhaul if it is to withstand future shocks and play the role that President Joe Biden has assigned it in the battle against climate change, said The New York Times on Monday in an Opinion article titled "The Les-

sons of the Texas Power Disaster."

"The simple truth is that the state (Texas) was not prepared for the Arctic blast. A few wind turbines froze up, but the main culprits were uninsulated power plants run by natural gas. In northern states, such plants are built indoors; in Tex-

as, as in other Southern states, the boilers and turbines are left exposed to the elements," said the article.

Last week's power failures in Texas had left a number of people dead and millions without power or potable water, sometimes for days, according to the article contributed by The Editorial Board, a group of opinion journalists whose views are informed by expertise, research, debate and certain longstanding values. It is separate from the newsroom.

"There are two lessons here to be absorbed and acted on. First, the country's energy systems must be robust enough to withstand whatever surprises climate change is likely to bring. ... The scientific connection between climate change and extreme cold is not as well established, but it would be foolish to assume that it is not there," it said. — Xinhua ■

Sweden records lowest population growth since 2005

SWEDEN last year recorded the lowest population growth in 15 years, Statistics Sweden announced on Monday.

The population increased by only 0.5 per cent, reaching 10,379,295 on Dec. 31.

"This is almost a halving of the population increase compared with the previous year. We have to go back to 2005 to find a smaller increase, both in relative and absolute numbers," demographics statistician Linus Garp told Xinhua.

The statistics revealed that decreased net immigration was the main reason behind the decelerating population growth.



A man wearing a face mask waits for a bus during the COVID-19 pandemic in Stockholm, capital of Sweden, on Nov. 3, 2020. PHOTO: XINHUA

"The number of immigrants in 2020 was the lowest since 2005, while slightly more emigrated than the year before," Garp said.

However, it's also evident that the COVID-19 pandemic --

which has caused 12,649 deaths by Friday, according to the latest available update from the Public Health Agency -- contributed to the slowdown in population growth. — Xinhua ■

Syria approves Russia's Sputnik Covid vaccine

SYRIA has authorized the use of Russia's Sputnik V coronavirus vaccine, its embassy in Moscow said Monday.

The country is the latest to approve the Russian vaccine, named after the Soviet-era satellite. Sputnik V was registered in August before clinical trials were underway, which left experts wary. But leading medical journal The Lancet published results showing the jab to be

safe and 91.6 per cent effective.

More than 30 countries have approved the vaccine, according to the Russian Direct Investment Fund, which financed its development. Syria in December also signed on to the World Health Organization's Covax initiative to procure vaccines.

The WHO, together with the UN children's agency UNICEF and Gavi, will support Syria in acquiring jabs to initially cov-

er at least three per cent of the population and aim for 20 per cent by the end of the year. Syria has recorded 15,179 coronavirus infections and 998 fatalities from the virus in government-held areas. Territories under Kurdish control in the country's northeast have recorded nearly 8,600 cases and 311 deaths, while the rebel-held northwest has reported 21,121 infections and 408 fatalities. —AFP ■

Builder of Pagodas • Builder of Schools • Builder of Vipassana Centres • Guardian of Temples • Patron of Culture & Art • Founder of Indo Myanmar Friendship Society

Patron – International Dhammagiri Vipassana Association • Patron – Myanmar Hindi Literary Society
Vice President – School Welfare Association, BEHS-2 Dagon (Myoma)



7th March 1946 – 22nd February 2021

Humanitarian by Birth, Industrialist by Profession
Mentor by Choice, Philanthropist by Heart
Charitable by Nature, Monk by Soul

Thiri Tudhama Manijot Dhar
U Maung Shwe @ Shri Banwarilal Goenka
(Son of Late Sayagi S N Goenka &
Late Maa Daw Hla Aye Kyi @ Smt. Illaichidevi Goenka)

Patron – Inter Faith Dialogue Group • Patron - Sanatan Dharma Swayam Sevak Sangh • IPP of All Myanmar Hindu Central Council
President – Myanmar India Business Chamber • Former Executive Committee – Myanmar Industries Association (Group of Plastic Industries)

सील समाधि ज्ञान रा, रतन मिल्या अनमोल,
दलद मिट गयो, सफल हुई यह खोल ।।
ब्रह्मा देस में मिलि विपास्सना, पिहु अमृत घोल,
बौद्ध धर्म और संघ प्रति, श्रद्धा जगी अटूट ।।

Found priceless treasures of Seela,
Samaadhi and Pragya (Insight)...

This Mortal Body became Pure and
Useful again, rid of the Grime of Ignorance...

Found devotion for Buddha's teachings
and the learned gatherings....

In Myanmar I found Vipassana,
the nectar of Immortality that I partake....

.....Baba Doha

Honours

- President's Excellence Award, Myanmar •
- President's Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award, India •

Forever Remembered by

Daw Ni Ni Shwe @ Smt. Sushila Goenka
U Maung Sein @ Rajul & Neha, Advik
Goenka Family & Kedia Family

Bandoola Group • Kalyana Mateta Group
Vipassana Sayagi U Goenka Memorial Trust
Mahaparami Strengthening Matagi Foundation



Condolence Meet : 26th February 2021, 4.00 PM
Park Royal Hotel, Yangon.

Trustee of Central Vishwa Hindu Parishad, India • Trustee of World Buddhist Cultural Foundation

Malaysian king says parliament can sit, in blow for embattled PM

MALAYSIA'S king said Wednesday parliament can sit during a state of emergency, in a blow for the embattled prime minister whose government is on the verge of collapse.

Parliament has been suspended since the king declared a national emergency last month to fight the coronavirus, following a request from Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin as cases spiralled out of control.

The move sparked accusations that Muhyiddin, whose year-old government is riven by infighting, was using the virus crisis to cling to power.

But facing mounting criticism, Sultan Abdullah Sultan Ahmad Shah announced parliament can convene during the emergency following a meeting with the upper and lower house speakers, a palace statement said.



Malaysia's parliament has been suspended since the king declared a national emergency last month. PHOTO: Department of Information Malaysia. PHOTO: AFP

"The king emphasised to the two speakers that Malaysia is a democratic country," said the statement.

"The view in certain quarters that the declaration of an emergency bans the convening of parliament is incorrect."

Parliament will resume on

a date deemed suitable by the king, taking into consideration the advice of the prime minister, the statement said. The state of emergency, due to run until August 1, remains in place, with supporters saying it is needed to channel extra resources to fighting the pandemic. —AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

23 tonnes of cocaine seized in Europe's biggest haul

GERMANY and Belgium have seized 23 tonnes of cocaine in the biggest-ever haul of the drug in Europe, German customs said Wednesday.

"The enormous amount of cocaine would have brought in several billion euros (dollars) in street sales," the customs office said in a statement.

German officers had discovered 16 tonnes of cocaine hidden in containers from Paraguay at the port of Hamburg on February 12. Joint investigations into the stash with Dutch officers led authorities to swoop on another 7.2 tonnes in cocaine at the port of Antwerp in Belgium, German customs said. —AFP ■

German 'IS leader' handed lengthy prison sentence

A NOTORIOUS Iraqi preacher said to be the Islamic State jihadist group's de facto leader in Germany was sentenced to 10 years and six months in prison by a German court on Wednesday.

The 37-year-old Ahmad Abdulaziz Abdullah Abdullah, better known as Abu Walaa, was accused of directing a jihadist network which radicalized young people in Europe and helped them travel to Iraq and Syria. He was found guilty of belonging to a foreign terrorist organization, helping to plan subversive violent acts and financing terrorism. The verdict marked the end of a "special case" which was "very long and very complex", judge Frank Rosenow said as he handed down the verdict after 245 days of hearings. Abu Walaa was in the dock with three other men in a costly, high-security trial that began in 2017 in the northern German town of Celle. —AFP ■

YUFC sign Zwegapin player on two-year loan

YANGON United recently confirmed that defender Thein Than from Zwegapin United had joined the football club on a two-year contract for a new football season of the Myanmar National League, according to

the team statement.

Thein Than revealed his hope upon joining the epic club of MNL.

“I am very proud to join the great club and can’t express how I feel right now. I

know it is hard to be the first line-up player. But I will try hard and play for the wins.”

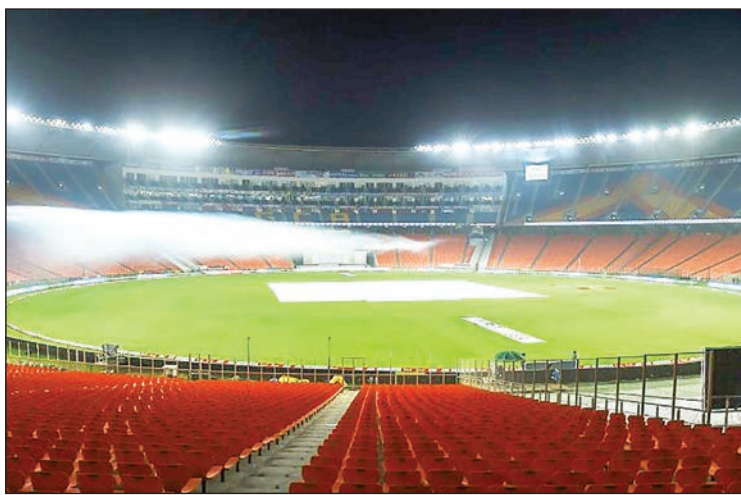
The 25-year-old defender studied his basic football education from the Institute of Sports and Physical Educa-

tion (Mandalay) from 2010 to 2014. Then he started his youth professional career with Horizon Football Club of Myanmar National League-II in 2015. He played well for the club for two years and then moved to My-

anmar National League club Chin United in 2017.

He played for one year in Chin United and then transferred to Zwegapin United in 2018 and played for three years.—GNLM

World’s biggest cricket stadium renamed after India’s Modi



The 110,000-seater stadium in Ahmedabad was renamed after India’s Prime Minister Narendra Modi in a surprise move Wednesday. **PHOTO: AFP**

NEW DELHI — The world’s biggest cricket stadium was renamed after India’s Prime Minister Narendra Modi in a surprise move Wednesday hours before its inaugural international match between India and England.

The 110,000-seater stadium was the pet project of Modi who was chief minister in Gujarat state, where Ahmedabad is the

main city, before taking over as head of government in 2014.

The new name was announced by President Ramnath Kovind during a ceremony ahead of the third Test between India and England.

“This stadium was the dream of the prime minister and he had during his stint as chief minister here floated the idea

of building the world’s largest stadium,” Home Minister Amit Shah said at the event.

The \$100-million, perfectly round venue, with seats in the blue and saffron of the Indian team, promises unobstructed views from every angle.

It eclipses the 100,000-seat Melbourne Cricket Ground in Australia, which dates back to 1853.

The former Motera stadium was inaugurated as the Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel Cricket Stadium by Modi in February 2020 when he hosted a mega-rally there with then US president Donald Trump.

Patel, an independence leader, is immortalized by the world’s biggest statue, the enormous Statue of Unity completed in 2018 measuring 182 metres (597 feet) -- twice the size of the Statue of Liberty -- which has struggled to attract visitors. — AFP ■

Tiger’s legendary golf career in jeopardy after car crash



Tiger Woods, celebrating his 15th major title at the 2019 Masters, has been among the world’s most famous athletes for the past 25 years. **PHOTO: AFP**

LOS ANGELES — The amazing golf career of Tiger Woods, from two-year-old prodigy to his epic comeback 2019 Masters victory, was in jeopardy Tuesday after injuries suffered in a serious solo car crash.

The 45-year-old American, among the world’s most famous athletes for the past quarter-century, underwent surgery for multiple leg injuries following the early morning wreck near Los Angeles.

It could mean the end of a groundbreaking career that has seen Woods win 15 major titles, three shy of the all-time record set by Jack Nicklaus, and 82 US PGA crowns, level with Sam Snead for the

all-time mark.

Woods has faced plenty of prior troubles off the course, including multiple back and knee surgeries, the 2009 revelation of multiple affairs that led to an emotional public apology and divorce from wife Elin Nordegren plus a 2017 reckless driving incident.

Woods was recovering from 2017 back surgery when he was arrested for driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs, his mug shot drawing worldwide attention.

He said he had not realized how prescription drugs he was taking might interact and later pleaded guilty to reckless driving. —AFP ■

Bayern Munich plot quarter-final course by routing Lazio

ROME — Holders Bayern Munich brushed off their recent poor domestic form by throwing down a Champions League marker with an emphatic 4-1 win at Lazio in Tuesday’s last-16 first leg to take a “huge step” towards the quarter-finals.

Robert Lewandowski gave Bayern an early lead before 17-year-old Jamal Musiala scored his first Champions League goal on only his fourth appearance in Europe. Stuttgart-born Musiala, who turns 18 Friday, is now the youngest English goalscorer in Champions League history. A Leroy Sane strike gave Bayern a three-goal half-time cushion

at the Stadio Olimpico before Francesco Acerbi scored an own goal just after the break.

“We are a huge step closer to the quarter-finals,” Bayern

coach Hansi Flick told Sky. Joaquin Correa pulled a goal back early in the second half to give the scoreline some respectability for Lazio. —AFP ■



Bayern Munich’s England Under-21 midfielder Jamal Musiala (R) celebrates scoring his first Champions League goal. **PHOTO: AFP**