

NATIONAL

Union Minister discusses tourism development in Mandalay region

PAGE-3

LOCAL BUSINESS

Stock trading value in equity market extends drop in Feb 2021

PAGE-7

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Announcement of Union Election Commission (6 March 2021)

REGARDING the Multiparty General Election held on 8 November 2020, the Union Election Commission has inspected the withdrawal/receipt/use/remaining of ballot papers used for Pyithu Hluttaw Election of Meiktila Township in Mandalay Region, together with the respective township election sub-commission, head of police, Immigration and Population and administrator according to the Hluttaw Election Law Section 53.

According to inspection on the ground, a total of 291 poll stations of Meiktila Township in Mandalay Region took out 286,524 ballot papers. It used 204,358 ballot receipts, and the remaining ballots were 70,511 instead of 82,166. The extra/shortage ballots were found at respective poll stations.

SEE PAGE-2

Tatmadaw medical corps provide healthcare services to local people

THE Tatmadaw medics and nurses provided medical services to the locals as the staff and patients' family members of station hospitals in Thazi, Han Zar and Yinmabin townships of Meiktila District in Mandalay Region, Takaung of Thabeikkyin township, Kyauktaga and Done Zayit station hospitals in Shwegyin township of Bago Region requested assistance from the region military hospitals.

The Tatmadaw medical corps provided the needed medical services, including operations to the local populace at these hospitals yesterday.

Similarly, the doctors and nurses of Mawlaik general hos-

pital of Sagaing Region failed to do their duties, and only 1 nurse and 8 healthcare staff currently provide medical treatments to the local populace. Therefore, the residents asked for help from the North-West Command, and so the region command sent Tatmadaw medical team to offer medical treatment.

The commanders of respective region commands inspected the medical services for the local populace and comforted the patients. The military officials also provided food aids and instructed the necessary things. The residents are satisfied with the medical support of Tatmadaw.—MNA



A local patient is receiving treatment from Tatmadaw health team, at Yinmabin station hospital in Meiktila yesterday.



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Announcement of Union Election Commission

FROM PAGE-1

The findings are as follows:

On the ground inspections on ballot papers for Pyithu Hluttaw Election of Meiktila Township

Sr	Subject	Withdrawal	Used	Exact Remaining	Remaining on the ground	Difference	
						Shortage	Extra
1	Ward/Village ballots	276,900	201,818	75,082	63,427	12,612	957
2	Township advance ballots	2,540	2,540	-	-	-	-
3	Township remaining ballots	7,084	-	7,084	7,084	-	-
Total		286,524	204,358	82,166	70,511	12,612	957

It was also found that the used ballots in 24 poll stations of 8 village-tracts are higher than the numbers of ballots issued by UEC. The extra-used ballots at these poll stations are as follows:

List of extra-used ballot papers for poll station-wise of Wards/Villagetracts in Meiktila Township

Sr	Ward/village tracts	Issued	Used	Extra-used ballot papers
1	Galone Gone Village	1,700	1,703	3
2	Shaw Phyu Kan Village	1,950	1,951	1
3	Pauk Chaung Village	5,150	5,195	45
4	Nyaung Pin Hlow Village	3,800	3,996	196

5	Thee Kone Village	1,450	1,454	4
6	Kyauk Phu Village	2,000	2,004	4
7	Shan Ma Nge Village	2,500	3,200	700
8	Mazali Gone Village	1,350	1,354	4
Total		19,900	20,857	957

It also found the missing ballot papers at 219 poll stations in 48 village tracts. The missing ballots are as follows:

List of missing ballot papers for poll station-wise of ward/village tract in Meiktila Township

Sr	Ward/village tracts	Is-sued	Used	Missing ballot papers
1	Thiri Mingala	4,250	3,800	450
2	Wunzin	9,750	9,715	35
3	Yan Myo Aung	12,600	10,595	2,005
4	Pyithayar (Ta)	4,150	4,148	2
5	Pyithayar (Ma)	4,700	4,598	102
6	Chi Set	2,900	2,600	300
7	Aung Zayar	9,750	8,697	1,053
8	Kyauk Phyu Gone	4,850	4,700	150
9	Nyaung Saut	4,050	3,851	199
10	Nyaung Kaing	1,250	1,249	1
11	Htamone Kan	6,000	5,957	43
12	Khin Lu	2,650	2,648	2
13	Kan Gyi	2,050	1,744	306
14	Shan Te	3,900	3,895	5
15	Zaung Chan Gone	5,750	5,701	49
16	Kaphyu	1,450	1,400	50
17	Kan Thar	7,150	6,596	554
18	Nyaung Kan	3,100	3,048	52
19	Kyaung Ywar	3,700	3,499	201
20	Ma Gyi Su	2,550	2,544	6
21	Sal Kone	3,000	2,949	51
22	Kan Taung	2,550	2,016	534
23	Kukko Gone	2,500	2,278	222
24	Wah Yone	2,350	2,349	1
25	Kwet Nge	4,150	3,845	305

26	Myar	4,000	3,697	303
27	Aung San	11,200	9,769	1,431
28	Nan Taw Gone	9,750	9,497	253
29	Myoma	2,150	2,145	5
30	Zay Ashae Pyin	4,400	3,899	501
31	Yadana Mhan Augn	8,000	7,984	16
32	Lain Taw	2,300	2,100	200
33	Inn	2,850	2,848	2
34	Shwe Pan Tine	2,800	2,696	104
35	Kywal Ta Lin	5,750	5,338	412
36	Mone Tine	5,350	5,280	70
37	Kan Ni	1,700	1,680	20
38	A Lal Ywar	5,550	5,176	374
39	Sat Pyar Kyin	3,600	3,546	54
40	Sal Aung	2,900	2,606	294
41	Myauk Lal	4,700	4,348	352
42	Tha Yet Pin	3,100	3,050	50
43	Mway	3,450	3,098	352
44	Myin Kan	2,850	2,801	49
45	Than Bo	3,850	3,751	99
46	Thee Pin Gone	4,850	3,905	945
47	Ta Pyaw	3,350	3,310	40
48	Zayet Gone	3,650	3,642	8
Total		213,200	200,588	12,612

Union Election Commission

Correction

Please read "extra ballots were 5,993" in the Announcement of Union Election Commission" appeared on page 2 of the 6 March 2021 issue of the Global New Light of Myanmar instead of "extra-used ballots were 5,993".

Union Election Commission

Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Administration Council Announcement for CRPH that commits high treason and its organizations 7th Waning of Tabodwe 1382ME (5 March 2021)

1. The Information Team of the State Administration Council has already released a statement that the formation of “Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH)” by the ones who have no rights to stand as official Hluttaw representatives according to the Constitution, Pyithu Hluttaw and Amyotha Hluttaw Rules does not conform to the Law and seems to violate the serious crimes, and not to collude with this unofficial committee directly or indirectly, and action will be taken against those who fail to follow.
2. Currently, the CRPH formed government and illegal organizations like public administrative organizations. Such doings do not conform to the Constitution, and it is a violation of the Penal Code Section 122 for high treason and just a crime to be punished with death or transportation for life or 22 years of imprisonment. Moreover, those who do not directly communicate with CRPH, or other CRPH’s organizations can face 7 years imprisonment under the Penal Code Section 124-d for supporting CRPH by committing incitements and threats to the civil service personnel to fail in their duties.
3. Therefore, it is here announced that effective actions will be taken against those who directly or indirectly collude with CRPH, which commits high treason to affect the stability of the State, and other organizations formed by CRPH, and also against those who support the CRPH and other groups formed by CRPH. It is announced again not to collude with CRPH, which commits high treason to affect the stability of the State, and other CRPH’s organizations directly or indirectly.

State Administration Council

Union Minister discusses tourism development in Mandalay region

UNION Minister U Maung Maung Ohn held the coordination meeting for the development of the Hotels and Tourism sector in Mandalay Region on 5 March 2021 in Mandalay.

The meeting was attended by the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of Myanmar Hotelier Association (Mandalay), Union of Myanmar Travel Association (Mandalay), Myanmar Restaurants Association (Mandalay) and Myanmar Souvenir Entrepreneurs Association (Mandalay).

At the meeting, the Union Minister said the resumption of tourism would focus on domestic travel. Not only tourists but also employees working in the tourism industry need to work in accordance with the COVID-19 rules and regulations.

The Ministry has developed the Enchanting Myanmar Health and Safety Protocols in accordance with the regulations issued by the Ministry



Union Minister U Maung Maung Ohn discusses with the hotelier associations, heads in Mandalay on 5 March 2021. PHOTO: MNA

of Health and Sports and the guidelines of international tourism organizations such as UNWTO/WTTC.

The Union Minister called on the hoteliers to work together for the reopening of hotels after the inspection in accord-

ance with the COVID-19 prevention guidelines.

He added the need to pay attention to improving services and marketing, including developing new tourist destinations as Myanmar is rich in tourism resources, and tourism is a

lucrative business that contributes a lot to the development of the country.

The meeting also discussed to continue to develop the Community Based Tourism—CBT which identifies the traditional culture of the ethnic national-

ities and directly beneficial to the residents; preparation for the resumption of tourism and the human resource development of the hotels and tourism sector; COVID-19 tests for passengers travelling by express buses and the reduction of the Test Kit price; tax reduction and loan assistance by the government to the restaurant businesses.

The Union Minister also met with Chairman of the Mandalay Region Administration Council U Maung Ko and discussed the reopening of hotels and tourism, approval of hotel licences as soon as possible and matters related to tourism promotion.

After paying homage to the Maha Muni Pagoda in Mandalay, the Union Minister inspected Hotel Shwe Pyi Thar’s preparation in accordance with the COVID-19 preventive guidelines to be reopened.—MNA

Fake bomb found in Toungoo

THE Tatmadaw members and security forces conduct security measures for the peace and tranquility of the State, the rule of law and public safety the whole day.

Meanwhile, the security forces found a bomb attached to a clock and 6 (15mm) pipes in front of a transformer, beside the moat located in the western part of the district auditor office near Min Gyi Nyo statue at the corner of Bo Mhu Pho Kun street along the old Yangon –Mandalay

road in Toungoo of Bago Region yesterday. After inspection, it was a fake bomb and the security forces destroyed it.

Those who do not want stability of the State conducted such destructive elements to threaten the public. Therefore, the people in other states and regions should be more cautious of such activities and report to the security forces in time if some suspicious items are found.—MNA



A fake bomb was found near the district auditor office in Toungoo.

Actions to be taken against those who disturb reopening of hospitals

CONTAINMENT measures against COVID-19 with 140,000 infection and about 3,200 deaths in Myanmar and the possibility of higher figures due to the crowds in previous weeks, the negative impacts on healthcare services due to civil disobedience movement of health workers, possible legal actions of relevant ministries against those who disturb the reopening of hospitals.

(Excerpt from the speech to the management committee 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 26 February 2021)

Shan State former finance and planning minister U Soe Nyunt Lwin arrested

DEPUTY Township Administrative Officer U Sai Kyaw Tun of Taunggyi filed a direct complaint to the court against former finance and planning minister of Shan State government U Soe Nyunt Lwin, aged 50, son of U Maung Son, who lives at No (3/14), Ayeyawady street in Phayar Phyu Ward of Taunggyi Township in Shan State (South) for committing the crime that affects the government and State peace and tranquillity on 16 February. Taunggyi township court opened the case under Penal Code Section 505(b) and conducted measures to arrest the suspect.

Meanwhile, according to the tip-off, the suspect was hiding at the house of U Aung Zaw Thant, located at the corner of Wai Za Yan Tar and Pyithayar streets in South Okkapala Township of Yangon Region. The security forces raided the house at about 1 am yesterday and arrested U Soe Nyunt Lwin. U Aung Zaw Thant, son of U Tin Aung, U Min Min, son of U Tin Hla and U Ye Hlaing, son of U Hla Tun will face action in accordance with the law for accepting U Soe Nyunt Lwin.—MNA



U Soe Nyunt Lwin was arrested for the crime against the government yesterday.

Announcement to health workers

THE medical expert U Zaw Wai Soe, who served duties at the University of Medicine (1), colludes with the “Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH)” formed by the unofficial Hluttaw MPs committing high treason, and he also conducts various incitements to health workers to join with him.

Regarding the crimes committed by U Zaw Wai Soe, the Ministry of Home Affairs has opened cases and further action will be taken against him for committing high treason. Therefore, the health workers should not perform support measures for him, and if they make such moves, action will be taken.

Ministry of Health and Sports

Police take actions against two protestors on Shwebo-YeU Road

POLICE yesterday took actions against two protestors on the Shwebo-YeU Highway Road, according to the Shwebo Township Police Force.

The two protestors including Thiha Naing (21-years-old) involved in the 50 rioters on the road and police force seized them according to the issued law.

The protestors are being charged under the law at Shwebo Myoma Police Station, according to the police force. —MNA



Violent protestors block the public road (Shwebo-YeU Highway Road) in Shwebo.

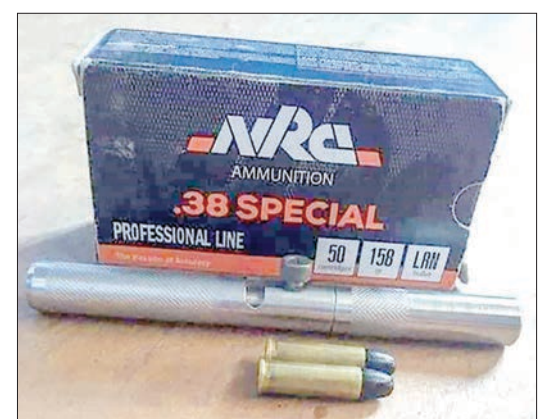
Release of information about the cause of death of Ma Kyal Zin died in riot, Mandalay

SECURITY Forces and responsible administration officials dispersed the mass protest on 84th street and 30th street with minimum force, after requesting to be dispersed for several times.

Although Myanmar Police Force tried to investigate the death of the young woman who was killed of injury during the riot, relatives to the deceased person refused to do so and buried the body.

Since it is necessary for the Myanmar Police Force to investigate the cause of death in accordance with the law, the body was excavated from the tomb with the permission of the judge, by the officials from the district police chief and officials, forensic pathologists and witnesses. According to the autopsy, the injury was caused in the left of her head right behind her ear and a piece of lead metal of 1.2 centimetre long and 0.7 centimetre wide which is different from the riot control bullets used by the Myanmar Police Force, was found.

Although the security guards on duty at the time of incident were in a face-to-face position to the crowd, the injury was in the back of the deceased



A pointer that can shoot with 0.38 bullet, is seen.

person and the lead piece found in the head was a type of ammunition that can be fired with a shotgun with 0.38 round of ammunition. It can be seen that those who do not want stability in the country are attempting to escalate the conflict and actions are being taken to identify those who are behind this and prosecute according to the law.—MNA

Security forces maintain riots in accordance with the law across the country

THE security forces had to maintain the riots occurred in townships in Myanmar in accordance with the law, according to the statement of the Myanmar Police Force.

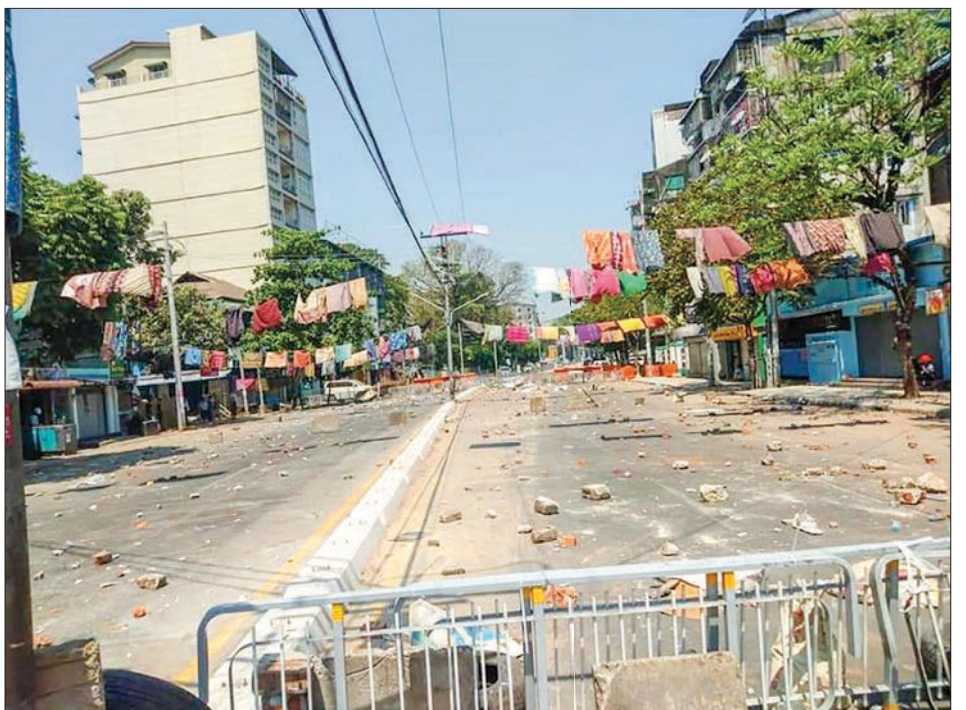
According to the statement, while efforts are being made for the stability and security of the country, it has been found that all the above/underground organizations, which accept the one party's patronage and ignore the truth, are spending much amount of money to make incitements in various parts of the places. Security forces are focusing to minimize injuries during the riot control by using riot gears, sound bombs, tear gas as there were mass protests, blocking public roads and riots in the country.

Security forces have maintained the situation in accordance with the law in the event of riots in some townships on 6 March 2021.

The Statement also said that the public should be careful not to get involved in the protests to prevent the future of their children from being ruined as it is found that young people in less violent areas are being pressured and intimidated with various methods, including rumours to stimulate the emotions of the youth and financial support from behind constantly.—MNA



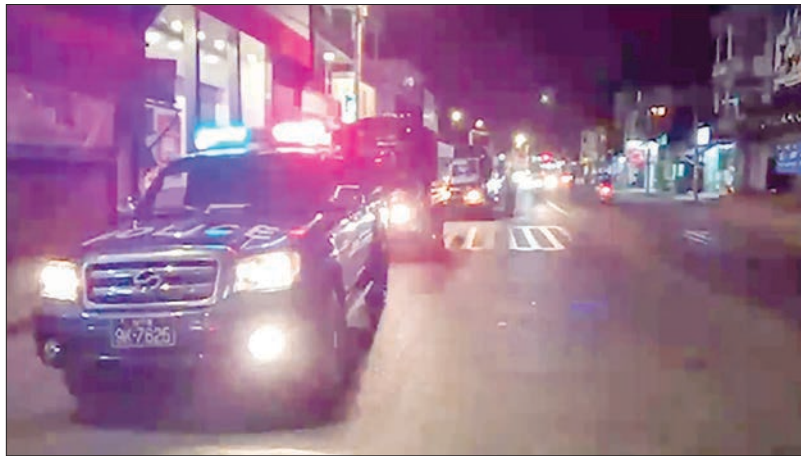
Violent profesters are seen blocking the public roads and disrupting the smooth flow of transport.



Security measures to ensure community peace

TATMADAW, Police Force and Fire Brigade have jointly conducted security measures to ensure the stability of the State, security of people, the rule of law and community peace starting 14 February night.

The Tatmadaw, police and fire brigade members also jointly continued conducting security measures for the peaceful night and community peace in respective regions and states yesterday, and will keep serving security measures the whole day.—MNA



Tatmadaw, Police Force and Fire Brigade are seen performing security measures in Toungoo and Dawei yesterday.

Administrative mechanisms implemented by opening village/ward administration office

FOR the proper implementation of administrative mechanisms, Security Forces and members of the township administration negotiated with the residents in Wachankar village, Taungtwingyi township, Magway Region and opened the ward administration office which was closed due to the illegal activities, yesterday.

With the aim of undermining community peace and the rule of law in the villages and wards in states and regions, the ward/village administrator are being pressured and rioting in administration office, destroying the signboard of the administration office, writing



An administrative office is reopened in Taungtwingyi township.

malicious messages and hanging them in front of the office, locking the door by welding with iron rods in an anarchic manner by the unscrupulous persons.

As a result, the residents do not have the protection of

the law and as it is found that the village administration mechanism may malfunction, legal action was taken against those who incited the riots and those involved in the riots, at the request of the residents.—MNA

Tatmadaw carries old landmine clearance in Rakhine

LOCAL troops from the Western Command are clearing old landmines to help displaced people in Rakhine State return to their homes.

In doing so, the troops continued to clear the old mines along the Ann-Sittwaye Union Highway, according to the Tatmadaw officials.—MNA



Military personnel are seen clearing old mines on the Ann-Sittwaye Union Highway.



Blood donated at military hospitals for civilians

MILITARY hospitals in the townships of regions and states have been providing medical treatments to the people to solve their difficulties in healthcare services. A total of 51,689 outpatients and 3,514 inpatients reached these hospitals from 5 February to date.

Senior medical experts, medics and nurses have conducted 2,287 major operations and 1,229 minor operations, and the serious cases are treated by

the senior doctors. These hospitals managed for the birth of 3,257 babies, while 3,257 pregnant women were taken to the respective military hospitals.

Monks, local residents and Tatmadaw members donated blood in Tatmadaw hospitals in Pyin Oo Lwin and Magway townships as well as officials from the respective commands also provided the patients with foods.—MNA

An operation is underway for a local patient with leg injury in Bokpyin township.

COVID-19 Call Centre opens daily

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

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

Stock trading value in equity market extends drop in Feb 2021

THE value of shares traded on the Yangon Stock Exchange (YSX) in February 2021 showed a drastic drop of K200 million against January's trading value, the YSX's monthly report indicated.

In February 2021, K442 million worth of 77,388 shares were traded on the exchange. The figures plummeted from K640 million value of 121,893 shares registered in January.

Additionally, the value of shares traded on the Yangon Stock Exchange (YSX) in February 2021 dropped by more than a third compared with February 2020 (registered K1.4 billion valued 188,919 shares), the YSX's monthly report indicated.

At present, shares of six listed companies — First Myanmar Investment (FMI), Myanmar Thilawa SEZ Holdings (MTSH), Myanmar Citizens Bank (MCB), First Private Bank (FPB), TMH Telecom Public Co. Ltd (TMH) and the Ever Flow River Group Public Co., Ltd (EFR) are being traded on the exchange.

The shares prices last month showed a downtick compared to the prices registered in January 2021.

The price per share of FMI decreased from K9,700 in January 2021 to K9,300 in February 2021. Similarly, the share price of MTSH slid to K3,500 from K3,900 last year. The stock prices were remained unchanged at K8,200 for MCB and K22,000 for FPB, while TMH slightly rose to K2,800 from K2,700. The share price of EFR last month was closed at K3,350 from K3,600 in January 2021.

Amid the COVID-19 crisis, Myanmar's securities market has been able to continue oper-



The YSX, a Myanmar bourse, was launched four years ago to improve the private business sector.

ating without stopping trading.

In 2020, the value of stocks traded on the exchange peaked at K1.48 billion in February. In contrast, trading on the exchange registered an all-time low of K552.9 million in November due to the COVID-19 resurgence in Myanmar, the exchange's monthly report showed.

According to the annual report released by the exchange, a total of K12.6 billion worth of 1.87 million shares by six listed companies were traded on the exchange in 2020, a significant drop compared to 2019.

Over 2.4 million shares from five listed companies, valued at K13.39 billion, were traded on the exchange in 2019.

In 2016, shares of only three companies were traded on the YSX — FMI, MTSH, and MCB. One more public company, FPB, was listed on the YSX in 2017. In 2018, TMH debuted on the exchange. EFR entered the exchange in 2020.

Moreover, Amata Holding Public Co., Ltd. (AMATA)

released a statement that the listing date will be postponed for a certain period of time, and the rescheduled listing date will be announced in due time, YSX notified on 26 February 2021.

The stock markets worldwide have reported their largest declines since the 2008 financial crisis. Similarly, the local equities market is also scared by the COVID-19 crash, a market observer points out.

At present, people are keeping emergency savings rather than investing in the COVID-19 crisis and current political conditions, he added.

Next, the Securities and Exchange Commission of Myanmar (SECM) has allowed foreigners to invest in the local equity market from 20 March 2020.

The YSX launched a pre-listing board (PLB) on 28 September 2020 to provide unlisted public companies with fund-raising opportunities and build a bridge toward listing on YSX, stated the bourse.

The YSX, a Myanmar

bourse, was launched four years ago to improve the private business sector. It disseminates rules and regulations regarding the stock exchange and knowledge of share trading through stock investment seminars. The stock exchange has also sought the government's support to get more public companies to participate in the stock market and help more institutional investors, such as financing companies, investment banks, and insurance companies, to emerge.

Amid the COVID-19 crisis, Myanmar's securities market has been able to continue operating without stopping trading.

According to the annual report released by the exchange, a total of K12.6 billion worth of 1.87 million shares by six listed companies were traded on the Yangon Stock Exchange (YSX) in 2020, a significant drop compared to 2019.

Over 2.4 million shares from five listed companies, valued at K13.39 billion, were traded on the exchange in 2019. —KK/GNLM

Growers suffer falling price of ripe chillies in Nyaung-U

THE chilli growers suffer from ripe chilli's falling price in harvest season in Nyaung-U township, Mandalay region. The growers could not profit because they could not store the ripe chilli at the price falling time.

The growers from villages in Latpachaypaw, Thukaungtae and Thit Daung village-tracts are growing the chilli using the underground water. Consequently, the chilli cultivation succeeded, and the chilli yielded abundantly. In the harvest season, the chilli price is ranging between K1,000 and K1,200 per viss. The local people are growing Auk Swe Thi chilli species. The chillies are cultivated within an enclosed space. After 15 days, the chillies are transplanted to the farmlands, and it needs to put the water into the farms every five days. After one month of transplanting into the fields, the chillies bloom and bear fruits.

The chilli growers harvest only the ripe chillies to sell them in the market. The chillies are dried and collected to be sold at the same time to save much money. The growers sell the fresh chillies only to solve their current livelihood problem. They have to hire labourers to pick the chillies. It costs the farmers K2,000 for one per person for the morning session only and K4,000 per person for the whole day, Daw Nyo Lone from Ywar Thit Gone village said.

Although the chillies fetched K1,000 or K1,200 per viss in the ripe chillies harvest time, they are sold for K450 or 500 per viss now. As chilli's price has dropped half, some growers could not stockpile the ripe chillies and sell the chillies immediately, said U Win Tint, a chilli grower. —Ko Htein (KPD)/GNLM

Goat breeders earn good profit on upward market in Kalay

WITH the high demand for goats in Chin hills in Kalay town, Sagaing region and Tamu, goat breeders are happy with the upward market. They are earning good profit, according to a manageable-scale goat breeder in Kalay township.

"For me, I have bred five goats on a manageable-scale. We got 10 cups of goat's milk if we milk the goat once a day. Each cup of goat milk is sold for K1,000, and the breeders are earning around K10,000 daily. Now, the breeders are happy earning a good profit because there are many goat buyers in this open season," said a goat breeder in Thazin ward, Kalay town.

There are only a few commercial goat

breeders in Kalay Township. Only around ten people are doing a manageable-scale livestock breeding business. Therefore, the goat demand is higher than the supply, and so the breeders are selling them at a higher price. The bucks are sold for around K100,000, while the nanny is sold for around K50,000 or K80,000, depending upon the size.

"Last year, India came to buy the goat in Myanmar. Also, hundreds of goats from Monywa, Pakokku and Myingyan were sold at a good price in the Myanmar-India border. Now, the Myanmar-India border traders are buying less than 100 hundred goats," said a goat trader on the Tamu border. —Chindwinthar/GNLM



The bucks are sold for around K100,000, while the nanny is sold for around K50,000 or K80,000, depending upon the size. PHOTO: CHINDWIN THAR

Ensuring fair price for paddy key to promoting farmer interest

Price for paddy reached lower than the set price of K520,000 per 100 baskets in some areas in November and December when the farmers harvest monsoon paddy.

Farmers have now pinned their hopes on summer crops, especially summer paddy, grown using irrigation water. Farmers are confident that cultivation using irrigation water, which is considered a nutrient for paddy plants, will ensure a high yield.

Our farmers will harvest their summer paddy soon. The price of the most common variety of paddy usually drops during harvest.

The merchants must purchase the paddy at the set price when the cost is lower than the actual market price.

market price. If the market price is above the basic price, they are obliged to purchase the paddy at the prevailing price.

Growers are facing financial hardships due to low price offered at harvest time, coupled with high input costs and shortage of farm workers.

To promote the livelihood of farmers who make up over 70 per cent of the total population of Myanmar, we need to make legislations which can protect them.

This is because crops that grew well in the past may no longer continue to do so due to climate change, and crops are getting damaged by droughts or floods every year.

To give priority to the interests of farmers working on a manageable scale, we need to ensure that a price set annually is not lower than a current market price.



Empowering women and girls is crucial to ensure sustainable food security in the aftermath of COVID-19, say UN food agency heads ahead of International Women's Day

Hunger and famine will persist and there will be unequal recovery from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic unless more women in rural and urban areas hold leadership positions with increased decision-making power, say the heads of the three United Nations' food agencies ahead of their joint International Women's Day event on 8 March.

The event, co-organized by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the World Food Programme (WFP), will focus global attention on the vital role that empowered female farmers, entrepreneurs and leaders need to play so that women can contribute on equal terms to the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, and in creating an environment to eliminate poverty, enhance productivity, and improve food security and nutrition.

"The world is home to more than 1.1 billion girls under the age of 18, who have the potential of becoming the largest generation of female leaders, entrepreneurs and change-makers ever seen for the better future. Yet, women and girls continue to face persistent structural constraints that prevent them from fully developing their potential and hinder their efforts of improving their lives as well as their households and communities," said FAO Director-General QU Dongyu. "Women and girls can play a crucial role in the response to the COVID-19 pandemic and in particular in transforming our agri-food systems. We all need to work together to spark the necessary changes to empower women and girls, particularly those in rural areas," he added.

"It is essential that women



A woman waters cabbages in northern Sierra Leone. When women have the same access to skills, resources and opportunities as men, they can be powerful drivers in the fight against hunger, malnutrition and poverty. PHOTO: FAO

are not only in more leadership positions, but that they are consulted and listened to, and integrated in all spheres and stages of pandemic response and recovery," said Gilbert F. Houngbo, President of IFAD. "Investing in rural women's leadership and involving them more in creating our post-COVID future is critical to ensure their perspectives and needs are adequately considered, so that we can build back better food systems where there is equal access to nutritious food and decent livelihoods."

"Women and girls make up half of our global community and it's time this was reflected in leadership positions at every level," said David Beasley, Executive Director of WFP. "We know from our

work around the world that when women and girls have better access to information, resources and economic opportunities, and are free to make their own decisions, hunger rates fall and nutrition improves not only for themselves but also their families, communities and countries."

Women's leadership is particularly important in rural areas of developing countries, where the voices of the 1.7 billion women and girls who live there are often overlooked. Sixty per cent of women in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa work in agriculture - yet they have less access to resources and services than men, including land, finance, training, inputs and equipment. In addition to their agricultural work, women

are overburdened with domestic chores and caring for their families - roles that have increased during the COVID-19 pandemic. At the same time, women are more negatively affected by the social and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, including losing livelihoods and experiencing decreases in their personal incomes.

Ensuring that women have a greater voice is not only a matter of gender equality. Women leaders can advocate for women to have better access to and control over assets and productive inputs, thus boosting their productivity and incomes, leading to food security and increasing their employment opportunities and real wages.

Research shows that if women farmers had the same access

also implies enhancing women's leadership skills and self-confidence and raising gender awareness within national and local institutions. Within the Organization, FAO has established a Women's Committee providing an inclusive, safe space that reflects the diverse and energetic nature of FAO's female workforce. The Organization also created incentives for career prospects for female staff and for achieving gender parity at all levels and across all job categories.

Since 2009, IFAD has implemented a 'household methodologies' approach to reinforce the equal role and decision-making capacity of women within households, groups and communities. Evidence from Uganda, Rwanda, Kyrgyzstan and other countries has shown that women who take part in the programme take up leadership roles in their organizations and communities, and have a greater voice in decision-making in their households. This has led to greater agricultural productivity.

Food security and gender inequality are closely linked with disadvantages beginning at a young age. In many countries boys and girls have very different childhoods. Boys eat first, are given more food than their sisters, do less housework and marry later. For girls, marriage and not school work can dominate their childhoods. WFP's work in achieving gender equality begins at school where support or implementation of School Feeding programmes in more than 70 countries contributes to increased school attendance of girls. This provides them greater access to education, reduces the risk of child marriage and other forms of gender-based violence, and increases future livelihood and leadership opportunities for girls.

Sources: FAO, IFAD, WFP

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 Saturday 6 March 2021)

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

FORECAST VALID UNTIL NOON OF THE 7 March 2021: Rain or thundershowers will be scattered in Kachin State and isolated in Upper Sagaing Region. Degree of certainty is (80%). Weather will be partly cloudy in Taninthayi Region and Northern Shan, Chin and 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 Upper Sagaing, Taninthayi regions and Kachin State.

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 7 March 2021: Generally fair weather.

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 7 March 2021: Generally fair weather.

FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 7 March 2021: Generally fair weather.

ACovid origins report due out week of 15 March: WHO

The international investigation into the Covid-19 pandemic's origins in China will publish its report in the week of March 15, the World Health Organization's chief has said.

The report was originally due to be published in two stages: an initial summary in February followed by the full text. However, they will both now be released at the same time, said WHO director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus.

The first Covid-19 cases were reported in the Chinese city of Wuhan in December 2019. The international investigation in the city only began in January 2021 and wrapped up last month. A team of international scientific experts spent four weeks in Wuhan visiting sites linked to early cases.

Experts believe the disease originated in bats and could have been transmitted to humans via another mammal.

Although the mission to Wuhan failed to identify the source of the virus, the experts were dismissive of the theory that it leaked from a virology laboratory in the city at a press conference before leaving China.

However, when the team leadership returned to Geneva, Tedros said that, "all hypotheses remain open".

SOURCE: AFP

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Need to distinguish between right and wrong, justice and injustice

By Kanaung

According to the country's current situation, the complicated circumstance between right and wrong, justice and injustice is threatening people's consciousness. Only the destructive elements that harm the country's peace and tranquillity are seen instead of understanding the country's current political situation and future. **Tatmadaw are making efforts under the procedures**

All as you know, the Union Election Commission failed to resolve the voting frauds in the multiparty general election held on 8 November 2020. Although the people, parties and Tatmadaw demanded UEC address voting irregularities in the election, UEC cancelled the motions.

Then, it also asked Pyidaungsu Hluttaw to resolve when UEC rejected. Pyidaungsu Hluttaw also declined to hold a Pyidaungsu Hluttaw special session under the law. Tatmadaw requested that the government or Pyidaungsu Hluttaw or the Union Election Commission needed to find a solution to resolve the issue. But all the proposals were denied, and the Tatmadaw approached the way to convene a meeting of the National Defence and Security Council, which represents civilian and military led by the President. Therefore, Tatmadaw conducted following the procedures.

Then, Tatmadaw called for the Hluttaw session's delay, but they continued releasing Pyithu Hluttaw session programmes. Therefore, all these acts lead to

take over the Union's sovereignty by illegal forcible means as prescribed in Section 417 of the Constitution. Consequently, Tatmadaw declared a state of emergency.

Transferring power under Section 418

Unless the cases are solved following the procedures, it will be worse on the democracy pathway of the country. Therefore, according to Section 418 of the Constitution, acting President U Myint Swe transferred the legislative, executive, and judicial powers to the Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services on 1 February 2021. Tatmadaw objected to conduct poll inspections, take action and lead to the right way from wrong things.

It was stated in announcement No 1/2021 of the Office of the Commander-in-Chief of Defence Service. The statement explicitly said that UEC failed to perform its duties in solving the election irregularities and the second Pyidaungsu Hluttaw to convene a special session. Moreover, Tatmadaw proposed twice the President to hold a National Defence and Security Council meeting. However, all efforts were in vain and rejected.

I want to say that the stubborn stances and neglects of UEC, Hluttaw, and government on the demands of Tatmadaw, suspicions of the public and media highlights mainly destroy Myanmar's political affairs, peace and tranquillity of the country.

As a result of the use of

force, instead of solving the differences and disunity to retain peace, the people started losing peace and tranquillity in the country.

Transfer of power after a free and fair multiparty general election

Therefore, the new Union Election Commission is to be reconstituted to check the unfairness. It will carry out on the ground inspection of the voting

free and fair multiparty general election. That was the statement of the Office of the Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services.

If we look back to now, they organized the UEC as quickly as possible. They also inspect the election irregularities. Military health corps and the Ministry of Health and Sports also serve COVID-19 vaccination programmes, including treatments to the patients.

Tee campaign, CDM and incitements to take to the streets. The young people, the future of the country, are staging strikes daily in every township. The unscrupulous persons use various ways to unrest riots when they see the youths protesting peacefully on the roads.

Request to government workers to return to their duties

On the other hand, the State

According to the nature of democracy, everybody has their freedom of speech and expression. But, their rights should not affect others.

frauds according to laws. COVID-19 preventive measures will also be continuously implemented. The government will make efforts to ease the economic impacts of COVID-19. They will mainly focus on the agreement points and facts of NCA for eternal peace. Finally, after all these measures as mentioned earlier have been carried out according to the provisions promulgated during the emergency period, they will transfer the State's responsibilities in line with the democratic norms to the election-winning party by holding a

The State Administration Council held meetings and discussions with the intellectual persons from the respective sectors to improve the all-round development of the State's economy.

These are the five future programmes, and they are also implementing the roadmaps as much faster as possible. But, there are some incitements or destructive elements to disrupt the country's stable condition these days. The unscrupulous persons organized a red ribbon campaign against the State Administration Council. Then, they asked the people to join CDM.

Trying not to listen to and view the 8 pm news broadcasting

They intentionally commit incitements to the government workers not to go to offices to stop the government mechanism, in addition to the oppositions to the government's efforts. They did like Than Bone Tee (banging tin materials) at 8 pm not to view and listen to the government's information broadcasted on a TV channel at 8 pm. But, the public did not notice their intentions.

Therefore, those from the black side might be satisfied with their actions like the Than Bone

Administration Council imposed Section 144 to maintain the peace and stability of the State. Moreover, SAC continuously released public notifications and requests to the public. The council also requested the health workers, engineers, teachers, including government workers, to return to their duties by solving the rumours regarding government staff's salary by unscrupulous persons.

According to the nature of democracy, everybody has their freedom of speech and expression. But, their rights should not affect others. They have to agree to the disagreements of others with different opinions. They should not stop or affect the rights of others. Severe actions will be taken against those detrimental to the State's peace and stability, the safety of the public and the rule of law. The council has already announced that they will take action as per the law since 8 February.

The unscrupulous persons and destructive elements are still doing the violent acts to the State's peace and tranquillity despite the announcements, orders and requests of the State Administration Council.

Translated.

... the stubborn stances and neglects of UEC, Hluttaw, and government on the demands of Tatmadaw, suspicions of the public and media highlights mainly destroy Myanmar's political affairs, peace and tranquillity of the country.

Stop inciting young people to take to the streets

By Nay Chi Thway

I read the news that a teenage girl has died during the demonstration. I do grieve when I see the word of the young generation's deaths from all over the country. I do sympathize with them as they are the ages of my children.

According to the people who were present at the demonstration and the CCTV footage of the event that happened on 30th street in Mandalay, the crowd eventually back off when the security forces used tear gas to disperse them. And witnesses said that the youth, who was died of a gunshot in the abdomen, was shot while hiding behind a tree.

Ma Kyal Zin, who was in the back of the barricades surrounded by many men and crowds in front of her, was hit dead by a bullet that entered her head in Mandalay.

I also noticed that pre-death photos of her were immediately circulating online

And witnesses said that the youth, who was died of a gunshot in the abdomen, was shot while hiding behind a tree. Ma Kyal Zin, who was in the back of the barricades surrounded by many men and crowds in front of her, was hit dead by a bullet that entered her head in Mandalay.

pictures of them before being shot were taken with an exact

middle. They also refused to inspect the incidents, and the pictures of the bullets spread on social media immediately after every gun shooting. The worst thing is that people who are not from the security forces are seen as armed with weapons.

No matter how much the wood is big, it can be easily divided once it is wedged. A wedge is a tool to break the massive thing. If we deliberate on the happenings across the country, we found that the arrest of the person who dropped the gun in Htauk Kyant; pistols

found at the motorbike accident in Mandalay; the angry crowd saying they want guns and serve the country as public militia. I want to remind you that people are intentionally pushing the country towards a worse situation.

As the protests continue day after day, all can see that people are getting tired and facing financial difficulties and lives are affected by unstable and insecure circumstances. I assume that unscrupulous persons are likely to make incitements to accelerate the demonstrations for various

reasons. We have seen they are inciting to let people die so that they will be provoked, which will lead to an intensified mass explosion.

Carrying fuel by charity vehicles and inviting the USA and UN by asking how many lives will be needed to be sacrificed leads to negative impacts than positive ones. The false news circulated on social media also raises public concern.

When young people are agitated, evil persons are pleased. In the 1988 revolution, there was this kind of crowd dispersal, as per my experience. Then, arms brokers tried to sell the weapons to the civilians. Similarly, this time, they will make the young people provoked and give them weapons. However, as people have no enough time to be trained, they will be the ones who will suffer.

What I want to appeal to the young protesters is that they should not try to risk confrontation. People who are inciting young people do not come forward anymore. They are not protecting young people from the frontline in the shooting. The bullets can be from the front of them as well as from behind. I condemn those who intentionally incite the public towards violence against the government, and I suggest the young people make conscious decisions.

Translated.

I even doubt that a person or an organization pre-planned to target young people. The pictures of them before being shot were taken with an exact and precise resolution.

from various points of view. Another girl was also shot dead to the head during the riot in Nay Pyi Taw. When inspecting the bullet, it was found that the shot is not the type of ammunition used by police. However, the police shooting pictures, which coincided with her fall, are being posted on social media.

I even doubt that a person or an organization pre-planned to target young people. The

and precise resolution. I think seeing them online simultaneously as their death is a source of hatred, resentment, and sadness towards the people.

It was seen that people are saying they were shot on the ground when the security forces fired in the air as the first warning. Some people instructed to destroy the CCTV footage. The front line of the protesting crowds was not shot but the young people in the

As the protests continue day after day, all can see that people are getting tired and facing financial difficulties and lives are affected by unstable and insecure circumstances.

Pandemic risks undoing gains for women, Merkel warns

GERMAN Chancellor Angela Merkel warned Saturday that the pandemic risked rolling back progress made on gender equality, as women take on the lion's share of childcare in lockdown and are more likely to work in at-risk jobs.

"We have to make sure that the pandemic does not lead us to fall back into old gender patterns we thought we had overcome," Merkel said in a video message ahead of International Women's Day on March 8.

Women have been disproportionately affected by the health crisis, she said, while being underrepresented in decision-making positions. "Once again it's more often women who have to master the balancing act between



The study found that the pandemic "has exacerbated existing inequalities between women and men in almost all areas of life". **PHOTO: AFP**

homeschooling, childcare and their own jobs," said the veteran leader.

"More than 75 per cent of those working in the health sector are women, from doctor's

offices and hospitals, to labs and pharmacies," Merkel said – yet women account for barely 30 per cent of management positions in those areas.

Merkel's warnings were echoed in the EU's annual report on gender equality released earlier this week. The study found that the pandemic "has exacerbated existing inequalities between women and men in almost all areas of life".

On top of increased childcare burdens from school and nursery closures, it said women were also more likely to work in low-paid jobs in the services sector worst affected by the shutdowns, leaving them at higher risk of unemployment. —AFP ■

Commission aims to secure vaccine materials from US

THE EU will open talks with Washington Monday to ensure its supply of US-made materials for coronavirus vaccines, a European source said Saturday, items currently under tough export restrictions.

Internal Market Commissioner Thierry Breton -- Brussels' pointman on vaccine production -- will confer with White House Covid-19 coordinator Jeffrey Zients, the source familiar with the talks told AFP. The EU and US want to "work together in a coordinated way to avoid bottlenecks" for European vaccine producers, the source said.

Among the restricted goods under discussion are bags fitted to the manufacturers' vats -- often either made in the EU by American firms or in the US by European companies -- as well

as vials, syringes and so-called "nanolipid particles" used to encapsulate some messenger RNA vaccines.

All vaccine materials require specific authorisations from Washington to export. "The idea isn't to relitigate" the rules but to "ease and speed up... administrative procedures," the European source said.

"We're taking action in advance. When the time comes that vaccine production in Europe steps up sharply, we want to be sure that all the materials will be there," the source added. The EU's own export control system only applies to ready-to-use vaccines, and was recently used to block a shipment of 250,000 AstraZeneca doses to Australia. The Swedish-British



A Pfizer employee is at work at packaging line of the factory of US multinational pharmaceutical company Pfizer in Puurs on February 22, 2021. **PHOTO: AFP**

firm has notified the EU's 27 member countries that it will only be able to deliver one-third of the initially promised number of doses to the bloc in the first quarter.

Monday's talks "do not aim to negotiate on doses" of finished vaccines with the US, the European source said, saying that was "up to businesses". —AFP ■

New US daily virus cases at five-month low



A mask requirement post welcomes patrons as New York City's cinemas reopen for the first time in a year following the coronavirus shutdown, in New York, US on March 5, 2021. **PHOTO: AFP**

The United States recorded fewer than 40,000 new daily cases of Covid-19 for the first time in five months at the weekend, a piece of promising news as

numerous countries across the globe struggle to hold off another infection surge before inoculations become widespread.

With frustration over re-

strictions having long weighed on populations worldwide, leaders were seeking to balance demands for easing rules while not unleashing another explosion in cases.

In the United States, the world's hardest-hit country, the number of daily cases peaked at nearly 300,000 in early January following the Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's holidays. With cases declining and vaccines rolling out, several US states have begun jettisoning mask-wearing rules -- much to the chagrin of President Joe Biden, who called the move "Nanderthal thinking." While his administration says its promise to vaccinate 100 million people

in its first 100 days is ahead of schedule, Europe is facing heavy criticism over delays in its inoculation campaign.

The EU drug watchdog said Thursday it had started a "rolling review" of the Sputnik V shot, meaning Russian coronavirus vaccines could soon be doled out across Europe. Moscow responded by saying it could supply doses for 50 million Europeans starting from June as the 27-nation bloc pledged to inoculate all those in need by the end of summer. The EU has already approved three vaccines, but some members have gone it alone, approving shots from Russia and China unilaterally after criticizing delays. —AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Restaurants in Belgium to reopen on 1 May

THREE key dates have been targeted for the easing of lockdown in Belgium: 8 March, 1 April and 1 May. The reopening of the Horesca industry was decided on 1 May following tough negotiations.

The ban on non-essential travel to and from Belgium has been extended until 18 April, which includes the Easter holidays, Belgian Prime Minister Alexander De Croo announced on Friday evening.

At the end of a meeting on the pandemic involving the heads of regional executives, Mr De Croo also presented an indicative timetable for easing the restrictions. The schedule foresees a gradual reopening of cafés, restaurants and theatres from May onwards.

Here are the decisions taken in Belgium and announced on Friday. —AFP ■

Danish navy transports Covid vaccines to remote Greenland areas

DENMARK'S military has started delivering Covid vaccines to remote settlements along Greenland's west coast, part of efforts to vaccinate isolated communities in the vast territory where logistics are complicated by extreme cold weather.

A naval patrol ship set out in mid-February to visit two settlements, fitted with a specialized refrigerator to store doses of the vaccine and transporting civilian medical staff to administer them at the request of Greenland's health authorities. The autonomous Danish territory's 56,000 inhabitants are spread over some 772,000 square miles (two million square kilometres), with a limited road network and the Arctic weather throwing up hurdles to air travel.

Greenland's health authorities have barred entry to the territory until April 18, with 31 cases of the infection and no deaths reported since the beginning of the pandemic.

Vaccinations started on January 4 and Greenland's authorities asked the Danish military's Joint Arctic command in the capital Nuuk to help with settlements unreachable by air or due to the weather. —AFP ■

Biden's Covid rescue plan grinds towards Senate approval

US Democrats were on track Saturday for a final vote on President Joe Biden's massive Covid-19 relief package after agreeing to scale back unemployment benefits, with passage increasingly likely in the evenly divided Senate.

With the sun rising in Washington, bleary-eyed senators continued their all-night session voting on nearly two dozen amendments and counting as they hammered out the \$1.9 trillion stimulus bill, which Biden insists will revive the pandemic-hit US economy.

Negotiations in the Senate had frozen the chamber's action for more than 10 hours Friday, before the Democrats reached a compromise with moderate Senator Joe Manchin, who had balked



US Senator Joe Manchin, the most conservative Democrat in the chamber, threatened to sink a jobless benefits element of the Covid rescue plan over its high cost, but agreed to a compromise. **PHOTO: AFP**

at the scale of the benefits.

"This agreement allows us to move forward on the urgently needed American Rescue Plan," White House spokeswoman Jen Psaki said.

Republicans have stood uniformly opposed to the giant package, but Democrats -- who cannot afford to lose a single vote -- united to beat back repeated efforts to derail the

legislation.

The action came against a backdrop of strong US economic data signalling that the world's largest economy may finally be healing. —AFP ■

U.S. trade deficit with Japan shrinks 25.9% in January



For the reporting month, Japan ranked as having the fifth-largest trade deficit with the United States after China, Mexico, Vietnam and Germany. **PHOTO: KYODO**

THE U.S. goods trade deficit with Japan shrank 25.9 per cent in January from the previous month to \$4.34 billion, the Com-

merce Department said Friday.

The deficit with China fell 3.6 per cent to \$26.25 billion, while that with

Mexico declined 4.0 per cent to \$9.56 billion, the department said.

For the reporting month, Japan ranked as

having the fifth-largest trade deficit with the United States after China, Mexico, Vietnam and Germany.

Globally, the U.S. deficit in trade of both goods and services grew 1.9 per cent to \$68.21 billion.

U.S. exports rose 1.0 per cent to \$191.94 billion, while imports climbed 1.2 per cent to \$260.16 billion, the highest since August 2019, according to the department.

The global trade figures are measured on a balance-of-payments basis after seasonal adjustment, and the country-by-country and regional breakdowns are based on unadjusted customs-cleared data. —Kyodo ■

China vows to create 11m jobs in 2021, back at pre-epidemic level

CHINA is planning to create 11 million jobs in 2021, a jump from the 9 million in 2020, which analysts said suggests that the country's job policy will steer toward the post-pandemic era as the COVID-19 situation in the world's second-largest economy is firmly contained.

While officials and economists also pointed out that as the country is expected to have about 15 million new urban workers this year, the challenges in the job market will be more severe than ever. The job creation target was made in the country's 2021 Government Work Report, which was delivered by Premier Li Keqiang on Friday at the opening of the fourth session of the 13th National

People's Congress, China's top legislative body.

"We will continue to improve the employment-first policy to enhance its performance," said Premier Li, adding that the country will work to keep the employment situation stable, provide adequate fiscal, tax, and financial policy support to businesses that do not cut jobs or only cut a small number of them. The government also vowed to ensure employment for key groups such as college graduates, ex-service members, and rural migrant workers, support the development of new forms of employment and expand the scope of the use of vocational skills training funds. —Xinhua ■

NEWS

IN BRIEF

UK finance firm Greensill on the brink, with 50,000 jobs at risk

Troubled UK finance firm Greensill is reportedly on the brink of bankruptcy -- a development which would send shockwaves through the sector, ensnaring clients and risking up to 50,000 jobs worldwide.

Greensill specializes in short-term supply chain financing to provide capital for businesses around the world, but now faces mounting questions over its opaque and complex accounting methods.

The London-headquartered finance firm, founded in 2011 by Australian Lex Greensill with activities spanning Australia and the United States, is preparing to file for insolvency according to the Financial Times and Bloomberg News.

However, an industry source told AFP that private equity firm Apollo Global Management Fund and partner Athene were nearing a rescue deal that could provide \$100 million in new financing. —AFP ■

U.S., EU agree on suspension of tariffs over aircraft subsidy dispute

THE United States said Friday that it has agreed with the European Union to suspend for four months tariffs imposed over their aircraft subsidy row, as they look to work together to address challenges posed by new entrants to the civil aviation market such as China.

As a result of their disputes at the World Trade Organization over their respective subsidies for Boeing Co. and Airbus SE, tariffs by the United States on \$7.5 billion worth of EU products and by the EU on nearly \$4 billion of U.S. imports have been allowed. The four-month truce will affect all tariffs, including those on aircraft as well as non-aircraft products, enabling the two sides to "focus efforts towards resolving these long running disputes at the WTO," the United States and the EU said in their joint statement. The two also said they will seek a "comprehensive and durable negotiated solution" in their disputes, which will include addressing "the trade distortive practices of and challenges posed by new entrants to the sector from non-market economies, such as China". Concerns linger that a protracted trade dispute between the United States and the EU could benefit companies such as the Commercial Aircraft Corporation of China Ltd., observers say. The administration of President Joe Biden is hoping to tackle what the United States views as China's unfair trade practices by working closely with allies and partners. —Kyodo ■

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

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Pakistan PM survives confidence vote boycotted by opposition



Khan secured 178 votes in the 340-seat National Assembly through an open ballot, boycotted by main opposition parties. **PHOTO: AFP**

PAKISTAN Prime Minister Imran Khan survived a vote of confidence by the country's parliament on Saturday, days after

his party lost a key Senate seat to an opposition candidate.

Ruling party and opposition activists clashed briefly outside

the parliament ahead of the vote, with local TV channels showing a shoe being thrown at former interior minister Ahsan Iqbal.

Khan secured 178 votes in the 340-seat National Assembly through an open ballot, boycotted by the main opposition parties, the Pakistan Muslim League and Pakistan Peoples Party.

The vote followed the contentious results of Wednesday's election to Pakistan's Senate, whose members are chosen by provincial parliaments and lawmakers from the lower house.

In a sign of growing ruptures within his ruling Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party, Khan's finance minister lost his seat to an opposition candidate, suggesting some members of the party had switched their loyalty. Khan -- who came to power in 2018 after a fiery campaign vowing to clean up corruption -- accused the opposition of horse-trading and buying some of his party's parliamentarians in a bid to ward off graft investigations.—AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Syria Kurds hand 12 children to their Iraqi Yazidi mothers

SYRIA'S Kurds have handed back 12 children of alleged Islamic State members to their mothers from Iraq's Yazidi minority, a Kurdish official said Friday.

"The children, aged two to five, were all born to Yazidi mothers and fathered by IS members. They were handed over to their mothers" on Thursday, said Syrian Kurdish official Zeyneb Saroukhan.

Dozens of Yazidi women and girls survived sex slavery at the hands of IS jihadists in Syria and have since returned to Iraq, but many were forced to leave their children behind or risk being shunned by their community.

Saroukhan said this was the first time children had been given back to their mothers.—AFP ■

90 killed in 24 hours as fighting rocks Yemen's Marib

FIERCE fighting between Yemeni pro-government forces and Iran-backed Houthi rebels has killed at least 90 combatants on both sides in the past 24 hours, government military sources said Saturday.

The Shi'a rebels launched an offensive last month to seize Marib, the last stronghold in northern Yemen of pro-government forces who are backed by a Saudi-led military coalition.

The clashes in the oil-rich province left 32 dead among government forces and loyalist tribes, while 58 Houthi rebels were killed in coalition air strikes, the sources told AFP.

They said heavy clashes

broke out on six fronts as government forces were able to counter attacks by the Houthis who managed to advance only on the Kassara front northwest of Marib city.

The fighting also left dozens of people wounded, the sources added.

The loss of Marib would be a huge blow for the Yemeni government, but would also threaten catastrophe for civilians, including hundreds of thousands of displaced people sheltering in desolate camps in the surrounding desert.

It would also be a major setback for Saudi Arabia, which has been the target of increasingly



A fighter loyal to Yemen's Houthi rebels at the funeral of fellow combatants killed in battles, on Feb 28, 2021. **PHOTO: AFP**

frequent Houthi missile attacks in recent weeks. Shrapnel from Houthi drones intercepted by the Saudis on Friday wounded two

civilians, including a 10-year-old, in the southwest of the kingdom, the official SPA news agency reported.—AFP ■

Twitter working on a way to 'undo' fresh tweets

TWITTER on Friday confirmed that it is working on a button that would give people a chance to take back freshly fired-off tweets before they are posted.

While the feature would not be an edit option long clamoured for by Twitter users, it would provide a brief window of opportunity of several seconds to "undo" a tweet after sending.

"We can confirm we are testing this feature," a Twitter spokeswoman said in reply to an AFP inquiry.

The feature would be in addition to the delete function but would prevent a tweet from appearing on a user's timeline. Google's free Gmail service provides a similar chance to reconsider emails being sent. Twitter put out word this week that it would be testing products throughout the year, and "hopefully" some would be rolled out. Plans shared by Twitter recently include a possible subscription service in which users would pay for special content from high-profile accounts, part of an economic model to diversify its revenue.—AFP ■

Ecuador's interior minister quits after prison riots



Relatives of inmates protest with signs outside the prison in Guayaquil, Ecuador, on February 25, 2021, after riots in which at least 79 prisoners died. **PHOTO: AFP**

ECUADOR'S interior minister resigned Friday in the wake of simultaneous riots in four prisons that left 79 people dead.

"It is my own personal decision to submit my irrevocable resignation as minister," Patricio Pazmino said in a letter to President Lenin Moreno, which was made public on Twitter.

Pazmino, a reserve police officer, said his "management at the head of the ministry has been questioned," without giving further details.

On Monday, the National Assembly called for the removal of Pazmino, as well as the head of the police and the prison service.

Pazmino's resignation came a week after the riots, which Moreno called an outbreak of "barbarism".

Authorities said the riots were triggered by clashes between rival criminal gangs vying for power and which are allegedly linked to Mexican and Colombian cartels.—AFP ■

Pope, top Shiite cleric plead for 'peace' in historic Iraq encounter

GRAND Ayatollah Ali Sistani, spiritual leader of most of the world's Shiite Muslims, told Pope Francis in a historic meeting in Iraq on Saturday that the country's Christians should live in "peace".

The meeting, on the second day of the first-ever papal visit to Iraq, marked a landmark moment in modern religious history and a milestone in Francis's efforts to deepen dialogue with other religions.

He later addressed the rich spectrum of Iraq's religious communities at Ur, traditional birthplace of the Prophet Abraham, a central figure in the Christian, Jewish and Muslim faiths, where he made an im-



Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani told Pope Francis that Iraq's ancient but often persecuted Christian community should live "in peace and security, and with their full constitutional rights". PHOTO: AFP

passioned plea for "unity" after conflict.

The 84-year-old pontiff's trip to Iraq is an effort to both

comfort the country's ancient but dwindling Christian com-

munity and deepen his dialogue with other faiths.

His meeting with the grand ayatollah lasted 50 minutes, with Sistani's office putting out a statement shortly afterwards thanking Francis for visiting the holy city of Najaf.

Sistani, 90, "affirmed his concern that Christian citizens should live like all Iraqis in peace and security, and with their full constitutional rights," it said. His office published an image of the two, neither wearing masks: Sistani in a black turban with his wispy grey beard reaching down to his black robe and Francis all in white, looking directly at the grand ayatollah. —AFP ■

Ivory Coast holds legislative elections after political turmoil



A voter casts a ballot at a polling station in the working class district of Yopougon in Abidjan during Ivory Coast's legislative elections. PHOTO: AFP

PEOPLE in Ivory Coast cast ballots in a parliamentary vote on Saturday, in a key test of stability after presidential elections last year marked by violence.

Grappling with a deep polit-

ical crisis, President Alassane Ouattara has offered an olive branch to his former rival, Laurent Gbagbo, whose party has now lifted a decade-long boycott of elections.

His Ivorian Popular Front (FPI) is the driving force of a centre-left coalition named Together for Democracy and Solidarity (EDS).

More than 1,500 candidates are vying for the votes of roughly seven million people in a contest for the 255-seat National Assembly.

At a polling station at a school in Abidjan, Micheline Irielou, a 43-year-old businesswoman, talked of the need for change in people's lives.

"We're tired. We don't have much to eat. In my (Plateau) neighbourhood we don't have water and that's why I came to vote. So that it changes."

In contrast to the bloodshed that marked the October 31 presidential polls, campaigning has been as peaceful as it has been enthusiastic.

All the candidates have pledged support for peaceful elections and signed up to a code of conduct. "The prospect (of a high turnout) favours peaceful elections," said Adama Bictogo, a candidate for the constituency of Agboville, near Abidjan.

In the last legislative vote in December 2016, Ouattara's RHPD party teamed up with the centre-right Ivory Coast Democratic Party (PDCI), winning an absolute majority with 167 seats. —AFP ■

Paraguay protests erupt over government handling of Covid-19

PROTESTORS angry over the Paraguay government's handling of the coronavirus crisis clashed with police late Friday, with shops ransacked and cars set on fire.

Police fired tear gas and rubber bullets as clashes in the centre of the capital Asuncion left around 20 injured, according to AFP estimates.

Protestors rallied earlier outside the Congress building to demand the resignation of President Mario Abdo Benitez.

Health Minister Julio Mazzoleni, who has been under attack from lawmakers, including some from the ruling party, and by health worker unions, submitted his resignation, which he made public on Friday after a meeting with the president.

On Thursday, the Senate adopted by 30 votes out of 45 a



Protestors rally outside the Congress building demanding the president resign. PHOTO: AFP

resolution calling for Mazzoleni to step down.

The coronavirus epidemic is

expanding in Paraguay and officials admit the threat is grave.

"We are in a critical sit-

uation," said health ministry spokesman Hernan Martinez. —AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Peru's victims of 'forced sterilizations' hope for Fujimori apology

THE start of court proceedings against Peru's former president Alberto Fujimori for a programme blamed for forcibly sterilizing thousands of poor, mostly indigenous women has generated hope among victims that justice will finally be served. "We've been waiting more than 20 years for justice. I want them to recognize us, to apologize to all the women" threatened or coerced into being sterilized, Gloria Basilio Huaman told AFP. She said authorities tricked her into getting her fallopian tubes tied when she was 27, as part of a family planning program implemented by Fujimori during the final four years of his mandate. —AFP ■

Gaza girl dons 3D-printed mask to heal burnt face

THE moment Maram al-Amaawi gets back from school, she slips on the 3D-printed mask that covers her face and treats her severe burns from a blaze at a Gaza bakery.

But she doesn't go out in the streets for fear of being made fun of. Eight-year-old Maram was severely burned a year ago in the Palestinian refugee camp of Nuseirat, in the central Gaza Strip. —AFP ■

ONE Fists of Fury II: Kang knocks out Amir at round one

Kang Ji Won of South Korea beat Amir Aliakbari of Iran via knockout at 1:54 minute of the round one at main bout of the ONE Championship: Fists of Fury II event held on 5 March at Singapore Stadium in Singapore.

As the bout was a main fight, “Mighty Warrior” or Kang Ji Won put more efforts to finish the fight via knock out even in the very first minute of the round one with continuous strikes and punches.

In the other Heavyweight fight, Anatoly Malykhin or “Spartak” defeats Alexandre Machado or “Bebezao” via Technical Knockout at 3:28

minutes of the round one.

Next in the Featherweight bout, Tang Kai shaped his victory over Ryogo Takahashi via knockout at 1:59 of the round one.

In the other Featherweight fight, Yoshiki Nakahara made a win over Ruslan Emilbek Uulu via Technical Knockout at 1:30 minute of the round one.

In the Bantamweight Muay Thai bout, Han Zi Hao beat Adam Noi via unanimous decision.

In the other Bantamweight fight, Mark Fairtex Abelardo defeats Emilio Urrutia via knockout at 3:20 minute of the round two. —GNLM ■



Kang Ji Won of South Korea celebrates the victory after beating Amir Aliakbari of Iran via knockout at 1:54 minute of the round one in the main bout of the ONE: Fists of Fury II in Singapore on 5 March. **PHOTO: ONE CHAMPIONSHIP**

Man City face Man Utd test on march towards history



Manchester City have history in their sights. **PHOTO: AFP**

LONDON — Manchester City have history in their sights as the runaway leaders bid to take a huge step towards the Premier League title in Sunday’s showdown with fading challengers Manchester United.

City are 14 points clear of United with 11 games left and victory in the derby would effectively end their second placed rivals’ faint hopes of catching them.

Pep Guardiola’s side have

been so dominant since the end of last year that it is the landmarks they can shatter on the way to a third title in four seasons that now hold the greatest interest. They are unbeaten in 28 games and will set a new club record if they avoid defeat this weekend. That could be the first of many milestones to fall for City, who are on an English top-flight record run of 21 successive wins in all competitions.

The only teams from the top

five European leagues ever to record longer winning streaks in all competitions are Bayern Munich (23) and Real Madrid (22).

City can edge closer to Bayern’s tally if they clinch a 16th successive Premier League victory this weekend, which would also take them to the brink of their own record of 18 consecutive Premier League wins, a mark shared with Liverpool. —AFP ■

Roland Garros confident of May-June return, ‘maximize number of fans’

PARIS — Roland Garros chiefs said Friday (Mar 5) they fully expected the Grand Slam event to return to its traditional May-June slot this year while being able to “maximize the number” of fans.

Last year’s tournament was switched unilaterally from spring to September-October as the coronavirus sent the sport into a five-month suspension.

When the clay court showpiece was eventually staged, health protocols saw a daily

limit of only 1,000 fans allowed onto the Roland Garros site.

“Our desire is to be able, in accordance with the decisions of the government and with the extremely ambitious and rigorous application of a very well-crafted health protocol, to organize Roland Garros on the dates scheduled, from May 17 to Jun 6 (qualifying included),” said Amelie Oudea-Castera, the French Tennis Federation’s (FFT) new director-general. —AFP ■



Plenty of room for a view: Rafael Nadal returns the ball to Novak Djokovic during the 2020 Roland Garros final. **PHOTO: AFP**

Ibrahimovic poised for Sweden comeback: reports



Zlatan Ibrahimovic has scored 14 goals in 14 Serie A matches for AC Milan this season. **PHOTO: AFP**

STOCKHOLM — Zlatan Ibrahimovic will return to international football at the age of 39, Swedish media reported on Saturday.

Sweden, coached by Janne Andersson, have qualified for the Euros and kick off their campaign against Spain in Bilbao on June 14.

The return has been under discussion for several months, according to reports, but has not been confirmed by the Swedish football federation (SvFF).

“It is certain that the Milan star is making a comeback in Janne Andersson’s squad for the World Cup qualifiers,” said

the site FootballDirekt, in a report that was picked up by the Swedish national press.

The striker, who has 116 caps and 62 goals, has not worn the Swedish jersey since Euro 2016, where he was captain but failed to score as Sweden finished bottom of their group. —AFP ■