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THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

Vol. VII, No. 317, 1st Waning of Tabodwe 1382 ME

www.gnlm.com.mm

Saturday, 27 February 2021

Republic of the Union of Myanmar Announcement of Central Committee for Prevention, Control and Treatment of COVID-19

Fullmoon of Tabodwe 1382 ME
26 February 2021

It is announced that the statements to public, orders, notifications, and directives (excluding eased restrictions) of Union-level organizations and Union ministries effective until 28 February 2021 for prevention, control and treatment of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) will be extended to 31 March 2021 as it is required to continue containment of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19).

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing discusses security, stability and rule of law measures



State Administration Council Chairman Senior General Min Aung Hlaing discusses security, stability and the rule of law measures in Nay Pyi Taw on 26 February 2021.

CHAIRMAN of the State Administration Council and Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing chaired the first meeting of Security, Stability and Rule of Law Committee yesterday.

At the meeting, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing talked about the tasks of the Committee on the management sector, using appropriate and suitable words with the time and situations of the country to meet with the international relation policies of the country in law enactments.

He also said the laws should clearly be defined for the understanding of common people and seeking recommendations from the Office of Attorney-General

of the Union after discussions among the relevant ministries in issuing laws, bylaws and orders.

The Senior General also gave guidance on the expansion of towns and villages out of consideration for the opinion of local people as soon as possible and in line with the rules and regulations, scrutiny of ministries in reforming and extending the term of organizations, legal actions against the formation of illegal organizations, checking the flow of funds at the organizations.

He continued to say conservation of forests in accordance with the Myanmar Forest Policy 1995, prevention of deforestation from clearing forests for firewood and for shifting cultivation

or swidden agriculture, and the limited amount of logging.

The Senior General also explained compensation for land confiscation cases and the return of over 100,000 seized lands by the Tatmadaw, the transfer of unused lands from the ministries.

Lt-Gen Soe Htut, the Secretary of Security, Stability and Rule of Law Committee, reported on the organizational structure and the tasks of his committee.

Union Minister U Myint Kyaing and member of Mandalay Region Administration Council U Myo Aung explained matters related to security, the rule of law, bylaws, policies and orders, cancellation of forest areas, security, peace and stability measures.

Members of the State Administration Council, Union Ministers and the Attorney-General of the Union discussed the formation of ward/village management councils with the participation of civil service personnel, the appointment of capable persons for the stability of the respective areas, the formation of supporting teams at various levels, protection of civil service personnel who do not join civil disobedience movement, greening programmes, the establishment of the reserved forests, the protected public forests and firewood forests, and combined forests and formation of the rule of law supporting teams.

In relation to the discussions,

the Chairman of the State Administration Council advised the appointment of legal advisors in drafting and amending the laws of relevant ministries, effective legal actions against unlicensed cars and education programme for this measure, conducting collective management in the administrative sector in line with the 2008 State Constitution, selection of renowned persons for ward/village administration, legal actions against civil service personnel who take part in CDM, reforestation plans, reduction of firewood and logging, generation of solar powers for rural areas and the need for coordination between the committees in making proper decisions.—MNA ■

Republic of the Union of Myanmar
State Administration Council
Order No 93/2021

Fullmoon of Tabodwe 1382 ME
26 February 2021

**Appointment of Union Election
Commission Members**

The following personnel are appointed as the members of Union Election Commission as per Section 419 of the State Constitution of Republic of the Union of Myanmar:

- (1) U Than Soe
- (2) U Bran Shaung
- (3) U Myint Oo
- (4) U Khin Maung Oo
- (5) Daw Nu Mya Zan
- (6) U Myint Thein
- (7) Dr Ba Maung

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

Republic of the Union of Myanmar
State Administration Council
Order No 94/2021

Fullmoon of Tabodwe 1382 ME
26 February 2021

**Substitution of Kayah State
Administration Council Members**

The following personnel are substituted for the members of Kayah State Administration Council Members with the persons shown against their names.

- | | | |
|-----------------|-------------------|---------------------------|
| (1) U Sein Oo | (substituted for) | U Paw Lu Chan |
| (2) U Saw Hu Hu | (substituted for) | Daw Sue Hmyar Yin Yin Lay |

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

**Announcement to take action in accord
with the law against those who broke
Section 144 of Criminal Procedure**

(26 February, 2021)

THE Tatmadaw was temporarily tasked for taking responsibilities of the State after declaring the state of emergency for the country in accord with the Constitution (2008) as attempts to form the new government by summoning the third Hluttaw was to forcibly take all powers of the State because the relevant government, the Hluttaw and the Union Election Commission severally refused the many-time requests of the Tatmadaw, political parties which faced loss and the majority of the people to address the gigantic errors of more than 10.4 million of voting lists in the multiparty democracy general election held on 8 November 2020 and to call the meeting of the "National Defence and Security Council".

As peaceful protests in democracy were incited to the crowded democracy during the emergency period, then to riot and later to anarchic mob, Section 144 of Criminal Procedure was imposed in some townships as of 8-2-2021 not to occur deterioration of public security, the rule of law, and community peace and tranquillity. After that, although some crowds of people peacefully staged protests, some crowds committed incitements to cause riots and anarchic mobs with forcibly imposing threats to the people and State service personnel who wish to live in a peaceful and stable manner forcibly incite to stage protests and put pressure on them. As such, there were many anarchic riots such as the event of Nay Pyi Taw Thabyegon roundabout, blockage event on rail tracks and event of Gawwein jetty in Mandalay, event in Zaygyo Ward in Mawlamyine, the event of disturbances and pressure on some supporters to the State Administration Council in Yangon Region and events in Hlinethaya Township and the administrator office in Tamway Township. In the events, as rioters committed violent acts harmful to the lives of security forces, one police member lost his life and many security personnel were injured. Many departmental vehicles were damaged as well, as some riotous protesters were dead and wounded.

These riotous demonstrations, which infringed the provisions of the Penal Code in accord with Section 144 of Criminal Procedure were as follows:-

- Section 143 of Penal Code: six months' imprisonment to be sentenced to those involved in any crowds against the law.
- Section 144 of Penal Code: two years' imprisonment to be sentenced to those involved in any crowds against the law holding weapons used to kill.
- Section 145 of Penal Code: two years' imprisonment to be sentenced to those continuously involved in any crowds against the law despite knowing that order has been given to disperse the crowds.
- Section 152 of Penal Code: three years' imprisonment to be sentenced to those assaulting, threatening, barring and bullying the public service personnel who tried to disperse the unlawful crowds.
- Section 188 of Penal Code: six months' imprisonment to be sentenced to those who defied the orders which were lawfully announced by public service personnel.
- Section 333 of Penal Code: 10 years' imprisonment to be sentenced to those, who themselves made public service personnel on duty suffer from severe hurts.
- Section 124-c of Penal Code: 20 years' imprisonment to be sentenced to those who attempted to delay or disarrange duties and obligations of the bodies to have success in restoring peace and stability of the State.

Although the State Administration Council performed issuance of requests and warnings in a patient manner during more than three weeks of the emergency period starting from 1 February 2021, it was found that attempts were made to reach the anarchic mobs intending to harm the majority of the people wishing for stable and peaceful living. As such, if anyone breaks the above-mentioned provisions, severe action will be inevitably taken against them not to harm the interests of the State and social-economic lives of the people.

Information Team
State Administration Council

Announcement of Union Election Commission
26 February 2021

The Union Election inspected the figure of voting lists in Sittway Township of Rakhine State, Hlinethaya (east) Township of Yangon Region and Taunggyi Township of Shan State in the multiparty democracy general elections held on 8 November 2020.

The findings in the respective townships were as follows:

Sr	Township and polling station	Figure of township commission	Figure of MoLIP	Voter lists without any scrutiny cards	Same national scrutiny card found three times and above in voter lists	Same national scrutiny card found two times in voter lists
1	Sittway Township with 108 polling stations in Rakhine State	107,232	117,451	21,914	1,515	11,942
2	Hlinethaya (east) Township with 349 in Yangon Region	362,585	122,546	72,288	372	13,378
3	Taunggyi Township with 245 polling station in Shan State	324,913	279,315	23,318	2,751	34,664

Union Election Commission

Notification of legal actions against CDM instigators 26 February 2021

THE civil service personnel have received salaries and other benefits from the State budgets after they have been appointed at any State department. Therefore, they need to perform their duties and must follow the rules and disciplines without fail. They must carry out the tasks of successive governments despite any instigation and external pressures.

Due to disturbances, hindrances, incitements, pressures, threats, actions against rights, freedom and rights of individuals made by the aggressive persons to destroy the administrative mechanism, some civil service personnel have been absent from their duties. Most of them are found to follow the incitements and the threats, although they have no willing to do so.

Similarly, those who do not expect peace and stability are threatening the administrative officials appointed for region/state levels and ward and village levels by the State Administration Council for peace, stability and the rule of law, with aggressive actions to threat lives, conducting violent protests, removing signboards of administrative offices and disturbing not to enter the office. Such unlawful actions were conducted to confront the administrative mechanism.

These unlawful actions are meant to commit the crimes in accordance with the provisions in the Penal Code.

- Up to 2 years imprisonment for any threat to duties of civil service personnel under Article 189 of the Penal Code
- Up to 7 years imprisonment for hindrance or disturbance not to perform their duties under Article 124 (d) of the Penal Code
- Up to 2 years imprisonment for damaging the motivation, discipline, health, conduct upon the duties of civil service personnel under Article 505 (a) of the Penal Code

The State Administration Council has issued Article 144 from 1 to 26 February 2021 after it took responsibilities for the country and has patiently watched, requested and warned many times. And that, effective actions will be taken against breaching the above-mentioned laws unavoidably in considering the interest of people and prevention of damages to socio-economy of the public.

*Information Team
State Administration Council*

UEC holds meeting with political parties

THE Union Election Commission held a meeting with 53 political parties at its headquarters in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

The UEC Chairman explained the announcement of the State of Emergency on 1 February as per Section 417 of the State Constitution, and transferred the powers of legislation, administration and judiciary by the Acting President to the Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services in accordance with Section 418 (a). Since then, it is deemed that legislative works of all Hluttaws and their respective committees have been suspended, and the respective Hluttaws have been revoked automatically on the day when their terms have ended.

The State Administration



UEC holds meeting with 53 political parties in Nay Pyi Taw on 26 February 2021.

Council also reconstituted the UEC and tasked it with investigating the possible voter fraud, and the new commission began scrutiny on the issue on 5 February.

He also explained the announcements of his commission on the findings of voting figures for 8 townships in Nay Pyi Taw Union Territory, 2 townships in Mandalay Region, the printing

of ballot papers, possible legal actions against forming committees representing Hluttaws.

After the UEC completed the first of five future programmes, it will organize the

free and fair general elections in which citizens, associate citizens, naturalized citizens who have been 18 years old and eligible for voting could cast their votes.

He also said the UEC would cooperate with political parties in organizing successful and better elections.

The representatives from political parties asked for the process of collecting voter lists, voting of the voters outside their constituencies for more than 90 days, security and the rule of law, amendment of the electoral system, legal actions against formation of committees representing Hluttaws, and successful holding of multiparty democracy elections in free and fair procedures.—MNA



MoPFI Union Minister inspects Myanmar Economic Bank in Nay Pyi Taw

UNION Minister for Planning, Finance and Industry U Win Shein inspected the works of Myanmar Economic Bank (Headquarters) in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

The Union Minister checked the banking processes and salary paying system for the government staff and met with the Managing Director, General Managers, Managers and bank staff.

The Union Minister then instructed the region/state Myanmar Economic Bank Managers to conduct systematic banking processes for the people via videoconferencing.

He also appreciated the efforts of bank staff for serving banking services for pensions and salary for government staff during this period and urged to keep carrying out the respective duties.—MNA

Union Minister U Win Shein inspects the Myanmar Economic Bank in Nay Pyi Taw on 26 February 2021.

Vows of medical professionals

The recovery of economy impacted by COVID-19, continuing its vaccination programme, being patient with CDM of civil service personnel, breaching the vows of medical professionals with failure to perform their duties of healthcare services at the public health centres, difficulties of people as they have to get medical services from private clinics and taking legal actions on these cases, issuing permits to the private sector to import COVID-19 vaccine for the public with the approval of Food and Drug Administration..

(Excerpt from the speech to the coordination meeting of the State Administration Council made by the Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Administration Council Chairman Senior General Min Aung Hlaing on 16 February 2021)

Republic of the Union of Myanmar Office of Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Announcement on Ceasefire and Eternal Peace

Full Moon of Tabodwe 1382 ME
26 February 2021

1. The Tatmadaw is exerting strenuous efforts into political, economic and social development of the country by adopting five future programmes and the nine objectives with the formation of the State Administration Council.
2. Moreover, as the implementation of eternal peace is necessary for the country, the Tatmadaw has formed peace negotiation committee to continue peacemaking processes with the ethnic armed organizations which have signed the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement and the remaining potential EAOs who have not signed the NCA.
3. In order to continue peace dialogues of the Tatmadaw Peace Negotiation Committee with NCA-S-EAOs, non-signatories in NCA and completion of peace processes, as well as COVID-19 containment measures, military operations will be suspended from 1 to 31 March 2021, except for the defence and administrative issues, across the country.
4. Therefore, all the relevant organizations and individuals in peacemaking processes are advised to do more works for peace during the period for suspension of military activities and continue more negotiation for eternal peace to be fulfill the aspiration of national people for the prosperity of Union, socioeconomic development and moving forward properly on the democratic way.

Office of Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services



MIFER holds third traditional Htamane making competition

WITH the view to increase solidarity and harmony, friendliness and team spirit, the third competition of Htamane making was held at the Ministry of Investment and Foreign Economic Relations, Office Building No (1), Nay Pyi Taw on 26 February 2021. A total of 3 teams, including Ministerial staffs actively participated at the event. The entertainment programme and prize-awarding ceremony are also included in the occasion and U Aung Naing Oo, Union Minister for Investment and Foreign Economic Relations, attended and made the encouragements.—MNA

Union Minister U Aung Naing Oo and party are encouraging the Htamane-making competitors at the MIFER's third event.

Union Minister U Chit Naing receives CCTV's chief correspondent

UNION Minister for Information received Chief Correspondent from China Central Television (CCTV) Mr Wang Yu yesterday afternoon in Nay Pyi Taw.

During the meeting, they cordially discussed further cooperation between the two countries' media sector and the interactive broadcast of the Myanmar-China Tourism Year Programme.

The meeting was attended by Deputy Minister for Information Brig-Gen Zaw Min Tun, Director-General for the Myanmar Radio and Television U Ye Naing and the Deputy Permanent Secretary.—MNA



The Union Minister, Deputy Minister and officials are seen receiving the CCTV's Chief Correspondent in Nay Pyi Taw 26 February 2021.

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.

Education Minister inspects school reopening plans in Nay Pyi Taw

UNION Minister for Education Dr Nyunt Pe inspected the preparations for reopening schools in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

The Union Minister accompanied by deputy ministers and officials met with the respective education officers, headmasters and teachers of No(10) B.E.H.S, No (9) B.E.H.S, No (7) B.E.H.S in Zabuthiri Township of Nay Pyi Taw Council, including the Government Technical Institute (Nay Pyi Taw).

During his visit, Union Minister instructed to focus mainly on school buildings, classrooms, teaching materials, toilets, water and electricity for the basic schools and to make preparations to fulfil the needs to reopen the schools across the nation, includ-



Union Minister Dr Nyunt Pe and officials inspect the preparations for reopening schools in Nay Pyi Taw on 26 February 2021.

ing housing for education staff.

He also discussed the recruitment of headmasters, effective teaching methods and managements, an equal education system regardless of schools

and the creation of opportunities for all students to achieve equal rights to learn.

Then, the teachers presented their difficulties to the Union Minister.

The Union Minister also inspected the Government Technical Institute (Nay Pyi Taw) in Dhannatheikdi Ward of Zabuthiri Township.

The Union Minister instruct-

ed the officials to cooperate in conducting teaching plans and the management sector to reopen the technical and vocational training during fixed times. He also discussed food and snack manufacturing training courses by collaborating with international countries to create job opportunities for the youths, driving and maintenance of farming machines.

The Government Technical Institute (Nay Pyi Taw) offers regular AGTI courses for students like Civil Engineering, Electronic Engineering, Electrical Power Engineering, Mechanical Engineering and Information Technology. The institute also plans to conduct short-term courses. —MNA



MoSWRR Minister Dr Thet Thet Khine chairs the meeting over the Elders Law (Draft) at her office in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

MoSWRR Union Minister discusses Elders Draft Law

THE Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement organized a meeting over Elders Draft Law yesterday morning.

During the meeting, Union Minister Dr Thet Thet Khine said she is still studying the performance of duties of departments under the ministry including stipulated law/rules and remaining law/rules (draft) to enact.

She also discussed the approval of the Elders Draft Law

if the processes are completed, important services for the elderly people and effective and best public services for the people.

Then, the officials of Social Welfare presented the current work plan of drafting Elders Draft Law, approval processes and formation of Myanmar elderly committee. The Union Minister coordinated the discussion and also highlighted the measures to raise funds for the elderly. — MNA

Buannel Mountain promoted for tourist destination in Chin State

PLANS are underway to make the Buannel Mountain located on a hill at the confluence of Falam Township, Tiddim Township and Reedhorda Town, at 8,226 feet above sea level, as a tourist destination in the post-COVID-19 period.

The Buannel Mountain can be reached from Tiddim for about two hours by car. From Falam, it is about a three-hour drive. It is located more than 20 miles northeast of Reed Lake and about 7 miles on foot.

“The mountain is spectacular for those who like to do hiking and for nature lovers. A guide can be available in Monhlwa village at the foot of the mountain. In addition to the lifestyle of the village, natural beauty can also be felt. For those who want to stay over-



The Buannel Mountain, also known as Leen Nupa mountain, is extraordinary for its hill where there are no trees growing naturally except grasses.

night there, they can report to the village administrator,” said an official from the Chin State Hotels and Tourism Department.

The Buannel Mountain, also known as Leen Nupa mountain, is extraordinary for its hill where there are no trees growing naturally except

grasses. The uniqueness of the mountain includes the main two hills similar in shape are called as the couple mountain; Although people straightens

the curve of the stream meandering in the middle of the hills, at night it continues to flow in the same way as before; The small hills growing on either side of the creek look like ant-hill, and villagers say that if the leaves fall into the stream, the birds will pick them up, and in ancient times it was said to be the place where the goddess Chongtinleri kept her wildlife.

The mountain is home to one of the world’s rarest species of white-necked vulture. It is an area with cherry trees and orchids and colourful flowers around the hills. You will be able to see pastures and landscapes with cows and birds and November and December are the best times to visit.—Chin Twin Thar

Htamane, seasonal meal of Tabodwe

THE month of Tabodwe, the eleventh month in the Traditional Myanmar Calendar, is the time for a seasonable festival of making Htamane. The month astrologically falls in Aquarius season where palm workers trample palm juice.

During Tabodwe, the sun rises at 6:20 in the morning and sets at 5:40 in the evening, therefore, the nights are long and the days are short and the weather is cold.

The month of Tabodwe coincides with the time of Htamane festival and the time of harvest. People in groups or families make Htamane and donate it to monasteries and to the people. Htamane is a Myanmar seasonal food made of sticky rice. The ingredients for

Htamane include sticky rice, oil, peanuts, sesame seeds, coconut and ginger. Firstly, the sticky rice is washed and soaked for about three hours; peanuts are fried without oil and sesame seeds, ginger and coconut shavings are cut to readiness. The cut coconut is fried. Then, the sticky rice is put into it with salt.

After putting water to it, two persons with their paddles and begin kneading, crushing and stirring the Htamane. Then, sesame seeds, peanuts and coconut shavings are mixed with the Htamane and get a seasonal meal of the traditional Myanmar month of Tabodwe.—Zeya Htet (Min Bu)



One of the Htamane-making competitions in progress.

Police detain protestors in Sangyoung, Kamayut of Yangon Region



THE security force members detained the people defying gathering ban in Sangyoung and Kamayut townships of Yangon Region, according to the statement of Myanmar Police Force.

The statement said more than 3,000 people gathered under Myaynigone overfly of Sangyoung Township while more than 3,000 people at Hledan junction of Kamayut Township at 8 am yesterday.

The administrative officials and security force members requested the protest crowds to disperse for many times in accordance with the directives. But the protestors kept protesting

shouting out slangs. When the security members tried to disperse the crowd by using shields in accordance with the law, the protestors seemed to attack the security members. Therefore, the police fired sound bombs to disperse the crowds.

The police also removed the vehicles blocked in the middle of the roads.

The police seized 7 cars, 3 motorcycles, 2 bicycles and detained a total of 31 people-30 men and 1 woman. The officials will take action against them in accordance with the law, the statement said.—MNA

Security members are dispersing the riotous protestors at the Hledan junction of Kamayut in Yangon yesterday.

Protest crackdown at Myaynigone, Hledan

THE protests currently occur in some large cities of the country after the declaration of the State of Emergency on 1 February 2021. As the protests seem to harm the stability of state, security of people, the rule of law and community

peace, the security forces conduct security measures the whole day not to occur riots.

About 3,500 protestors staged strikes shouting out slangs near Myaynigone junction of Sangyoung Township while about 1,500 protestors

near Hledan junction of Kamayut Township of Yangon starting 10am of yesterday morning.

Myanmar Police Force requested the protestors to disperse but the protest crowds used obscene languages by

using hand speakers and attacked the police. Therefore, the police dispersed in accordance with the crowd dispersal methods. The protest crowd dispersed at about 1:30 pm.

These places are under Section 144 of Criminal Pro-

cedure and gathering of five or more people is not allowed.

The security force members detained some of the protestors and the members are still conducting security measures.—MNA

Domestic gold price drops over K30,000 these days

ACCORDING to the domestic gold market, the gold market price in Myanmar dropped over K30,000 these days.

Although the pure gold fetched the highest price of over K1,400,000 per tical on 17 February, it has dropped to K1,366,000 per tical on 26 February.

Recent days saw the gold price unstable in the domestic market. That is the reason why the Yangon gold market halted on 5 February. But, the market was reopened on 10 February.

Consequently, Yangon Region Gold Entrepreneurs Association called an emergency meeting on 4 February before the gold market started. Then, the association made four decisions. They are to use the cash down payment system and encourage people trading with fear and trading with restraint.

Similarly, the international gold price is also on the decline. The gold price was fixed at around US\$1,788 per ounce on 17 February and \$1,770 on 26 February 2021.

In January 2021, the do-

mestic gold fetched the highest price of K1,336,000 per tical on 6 January. It reached the lowest price of K1,316,000 per tical on 28 January.

The local gold price reached the lowest level of K1,310,500 (2 September) and the highest level of K1,314,000 (1 September). In October, the rate ranged between K1,307,800 (30 October) and K1,316,500 (21 October). The rate fluctuated between the highest of K1,312,000 (16 November) and the lowest of K1,278,000 (28 November). In December, the pure yellow metal priced moved in the range of K1,275,000 (1 December) and K1,333,000 (28 December).

With the global gold prices on the uptick, the domestic price hit fresh highs in 2019, reaching K1,000,000 per tical between 17 January and 21 February, crossing K1,100,000 (22 June to 5 August), climbing to K1,200,000 (7 August-4 September), and then reaching a fresh peak of K1,300,000 on 5 September, according to the gold traders. — NN/GNLM



Kyaukse residents earn family income from bamboo wall weaving



The bamboo wall makers are buying the raw bamboo poles from the woods and bamboo shops in Kyaukse town. Then, they are weaving the bamboo walls for sale.

THE locals from Kyaukse township in Mandalay are earning family income from the bamboo wall weaving industry, said U Myint Swe, a bamboo wall weaver from Ye Su Ward in Kyaukse township.

There are many varieties of bamboo species. The local people are using only one kind of bamboo species named "TinWah" to weave the bamboo wall. The people need to use ten bamboo poles to weave the normal bamboo wall, which is four feet in width and 10 feet in length. The bamboo wall makers are spending K 6,500 to buy the bamboo poles and sell them back for K15,000.

The bamboo walls (locally named Hnine Pu walls) are sold for K25,000 per piece. The customers are also ordering bamboo walls with creative designs. Therefore, the local people are earning extra income for their family.

The bamboo wall makers are buying the raw bamboo poles from the woods and bamboo shops in Kyaukse town. Then, they are weaving the bamboo walls for sale. Some makers are buying the natural bamboo poles from the soaked bamboo sellers along the Ayeyawady river in Tada-U township. The buyers are more likely to purchase the walls, which are made with soaked

bamboo, said U Myint Swe.

The Forest Department has also instructed the businessmen who produce the bamboo, applying for the plantation to replant two acres of the bamboo plantation to produce every 100,000 bamboos, said U Htay Maung, the director of the Forest Department in Magway Region.

This instruction aims to prevent the destruction and conservation of bamboo species. The department is guiding to avoid the devastation of bamboo species and providing all possible support. The department officials are also giving awareness campaigns. — Thet Maung (Kyaukse)/GNLM

Notification of COVID Vaccination Fund Management Sub-Committee

From 19-2-2021 to 25-2-2021, local/foreign donors contributed 4.949 million Kyats to the COVID-19 Vaccination Fund Myanmar currency account OA 013733 opened at the Myanma Economic Bank (Nay Pyi Taw). The status of the fund account as of 25-2-2021 is as follows:

COVID-19 Vaccination Fund OA-013733 List

	Kyat
Account opening balance on 19-2-2021	30,110,158,115.39
Received amount of money from (19-2-2021 to 25-2-2021)	4,949,000.00
Closed balance on 25-2-2021	30,115,107,115.39

COVID-19 Vaccination Fund EDC 600012 List

	USD
Account opening balance on 19-2-2021	178,140,149.53
Received amount of money from (19-2-2021 to 25-2-2021)	—
Closed balance on 25-2-2021	178,140,149.53

State Administration Council's Announcement

Some unscrupulous persons are putting various forms of pressures and posing threats to civil service personnel in performing their duties at present. The civil service personnel who have encountered such pressures and threats shall contact the following phone numbers. Strong legal actions will also be taken against those who make such pressures and threats.

Contact phone numbers	-067 412 168	-067 412 246	-067 412 388	-067 412 598	-067 412 539
	-067 412 222	-067 412 387	-067 412 444	-067 412 066	-067 412 540

Following safety rules key to preventing accidents in heavy fog season

With dense fog covered the Yangon River early Friday, the ferry services across the river and commuters faced chaos. Due to sudden changes in visibility, the people had to allow for more time during yesterday morning commute.

Similar weather condition is expected to cover in parts of Myanmar. Fog is a major travel hazard in the winter season in Myanmar on account of the resulting poor visibility. Dense fog these days can cause traffic accidents on roads, especially on expressways and waterways. Hence, the authorities must enforce safety rules for ferries in this heavy-fog season. Drivers must use headlights while travelling on highways when visibility is below 100 metres. Before setting off on a foggy journey, drivers must make sure their lights - especially the fog lights - are working properly. In extremely dense fog, when visibility is near zero, the best course of action is to first turn on hazard lights and then pull into a safe location, such as a parking lot or driveway to pull into, vehicles can be parked off the side of the road. For ferries plying on the rivers, especially the Yangon River,

during rush hour, drivers must follow the safety rules and refrain from operating services in early morning and evening when visibility is limited due to fog.

The lives of passengers are in the hands of ferry drivers, and those who violate the safety rules deserve to be fined or suspended for the sake of passengers.

Domestic ferry operations play a crucial role in the movement of people and goods in the region, and sometimes, they serve as the only possible or reasonably affordable means of transport. To enforce safety rules, the authorities can fine owners and suspend crew licences. To prevent unnecessary accidents in the river, both local authorities and ferry operators should respect the legal machinery in dealing with violations of safety rules.



Three vaccine challenges for 2021

By Swee Kheng Khor

Vaccinating the world against COVID-19 is one of mankind's most critical non-war-time efforts ever. Many countries have developed ambitious, politically sensitive, and carefully sequenced vaccination plans, but executing them successfully will be a challenge.

To succeed, policymakers should build three realistic assumptions into their vaccination planning for 2021 and beyond. First, delays are inevitable. More than two months after the world's first COVID-19 vaccine injection on 8 December, 2020, hopes of a rapid rollout are fading in many countries.

Production holdups have triggered European Union (EU) threats of legal action and export restrictions. And there are several reasons to expect further delays.

For starters, the manufacturing constraints are daunting. Firms must scale up or repurpose factories to produce billions of doses annually, and vaccine supply chains are still being built even as they are being stretched. For example, the Pfizer/BioNTech and CureVac vaccines use lipid nanoparticles manufactured by the same supplier.

Moreover, capacity expansion through technology transfer - say, from AstraZeneca to Thailand's Siam Biosciences - involves legal and technical hurdles. If new coronavirus variants reduce current vaccines' effectiveness, vertically integrating the research-to-manufacturing process may enable a faster and more agile response.

Other legal and regulatory obstacles could also cause delays. Many countries have signed bilateral advance pur-

chase agreements (APAs) with vaccine manufacturers, most of which are subject to the vaccine gaining regulatory approval and involve phased delivery and a refundable deposit. But APAs may be difficult to enforce, and international law must evolve rapidly for dispute resolution to be effective.

The United Kingdom's (UK) regulator was the first to approve the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine because it benefited from rolling data submissions from clinical trials - an opportunity that should be accorded to other regulators, regardless of market size or wealth. A new approval process may be needed for vaccine variations in response to new coronavirus variants, perhaps modelled after the abbreviated approval pathway for seasonal variations in influenza vaccines.

Furthermore, a population-wide COVID-19 vaccination programme poses formidable logistical challenges and will require an all-of-society effort. Governments may need to provide around-the-clock or drive-through vaccination facilities, with proper cold-chain support, while a robust adverse-event reporting system must accompany adequate indemnity protections.

Wastage, sabotage, and weaponized vaccine hesitancy may occur. But countries can mitigate these potential problems by planning properly and learning from one another.

The second assumption is that COVID-19 vaccines will aggravate global inequality in 2021. All Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries except Turkey have procured more doses than their population needs; Canada, for example, has enough for nearly six times its population.



A staff member inspecting a fridge that will be used to store COVID-19 coronavirus vaccines at the Zuellig Pharma facility in Singapore on 20 January, 2020. PHOTO: AFP

This "vaccine apartheid", as Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) Executive Director Winnie Byanyima calls it, means that rich countries will most likely achieve widespread vaccination coverage and economic recovery sooner, leaving poor countries far behind.

COVID-19 vaccination programs could also worsen inequalities within countries, just as the pandemic itself has already disproportionately affected ethnic minorities, women, immigrants, and the poor. The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends vaccinating frontline health workers and the elderly first, but some advocate giving priority to ethnic minorities or the poor. Indigenous communities, migrants, and refugees could be marginalized further.

Meanwhile, wealthy elites could secure early vaccinations through the private sector, the black market, or "vaccine tourism." Big businesses may purchase vaccines for their employ-

ees or lobby for them to be given priority as "essential workers"; Amazon and Uber are already doing so. And "vaccination passports," if implemented, could be discriminatory.

Mitigating this inequality risk will require a multi-layered approach. The United Nations (UN) General Assembly and Security Council must govern global public goods more actively, while United States (US) President Joe Biden's administration needs to provide thoughtful and inclusive global leadership.

Governments must sustain the financial and political support that the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access (COVAX) Facility needs to make vaccines available everywhere in the world. The UN Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review process for all member states could be expanded to include country-level COVID-19 outcomes and vaccine equity. And citizens, civil-society groups, and media must remain vigilant to prevent unequal vac-

cine distribution.

Lastly, policymakers should assume that procurement decisions could become a proxy for the US-China rivalry. Geopolitics is already influencing public procurement, notably in some Western countries' decision to bar the Chinese telecommunications firm Huawei from their 5G networks.

When it comes to vaccines, geopolitics could encroach on decision-making criteria like data, quality, availability, value, and cost.

Vaccines could also feature in the US-China competition over global standards, which already encompasses artificial intelligence, smart cities, and lithium batteries. COVID-19 vaccines may require new standards for research methods, primary endpoints in trials, clinical outcomes, and production.

Just as the US and the Soviet Union engaged in space and arms races during the Cold War, America and China could enter

a vaccines race with the aim of gaining scientific prestige, standard-setting authority, soft power, and financial rewards. Competition is good if it gives countries a choice of cheap, cutting-edge vaccines.

But it could turn ugly if superpowers weaponize vaccine supplies, prices, or patents, or use them as bargaining chips in "vaccine diplomacy".

If that happens - if choosing vaccines means choosing sides - small and medium-size powers can adopt a hedging strategy or "vaccine portfolio" approach, as Australia, Malaysia, and Singapore are doing already. But this could still leave countries caught in a bind if they are forced to choose whether to weight their portfolios toward the US or China.

To escape the bind, such countries could use international mechanisms like COVAX, or band together for pooled procurement using models like the Pan American Health Organization's Revolving Fund or the UN International Children's Emergency Fund's (UNICEF) initiatives to strengthen vaccine procurement.

COVID-19 vaccines offer a welcome glimmer of hope after a bleak first year of the pandemic. But translating this hope into effective action will require policymakers to be resourceful in mitigating delays, inequality, and geopolitical risk.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Swee Kheng Khor, a Malaysian physician specializing in health policies and global health, holds fellowships at Chatham House, the United Nations University, and the Institute of Strategic & International Studies (ISIS) Malaysia.

SOURCE: THE ASEAN POST

Worldwide coronavirus deaths top 2.5 million: AFP count

COVID-19 has killed more than 2.5 million people worldwide since the pandemic began in December 2019, according to an AFP count based on official figures at 1730 GMT Friday.

In total, 2,500,172 deaths and 112,618,488 cases have been reported.

With 842,894 deaths, Europe

is the hardest-hit region, followed by Latin America and the Caribbean (667,972 deaths) and the US and Canada (528,039).

Almost half of the fatalities have occurred in just five countries: the US (506,232), Brazil (249,957), Mexico (182,815), India (156,705) and Britain (122,070).

These figures are based on

daily tolls provided by health authorities in each country and exclude later re-evaluations by statistical organizations, as has happened in Russia, Spain and Britain.

The world passed one million reported coronavirus deaths on September 28, a little over nine months after the first death was recorded in China in Janu-

ary 2020. It took just four more months, until January 15, to reach two million deaths.

But the pace of deaths has slowed since late January this year, with 66,800 last week or an average of 9,500 per day - well below the deadliest week of January 20 to 26, when 101,400 deaths or 14,500 per day were

registered. The present daily figure is similar to that seen in early November.

Over the past week, more than one-third of global deaths have come in Europe's 52 countries and territories, although the figure has fallen 14 per cent compared with the previous week, to around 3,400 per day.

Other continents have also seen falling death rates, with the US and Canada dropping 23 per cent, to 2,150 per day, falling faster than Europe and Africa, which shed 13 per cent to 378 per day.

Latin America and the Caribbean's rate fell seven per cent, to 2,720 daily deaths.

SOURCE: AFP

Objectives of 76th Anniversary Armed Forces Day

FOR the Tatmadaw to join hands with the entire nation to safeguard democracy, which is the aspiration of all the nationalities of the country, from deviating from its path, in accord with the basic principles of the Constitution, while observing Our Three Main National Causes, which is the national policy;

To protect the people from all dangers including natural disasters at any time and in any situation and to provide all-round assistance for ensuring social security of the people;

To restore eternal peace based on NCA, without deviating from Our Three Main National Causes, as the cessation of armed conflicts is the principal requirement in realizing democracy;

To build a strong and compact Standard Army, which has the combat prowess and combat power, to effectively safeguard the State peace and stability and sovereignty.

Myanmar Daily Weather Report (Issued at 7:00 pm Friday 26 February, 2021)

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

FORECAST VALID UNTIL NOON OF THE 27 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 Yangon, Taninthayi Regions and Northern Shan, Chin, 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 isolated light rain or thundershowers in Kachin State.

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 27 February, 2021: Generally fair weather.

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 27 February, 2021: Generally fair weather.

FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 27 February, 2021: Generally fair weather.

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Paris city hall suggests three-week lockdown to combat virus

THE Paris city hall suggested a three-week lockdown to quell rising coronavirus cases in the French capital but faced swift accusations Friday that such a move was a political stunt with little effect.

France has so far avoided a third lockdown to battle COVID-19 but, with case numbers starting to rise, the government of President Emmanuel Macron is beginning to impose restrictions on a local basis.

Mayors do not have the power to impose lockdowns which must be approved by the government but Paris deputy mayor Emmanuel Gregoire said a three-week measure would give “hope of everything reopening again” including cafes and cultural establishments.

“You can’t force yourself to live in a semi-prison for months. Now you have to make coura-



The Arc de Triomphe in Paris on March 17, 2020, as a then strict lockdown came into effect in France to stop the spread of COVID-19. **PHOTO: AFP**

geous decisions,” he told France Info radio late on Thursday, adding the city hall would propose the measure to the government.

However right-wing critics slammed the call, saying that the move by the city hall under Socialist Anne Hidalgo was elec-

tioning ahead of a possible presidential bid by the mayor next year.

“Anne Hidalgo cannot use

Parisians, play with their life and future, for the sake of PR stunts aimed above all at opposing Emmanuel Macron,” said the right-wing Change Paris group in a statement. Its leader Rachida Dati, a former minister who stood against Hidalgo in last year’s local polls, added on Twitter: “A lockdown endangers the economic and psychological life of thousands of people and must not be about 2022” presidential elections. The head of the wider Ile de France region that includes Paris, Valerie Pécresse, also ridiculed the suggestion, telling the *Le Parisien* daily that “millions of people” travel in and out of the region every day. The controversy comes after the French Riviera around Nice and the northern coastal city of Dunkirk – two coronavirus hotspots – were placed this week under weekend lockdown. —AFP ■

Lady Gaga’s dogs stolen in Hollywood shooting - \$500,000 reward for their return

TWO French bulldogs belonging to US pop singer Lady Gaga were stolen in Los Angeles after the employee walking them was shot and wounded, US media reported Thursday.

Los Angeles police said a gunman had taken the dogs and fled the Hollywood location in a vehicle Wednesday night, and that another man in his 30s was shot and hospitalized, but did not confirm any person’s identities.

Los Angeles: somebody shot Lady Gaga’s dog walker on Sierra Bonita and Sunset last night and stole two of her French bulldogs. We need to find Gustav and Koji. \$500,000 reward for safe return. Email: KojiandGustav@gmail.com pic.twitter.com/meSPCWAcUi

— Molly Knight (@molly_knight) February 25, 2021

Celebrity website TMZ reported that Lady Gaga had offered a \$500,000 reward for

the return of the dogs, named Koji and Gustav, “no questions asked.”

A third dog, Asia, was recovered by law enforcement at the scene of the attack, and reportedly later collected by another member of the singer’s staff.

French bulldogs are a coveted and expensive pedigree breed that can sell for thousands of dollars. It was not clear if Lady Gaga’s pets were deliberately targeted. —AFP ■

Four die in Sweden after falling through ice on lake



A frozen lake. **PHOTO: AFP**

FOUR people were killed when they fell through the ice on a lake in southern Sweden on Thursday, police said, as the country experiences a spell of unseasonably mild weather.

Four men aged between 65

and 75 were found in a hole in the ice on Savsjo lake, south of the town of Jonkoping, and could not be resuscitated after being pulled out of the water, a local police spokesperson told AFP.

The exact circumstances of

the incident were yet to be determined, she said.

Accidents caused by people walking across unstable ice are common in Sweden, but it is rare for the death toll to be so high.

After several weeks of intense cold throughout most of the country, which drew walkers to frozen lakes and estuaries, parts of Sweden have seen a rapid hike in temperature over the past few days.

A national heat record for February was set on Thursday, according to the Swedish Meteorological and Hydrological Institute.

A temperature of 16.8 degrees Celsius was registered in Kalmar, in the southeast of the country. —AFP ■

US to release report pointing at Saudi prince in Khashoggi murder



The US director of national intelligence is expected to release a damning report Friday that fingers Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman for the brutal murder and dismemberment of dissident journalist Jamal Khashoggi in October 2018. **PHOTO: AFP**

THE US director of national intelligence is expected to release a damning report Friday that fingers Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman for the brutal murder and dismemberment of dissident journalist Jamal Khashoggi in October 2018.

The classified report is believed to say that, based on intelligence collected by the CIA and other spy bodies, the kingdom’s de facto leader directed the assassination of the respected US-based writer in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul.

The prince has steadfastly denied a part in the murder, even as some of his closest advisors have been shown to be deeply involved.

Intent on strengthening relations with Riyadh, previous

US president Donald Trump’s administration avoided making the report public or naming Prince Mohammed in the case.

Its declassification and release comes just as President Joe Biden endeavors to reset US relations in the Middle East and return principles of human rights to a prominent position in US policy.

Ahead of the release, Biden spoke on the telephone Thursday with Saudi King Salman, Prince Mohammed’s father, in their first discussion since he became president five weeks ago.

A White House statement on the call did not mention the Khashoggi report, but Biden said Wednesday that he had read it. —AFP ■

UK COVID-19 variant becomes dominant in Belgium



A man waits to receive a COVID-19 vaccine at a vaccination centre in the Zaventem Skyhall in Brussels airport. **PHOTO: AFP**

THE more contagious British variant of the coronavirus is now the dominant strain in Belgium, authorities said Friday, as they explained why infection numbers have again started to rise.

“Last week, we estimate that 53 per cent of infections were caused by the UK variant, against 38 per cent a week earlier,” a spokesman for the government’s coronavirus response, Steven Van Gucht, told a news conference.

The UK variant, technically identified as B.1.1.7, is considered a “variant of concern” because of its high infectivity – though it has not been shown

to be more dangerous in terms of deaths or intensive hospitalization than earlier forms of the coronavirus.

It emerged late last year in southeast England, prompting EU countries to quickly restrict movement from Britain.

Around eight per cent of new infections in Malta are of the variant, Superintendent of Public Health Charmaine Gauci said on Friday.

Current COVID-19 vaccines are shown to be effective against the UK variant.

That, however, is not the case with other variants that have popped up elsewhere in

the world: one in South Africa (B.1.351) and another in Brazil (P.1), both of which appear to have a level of vaccine resistance.

In Belgium, just 2.2 per cent of all detected cases are of the South African variant, and 0.9 per cent are of the Brazilian strain.

In neighbouring France, authorities say the UK variant now accounts for “around half” the COVID-19 cases.

Belgium on Friday recorded a 24 per cent rise in infections compared to the previous week, with a daily average of 2,300 cases detected.

According to Van Gucht, that increase has pushed the country back to the situation it was in around a month ago.

All age groups are affected by the surge in infections, except for those over 80 years old who have since January been vaccinated in priority.

With a population of 11.5 million and a death toll of over 22,000, Belgium has the highest fatalities compared to its population of any country in the world.

Hospitalisations are on the increase, too, with 1,761 receiving treatment and 368 of patients in intensive care. —AFP ■

Boeing 777 makes emergency landing in Moscow after engine trouble

A BOEING 777 airliner on Friday made an emergency landing in Moscow with engine problems, the operating airline said, days after another model rained down engine debris over the United States.

State-owned Rossiya airline said the crew had registered the “incorrect operation of the engine control sensor” on a cargo flight from Hong Kong to Madrid and “decided to make an emergency landing in Moscow.”

Online flight trackers confirmed the flight was carried out with a Boeing 777.

The airline said the unscheduled landing went ahead without incident and that no one was injured. The plane was due to continue its onward journey to Madrid after a delay of several hours, it added.

The incident came just days after Boeing confirmed that dozens of its 777 aircraft



A Boeing 777 airliner on Friday made an emergency landing in Moscow with engine problems, the operating airline said, days after another model rained down engine debris over the United States. **PHOTO: AFP**

were grounded globally resulting from the engine of a United Airlines plane catching fire and scattering debris over a suburb of Denver, Colorado.

Rossiia told AFP later Friday that the Boeing 777 that made the emergency landing in Moscow was fitted with a different make of engine to the plane that shed engine parts in the United States last week.

The United Flight engine failure was a fresh blow for the beleaguered US aviation giant that was forced to ground another fleet of planes after a series of deadly crashes. Malfunctions in engines are not uncommon and most airplanes are designed to be able to fly for several hours on one engine until crew identify and land at the nearest available airport. —AFP ■

Widow of slain Italian ambassador says he was ‘betrayed’



Zakia Seddiki (rear centre), wife of Italy’s slain ambassador to the Democratic Republic of Congo Luca Attanasio, standing by a hearse after attending the state funeral of her late husband. **PHOTO: AFP**

THE Italian ambassador killed in an ambush in the Democratic Republic of Congo while travelling on a UN convoy was “betrayed” by someone close to the family, his widow said in an interview published Friday.

Luca Attanasio, 43, was shot dead on Monday after unidentified assailants ambushed a two-vehicle convoy from the UN’s World Food Programme (WFP) in the eastern North Kivu province, near the Rwanda border.

The ambassador’s bodyguard from Italy’s Carabinieri police forces, Vittorio Iacovacci, 30, and a Congolese WFP driver, Mustapha Milambo, 56, were also killed. Six others survived the attack. “Luca was betrayed by someone close to us, to our family,” Attanasio’s wife, Zakia Seddiki, told Italian newspaper *Il Messaggero*.

“Someone who knew his movements has spoken, has sold him out and betrayed him,” she said without giving more detail as investigations are under way.

Attanasio, who had been Italy’s chief diplomat in Kinshasa since 2017, lived in the capital with Seddiki and their three daughters. He was given a state funeral in Rome on Thursday, and was due to be buried in his home town of Limbiate, near Milan, on Saturday. Meanwhile, the *La Stampa* daily said Attanasio had in 2018 asked his

ministry to double his embassy security detail from two to four Carabinieri officers, but his request was denied.

According to *La Stampa*, the previous ambassador had four Carabinieri. The Italian foreign ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the report.

The WFP said Thursday that three separate investigations have been launched into Monday’s attack – by the UN’s security department, as well as by Italian and Congolese authorities.

According to Congolese and Italian authorities, the convoy was ambushed three kilometres (two miles) from its destination, the town of Kiwanja, where the UN convoy was due to visit a school.

After shooting Milambo, six assailants with AK-47s assault weapons forced the occupants of the two vehicles to follow them into the Virunga National Park, a wildlife reserve.

When nearby rangers and Congolese soldiers alerted by the gunfire approached the assailants, Attanasio and Iacovacci were shot.

DRC authorities accused the Rwandan Hutu rebels of the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), who have denied any involvement and instead blamed members of the Rwandan and Congolese armies. —AFP ■

NEWS
IN BRIEFNigeria gunmen
kidnap more than
300 schoolgirls, say
police

MORE than 300 schoolgirls were abducted by gunmen in northwest Nigeria on Friday in the country's latest mass kidnapping, and a rescue bid was under way, regional police said.

A suspected criminal gang attacked the Government Girls Science Secondary School in Jangebe, a village in Zamfara state, around 1 am, police and a local official said.

It is Nigeria's third school attack in less than three months -- a series that has revived traumatic memories of the "Chibok girls" kidnapped by jihadists nearly seven years ago.

Zamfara State Police Command, working in collaboration with the military, "commenced a joint search and rescue operations with a view to rescuing the 317 students," police spokesman Mohammed Shehu said in a statement. — AFP ■

Thousands march in
Armenia to demand
PM's resignation

SEVERAL thousand opposition supporters marched through the capital of Armenia on Friday to demand Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's resignation over his handling of last year's war with Azerbaijan which many see as a national humiliation.

Columns of people angry with the prime minister flooded the streets of central Yerevan, waving Armenian flags and chanting anti-government slogans, hours before a planned meeting with the ex-Soviet country's president. Former Prime Minister Vazgen Manukyan, who has been put forward by the opposition to replace Pashinyan, called on all Armenians to join the protest. "The people must take to the street and express their will so that we can avoid bloodshed and turmoil," he said at the rally. "Either we get rid of them," Manukyan said, referring to Pashinyan and his allies who control parliament, "or we will lose Armenia." —AFP ■

India, China discuss further troop pullback from border

INDIA and China's foreign ministers have discussed further de-escalating tensions at a disputed border after a pullback of troops in response to a deadly clash last year, New Delhi and Beijing said Friday.

The nuclear-armed neighbours fought a border war in 1962 and last June their worst skirmish in decades left 20 Indian troops and four Chinese dead on the inhospitable frontier between Ladakh and Tibet, the Line of Actual Control.

Both sides have sent thousands of extra troops and military hardware to the area since the clash.



Chinese soldiers undertake a military disengagement along the Line of Actual Control at the India-China border in Ladakh. PHOTO: INDIAN MINISTRY OF DEFENCE/AFP/FILE

But India on Sunday said the two countries had completed a "disengagement" of troops and tanks from one part

of the disputed zone around the high-altitude Pangong Tso lake, following nine rounds of military talks. In a 75-minute call with counterpart Wang Yi on Thursday, Indian Foreign Minister S. Jaishankar said they "should now quickly resolve the remaining issues", according to his office.

"(Jaishankar) said that once disengagement is completed at all friction points, then the two sides could also look at broader de-escalation of troops in the area and work towards restoration of peace and tranquillity," a statement said. —AFP ■

EU eyes more 'responsibility' for its own security



NATO's Jens Stoltenberg will take part in Friday's video summit amid concerns that the EU's defence push could undermine the US-backed alliance. PHOTO: AFP

EU leaders agreed Friday that the bloc should take more responsibility for its own security,

insisting Brussels needs to be a strong partner for NATO and the United States.

Debate has raged for decades over what role Brussels should play on defence, and individual nations have often been reluctant to agree moves to integrate military capabilities.

"We want to act more strategically, to defend our interests and to promote our values," European Council President Charles Michel tweeted after a video summit.

"We need to increase our ability to act autonomously and strengthen our cooperation with our partners."

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg joined the summit to talk up cooperation in the face of worries the EU's

drive could undermine the US-backed alliance at a time new President Joe Biden is looking to strengthen it.

"We share very much the same population, the same members and the same neighbourhood and the same challenges," Stoltenberg said ahead of the encounter.

"It makes it absolutely obvious that we need to work together."

France is championing a push for "strategic autonomy" -- arguing the coronavirus pandemic, a resurgent Russia and former US leader Donald Trump's threats to cut off allies show Europe has to be able to stand alone. —AFP ■

Thousands rally in Georgia after opposition chief's arrest

THOUSANDS of anti-government protesters rallied in the Georgian capital Friday to demand early elections after the arrest of a top opposition leader.

Protesters marched through the city's main street, led by the leaders of all of Georgia's opposition parties waving Georgian, EU, and US flags, before staging a rally outside parliament.

Georgia plunged deeper into political crisis following this week's arrest of Nika Melia -- the leader of the country's main opposition force, the United National Movement (UNM), and a violent police raid on the party headquarters.

"I am in prison, but I am free," Melia wrote in an address to demonstrators read out at the rally.

"We are fighting for freedom and we will prevail in this

struggle."

Supporters said they were energized by Melia's resolve.

"Nika's example inspires all of us," 20-year-old student Tornike Beridze told AFP.

"We will not stop until he is set free, until Georgia is free from Georgian Dream's authoritarianism," he said referring to the ruling party.

Nata Shavishvili, 46, said Melia had become "an icon of Georgians' aspirations to build a democratic, European country."

Ex-Soviet Georgia has faced political turmoil since parliamentary elections in October that the opposition said was rigged to give the ruling party a narrow victory.

Opposition members have refused to enter the new parliament in a boycott that weighs heavily on the ruling party's le-



The opposition has staged mass rallies since October. PHOTO: AFP

gitimacy.

'Democratic setback'

Melia, a 41-year-old who has united Georgia's traditionally divided opposition forces, his prosecution on charges of "organizing mass violence" during anti-government protests in 2019 as politically motivated.

A court in Tbilisi last week

ordered Melia to be placed in pre-trial detention after he refused to pay an increased bail fee in the case.

Prime Minister Giorgi Gakharia resigned over plans to arrest Melia, warning it would escalate tensions, but police moved in anyway and detained him on Tuesday. —AFP ■

G20 finance chiefs meet on Covid recovery, aid to poor countries

G20 finance ministers and central bankers were meeting Friday to align plans to relaunch the global economy after the coronavirus pandemic and to limit the harm to the worst-off nations shut out of the race for vaccines.

The video conference, which Italy was chairing as G20 president, is the first such meeting in post for US President Joe Biden's new Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen, who is expected to be far less confrontational than Donald Trump's representatives at past gatherings. "With the new American administration, it will certainly be easier to reach a deal" for increased aid to poorer nations, international economy professor Lucia Tajoli of Milan's Polytechnic business school told AFP. But while

"Joe Biden's approach to international cooperation is much more open... it won't be easy to gather funds given the economic crisis hitting many countries," she added. On Thursday, Washington urged wealthy G20 countries to launch a truly global, coordinated

vaccination campaign.

"Without access to vaccines, low-income countries in particular will experience further tragic loss of life and needlessly delay their economic recoveries," Yellen wrote in an open letter to her G20 finance counterparts. —AFP ■



Former Federal Reserve chief Janet Yellen is attending the G20 finance ministers' gathering for the first time as Joe Biden's Treasury Secretary. PHOTO: AFP

Tokyo's Nikkei ends down 4 per cent after US rout



Falls of Wall Street pressed investors in Tokyo to hit the sell button from early in the trading day. PHOTO: AFP

TOKYO'S key Nikkei index tumbled four per cent at the close on Friday after a rout on Wall Street as rising bond yields in the United States and elsewhere stoked inflation fears.

The Nikkei gave up 3.99 per cent, or 1,202.26 points, to 28,966.01, marking its largest fall since June 2016.

The broader Topix in-

dex dropped 3.21 per cent, or 61.74 points, to 1,864.49. "Equities are starting to quiver on the outlook for higher rates with losses led by the tech sector," said Tapas Strickland, senior analyst at National Australia Bank.

SMBC Nikko Securities said "rapid surge of the US yield heightened the sense of caution and

triggered selling across the board." "Falls did not stop in the afternoon session and the market ended at the day's low," the brokerage said. Stocks had been under pressure as investors monitored the 10-year US Treasury yield, which has been rising sharply in recent days and got as high as 1.61 per cent on Thursday. —AFP ■

European stocks pull back after sharp global losses

EUROPEAN stock markets pulled back Friday after sharp losses in Asia overnight due to concerns over the prospect of high inflation and interest-rate rises that could hamper economic recovery from the coronavirus pandemic.

The dollar rose against its main rivals ahead of Congress later Friday voting on US President Joe Biden's enormous \$1.9-trillion economic rescue package. Oil prices fell after striking 13-month peaks

Thursday on keen demand. Vaccine rollouts, slowing Covid infection rates and Biden's stimulus package are proving to be a double-edged sword for traders as they weigh the much-needed return to pre-pandemic life with the prospect that prices could rise, possibly sharply.

There is a worry that surging inflation could threaten one of the key pillars of the rally on world markets from their March nadir -- record-low borrowing costs. —AFP



While optimistic about the economic outlook, world markets have turned bearish on concerns about a hike in interest rates coming sooner than expected.

PHOTO: AFP

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V NEGAR VOY. NO. (SCY1093)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V NEGAR VOY. NO. (SCY1093)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **27-2-2021** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **MITT** where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

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M.V FROSSO K

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V FROSSO K VOY. NO. (2402)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **28-2-2021** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **MIPL** where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

Phone No: **2301928**

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:
M/S CHUN AN INTERNATIONAL LOGISTICS CO LTD

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V OSLO TRADER VOY. NO. (106W/107E)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V OSLO TRADER VOY. NO. (106W/107E)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **27-2-2021** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **MITT/TMT** 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.

Phone No: **2301185**

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

M/S SEALAND MAERSK ASIA PTE LTD

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V HOSEI OCEAN

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V HOSEI OCEAN** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **27-2-2021** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **MITT** where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

Phone No: **2301185**

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

M/S EVERETT ASIA LINE LTD

Coinbase plans to go public with direct listing

COINBASE, an exchange for bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies, filed papers Thursday to become publicly traded in the latest sign of the rise of digital currencies.

The San Francisco-based group, which plans a direct listing rather than initial public offering, pointed to strong growth in 2020 as it announced itself as a disruptor of the financial system.

The current financial system “is rife with high fees, delays, unequal access and barriers to innovation,” said Coinbase Chief Executive Brian Armstrong, according to a securities filing laying out the group’s plans.

Facilitating and promoting digital currency marks a path to a “more global, free and fair alternative,” Armstrong said.

“The cryptoeconomy is just getting started,” he said. “It is not intended to replace the traditional economy, but

instead be a complement to it, much like email was to paper mail.”

The Coinbase announcement comes in the wake of surging values of bitcoin as mainstream companies such as BNY Mellon and Mastercard unveil programs to enable digital currency use.

Coinbase reported a 136 per cent surge in 2020 revenues to \$1.1 billion. It reported a profit of \$322 million, compared with a loss of \$30 million in 2019.

In employing a direct listing, Coinbase investors and employees will convert their ownership stakes into stock.

This strategy has become an increasingly popular way to become publicly traded and was used earlier by Spotify, Slack and Palantir.

Coinbase had 43 million retail users across 7,000 institutions on its platform in 2020. —AFP ■



Coinbase filed papers to become publicly traded through a direct listing. PHOTO: AFP

NEWS IN BRIEF

India exits recession with 0.4 per cent

INDIA’S economy grew 0.4 per cent year-on-year in the final quarter of 2020, official data showed Friday, ending its first recession since independence as easing coronavirus restrictions sparked a modest recovery.

THE country has struggled to claw back lost ground after a stringent, months-long lockdown caused the labour market to collapse and the economy to contract by nearly a quarter between April and June.

INDIA entered a “technical recession” last year for the first time since gaining independence in 1947 after registering two successive quarters of contraction. The government now estimates annual GDP will fall eight per cent in 2020-21.

THE latest figures, which fell shy of the expectations of a Bloomberg survey of economists pegging growth at 0.5 per cent, will nonetheless bring some cheer to Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s beleaguered government.

KEY sectors such as construction and manufacturing showed an improvement compared to the same quarter last year, Friday’s data revealed. —AFP ■

Internet asks if Petrobras CEO’s T-shirt is Bolsonaro job



President Jair Bolsonaro’s CEO switch triggered fears that he will try to make Petrobras hold fuel prices artificially low as he eyes re-election next year. PHOTO: AFP

THERE were many questions at Brazilian state-run oil company Petrobras’s annual results conference: is pandemic mayhem behind us for good? Will the incoming chief executive keep the firm on its cost-cutting trajectory?

But the one that intrigued

the internet was: what exactly is the deal with the CEO’s T-shirt?

Ditching the usual white-collar shirt, outgoing chief executive Roberto Castello Branco addressed the video conference with investors in a “Mind the Gap” T-shirt, the phrase made famous by the London Under-

ground.

Castello Branco, an economist well-liked by the business sector, said it was a reference to his goal “to close the gap with our peers in the global oil industry.”

But many wondered whether it was really a jab at President Jair Bolsonaro, who decided last week to replace Castello Branco with army reserve general Joaquim Silva e Luna, a former defense minister with no oil industry experience.

That triggered fears the far-right president will try to make Petrobras hold fuel prices artificially low as he eyes re-election next year.

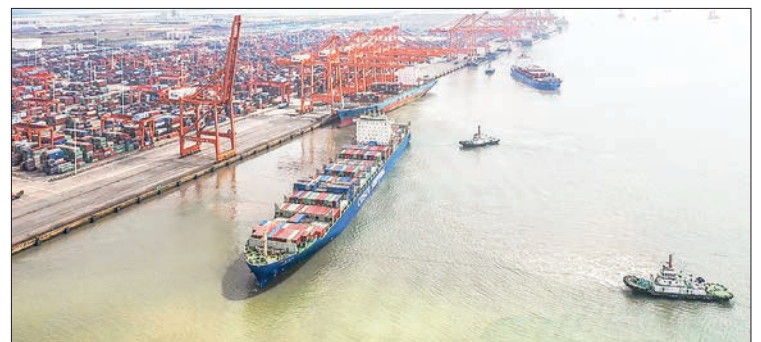
“Interesting outfit choice by Castello Branco at the 2020 earnings webcast now, considering all the discussions on the fuel price gap that led Bolsonaro to appoint a new CEO,” journalist Sabrina Valle wrote on Twitter. —AFP ■

China’s overall tax on imported goods hits record low

THE overall tax rate on imported goods in China was slashed by more than a quarter during the 13th Five-Year Plan period (2016-2020), hitting an all-time low, the General Administration of Customs (GAC) said Thursday.

The overall tax rate had dropped from 21.8 per cent to 15.8 per cent during the period, marking a decline of 27.5 per cent, said Jiang Feng, an official with the GAC, adding that the huge decline was due to China significantly reducing its value-added tax (VAT) and tariffs during the period.

However, the total amount of



Aerial photo taken on Nov. 19, 2020 shows a view of the Qinzhou Port in south China’s Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region. PHOTO: XINHUA

customs duties and taxes levied, mainly the VAT and consumption tax, on imported goods, saw an 8.7-per cent growth to 8.99 trillion yuan (about 1.39 trillion U.S. dollars) in the last five years,

he said.

The growth indicates that China has substantially expanded imports during the 13th Five-Year Plan period, Jiang added.

—Xinhua ■

Facebook launches PR campaign to defend targeted ads in spat with Apple

FACEBOOK is not backing down in its fight with Apple over a new privacy feature that could curb tracking needed for the social network’s targeted ads, launching a major media campaign to defend a practice that is a big revenue generator.

The “Good Ideas Deserve To Be Found” initiative unveiled on Thursday includes television, radio and digital spots. “Every business starts with an idea,

and being able to share that idea through personalized ads is a game changer for small businesses,” Facebook said in a statement, citing examples like a farm that offers goat yoga classes. Facebook insists the initiative is designed to help small businesses weather the economic storm churned up by the coronavirus pandemic, but it also wants to keep pressure on Apple about an upcoming change to

its operating software. The iOS change, expected to come later this year, will include a tracking transparency feature that Facebook claims could cripple its ability to serve up targeted ads and hurt many businesses — and cost it a ton of revenue.

The new feature will include a displayed prompt telling people what tracking data is gathered by mobile apps and asking for permission to allow it. —AFP ■

Spain's tainted former king settles tax debts

SPAIN'S former king Juan Carlos, who moved to the UAE last year under a cloud of scandal, has settled a debt of nearly 4.4 million euros (\$5.3 million) with the Spanish tax authorities to try to avoid an embarrassing lawsuit.

The debts -- the second batch Juan Carlos has settled in less than three months -- have renewed questions over the 83-year-old's financial affairs and further dented the reputation of the Spanish monarchy.

Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez said he shared Spaniards' "rejection" of what he called Juan Carlos' "uncivic behaviour". "An institution is not being judged," Sanchez said, amid anger over the delayed payment. "What is being questioned is the behaviour of a person."

The back-taxes were due on the value of private jet flights -- worth eight million euros, ac-



Juan Carlos has since lived in self-imposed exile in the United Arab Emirates since last year. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

ording to press reports -- that were paid by a foundation based in Liechtenstein belonging to a distant cousin of Juan Carlos.

The value of the flights are considered taxable income on the part of the ex-king. The payment comes after he made a voluntary declaration of this income, his lawyer said in a let-

ter Friday, confirming press reports. In December Juan Carlos, who has since August lived in self-imposed exile in the United Arab Emirates, settled another tax debt of nearly 680,000 euros. That settlement is linked to a probe made public last month by Spain's attorney general. — AFP ■

Self-made South Korean billionaires promise to give half away



The Samsung group -- South Korea's biggest conglomerate -- founded the Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art in Seoul. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

TWO self-made South Korean billionaires have pledged in as many weeks to give away half their fortunes -- a rarity in a country where business is dominated by family-controlled conglomerates and charity often begins and ends

at home.

Kim Beom-su, the founder of South Korea's biggest messaging app KakaoTalk, announced this month he will donate more than half his estimated \$9.6 billion assets to try to "solve social issues".

Shortly afterwards, Kim Bong-jin of food-delivery app Woorma Brothers and his wife, Bomi Sul, became the first South Koreans to sign the Giving Pledge. The philanthropic initiative was set up by Bill and Melinda Gates, alongside Warren Buffett, for billionaires to give away at least half their wealth.

Both Kims contrast with most of South Korea's ultra-wealthy, who are largely descendants of the founders of the chaebol, the sprawling, usually family-run conglomerates that powered the country's post-war boom and still dominate the economy. Unlike the chaebol heirs who inherited their wealth, power and connections, the two Kims were born to working-class families. —AFP ■

I choose you! Pokemon turns 25

TWENTY-FIVE years after Pokemon first began delighting children and adults alike, the phenomenon is still capturing hearts, with smartphone craze Pokemon Go enjoying record success in virus-hit 2020.

The augmented-reality game raked in \$1 billion in just the first 10 months of last year -- its most lucrative yet -- according to market tracker Sensor Tower, and experts see no sign that interest is flagging as the world's highest-grossing

media franchise evolves.

"The characters themselves are so appealing, and the mechanics of the actual video and card games are so well executed that it has this very timeless quality," said Brian Ashcraft, an author who writes about Japanese pop culture.

Dan Ryan, a 29-year-old who works in London's finance sector, has been a fan nearly his whole life and is not shy about his hobby, even with colleagues.

"They know I disappear every Thursday to go and play Pokemon cards, they see me come in with my Pikachu jacket, and they see my Pokemon mugs," he told AFP.

He admits he spends "too much money" on rare Pokemon cards, whose prices have boomed as virus lockdowns push people towards indoor pursuits, with some in mint condition going for over \$500,000 in recent weeks. —AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Twitter considers charging users for special content, in revenue push

TWITTER said Thursday it plans to offer a subscription service in which users would pay for special content from high-profile accounts, part of an economic model to diversify its revenue.

THE globally popular social media platform announced the potential new Super Follows service at its annual investor meeting, as it searches for new revenue streams beyond targeted advertising.

"EXPLORING audience funding opportunities like Super Follows will allow creators and publishers to be directly supported by their audience and will incentivize them to continue creating content that their audience loves," a Twitter spokesperson told AFP.

TOP Twitter executives discussed Super Follows while outlining goals and plans for the near future during the streamed presentation.

"WE are examining and rethinking the incentives of our service -- the behaviours that our product features encourage and discourage as people participate in conversation on Twitter," the spokesperson said.

SUPER Follows was described during the presentation as a way for Twitter audiences to financially support creators and receive newsletters, exclusive content and even virtual badges in exchange.

TWITTER, which currently makes money from ads and promoted posts, might be able to add additional revenue via the Super Follows transactions. —AFP ■

Beyond Meat signs long-term agreements with McDonald's, KFC parent

US plant-based meat substitute start-up Beyond Meat announced Thursday it has signed partnerships with fast-food giants McDonald's and Yum! Brands, the parent company for KFC, Pizza Hut and Taco Bell.

THE "strategic" agreements will cover a three-year period for McDonald's and "the next several years" for Yum! Brands, according to two separate statements from Beyond Meat.

BEYOND Meat will be the main supplier for the patty in the McPlant, the plant-based burger currently in testing phase in McDonald's restaurants around the world.

THE two companies, which have worked together since 2019, also plan to work together to explore and develop other menu items, including plant-based options for chicken, pork and eggs, they said in the statement.

THE goal is to help McDonald's offer a large variety of plant-based products.

"THIS strategic agreement is an important step on our journey to bring delicious, high quality, plant-based menu items to our customers," said Francesca DeBiase, McDonald's executive vice president, in the statement. —AFP ■



Red-cheeked Pikachu is instantly recognizable around the world as one of the best-known Pokemon. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

Magwe forward player signs two-year deal with SUFC

FORMER Magwe FC player Soe Lwin Lwin joined Shan United Football Club for two-years, according to a previous statement with the football club.

Soe Lwin Lwin started his football career in Yadanarbon Football Academy in 2010, and then he was selected in Myanmar international teams: U-16s,

U-18s, U-19s, U-21s and U-23s accordingly.

“Upon joining the club, Soe Lwin Lwin said, “One of the reasons why I’ve come back here is that my ex-teammates are here. All the teammates I played with in the Shan United youth team are like my brothers. The next reason is because of coach U Han Win Aung. I think the play

styles he has told me are good enough for me to fit in. I was told that I would be positioned at drop-forward. I can also play in the wing, but I will be better as a drop-forward”.

The striker made his professional debut at the Manaw Myay youth team in 2015. Next he moved to Shan United U-20s in 2016 and arrived at Magwe

FC in 2018, and played until 2020.

“Playing in Magwe FC first team brought me excellent experience. I’m supposed to emphasize football skills as I’m not quite big-sized type. There are different types of defenders that I have faced. It’s not uneasy about penetrating if the defender is the one who likes

to use force or strength. It’s, however, hard to pass through a defender like Ye Min Thu, who has a sense of guessing where the ball will go. My idol player is Ko Yan Naing Oo – his play-style is really my favourite. He’s very good at sending the ball to the teammate’s runway and one-two penetration,” Soe Lwin Lwin added.—GNLM ■

Juventus financial losses grow amid coronavirus pandemic

MILAN — Italian champions Juventus on Thursday reported losses of 113.7 million euros (\$139 million) for the first half of the current financial year, more than double the deficit for the same period the previous season largely due to the coronavirus pandemic.

The latest figures compare to losses of 50.3 million euros in the first half of the club’s 2019/20 financial year, which runs from July 1 to June 30.

“The first half of the 2020/2021 financial year was heavily penalized by the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic and the consequent restrictive measures imposed by the authorities,” Juventus said of a season played with matches behind closed doors.

“The pandemic directly and significantly affected, above all, ticket sales and sales of products and licenses, with a consequent negative impact on operating income, net income and financial debt.”

The club had reported losses of 89.7 million euros for the year 2019/2020.

Juventus noted the “positive trend of revenues from sponsorships and advertising” which were slightly higher than the previous year.

“These negative effects were partly offset by higher revenues from radio and television rights.” —AFP ■

Arsenal, Man Utd, Rangers into Europa League last 16 as Leicester exit

PARIS — Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang scored twice including a late winner as Arsenal qualified for the last 16 of the Europa League on Thursday

with a 3-2 victory over Benfica in Greece, while Manchester United and Rangers cruised through to the next round.

The Gabon striker put Ar-

senal ahead at the Karaiskakis stadium in Piraeus in their home leg of a tie relocated due to Covid-19 travel restrictions between Portugal and the Unit-

ed Kingdom. Diogo Goncalves levelled the contest with a magnificent free-kick and Rafa Silva gave Benfica a 2-1 lead on the night when he took advantage of an error from Dani Ceballos on the hour. Kieran Tierney rifled in an equalizer and Aubameyang headed in the decisive goal from Bukayo Saka’s cross on 87 minutes, earning the Gunners a 4-3 aggregate victory and saving them from an unusual away goals exit following a 1-1 draw in the first leg in Rome. “Everyone is happy tonight. This is what gives me power every day, take errors from the past and transform to strength,” Aubameyang told BT Sport. “The team showed a lot of character and we deserved the win. It was a hard game. What we showed tonight will be an example for the future.” —AFP ■



Arsenal, Man Utd, Rangers into Europa League last 16 as Leicester exit Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang (C) scored two of Arsenal’s three goals in a win over Benfica in Greece. PHOTO: AFP

Henderson has surgery as Liverpool’s injury crisis deepens

LONDON — Liverpool captain Jordan Henderson has undergone surgery on a groin injury to further deepen the injury crisis that has derailed the English champions’ Premier League title defence.

The midfielder was forced off half an hour into a 2-0 home defeat to Everton last weekend and further investigation revealed the need for surgery.

“Henderson has successfully had a corrective procedure carried out on the adductor injury,” said a Liverpool statement on Friday. “He will begin a rehabilitation

programme immediately.

“No specific timescale is being placed upon his return. However, the 30-year-old is ruled out initially until after the March international break.”

Klopp’s plans have been hit by long-term injuries to centre-backs Virgil van Dijk, Joe Gomez and Joel Matip, which have forced Henderson to deputise in defence for long stretches of the season.

Liverpool romped to the title for the first time in 30 years last season but four straight defeats have left



Liverpool captain Jordan Henderson leaves the pitch after suffering an injury during the Premier League match against Everton. PHOTO: AFP

them in serious danger of missing out on next season’s Champions League.

The Reds are sixth in the table, five points adrift of the top four. —AFP ■