

NATIONAL

Vice-Chairman of State Administration Council Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Commander-in-Chief (Army) Vice-Senior General Soe Win meets officers, other ranks and families of Kalaw, Aungban stations

PAGE-4

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Friday, 12 March 2021

Economy plays a key role in the three main driving forces of the State: Senior General



Chairman of the State Administration Council Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing addresses meeting 3/2021 of the Management Committee in Nay Pyi Taw on 11 March 2021.

THE Management Committee of the State Administration Council held a meeting 3/2021 at the meeting hall of the State Administration Council Chairman's Office, in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday with an address delivered by Chairman of the State Administration Council Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing.

Also present at the meeting were Vice-Chairman of the Council Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Commander-in-Chief (Army) Vice-Senior General Soe Win, Union Ministers General Mya Tun Oo, Lt-Gen Soe Htut, U Wunna Maung Lwin, Lt-Gen Tun Tun Naung, U Win Shein, U Aung Naing Oo, U Chit Naing, U Ko Ko, U Tin Htut Oo,

Admiral Tin Aung San, U Khin Maung Yi, U Aung Than Oo, U Myint Kyaing, Dr Pwint Hsan, Dr Nyunt Pe, Dr Thet Khaing Win, U Shwe Lay, Dr Thet Thet Khine, U Maung Maung Ohn and U Saw Tun Aung Myint and Attorney-General of the Union Dr Daw Thida Oo.

In his opening address, the Senior General said the management committee is to mainly implement tasks of social, economic and international relations of the State. During more than one month period when the Council has taken responsibilities of the State, some tasks have completed by cent per cent and some tasks which need to be continuously undertaken must be carried out in possible ways. Five future programmes the Council has adopted since the time of assumption comprise

'efforts will be made to recover businesses that faced loss caused by COVID-19 in various ways as quickly as possible'. The economy plays a key role in the three main driving forces of the State. It is necessary to encourage domestic economy such as SMEs related to the objectives involved in the nine objectives, as further development of products based on agriculture and livestock breeding and stability of the market economy and inviting international investments. The Senior General stressed the need to set an aim for further production of goods. If the people have a good economy, demand will increase. Consequently, supply will also be higher, contributing to the improvement of social-economic life. Relevant departments need to cooperate with each other so

as to carry out economic tasks in the short/long run. Other departments need to take co-operation measures and give advice for better improvement of tasks. Moreover, all must strive for the successful operation of the tourism industry which can rapidly contribute to the State economy. The tourism industry is benefitting all arenas.

With regard to duty discharging and carrying out tasks at ministries, the Council is on the path of multiparty democracy. As democracy is a practice but not an ism, ministries need to do their tasks in accord with the practice of democracy. So, it is necessary to clarify the practice of democracy to service personnel. Regarding the rank promotion of staff, instruction has been given to promote deserved ranks for those who are

skilful in works and loyal to the State. Staff must be undergone on-job training and at training schools for enhancing capacity to culture hierarchical respect in unity in respective departments. Democracy can be realized with disciplines, not undisciplined acts. Hence, relevant departments need to do their tasks in accord with the practice of democracy so as to have achievement in their missions.

Next, the Union ministers reported on permission to double the salaries of permanent and daily-wage staff in Maung-taw District of Rakhine State and Paletwa Township of Chin State and increase their daily allowances, matters related to the agreements and MoUs between Myanmar and Bangladesh, tax exemption, the appointment of

SEE PAGE-3

inside TODAY

NATIONAL

Ministry of Construction holds 2nd coordination meeting

PAGE-4

NATIONAL

State Administration Council holds press conference

PAGE-6

LOCAL NEWS

Onion growers expect good price amid sluggish trade

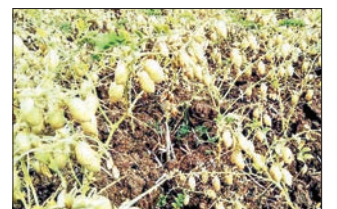
PAGE-10



LOCAL NEWS

Pwintbyu chickpea growers anticipate good price in early harvest season

PAGE-10



Announcement of Union Election Commission

11 March 2021

- Regarding the Multiparty General Election held on 8 November 2020, the Union Election Commission has inspected the voter lists and the casting of votes of Aungmyethazan Township in Mandalay Region.
- According to the inspection findings, the previous election commission released 186,323 eligible voters in Aungmyethazan Township of Mandalay Region. The list of the Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population in November 2020 showed 185,706 eligible voters who had turned 18. The voter lists mentioned that there were 8,368 citizens, associate citizens, nationalized citizens, and non-identity voters, 846 persons repeated on the voter lists more than three times and 15,126 persons repeated on the voter lists two times.
- Findings in inspection were as follows:

Findings on scrutinized voting list of Aungmyethazan Township

| Sr | Township and number of polling stations | List of township sub-commission | List from immigration department | Those involved in voting list without citizenship scrutiny cards | Those involved in voter list more than three times holding one CSC | Those involved in voter list more than two times holding one CSC |
|----|--|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|--|--|--|
| 1 | 92 polling stations in Aungmyethazan Township of Mandalay Region | 186,323 | 185,706 | 8,368 | 846 | 15,126 |

- The Union Election Commission has inspected the withdrawal/receipt/use/remaining of ballot papers used for Pyithu Hluttaw Election of Aungmyethazan Township in Mandalay Region, together with the respective township election sub-commission, head of police force, Immigration and Population and administrator according to the Hluttaw Election Law Section 53.
- According to inspection on the ground, a total of 92 poll stations in Aungmyethazan Township in Mandalay Region took out 196,588 ballot papers. It used 136,996 ballot receipts. The remaining ballots were 49,509 instead of the exact remaining 59,592.
- The numbers of missing ballots at 92 polling stations were 14,293 and 47 township advance ballots were also missing. The findings are as follows:

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

| Sr | Subject | Withdrawal | Used | Exact remaining | Remaining on the ground | Difference | |
|-------|----------------------------|------------|---------|-----------------|-------------------------|------------|-------|
| | | | | | | Missing | Extra |
| 1 | Ward/Village-tract ballots | 189,500 | 135,341 | 54,159 | 39,866 | 14,293 | - |
| 2 | Township advance ballots | 1,716 | 1,655 | 61 | 14 | 47 | - |
| 3 | Township remaining ballots | 5,372 | - | 5,372 | 9,629 | - | 4,257 |
| Total | | 196,588 | 136,996 | 59,592 | 49,509 | 14,340 | 4,257 |

- The missing ballots at 70 ward polling stations were as follows:

| Sr | Ward | Polling station | Issued | Inspection | | | Difference | |
|----|--------------------|-----------------|--------|------------|-----------|-------|------------|-------|
| | | | | Used | Remaining | Total | Missing | Extra |
| 1 | Ahnate Taw | 1 | 2,450 | 1,893 | 257 | 2,150 | 300 | |
| | | 2 | 1,800 | 1,431 | 169 | 1,600 | 200 | |
| | | 3 | 2,100 | 1,566 | 34 | 1,600 | 500 | |
| | | 4 | 1,400 | 1,083 | 217 | 1,300 | 100 | |
| | | 5 | 1,600 | 1,003 | 497 | 1,500 | 100 | |
| 2 | Dawna Bwar | 1 | 2,100 | 1,539 | 501 | 2,040 | 60 | |
| | | 2 | 2,350 | 1,699 | 601 | 2,300 | 50 | |
| | | 4 | 2,700 | 1,786 | 864 | 2,650 | 50 | |
| | | 5 | 1,750 | 1,334 | 316 | 1,650 | 100 | |
| | | 6 | 1,800 | 1,328 | 322 | 1,650 | 150 | |
| | | 7 | 2,450 | 2,048 | 202 | 2,250 | 200 | |
| | | 8 | 2,000 | 1,721 | 29 | 1,750 | 250 | |
| 3 | Ohbo Shwegyin | 1 | 1,450 | 1,307 | 43 | 1,350 | 100 | |
| | | 2 | 1,850 | 1,529 | 271 | 1,800 | 50 | |
| | | 3 | 2,000 | 1,413 | 537 | 1,950 | 50 | |
| 4 | Upoke Taw | 1 | 1,000 | 654 | 96 | 750 | 250 | |
| | | 2 | 1,200 | 796 | 204 | 1,000 | 200 | |
| | | 3 | 1,550 | 1,151 | 149 | 1,300 | 250 | |
| | | 4 | 1,750 | 1,168 | 282 | 1,450 | 300 | |
| | | 5 | 1,950 | 1,117 | 533 | 1,650 | 300 | |
| | | 6 | 1,250 | 845 | 205 | 1,050 | 200 | |
| | | 7 | 2,200 | 1,468 | 182 | 1,650 | 550 | |
| | | 8 | 2,300 | 1,418 | 382 | 1,800 | 500 | |
| | | 9 | 1,750 | 1,126 | 324 | 1,450 | 300 | |
| | | 10 | 1,850 | 1,290 | 310 | 1,600 | 250 | |
| 5 | Amara Htani (East) | 2 | 2,000 | 1,429 | 531 | 1,960 | 40 | |
| | | 3 | 1,500 | 1,195 | 291 | 1,486 | 14 | |
| | | 4 | 1,900 | 1,683 | 201 | 1,884 | 13 | |
| | | 5 | 1,750 | 1,295 | 407 | 1,702 | 48 | |

The government wishes to appoint only the persons who win the majority respect and who are free from party politics to a possible degree

NEW ward and village administrators have been appointed as the term of the old ones had expired. But there are acts against the appointment of the ward and village administrators. The government wishes to appoint only the persons who win the majority respect and who are free from party politics to a possible degree. Rejections against these appointments have appeared under the influence of party politics. Democracy tolerates whether it is pro or against a topic. Full democracies always accept appointments or assignments done in accord with the rule and law. As the township administrators are immediate superiors of the village administrators, they also should be free from political influence. Arrangements are being made to ensure this.

(Excerpt from the speech to the 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 2 March 2021)

Economy plays a key role in the three main driving forces of the State: Senior General

FROM PAGE-1

members of the Securities and Exchange Supervisory Commission and cash award presentation, disbursement of special Covid loans and loan returns, supervision of State-owned cinemas, spending of the emergency fund on agricultural, livestock breeding and transport sectors, raising of a socio-economic development fund for mining work and feasibility study of lead excavation.

The Senior General said needs arise now to reopen the hospitals. There are 1,177 hospitals in all regions and states but some are found to be closed. According to the ethics

of healthcare staff, they need to provide public healthcare to everyone regardless of friend or enemy.

The State will give medical doctors the rights and privileges they deserve. In this regard, the Ministry of Health and Sports and relevant ministries need to seek ways and means. Medical doctors themselves need to live in line with their professional ethics. Public healthcare services must be considered on a long-term basis as they are essential.

Regarding banking services, banks are responsible for cash flow. They need to operate regularly in accord

Therefore, education promotion is necessary. Education promotion efforts must be based on the already-existing national strategies so that students are not abused as an experiment.

with the rules and disciplines. It is necessary to take legal action against the banks that

fail to follow the disciplines. A modern and updated banking system should also be adopted.

Only when banks operate regularly, can monetary matters be smoothly handled for the public.

Without a good education, a country cannot develop. Therefore, education promotion is necessary. Education promotion efforts must be based on the already-existing national strategies so that students are not abused as an experiment. Closure of schools causes losses to individual students as well as the State. So, preparations are being made to reopen the schools systematically. Other ministries also need to render help for national education promotion.—MNA

Central Bank of Myanmar discusses banking-related matters

THE Central Bank of Myanmar organized a meeting yesterday.

During the meeting, CBM Governor U Than Nyein discussed the importance of the administration and human resources development department, control of staff under the civil services law, rules and regulations and assistance for departmental staff within the scope of the allocated budget.

He also discussed the training for staff to develop the human resources and IT and current expenditure and capital expenditures following the

financial rules.

He stressed the need to follow the civil services law, rules and regulations and to be mindful of technical security and cybersecurity in the IT era.

Then, the Deputy Director-General and Directors presented the respective work plans of their departments.

They discussed the plans to meet the needs for human resource development, e-Government, SWIFT system and CBM-NET system, completion of Training Centre of CBM in Yangon with World Bank loan,



CBM Governor U Than Nyein chairs the meeting to discuss banking-related matters yesterday.

upgrade of financial management, MIS Reporting System and SWIFT Reporting Service

and other arrangements. Then, the Vice-Governors coordinated the meeting and

CBM Governor instructed the necessary things.—MNA/GNLM

Vice-Chairman of State Administration Council Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Commander-in-Chief (Army) Vice-Senior General Soe Win meets officers, other ranks and families of Kalaw, Aungban stations

Vice-Chairman of the State Administration Council Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Commander-in-Chief (Army) Vice-Senior General Soe Win met officers, other ranks and families of Kalaw and Aungban stations at the station hall Kalaw of Shan State (South) this evening.

Also present were Lt-Gen Aung Zaw Aye from the Office of the Commander-in-Chief (Army), Chief of Staff (Air) Lt-Gen Tun Aung, senior military officers of the Office of the Commander-in-Chief (Army), Commander of Eastern Command Brig-Gen Ni Lin Aung and officers, other ranks and families of Kalaw and Aungban stations.

At the meeting, the Vice-Senior General explained the situation of the canvassing campaigns of the 2020 general election, during the general election and the post-election period, a gigantic error of 10.4 million in the voter list of over 39.2 eligible million voters, the frequent demands made by the people and the political parties concerned to the Union Election Commission to solve the matter in a transparent way,



Vice-Chairman of the State Administration Council Vice-Senior General Soe Win holds meeting with officers, other ranks and family members of Kalaw and Aungban stations yesterday.



the ignorance of those demands by the UEC led by U Hla Thein, the rejection of the request to hold a special session on the voter list errors by the speaker of the Hluttaw, President U Win Myint's total rejection of the final request to solve the problem through the meeting of the National Defence and Security Council for two times, the refusal of a personal request to check the voter list with the newly-formed UEC, to postpone the programme to summon the new Hluttaw during the time the lists were under inspection and

the President to solve the issue in time. He also said attempts were made to convene the third Hluttaw without clearing all the doubts about the error in the voter list that exceeded 10.4 million in numbers with the intention of taking over the three organs of power through unfair means. Hence, the Tatmadaw had to declare the state of emergency under Sections 417 and 418 without revoking the 2008 Constitution to serve the duties of the State during the designated period. The Tatmadaw set up the State Administration

Council, adopted the five future work programmes and is implementing them. Security forces are using the minimum force and rules at the lowest level in controlling the anarchic riots in accord with the 1956 Law on the riot manual of the government of the Union of Myanmar and the 2015 mob control manual of the Myanmar Police Force of the Ministry of Home Affairs. Some civil servants who are misled into participating in the CDM are facing socio-economic losses. Officers, other ranks and families should have unity

and security awareness. He also explained the dos and don'ts for the servicemen and their families to stay away from acts that may tarnish the image of their institution.

The Vice-Senior General and party presented foodstuff and gifts to officers, other ranks and families of Kalaw and Aungban stations through the respective officials.

After the meeting, the Vice-Senior General and party cordially greeted officers, other ranks and family members who attended the meeting.—MNA

Ministry of Construction holds 2nd coordination meeting

THE Ministry of Construction held the coordination meeting to discuss matters relating to the successful implementation of the five key stages of the State Administration Council, directives of the Chairman of the Council, further implementations of the Ministry, policies, personnel issues and status of the current business development, under the COVID-19 health guidelines yesterday morning in Nay Pyi Taw.

At the meeting, Union Minister for Construction U Shwe Lay said from the time the State Administrative Council took responsibilities of the State, five key roadmaps and nine goals for politics, economy and society have been set and civil servants must follow the procedures and objectives set by the sector.

Although civil service personnel have different beliefs and practices, they must perform



Union Minister U Shwe Lay presides over the second coordination meeting of his ministry yesterday.

their duties to function the whole State machinery properly.

The Union Minister added the 10,000 public housing units which have been implemented by the Ministry in Nay Pyi Taw, Yangon and Mandalay as per the COVID-19 economic relief plan and the need to remedy joint ventures of other depart-

ments of the Ministry, including the Department of Road Transport Administration which has been affected by the COVID-19 crisis.

He stressed the importance of conducting implementations with the 2020-2021FY fund in the set time and meeting 100 per cent of the quality and stand-

ards.

He urged the civil service personnel to work hard as per the existing laws, rules and regulations to function the machinery of the State, to continue research activities and to comply with financial regulations in carrying out activities.

Deputy Minister U Min

Htein discussed the future plans of the Ministry, activities to be implemented under the State Administration Council and living under the staff rules and regulations.

Permanent Secretary U Aung Myint Oo explained the status of the construction work of the Ministry and the situation to proceed following the rules regarding the staff who have been participating in the CDM campaign.

The meeting also discussed the status of the current implementation and further plans, staffing issues, financial difficulties including the current inconvenience in withdrawing money from banks and transportation of the necessary building materials and labour issues and difficulties for some skilled workers to come to work, and the Union Minister coordinated as necessary.—MNA/GNLM

Republic of the Union of Myanmar
State Administration Council

Order No 103/2021

13th Waning of Tabodwe 1382 ME
11 March 2021

Appointment and Duty Assignment of
Deputy Ministers

The State Administration Council has appointed and assigned the following persons as Deputy Ministers shown against each of their ministries, in accordance with the right to exercise the powers under Article 419 of the State Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar:

1. U Ko Ko Lwin Ministry of Planning, Finance and Industry
2. Dr Aung Gyi Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation
3. U Min Min Oo Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation
4. U Thant Sin Ministry of Electricity and Energy

By order

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

Press Release

IT was posted on Facebook social media that Union Minister for Foreign Affairs U Wunna Maung Lwin had sent an email about the "Presenting the Current Situation in Myanmar" to U.S. Secretary of State Honourable Antony J. Blinken via an email account of wunnamaunglwin@mofa.gov.mm.

That particular email account is not the email of Union Minister U Wunna Maung Lwin and it has never been created. Such kind of online post on social media has a deliberate intention to sow misunderstanding to the public with false contents by using a fake email account. Actions will be taken against those posting fabricated contents in accordance with the existing laws and regulations.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs only uses official diplomatic channels and sends official note verbales through embassies based in the respective countries for its official diplomatic correspondences.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Nay Pyi Taw
Dated, 11 March 2021

Announcement of Union Election Commission

FROM PAGE-2

| Sr | Ward | Polling station | Issued | Inspection | | | Difference | |
|-------|----------------------------|-----------------|---------|------------|-----------|---------|------------|-------|
| | | | | Used | Remaining | Total | Missing | Extra |
| 6 | Amara Htani (West) | 1 | 2,500 | 1,764 | 687 | 2,451 | 49 | |
| 7 | Nyaung Kwal | 1 | 2,300 | 1,709 | 241 | 1,950 | 350 | |
| | | 2 | 2,550 | 1,409 | 593 | 2,002 | 548 | |
| | | 3 | 1,850 | 1,264 | 376 | 1,640 | 210 | |
| | | 4 | 1,800 | 1,684 | 56 | 1,740 | 60 | |
| | | 5 | 1,950 | 1,474 | 276 | 1,750 | 200 | |
| | | 6 | 2,000 | 1,074 | 776 | 1,850 | 150 | |
| | | 7 | 1,850 | 1,417 | 333 | 1,750 | 100 | |
| | | 8 | 2,000 | 1,163 | 89 | 1,252 | 748 | |
| | | 9 | 2,250 | 1,543 | 697 | 2,240 | 10 | |
| | | 10 | 2,400 | 1,563 | 587 | 2,150 | 250 | |
| 8 | Pyi Lone Chan Tha | 1 | 2,450 | 1,781 | 619 | 2,400 | 50 | |
| 9 | Pyi Gyi Yan Lone | 1 | 2,200 | 1,779 | 321 | 2,100 | 100 | |
| | | 2 | 2,200 | 1,605 | 245 | 1,850 | 350 | |
| | | 4 | 2,400 | 1,611 | 89 | 1,700 | 700 | |
| | | 5 | 3,050 | 2,421 | 529 | 2,950 | 100 | |
| 10 | May Ga Thiri | 1 | 1,900 | 1,304 | 546 | 1,850 | 50 | |
| | | 2 | 2,300 | 1,573 | 17 | 1,950 | 710 | |
| | | 3 | 2,100 | 1,572 | 478 | 2,050 | 50 | |
| 11 | Pale Ngwe Yaung | 2 | 2,650 | 1,705 | 895 | 2,600 | 50 | |
| | | 3 | 2,100 | 1,216 | 784 | 2,000 | 100 | |
| 12 | Aungmyethazan | 1 | 2,450 | 2,027 | 373 | 2,400 | 50 | |
| | | 2 | 2,550 | 1,969 | 131 | 2,100 | 450 | |
| | | 3 | 2,350 | 1,734 | 66 | 1,800 | 550 | |
| | | 5 | 2,750 | 1,609 | 588 | 2,197 | 553 | |
| 13 | Min Te Ei Kin | 1 | 2,200 | 1,471 | 429 | 1,900 | 300 | |
| | | 2 | 2,200 | 1,635 | 465 | 2,100 | 100 | |
| | | 3 | 2,700 | 2,016 | 634 | 2,650 | 50 | |
| | | 4 | 3,200 | 2,134 | 1,059 | 3,193 | 7 | |
| | | 5 | 2,200 | 1,795 | 260 | 2,055 | 145 | |
| | | 8 | 1,000 | 546 | 404 | 950 | 50 | |
| 14 | Pyi Gyi Kyet Thayay (West) | 1 | 2,700 | 1,434 | 766 | 2,200 | 500 | |
| | | 2 | 2,400 | 1,584 | 766 | 2,350 | 50 | |
| 15 | Thiri Malar (east) | 1 | 1,900 | 1,085 | 415 | 1,500 | 400 | |
| | | 2 | 1,900 | 1,333 | 417 | 1,750 | 150 | |
| | | 5 | 2,400 | 1,459 | 541 | 2,000 | 400 | |
| 16 | Thiri Malar (west) | 1 | 1,150 | 903 | 214 | 1,117 | 33 | |
| | | 2 | 1,600 | 1,132 | 438 | 1,570 | 30 | |
| | | 3 | 2,150 | 1,608 | 500 | 2,108 | 42 | |
| | | 4 | 1,800 | 1,275 | 510 | 1,785 | 15 | |
| | | 5 | 1,750 | 1,296 | 449 | 1,745 | 5 | |
| Total | | | 143,900 | 101,991 | 27,616 | 129,607 | 14,293 | |

State Administration Council holds press conference



State Administration Council's Information Team Leader Brig-Gen Zaw Min Tun explained the ongoing political affairs of the country to the media.

STATE Administration Council's Information Team Leader Brig-Gen Zaw Min Tun explained the ongoing political affairs of the country to the media yesterday.

Before the press conference, the officials conducted COVID-19 preventive measures

dispersal procedures and repatriation of Myanmar nationals and scholar monks from Malaysia, India and Sri Lanka in Tatmadaw's vessels and aircraft.

He continued to say about the difficulties of the public in health sectors for CDM, health-

He also added the investigation of Anti-Corruption Commission, corruption committed by former chief ministers Dr Zaw Myint Maung, Dr Myint Naing and Dr Aye Zan, further investigation by ACC on former President U Win Myint and his wife

Daw Cho Cho for taking bribe from some business people.

He then highlighted the difference between the election results released by former UEC and findings by current UEC and words of a member of former UEC via PowerPoint presenta-

tion and video clips.

U Khin Maung Oo, a member of UEC presented the performance of the current UEC and its findings in inspections on election results with pieces of evidence.

Some of the documents for the press conference, performance of current UEC, findings in inspection on election results and other documents were displayed at the press conference for the media to cover the news, Brig-Gen Zaw Min Tun explained to the attendees.

The press conference was attended by the members of the State Administration Council's Information Team, officials from the Tatmadaw True News Information Team and journalists from local media organizations, dailies, local TVs, foreign media organizations based in Myanmar and the full documents of the press conference will be released soon. — MNA/GNLM



U Khin Maung Oo, a member of UEC presented the performance of the current UEC.



Local and Foreign media personnel are seen viewing the display panel.

against the attendees to ensure social distancing.

During the press conference, Brig-Gen Zaw Min Tun talked about the performance of the State Administration Council for peace and tranquillity of the State, the rule of law and sector-wise development during one month, the outbreak of riots from peaceful protests, lawless anarchy mob, CDM to affect the governance mechanism, transport, public services, banking services and departmental operations and threats to join CDM.

He added the formation of unlawful CRPH to escalate civil unrest and disobedience movement, forcing youths to take to the streets, handling protests led by anarchists in February and early March under the crowd

care services of military medics at military hospitals and public hospitals, actions that were taken against those who pledged to support financial assistance to CDM staff and those who misused the cash contributions, State-level corruption, findings after inspections on Daw Khin Kyi Foundation, inspection on former region and state chief ministers while former President U Win Myint and State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi were placed under house arrest starting 1 February 2021 and testimony of former Yangon Chief Minister U Pyo Min Thein that he gave more than \$600,000 and 7 visses of gold to State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and she, herself received them.



Some of the documents for the press conference, performance of current UEC, findings in inspection on election results and other documents were displayed at the press conference.

Riot control conducted in townships in Magway, Yangon, Ayeyawady and Sagaing regions



Myaing Township Police Station is seen after rioters storm into it. Rioters are seen attacking the security forces, with slingshots and rocks.

SECURITY forces maintained the situation while riots broke out in Myaing Township in Magway Region, Dagon Myothit (North) in Yangon Region, Nyaungdon Township in Ayeyawady Region and Kalay Township in Sagaing Region, yesterday.

While a group of about 50 people were rioting in front of Thukhamyaing monastery in Myaing Township in Magway Region, security forces demanded to disperse the

crowd. Finally, when the group insisted on riot, security forces dispersed the crowd in accordance with the riot control procedures and detained 2 men.

Afterwards, about 100 people gathered in front of the township police station and invaded violently with slingshots and rocks. During the riot, one man (still investigating) died, three police were injured and the crowd removed back.

Similarly, security forces had to fire warning shots to

scare the group of about 80 rioters away who attacked them while they were patrolling the streets in the wards of Kalay Township, Sagaing Region around 10 pm on 10 March. After the crowd had been dispersed, Soe Win, 49, who lived in Chan Myay Aung ward, Kalaw Township, was injured and under medical care and will be charged in accordance with the law.

Riots in Dagon Myothit (North) also led two men in-

jured and one of them died due to the injury. It was reported that the deceased person was Chit Min, 25, who lived in (49) ward, Dagon Myothit (North), Yangon Region.

Around 8 pm on 10 March, a rioter burned the motorbike of an official parked in front of staff housing in ward (3), Nyaungdon Township, Ayeyawady Region and investigations are underway to charge the responsible person at the township police station.—MNA

New gold plates to be offered to Shwedagon Pagoda

THE Shwedagon Pagoda Treasurer's Board of Trustees received the sermon from the senior venerable monks regarding the remaining work to be carried out under the Shwedagon Pagoda Gold Plate Donation Plan (2018-2019) yesterday morning in Shwedagon Pagoda.

Due to the COVID-19 crisis in 2020, the implementation of engraving more than 12,000 Gavisite copper plates to the remaining areas of Shwedagon Pagoda was suspended. At present, as a group of 50 people can be gathered, the pagoda will be covered in scaffolding to carry out gold coating, and to screw gold plates step by step on necessary areas of the pagoda under the guidelines of the senior venerable monks, according to the statement of the Shwedagon Pagoda Treasurer's Board of Trustees.—MNA/GNLM

Pandemic vaccinations continue for staff, religious persons



Tatmadaw medical corps are administering COVID jabs to the 65-year-old.

TATMADAW yesterday gave COVID-19 vaccinations for the relevant staff and religious persons including monks and nuns who are above 65-year-old, according to the officials.

Yesterday, relevant staff from Lashio, Laukkai, Kunlong, Kutkai, Namsam, Mongyai, Mongton, Namkham, Hsipaw, Nawngkhio, Kyaukme and Hopan townships from northern Shan State received

the vaccination.

Likewise, venerable monks and nuns from townships of eastern and northern Shan State, Rakhine State, Mandalay Region, and Bago Region received the pandemic vaccination. The Tatmadaw physicians and medical teams who did not participate in the Civil Disobedience Movement in Myanmar gave the vaccinations, according to the officials.—MNA

Malaysia returnees provided cash assistance and items

THE Department of Disaster Management under the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement provided cash assistance and items to a total of 1,086 Myanmar nationals, who were repatriated from Malaysia, yesterday morning in Yangon.

Deputy Director-General for the Disaster Management Department U Win Shwe handed over K 2,280,6000 to the two workers' representatives; Director of the District Disaster

Management Department U Than Soe provided a total of 9 personal grooming items, 543 boxes of surgical masks, 1,086 face shields, 300 bottles of hand gel and Lt-Col Linn Tun from the Yangon Command provided T-shirts to each one of them and a Workers' Representative expressed words of thanks.

They were also provided longyis, towel and soaps while they were on board.—MNA



Aids in cash and kind are provided to returnees from Malaysia.

Fire danger should be taken seriously

With the summer season coming in, the reports on fire outbreak are seen on social media. The reasons for causing fire are different from lighted mosquito-coils to electric short-circuit and negligence for using an electrical appliance.

Electrical fires involving cooking food and the misuse of electrical appliances were reported in our country every year.

Meanwhile, faulty appliances are a big danger for fire outbreaks even in the developed countries today. A survey has shown that accidental electrical fires in the kitchen were caused by misuse and fires caused by electrical appliances are due to negligence.

The modernization of technology and techniques leads to a large increase in the use of electricity. Electricity supply is available not only in big cities but also in rural areas.

When we use electrical appliances, we are also responsible to prevent fire by following fire safety guidelines.

Those who use fire recklessly or carelessly, thereby setting fire to flammable materials and actions will be taken against them according to Section 285, Criminal Law. Those who use the electricity are responsible for negligence and careless use of electricity, therefore tough actions will be taken against them.

Section 285, Criminal Law was promulgated to take against those who have committed arson. In accordance with this Section, tough actions will be taken against those who have committed arson inadvertently or carelessly. They are liable to a heavy fine and could be sentenced to three-year imprisonment for arson.

According to the motto: "Avoid the danger of fire before being caught by it." Therefore, people from all walks of life are sincerely urged to avoid the danger of fire by using it cautiously.



UN adopts landmark framework to integrate natural capital in economic reporting

In a move that may reshape decision and policy-making towards sustainable development, the United Nations on Wednesday adopted a new framework that includes the contributions of nature when measuring economic prosperity and human well-being.

The new framework

The new framework - the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting - Ecosystem Accounting (SEEA EA) - was adopted by the UN Statistical Commission and marks a major step forward that goes beyond the commonly used statistic of gross domestic product (GDP) that has dominated economic reporting since the end of World War II. This measure would ensure that natural capital - forests, wetlands and other ecosystems - are recognized in economic reporting.

Experts emphasize that while a statistic such as GDP does a good job of showing the value of goods and services exchanged in markets, it does not reflect the dependency of the economy on nature, nor its impacts on nature, such as the deterioration of water quality or the loss of a forest.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres welcomed the adoption of the new economic and environmental framework. "This is a historic step forward towards transforming how we view and value nature. We will

no longer be heedlessly allowing environmental destruction and degradation to be considered economic progress."

The new framework can also underpin decision-making at two crucial conferences later this year - COP15 on Biodiversity in Kunming and the Glasgow Climate Conference, COP 26.

Making Peace with Nature

According to a new UN Environment Programme (UNEP) report, "Making Peace with Nature," the global economy has grown nearly fivefold over the last 50 years, largely due to a tripling in extraction of natural resources and energy that has fueled growth in production and consumption. Over the same time, the world population has increased by a factor of two, to 7.8 billion people, and though on average prosperity has also doubled, about 1.3 billion people still live in poverty and some 700 million are hungry.

"This is a major step forward," said UNEP Executive Director Inger Andersen. "The new framework can be a game changer in decision-making. By



Foreign tourists swim and relax at a natural pool at Kuang Si falls, a few kilometres outside Luang Prabang in northern Laos. PHOTO: AFP

highlighting the contribution of nature, we now have a tool that allows us to properly view and value nature. It can help us bring about a rapid and lasting shift toward sustainability for both people and the environment."

The adoption comes at a time when climate change continues its relentless march and the world is on track to reach new highs of warming, climbing to at least 3 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels by 2100.

The loss of biodiversity

According to the World Meteorological Organization, 2020 was in a dead-heat to be one of the three warmest years on record, and 2011-2020 was the warmest decade on record, with

the warmest six years all being since 2015. And the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem integrity, together with climate change and pollution will undermine our efforts on 80 per cent of the Sustainable Development Goal targets.

And yet countries continue to make decisions on the economy without consideration to environmental impacts. Governments are still directing more than 5 trillion U.S. dollars in annual subsidies to fossil fuels, non-sustainable agriculture and fishing, non-renewable energy, mining, and transportation.

The new framework recognizes that ecosystems deliver important services that generate benefits for people. In essence, they are assets to be maintained, similar to economic assets. For example, forests play a role in providing communities with clean water, serving as natural water filters with trees, plants and other characteristics, such as soil depth, that help absorb nutrient pollution like nitrogen and phosphorus before it can flow into streams, rivers and lakes.

Source: Xinhua

Vaccine hope, but enduring fear one year after pandemic declared

The world on Thursday marked one year since the coronavirus threat was declared a pandemic, with vaccinations offering hope but much of humanity still enduring highly restricted lives and no clear path back to normality.

The enormity of the challenge entering the second year of the pandemic was highlighted Wednesday in Brazil, where a surge fuelled by more contagious new variants saw a record 2,286 deaths reported for the day.

On the economic front, the US Congress passed one of its biggest stimulus efforts ever - a \$1.9-trillion package that President Joe Biden said would give struggling American families a "fighting chance".

Since first emerging in China at the end of 2019, the coronavirus has killed more than 2.6 million

people and forced unprecedented curbs on movement that eviscerated economies.

"It took a long time for the politicians to act... We are paying for it, the poor people," said Adilson Menezes, 40, outside a hospital in Brazil's biggest city Sao Paulo, where all non-essential businesses are closed to help fight the virus.

The World Health Organization officially declared Covid-19 a pandemic on March 11 last year as infection numbers were beginning to explode across Asia and Europe. About 4,600 deaths had been officially recorded around

the world at the time.

On the same day, actor Tom Hanks announced while on a filming mission in Australia that he had contracted the virus, deepening fears that no one was safe.

But with the United States only just starting to feel the direct impacts of the pandemic, then president Donald Trump played down the threat.

"The virus will not have a chance against us," Trump told the nation. Under his chaotic leadership, the United States would become the hardest-hit nation: the American death toll today stands at more than 528,000.

- 'War footing' -

The only defenses to the contagious virus one year ago appeared to be face masks and stopping people from interacting. Global aviation came to a standstill and governments imposed deeply unpopular restrictions, forcing billions of fearful people into some form of lockdown.

"We are on a war footing," Corinne Krencker, the head of a hospital network in eastern France told AFP on March 11 last year, as patient and death numbers began to surge.

Source: AFP



The Brazilian mega-city is known as a world street-art capital, and not even the coronavirus pandemic has stopped graffiti painters. Mural by artist Mari Mats on Rua Capitaio Prudente, West Zone of the city of Sao Paulo on August 10. PHOTO: 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.

Announcement of Central Bank of Myanmar

THE foreign currency account under the name of Open Society Myanmar was opened at the Small and Medium Enterprise Development Bank (SMEDB) located at the corner of Wah Dan street and Anawyahtar street in Yangon. Of \$5 million transferred to that account, \$1.4 million was changed into Myanmar Kyat (K1,999,900,000) and Finance Manager Daw Phyu Pa Pa Thaw of Open Society Myanmar withdrew it on 8 February 2021. The Small and Medium Enterprise Development Bank (SMEDB) failed to report such remittance and withdrawal of money to the Central Bank of Myanmar under the procedures and so, arrangements are being made to take action against those officials in accord with the law.

Central Bank of Myanmar

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Onion growers expect good price amid sluggish trade

ONION growers from Monywa Township, Magway Region are expecting a good price amid a bear market trend.

“The onion price is steadily declining. The trade has slowed down for months. We cannot cover even the cultivation cost. Onion is priced only K200-230 per viss (a viss equals 1.6kg). The market will raise its head again only if the external markets demand them,” said an onion grower from Monywa Township.

The onion growers have been facing extreme losses on a downward trend due to the lack of foreign demand. They cannot cover the cultivation cost as well as afford the harvesting cost for now.

Consequently, the prolonged price declines led some growers in Magway Region to leave their onions unharvested as they cannot cover the labour wages and transportation charges.

The stockpiles in the market have exacerbated with the



In early 2020, the onion fetched K1,200-1,300 per viss. Now, the price drastically fell and the growers cannot even cover the input cost.

fresh bulk supply of onions. The old onions fetched only K100-200 per viss in the wholesale market, whereas the prices of fresh onion stand at over K200 per viss.

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

a grower.

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

The prices of onions sharply dropped owing to the bulk supply and the closure of the western

border following the coronavirus impacts. Additionally, the sluggish trade amid the current political conditions and shutdown of the restaurants, hotels, factories and donation events exacerbate the onion market.

Earlier, onions were highly demanded by Bangladesh and India. The trade with Bangla-

desh and India has been halted to contain the spread of the coronavirus. Having said that, the price remains low. The onion growers, as well as traders, have been experiencing market fallouts due to the COVID-19 impacts since last year, said onion wholesale dealer from Mandalay.

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

The high demand by foreign markets and a remarkable price rise prompted the growers to expand the onion cultivation in 2020. Unfortunately, the market is getting worse.

The prices of domestic onions exceeded K3,000 per viss in 2015, 2018, and 2019.

The onions are primarily grown in Mandalay, Magway and Yangon regions, Nay Pyi Taw and Shan State. — Lulay/ HH

Construction of crop dehydration factory completed by 65% in ChaungU Township

THE construction of crop dehydration factory is 65 per cent finished in ChaungU Township, Sagaing Region and about 2,000 tonnes of crops are daily dried on a trial run at present.

The factory is started to be developed on 28 December 2018, under the endorsement of the Sagaing Region Investment Committee, said manag-

ing director U Aung Naing Oo of Aung Nagani Co., Ltd.

The dehydration factory is aimed at fetching a good price in the export market. It will export quality vegetable to foreign countries. About 30 people will be employed upon the completion of the factory.

“The crop processing was earlier delayed due to the lack

of dehydration factory. We faced market loss owing to the inferior quality then. The dehydration factory is set up to enhance the socio-economy of the farmers and explore more potential markets,” said U Aung Naing Oo.

Sagaing Region Investment Committee endorsed Aung Nagani Co., Ltd to ex-

ecute crops drying, categorizing and rice milling and processing activities on 28 December 2018, bringing in the capital of K726.44 million (including US\$ 0.113 million). The factory is located at No. 2038, Kywalkyay-oe yard, Ngaya n village-tract, ChaungU Township, Sagaing Region, according to the Directorate of Investment and

Company Administration.

To simplify the verification of investment projects, the Myanmar Investment Law allows the region and state Investment Committees to grant permissions for local and foreign proposals, where the initial investment does not exceed K6 billion, or \$5 million. — Lulay (GNLM)

Pwintbyu chickpea growers anticipate good price in early harvest season

CHICKPEA growers in Pwintbyu Township, Magway Region are expecting a good price in the coming harvest season amid low yield this year.

On 5 February, the prices of chickpeas ranged between US\$1,365 and \$1,385 per tonne, Bayintnaung market's data showed.

At present, the domestic bean market is positively related to the law of supply and demand. The black bean price depends on the buyers and sellers. There is no official set price, the traders stressed.

“The prices usually fluctuate depending on supply and demand. When the peas are loaded on the ship, the prices climb up. The market is now slowing down due to transport problem and transaction difficulties,” said a trader from Mandalay shared

his opinion.

“This year, the yield of chickpea per acre is five baskets lower than last year. Last year, a basket of chickpea was worth over K20,000. We are waiting for a good price this year as well. Now, the irrigation water has been distributed. The summer chickpea and sesame growers are competitively hiring the workers for harvesting, which allows the village workers to earn K5,000 a day. Those who have already harvested the chickpea are also treating their farms to grow paddy and other crops,” said a chickpea grower from Letpanwe village of Pwintbyu Township.

The winter chickpeas are ripe enough to be harvested in Pwintbyu Township. The growers started plucking them in early March, a local grower said.



There are 890,000 acres of chickpeas across the country.

Myanmar exported chickpeas to India, Pakistan, UAE, Turkey and other foreign markets last year.

The chickpeas are cultivated in Yangon, Mandalay, Bago, Sagaing and Ayeyawady regions and

Nay Pyi Taw. There are 890,000 acres of chickpeas across the country.

The peas are cultivated in October and November and they are harvested in the January-April period. —Ye Win Naing/ KK/GNLM

Price of tongala 692 chilli species in Ngaphe township expected to reach peak

THE price of tongala 692 chilli species is expected to reach a peak in this chilli harvest season.

The local villagers from Hsinchindaing village in Ngaphe township, Magway region are interested in the agricultural sector. They are growing the tongala 692 chilli species with the use of underground water. Now, the chillis are yielding abundantly this year.

“The W7 multi-crop trading company in Tada-U township in Mandalay region is selling the tongala 692 chilli species for K6,000 per pack. The nursery seed plants need fertilizer to grow well. After 25 to 45 days, the nursery plants are transplanted to the boundary farmland and given water once a week. The growers are not allowed to use any pesticides and chemicals but they can use natural medicine, consisting of wild almond, Epsom salt, egg shall, algae, rice water, molasses and raw salt. After two and a half months, the plants could yield. The chillis are planted usually in November and they yield in March. The ripe chillis will be sold to the W7 company



The farmers who grow Tongala 692 chilli species are having greater profit by investing less capital.

for about K1,200 per viss. So, the growers are expecting to get a higher price than a fixed price. More than 10,000 chilli plants are grown on one and a half acres of farmland and the cultivation

costs K 750,000,” said U Min Min, a chilli grower from Hsinchindaing village.

The farmers who grow Tongala 692 chilli species are having greater profit by investing less

capital. So, the farmers are likely to grow more chillies on a trial basis. Now, about 78 farmers from the village are growing the chilli on 210 acres of their farmland. —Ma Yu (Ngape)/GNLM

Pilgrims peacefully visit pagodas including Shwedagon

ALTHOUGH the pagodas including buildings or temples of other religions were temporarily closed during COVID-19 pandemic, all were reopened in accordance with the COVID-19 health rules starting 8 February.

Meanwhile, the pilgrims and visitors including monks and nuns visit the Shwedagon of Yangon Region, Maha Muni Pagoda of Mandalay Region and Uppatasanti Pagoda of Nay Pyi Taw Council Area and other pagodas of regions and states accordance with the COVID-19 health rules.

Moreover, Islamic religious schools, Churches and Hindu temples across the nation are also reopened in accordance with the COVID-19 health rules and the people of respective religions peacefully do their religious matters.—MNA

180 rioters detained during riot control across country

THE Security Forces detained a total of 180 rioters (155 males and 25 females) during the riot control across the country yesterday.

The protestors ran riots in townships of Nay Pyi Taw, Yangon Region, Mandalay Region, Magway Region, Sagaing Region, Bago Region, Ayeyawady Region, Taninthayi Region, Kachin State, Kayah State, Kayin State, Chin State, Shan State, Mon State and security forces had to maintain the situation.

As Security Forces inevitably had to conduct the riot control depending on the nature of the protest, there will be injuries or death. By the time the leaders are ordering from hiding places, there are just grievous losses for the people in reality. It has been announced that the parents and relatives must control the situation in their neighbourhood since the rioters also do not have an actual idea of why they are doing these protests. —MNA/GNLM

Around 10,000 herds of cattle for export to China stuck in Muse since the end-last year

AROUND 10,000 herds of cattle that have been planned to export to China have been stuck in the Muse trade zone till now since the end of last year, said U Soe Naing, chairman of the Mandalay Region Cattle Exporters Association.

At present, about 10,000 herds of cattle owned by 150 companies are stranded at the Muse border. The labour wages and feedstuff cost burden them and it costs K400,000-K600,000 to take care of 100 herds of cattle every day, according to the association.

Consequently, some of the traders are going back to their original places while the others are trading under illegal markets because of the high costs of labour wages and feedstuff.

Although China does not prohibit the purchase of cattle from Myanmar under trading illegal

market, China permits cattle import under legal market only after ensuring that the cattle are free from 20 diseases including foot and mouth disease.

Earlier, 1,500-2,000 herds of cattle were daily traded through the Muse border. Now, Chan halted the cattle trading under a legal route.

Because of the suspension of China's cattle trading market, Myanmar is trading with other external markets such as Laos, Thailand, Malaysia and Bangladesh. But, Myanmar's live cattle export is highly relying on the China market because of a reasonable price.

The Ministry of Commerce grants permission to each company for 100 cattle exports, and the permit is valid for three months. The companies can have

legal action taken if they do not sell the cattle for three months.

Live cattle export was allowed in late 2017 to eradicate illegal exports, creating more opportunities for breeders and promoting their interests.

According to the 2018-2019 financial year trade figures of the Commerce Ministry, Myanmar's exports of livestock and animal products hit over US\$360 million. Myanmar cattle tradition has significantly dropped by over \$100 million in 2019-2020FY.

According to the 2018 cattle census, there are 11.5 million herds of cattle in the country including 18 buffalos, and 87 cows and bulls. About 400,000 herds of cattle are needed for domestic consumption while the remaining cattle are targeted to export. —NN/GNLM

Public information

Yangon Administration Council is working with relevant departments to help the businesses in the region. People are informed to contact the following phone numbers to get assistance for their small and medium-scaled businesses and investments which are facing some delays and working to do new businesses.

Phone numbers: 01 830 1975, 01830 2175

Yangon Region Administration Council

EU plans for 'bumpy' vaccine production

THE EU has taken "bumpy" Covid-19 vaccine production into account in its plan to ramp up deliveries in coming months, the head of its supply task force said Tuesday.

Thierry Breton, the bloc's industry commissioner, told a news conference the EU's vaccine strategy should this week be augmented with the addition of Johnson & Johnson's single-shot vaccine. He said that approval would be "within the next, hopefully, days or hours," and would bring the number of vaccines in use across the 27 member states to four, on top of ones from BioNTech/Pfizer, Moderna and AstraZeneca. Breton reaffirmed the commission's goal of greatly increasing deliveries in the coming three months, after a



The EU has taken "bumpy" Covid-19 vaccine production into account in its plan to ramp up deliveries in coming months. PHOTO: AFP

disappointing vaccination rollout started in January that faltered because of a lack of doses.

"I am confident that we will make it. But it's difficult. It's bumpy. And this is why we have this task force," he said.

Breton said the bloc re-

ceived only 14 million doses in January, 28 million in February and he expected more than 55 million doses in March.

That was well below the commission's original projections, because of shortfalls by all three vaccine makers, par-

ticularly AstraZeneca.

But, he said, the bloc was now on target to receive 100 million doses in each of the next three months, and possible further hiccups have been "integrated" into the planning.

"I forced companies to have many, many (contingency) actions in case something could go wrong," Breton said.

He added that reported production shortfalls in the United States by Johnson & Johnson would therefore not impact the EU's outlook. "Do not believe that because one company has a problem that overall it will jeopardize the whole programme. This is why it's good to have today -- or let's say tomorrow -- hopefully four vaccines to go, and soon five," he said.—AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Baltic states ask EU to distribute vaccines based on need

THE three Baltic states on Wednesday wrote to the European Commission to ask for a new system for distributing Covid-19 vaccines within the EU based on need rather than population size.

In a letter to EU Health Commissioner Stella Kyriakides, the health ministers of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania called for "a temporary re-distribution of deliveries taking into account the extraordinary situations and actual use of vaccines".

They asked that criteria such as availability of vaccines, vaccination rate, case rate, mortality rate and the spread of new variants should be taken into account in the new system.—AFP ■

Los Angeles agrees to reopen schools in April

HUNDREDS of thousands of Los Angeles children could return to their classrooms next month, almost a year after the coronavirus pandemic forced learning online across the United States.

The second-largest school district in the country has lagged behind others in the effort to get students back on campus, after a prolonged battle that struggled to balance safety concerns with educational needs.

Under a reopening roadmap agreed between the district and a teachers' union, preschools and elementary schools would be the

first to resume in-person lessons in mid-April.

Secondary schools would follow by the end of the month.

The agreement is contingent on vaccinations for school staff and on restrictions being eased throughout Los Angeles County. It also still needs to be approved by the school board and the membership of the United Teachers Los Angeles union.

Los Angeles is among the hardest hit parts of California, a state that has logged the highest overall coronavirus death toll in the country.—AFP ■



East College Prep High School senior Jocelyn Hernandez follows a remote Advanced Placement (AP) Calculus class while sitting in a community garden near her home, August 14, 2020 in the Boyle Heights neighbourhood of Los Angeles, California. PHOTO: AFP

Japan to face South Korea in first home game since pandemic

JAPAN will play South Korea in a friendly in Yokohama on March 25, the Japan Football Association announced Thursday, in their first home game since the coronavirus pandemic began.

The four-time Asian champions will take on their Korean neighbours at the 72,000-capacity Nissan Stadium, although attendance restrictions have yet to be announced.

The greater Tokyo region -- including Yokohama -- is currently under a coronavirus state of emergency that is set to end on March 21.

Under the restrictions, attendance at sporting events is capped at 5,000 or half capacity, whichever is lowest.—AFP ■

Cathay Pacific posts record loss, warns of long recovery



Cathay Pacific warned of a tough road ahead after reporting a record loss for 2020. PHOTO: AFP

HONG Kong carrier Cathay Pacific said Wednesday it suffered a record \$2.8 billion loss last year as the coronavirus pandemic wiped out demand for travel -- and the airline warned of a long road to recovery ahead.

Chairman Patrick Healy described 2020 as the "most challenging" in the airline's 70-year history and said much will now depend on how effective and widespread global vaccination programmes are.

"It is by no means clear how the pandemic and its impact will develop over the coming months," he warned, saying the group expected passenger traffic to remain "well below" half of pre-pandemic levels throughout 2021. Like all major airlines, Cathay Pacific has seen its business evaporate during the coronavirus pandemic but the Hong Kong carrier has had an especially torrid year because it has no domestic market to fall back on.—AFP ■



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Rolls-Royce losses double as virus hits aviation sector

BRITISH aircraft engine maker Rolls-Royce said Thursday that net losses more than doubled last year to £3.2 billion as the coronavirus pandemic hammered the aviation sector and forced it to axe thousands of jobs.

The deadly Covid-19 pandemic had a “severe impact” on the group’s performance and near-term outlook, Rolls-Royce said in a results statement.

The loss after tax, equivalent to \$4.4 billion or 3.7 billion euros, compared with a loss of £1.3 billion in 2019.

The aviation industry was ravaged last year as the contagion grounded aircraft worldwide and sparked a crisis in air transport.

Rolls, which operates in the air, defence and energy sectors, has slashed costs as it seeks to navigate damaging fallout.

The company saved more

than £1.0 billion in costs last year, including via the loss of 7,000 jobs as part of a planned restructuring drive.

“2020 was an unprecedented year,” said Chief Executive Warren East.

“The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the group was felt most acutely by our civil aerospace business.”

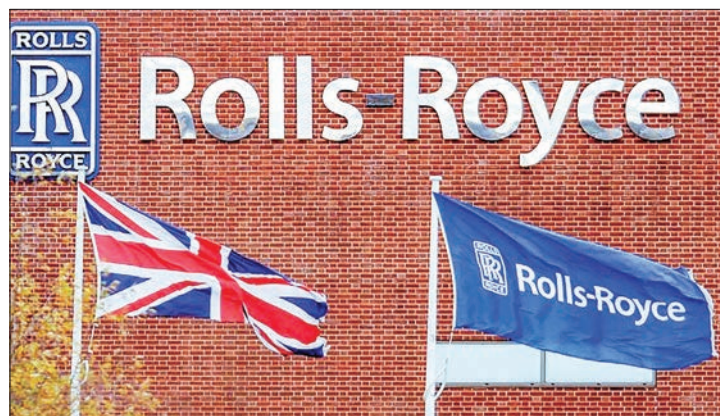
Regrettable’ job cuts

East said the company responded swiftly by “launching the largest restructuring in our recent history, consolidating our global manufacturing footprint and delivering significant cost reduction measures.”

The firm suffered a record underlying pre-tax loss of £4.0 billion, which contrasted with profit of £583 million a year earlier.

Revenues tanked almost 29 per cent to about £11.8 billion.

—AFP ■



The company saved more than £1.0 billion in costs last year, including via the loss of 7,000 jobs in a restructuring drive that seeks to shed “at least” 9,000 roles by the end of 2022. PHOTO: AFP

Spain declares delivery riders to be staff, in EU first

SPAIN’S government announced Thursday a deal that will recognize riders working for delivery firms such as Deliveroo and UberEats as salaried staff following complaints about their working conditions -- a first in the EU.

The move came six months after Spain’s leftwing government pledged to clarify the legal status of couriers working for online delivery firms, saying they should be considered employees rather than “gig” workers.

It will strike at the heart of the so-called gig economy, which relies on hundreds of thousands of independent workers for app-based services such as food delivery or car rides.

The government’s deal with Spanish labour unions sets

up the first legislation in Europe that explicitly regulates the status of delivery workers who get around on bikes and motorcycles and whose numbers have exploded in recent years.

In Spain, as in other countries, the riders have repeatedly denounced their precarious working conditions, taking legal action to demand recognition as salaried staff, which would grant them benefits such as paid holidays and sick leave.

“They are now considered as salaried workers and will enjoy all the relevant protections,” Labour Minister Yolanda Diaz said in a televised address.

Spain is “the first country in the European Union to legislate on the matter”, Diaz said. —AFP ■

Biden victory as Congress passes huge Covid relief plan

THE US Congress passed Joe Biden’s enormous economic relief package Wednesday, delivering a resounding victory for the president and giving what he called a “fighting chance” to millions of families and businesses suffering during the coronavirus pandemic.

The \$1.9 trillion plan, months in the making, is one of the largest US rescue packages ever. It will dramatically impact every aspect of the world’s biggest economy for years to come while protecting and expanding the country’s social safety net.

Democrats say they have met a historic moment of crisis head on, funneling federal dollars into vaccine distribution, stimulus checks of up to \$1,400 to most Americans, extended unemployment benefits for millions and an expansion of government funding for health care.

The measure only narrowly passed the House of Representatives by a 220-211 vote, with zero support from Republicans, who accuse Biden of abandoning his Inauguration Day pledge to unify a divided nation.

But as Republicans stood



US Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) presided over the session during which the huge Covid relief measure was passed. PHOTO: AFP

in opposition, progressive and moderate Democrats locked arms and marched the measure across the finish line days before critical unemployment benefits were set to expire.

The bill now heads to the White House, where Biden -- who made the American Rescue Plan his top legislative priority -- said he will sign the measure into law on Friday.

“This legislation is about giving the backbone of this nation -- the essential workers, the working people who built this

country, the people who keep this country going -- a fighting chance,” the president said in a post-vote statement.

At a presentation with vaccine makers, Biden went on to call the bill a “historic victory for the American people” and said “there’s a real reason for hope” in beating back the pandemic.

Critical moment

Minutes earlier, loud cheers and applause rose from the floor when House Speaker Nancy Pelosi declared the measure passed. —AFP ■

ECB to speed up pandemic bond buys on rates fears



The move over the next quarter is aimed at “preventing a tightening of financing conditions” while the eurozone economy is still fragile, the bank said in a statement. PHOTO: AFP

THE European Central Bank said Thursday it would “significantly” step up the pace of its pandemic bond buys to soothe market jitters about a recent rise in government bond yields.

The move over the next quarter is aimed at “preventing a tightening of financing conditions” while the eurozone economy is still fragile, the bank

said in a statement.

The ECB’s 1.85 trillion euro pandemic emergency bond purchasing programme (PEPP) is the bank’s main tool to help the eurozone weather the coronavirus shock.

While no changes were expected to the scheme’s size or duration, many observers had said the bank could decide to “frontload” asset purchases

over the coming months to respond to a recent global bond sell-off that has spooked investors.

Attention now shifts to Lagarde’s 2:30 pm (1330 GMT) virtual press conference where she will likely be quizzed on just how worried the ECB is about the recent rise in bond yields.

The higher European yields are largely seen as a knock-on effect from an even steeper surge in US Treasury yields, fuelled by optimism about the US economy as well as signs of higher inflation on the horizon.

Yields serve as a guide for bank lending rates, and the ECB is eager to avert a premature end to low borrowing costs that could slow the euro area’s rebound.

In Thursday’s statement, the ECB said it would maintain “an ample degree of monetary accommodation” and stressed that it stood ready to “adjust all of its instruments, as appropriate”. —AFP ■

NEWS
IN BRIEF18 al-Shabab
militants killed in
southern Somalia

SOMALI National Army (SNA) on Thursday killed 18 al-Shabab militants and injured several others during operations in several locations in Lower Shabelle region, southern Somalia, local media reported.

SNA Operation Commander in the region, Abdalla Mustaf told the state news agency, SONNA that the operations were aimed at neutralizing terrorists who often plant landmines on the main roads in the region.

"The army killed 18 al-Shabab terrorists and injured several others. They were all in charge of explosives and landmines that target armed vehicles and civilian buses using roads. The operations were very successful," Mustaf was quoted as saying.

He said that the operations happened at Magurto, Gumurey, Adeley, Donyarow and Lafagale neighborhoods near Afgoye town in Lower Shabelle region.—Xinhua ■

Ethiopia's Amhara
region rejects charge
of 'ethnic cleansing'
in Tigray

ETHIOPIA'S Amhara region denied Thursday that its forces were engaged in "ethnic cleansing" in conflict-hit Tigray, one day after US Secretary of State Antony Blinken used the phrase in public testimony.

Earlier this week, Tigrayan officials accused forces from neighbouring Amhara of kicking thousands of people off land in western Tigray -- a part of the region that ethnic Amharas claim rightfully belongs to them. Appearing before Congress Wednesday, Blinken said "acts of ethnic cleansing" had been committed in western Tigray, calling for them to "stop" and for "full accountability". In an interview with AFP Thursday, Amhara spokesman Gizachew Muluneh dismissed reports of ethnic cleansing and large-scale displacement as "propaganda".—AFP ■

PNG parliament bids farewell to 'father of the nation'



Two weeks of memorial events for Somare have come amid a surge of coronavirus infections in the poor Pacific nation. PHOTO: AFP

Papua New Guinea's first prime minister Sir Michael Somare's coffin laid in state at a special sitting of parliament Thursday ahead of a series of funeral services for the beloved "father of the nation".

Crowds lined Independence Boulevard in the capital Port Moresby, throwing flowers onto the passing motorcade carrying the body of the "Grand Chief" as it approached parliament.

Somare, who died of pancreatic cancer late last month aged 84, led Papua New Guinea at independence from Australia in 1975 and was prime minister for a total of 17 years, during

three separate terms.

"Somare united our leaders, and united a thousand tribes to become a nation called Papua New Guinea," Chief Justice Sir Gibuma Gibbs Salika told parliament over the coffin placed in the centre of the chamber. "You and I are to guard with our lives our PNG national identity with integrity and respect," he said.

Two weeks of memorial events for Somare have come amid a surge of coronavirus infections in the poor Pacific nation, with large crowds turning out to honour the politician heightening concerns of a worsening outbreak.—AFP ■

Hundreds of thousands take holy dip in India

NAKED, dreadlocked holymen were among hundred of thousands of jubilant Hindu pilgrims who thronged the banks of India's Ganges river on Thursday, ignoring any coronavirus threat, for one of the nation's most famous and colourful religious festivals.

Authorities in Haridwar expect 2.5 million people for the Maha Shivratri festival, one of three auspicious bathing days over the next month as part of a major gathering called the Kumbh Mela.

Before dawn men, women and children jostled for space along the several miles of riverbank before a brief plunge in the fast-flowing water, singing hymns and showering flowers into the Ganges.

The highlight later was set to be a jubilant procession by groups of hundreds of Naga Sadhus — naked holy men with long

dreadlocks, their bodies smeared in ash — before their dip in the holy town in the Himalayan foot-

hills. Because of the pandemic the government has curtailed the Kumbh Mela, a mass event

held regularly in different cities, and negative test certificates are in theory compulsory.—AFP ■



Authorities in Haridwar expect 2.5 million people for the Maha Shivratri festival, one of three auspicious bathing days over the next month as part of a major gathering called the Kumbh Mela. PHOTO: AFP

Japan's 2011 disaster as it happened

IT was just after quarter to three on a cold Friday afternoon when buildings across northeast Japan began to shake fiercely as one of the strongest earthquakes ever recorded unleashed its fury.

The March 11, 2011 tremor, which triggered a catastrophic tsunami and nuclear disaster, was unlike anything Sayori Suzuki had experienced in her coastal town of Minamisoma.

"My son cried violently, and things just flew from the shelves," she said of the convulsions that continued for multiple terrifying minutes, crumbling homes and tearing cracks into roads. The 9.0-magnitude quake was felt as far away as Beijing,



The tsunami breaches an embankment and flows into the city of Miyako in Iwate prefecture. PHOTO: AFP

and rocked Tokyo, where skyscrapers swayed alarmingly, fires broke out and the vast transport network came to a

standstill. But the day's horrors had just begun.

Miles offshore, as one part of the earth's crust smashed

deeper under another, formidable tension was released and a section of the seabed was thrust upwards. The sudden rift sent a series of huge waves racing towards Japan -- leaving 45 minutes or less for people to scramble to safety as the country issued its top tsunami warning.

"I grabbed grandfather and our dog and drove. The wave was right behind me, but I had to keep zigzagging around obstacles and the water," survivor Miki Otomo told AFP shortly afterwards. Footage of the sea barreling into the coast showed it obliterating concrete buildings and carrying boats, cars and chunks of flaming debris inland.—AFP ■

French minister says Poland threatened to cancel meetings over LGBT activism

A French minister said Thursday that the Polish government had threatened to cancel his official meetings during a trip to the country if he visited a village that has declared itself an “LGBT-ideology free zone”.

During a two-day trip to Poland this week, Europe Minister Clement Beaune, who is gay, had planned to stop in the village of Krasnik to highlight its anti-LGBT stance.

“They didn’t want me to go there. They didn’t physically prevent me, it was political pressure,” Beaune told France Inter radio.

He said he was informed that “if I went there, there wouldn’t be any official meetings during the trip.”

Beaune, who came out publicly as gay in December, has previously called the existence of “LGBT-free zones” in Poland an “absolute scandal” amid a long-running row between the EU and the populist right-wing Polish government.

Beaune decided not to visit Krasnik, but he met gay and women’s rights activists in Warsaw. He held talks with his counterpart in the Polish government, Konrad Szyman-

ski, on Tuesday.

He has vowed to return to the country and travel to one of the anti-gay zones.

“I think it’s serious, but I don’t want to cause a controversy with a government,” Beaune said. “What is very serious is the situation on the ground, not my personal case.”

With support from the government, several regions have declared themselves free from “LGBT ideology” in Poland to protest against support for gay rights from Warsaw Mayor Rafal Trzaskowski, an opposition leader. —AFP ■



Beaune came out publicly as gay in December. PHOTO: AFP

Palace hand-wringing sparks media soul-searching in UK



Many in the British media have called for reflection after Prince Harry and his wife Meghan say prejudice and hostility drove them out of the UK. PHOTO: AFP

FOR all the anguished talk of a reckoning on racism for Britain’s royal family, so far it is the

media bearing the brunt most noticeably, with two high-profile departures.

Many in the industry have called for reflection after Prince Harry and his mixed-race wife

Meghan said media-driven prejudice and hostility had driven them out of the UK.

There was a furious backlash against the Society of Editors, which represents senior media figures and organizes a glittering annual awards ceremony, after its executive director Ian Murray baldly retorted that the media are “most certainly not racist”.

“The blanket refusal to accept there is any bigotry in the British press is laughable, does a disservice to journalists of colour and shows an institution and an industry in denial,” said an open letter signed by more than 250, mostly minority, journalists. After doubling down in a bad-tempered interview on BBC News, Murray resigned late Wednesday, a day after controversial presenter Piers Morgan also stepped down from his high-profile perch on the ITV network’s flagship breakfast show. —AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Digital Covid pass for air travel a consideration

FRANCE will try out a Covid-free status digital pass for air travellers with flag carrier Air France starting a month-long trial for some flights, Transport Minister Jean-Baptiste Djebbari said Thursday.

Airlines battered by travel restrictions are pushing hard for a global standard that would reassure passengers over contagion risks onboard and accelerate an eventual recovery for the sector. For Air France flights to the French Caribbean territories of Martinique and Guadeloupe, passengers will have to present a phone app that shows either a vaccination certificate or a recent negative Covid test. —AFP ■

Israeli aerospace company, UAE tech defence group to develop joint anti-drone system

THE Israeli government company Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI) and the United Arab Emirates’ advanced technology group EDGE on Thursday announced an agreement to develop an advanced solution against unmanned aircraft systems. As part of the agreement, the IAI’s C-UAS (counter-unmanned aircraft system) solution will be tailored to the UAE’s market, with wider ranging benefits for the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region and beyond. —Xinhua ■

Lady Gaga ‘praying’ for Japan on 2011 disaster anniversary

LADY Gaga added her voice to the diplomats and dignitaries sending condolences to Japan on Thursday to mark 10 years since its catastrophic earthquake, tsunami and nuclear disaster.

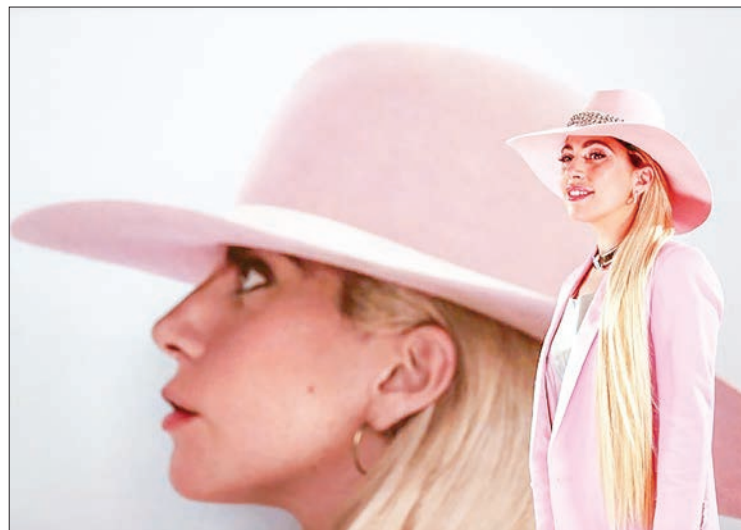
The US singer has a huge following in Japan and visited the country three months after the 2011 disaster, declaring “Japan is safe” and calling on tourists from around the world to do the same.

“It seems like yesterday that I was watching the shocking footage of the devastating earthquake and tsunami on

the news, and thinking, ‘what can I do to help?’” she said in a video posted on Twitter.

“Seeing and hearing about the vast recovery of your beautiful cities, I have so much respect to the people of Japan for your strength, kindness, and love for each other,” she said in the clip of just over a minute.

In the video -- viewed 1.5 million times -- the currently lilac-haired star said Japan’s response would give hope to people who are “fighting through” the coronavirus pandemic. —AFP ■



Lady Gaga, seen here in Tokyo in 2016, has a huge following in Japan. PHOTO: AFP

ASEAN's Suzuki Cup gets official sponsor for upcoming season

JAPANESE electrical equipment company Fuji Electric will support the ASEAN region Suzuki Cup as an Official Supporter for the upcoming football season, according to the statement with the AFF.

The deal was brokered by SPORTFIVE, the exclusive com-

mercial partner of the AFF Suzuki Cup, said AFF officials.

As part of the partnership, Fuji Electric will get to host fan engagement and promotional activities to connect with fans in South East Asia," officials stated.

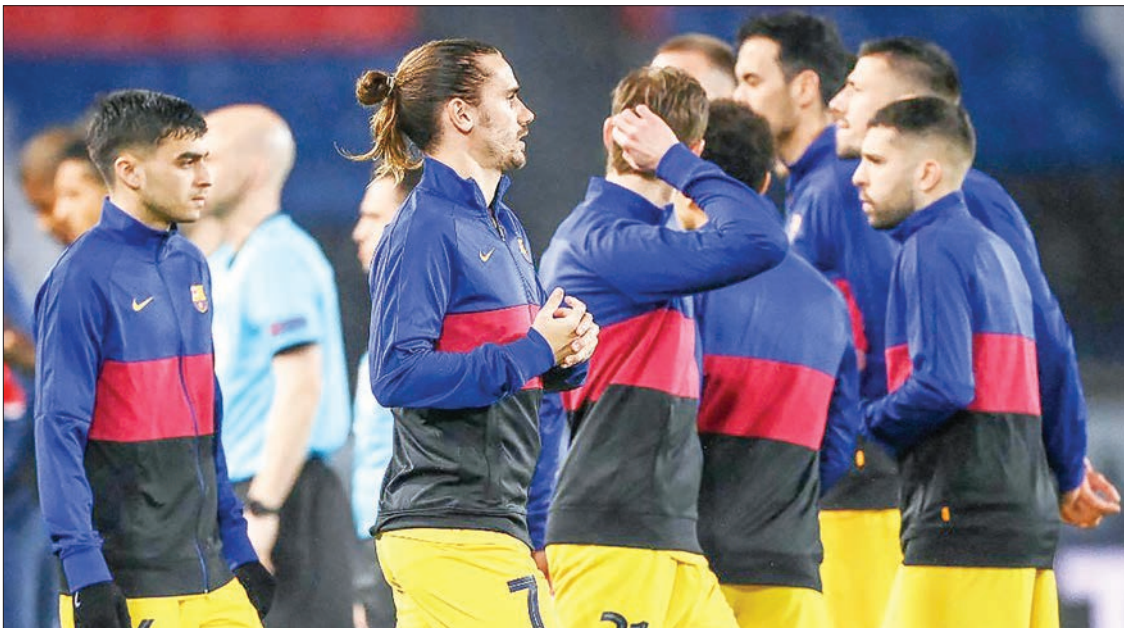
Yoshitada Miyoshi, Executive Officer at Fuji Electric, said,

"We view Southeast Asia as an important region so we are working to develop our business there. In Thailand, we have our largest mother factory in the Asian region, and we develop and manufacture state-of-the-art transformers and drive equipment to promote local production for local

consumption. In Indonesia, we have delivered the most geothermal power generation facilities in the country, contributing to the popularization of clean energy." "In Singapore, we supply environmentally friendly inverters for air conditioning at a national hospital, contributing to the de-

velopment of medical care and reducing CO2 emissions through energy conservation. Given all this, we are pleased to be working with our employees in Southeast Asia to support the AFF Suzuki Cup 2020, one of the region's largest soccer tournaments", Yoshitada Miyoshi added.—GNLM ■

Barcelona 'gutted' at earliest European exit in 14 years



Barcelona's French midfielder Antoine Griezmann (2nd-L) enters the pitch prior to the UEFA Champions League round of 16 second leg football match between Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) and FC Barcelona at the Parc des Princes stadium in Paris, on March 10, 2021. PHOTO: AFP

ANTOINE Griezmann admitted Barcelona was "gutted" after going out of the Champions League in the last 16 on Wednesday, as a 1-1 draw away to Paris Saint-Germain saw the Catalans lose 5-2 on aggregate.

"We put on a good showing, it was a great performance, we had a lot of chances in the first half but we just missed the finishing touch which was

a shame," Griezmann told Movistar Plus after Barca had 20 attempts on goal but only scored courtesy of a Lionel Messi thunderbolt in the first half.

Messi then had a penalty saved by Keylor Navas as Barcelona fell short of repeating their remarkable comeback against PSG in 2017, when they lost 4-0 in the first leg in Paris

but won 6-1 in the return. "We said we would give the most effort possible and it wasn't to be. We still have the league and the cup left and we have to give everything in them." The five-time European champions had not been knocked out before the quarterfinals since 2006/07 when, with Messi aged 19, they lost to Liverpool in the last 16. —AFP ■

Osaka's sister Mari retires, saying she 'didn't enjoy' tennis

TOKYO— Mari Osaka, the elder sister of four-time major-winner Naomi Osaka, has retired from tennis at the age of 24, explaining "it was a journey which I didn't enjoy".

The elder Osaka was ranked 340th in the world, having reached a career-high of 280th in 2018, and last played a singles tournament in January.

She partnered in doubles with her sister Naomi, who is 18 months younger, ranked second in the world and the reigning US and Australian Open champion, at the 2017 Toray

Pan Pacific Open in Tokyo. "I am retired from playing tennis," Mari wrote on Instagram. "It was a journey which I didn't enjoy ultimately but I'm grateful for all the memories and support I've gained and received over the years from the sport."

"I'm moving on now so you can look forward to new fun projects upcoming in the future." Mari also plays a role in her younger sister's career, and last year helped produce a manga character representing Naomi in a magazine aimed at teenage girls. —AFP ■



Mari Osaka, pictured here in March 2019, announced her retirement from tennis on Instagram. PHOTO: AFP

In it to win it, Liverpool eye Champions League salvation



Mohamed Salah (left) and Sadio Mane (right) scored the goals as Liverpool beat RB Leipzig 2-0 to reach the Champions League quarter-finals. PHOTO: AFP

LONDON — Liverpool made light of their Premier League woes to ease into the quarter-finals of the Champions League by beating RB Leipzig 2-0 in Budapest for the second time in three weeks.

After a wretched run of a record six consecutive defeats at Anfield, Jurgen Klopp's men might have welcomed a return to the Hungarian capital for their 'home' leg of the last 16

tie.

The Champions League this season and next is now the Reds focus as they try to salvage a campaign decimated by injuries and a drastic decline in form after romping to a first league title in 30 years last season.

With a seven-point gap to make up on a resurgent Chelsea or 10-point deficit to bridge to third-placed Leicester in the

final 10 games of the Premier League season, a return to the Champions League via the top four is looking increasingly unlikely.

Instead, the English champions could have to win a seventh European Cup just to avoid missing out on next season's Champions League for the first time in five seasons. —AFP ■