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Some incite the youths to commit violent acts; these attempts are dangerous for the State : Senior General

THE Tatmadaw is carrying out political, social and economic development by assuming State responsibilities in accord with Sections 417 and 418 of the Constitution (2008) as of 1 February 2021 and forming the State Administration Council in line with Section 419. The council temporarily takes responsibilities in a short time to ensure genuine democracy and disciplined and firm democracy. Tatmadaw members need to conscientiously try hard for their works in individuals and must strive for uplifting the prestige of the Tatmadaw, the State and the nationality while improving their individuals and military units, said Chairman of the State Administration Council Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing at the separate meetings with officers, other



Chairman of the State Administration Council Senior General Min Aung Hlaing meets officers, other ranks and their families in Myeik station.

Democracy is based on the wish of the majority, but such a wish must be authentic with honest politics. If the majority's wish is not honest, it is difficult to identify such politics is of democracy.

ranks and families of Myeik, Kyunsu and Cocogyun stations.

Also present at the meetings were members of the State Administration Council General Maung Maung Kyaw and Lt-Gen Moe Myint Tun, Commander-in-Chief (Navy) Admiral Moe Aung, senior military officers from the Office of the Commander-in-Chief (Army), Commander of Coastal Region Command Brig-Gen Saw Than Hlaing, station commanders, of-

ficers, other ranks and families of Myeik, Kyunsu and Cocogyun stations.

In his address, the Senior General said the Tatmadaw tried to address the voter list fraud in the 2020 multiparty democracy general election in line with the practice of democracy under the law many times. It was such a gigantic error on the voter list but normal ones. Although the Tatmadaw tried to solve the problems of vot-

er list fraud in accord with the democracy ways as much as possible, any negotiation could not be undertaken. Hence, it reached the current stage. The country has lesser experience in the election. It gained election experiences as of 1990. Since then, the country has been possessing experiences that the correct result cannot come out if an election is under pressure.

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Pyin Oo Lwin
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2+1 coffee
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NANMYAING
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Benefits from working together

If we want the whole country to develop, we need to combine all our human, financial and material resources and work strenuously together. Only then shall we benefit. It will be of no benefit if the Barmars, the Karens, the Shans, the Kachins and the Chins are divided, each going their own way. We will enjoy benefits only if we work together. And you will find that out only if you try it out.

(Extract from a speech delivered by General Aung San on 11 February 1947 in Panglong at a dinner with Sawbwas)

Union Minister U Maung Maung Ohn inspects river cruise, hotels in Yangon

UNION MINISTER for Hotels and Tourism U Maung Maung Ohn made an inspection tour to the pleasure craft of the Inland Water Transport, Waterboom in Dawbon Township, Tourism Development Centre in Bosunpat street, Karaweik Hall, Chatrium Hotel, Sedona Hotel and Lotte Hotel on 19 March in Yangon.

The Union Minister, accompanied by the chairpersons and officials of the Myanmar Tourism Federation and its affiliated organizations, took a ride onboard the cruise from the Inland Water Transport along the Yangon River. He instructed the responsible persons to pay special attention to the passengers' safety who will ride on the cruise and make the price affordable.

People will be able to enjoy exciting scenes, including the beautiful scenery of the Yangon



MoHT Union Minister U Maung Maung Ohn makes an inspection tour on river cruise and hotels in Yangon on 19 March. **PHOTO: MNA**

River, colonial buildings of the city, bird species and Dala Shipyard.

At the Yangon Waterboom

in Dawbon Township, the Union Minister inspected the preparations of the Waterboom to be able to reopen soon and discussed to

make sure the water purification system to enable to ensure the health and safety of the visitors. Afterwards, he met officials

from the Tourism Development Centre on Bosunpat street. During the meeting, the Union Minister stressed the need to comply with the ministry and the government's policy, follow the rules and orders under the Civil Service Law, and build mutual trust among the officers to develop the tourism sector.

During the inspection tour to Karaweik Hall, Chatrium Hotel, Sedona Hotel and Lotte Hotel, which have been resuming the hotel operation following the COVID-19 rules and regulations, the Union Minister said to prepare a staff list in advance for the priority vaccination of COVID-19 vaccine for hotel staff who are mainly exposed to tourists, to make sure to comply with the COVID-19 preventive measures and to focus on giving better services to the tourists.—MNA

COVID-19 immunization conducted to monks, nuns and civil service personnel

THE COVID-19 vaccination was administered to the people over the age of 65, including monks, nuns and civil service personnel in Ayethaya, Kalaw, Aungban, Hopong, Pinlaung, Pekon, Loilem townships in Shan State; Loikaw, Bawlake townships in Kayah State; Mayangon and Hmawby Townships in Yangon Region; Chanmyathazi Township in Mandalay Region yesterday.

Chairpersons of the respective region administration councils and officials from the respective regional commands encouraged and coordinated with them as necessary.

Tatmadaw has been working together with civilian doctors who did not participate in the CDM campaign to conduct COVID-19 immunization across the country.—MNA

15th batch of volunteer military corps depart to exchange duty at COVID-19 centre (Phaunggi)

THE 15th batch of volunteer Tatmadaw medical team assigned to support the COVID-19 prevention, control and treatment activities went to perform their duty in the COVID-19 Centre (Phaunggi) in Hlegu Township yesterday morning from the Defence Services Medical Academy.

The medical team included 5 Anesthesiologists, 1 Pathologist, 1 Surgeon, 2 Radiologists, 3 Medics, and 26 nurses, will exchange the 14th batch of the Tatmadaw medical team of 40 medical specialists, medics and nurses at the Phaungyi COVID-19 centre.

Before their departure, Commander of the Yangon Region Military Headquarters General Nyunt Win Swe addressed the medical team's meeting and donated foods.

The Tatmadaw medical team



The 15th batch of volunteer Tatmadaw medical team is leaving for Phaunggi for exchange of duty.

consisted of medics, medical specialists, and nurses supporting medical treatments to accelerate the COVID-19

prevention, control, and treatment activities in Phaungyi COVID-19 Centre.—MNA

Doctors are considerate ones

HEALTH staff are mainly responsible for public healthcare. Despite the closure of some hospitals, the majority have reopened to give treatment. Non-CDM doctors are under pressure now in the efforts to reopen the hospitals. Generally, doctors are considerate ones, so they need to respect the ethics of providing healthcare.

(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)

Some incite the youths to commit violent acts; these attempts are dangerous for the State : Senior General

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Democracy is based on the wish of the majority, but such a wish must be authentic with honest politics. If the majority's wish is not honest, it is difficult to identify such politics is of democracy. The elected governments need actually to serve their tasks in a correct way of democracy. A total of 77 per cent of eligible voters cast votes in the 2020 election. It was found that the people felt frustrated over the endeavours of the government elected in 2016. As the people felt frustrated over the endeavours of the government based on anticipation of all strata, they lost their wish to cast votes in the election due to disappointment. As such, no vote campaigns were staged. It was known that when the election for the Yangon City Development Committee was held in 2019, some 14 per cent of eligible voters from Yangon City cast votes.

As holding the election and casting a vote are the essence of democracy, the Senior General recounted that he urged all to cast votes for those whom they aspire, those who can serve the State and the nationality and those who can serve the interests of the region whenever he arrived. The Senior General retold that he urged all to do things that should be done. When the Tatmadaw was ordered to cast votes together with the people at polling stations outside the military units, the Senior General said he suddenly agreed on it. Arrangements were made to cast votes together with the people freely. During the election period, some problems happened for advance votes at the polling stations.

With regard to the ad-

vance votes, order, directives and amendments were issued to order casting of votes. It is impossible to be beyond the law. The orders beyond the election law should not be issued. However, the release of many orders was based on the outbreak of Covid-19 by turning a blind eye

many times. There were more than 50,000 vote-riggings in Myeik Township and over 30,000 in Kyunsu Township, in addition to more than 10 million across the nation. Voting fraud was terrible. Such an event was similar to the act of illegally sitting the examination to take the highest

assuming the responsibilities was stable and peaceful, staging riots and protests started in the second week. These protests were based on restriction in the outbreak of Covid-19 and addressing the vote-rigging. Members of the Myanmar Police Force control all riotous protests under the mob control manual. Now, riotous protests transformed themselves to the anarchic mobs breaking laws and then to armed violent acts in holding destructive elements such as arms, home-made guns, home-made grenades and arson wares, setting fire to State administrative buildings, police stations, law office and people's housings as well as factories and making attempts to raid these buildings. Moreover, those rioters set fire to factories built with local and foreign investments and attacked security personnel. Hence, the order of martial law was released in Hlinethaya, Shwepyitha, Dagon Myothit (South and North), North Okkalapa and Dagon Myothit (Seikkan) townships of Yangon Region for ensuring security, the rule of law, and community peace and tranquillity. It was seen that some incite the youths to commit acts against nationality, language, religion and culture so as to cause violence and riots and these attempts are dangerous for the State.

Currently, the State Administration Council is implementing five future programmes and releasing findings of scrutiny on voter lists on first priority. The combined lists will be released upon completion. Moreover, the findings on bribes were also released. It is necessary to strive for improvement of the political, economic and

social sectors of the State. As the closure of schools based on the outbreak of Covid-19 cause loss to individual students and parents as well as the State, preparations are being made to reopen the schools in a systematic manner. Some suggestions were made to close the schools, not to gather crowds and not to commit incitement. He expressed his concept that if schools are closed one year, it will be a one-year loss. So, efforts will be made to reopen the schools. Moreover, strenuous efforts are being made to achieve success in the peace process. Based on experiences, undertakings will be carried out for the all-round development of the State so as to build the Union based on democracy and federalism firmly.

State defence duty is the primary duty of the State, especially defending external danger. So, the capacity of members of the Myanmar Police Forces is being improved as they are mainly responsible for the security of the country.

The Senior General stressed the need to improve the Tatmadaw with high combat power and combat ability. He urged all to enhance the individual capability to have better teamwork and serve their duties conscientiously. He also urged all to improve individuals and their military units while striving for uplifting prestige of the Tatmadaw, the State and the nationality.

After the meetings, the Senior General and party viewed agricultural and livestock breeding tasks of regiments and units in respective stations and the progress of military buildings by car.—MNA

It is necessary to strive for improvement of the political, economic and social sectors of the State. As the closure of schools based on the outbreak of Covid-19 cause loss to individual students and parents as well as the State, preparations are being made to reopen the schools in a systematic manner.

to the above-mentioned facts.

Some doubts about fairness on talks and authority of parties were found in canvassing before the election. Canvassing with declaring party policies were placed under censorship. So, the Senior General on his tours said he called for holding a free and fair election. He emphasized holding a free and fair election.

In holding the 2020 election, as it was the time of breaking out of Covid-19, votes were cast under the social distancing. Votes were cast by 71 per cent. Large numbers of difference were found in the inspection of the voting result, and such findings were released. Requests were made for addressing the differences in voting results

marks. As attempts were made to form the new government by holding the third Hluttaw in addition to absence of addressing the errors on voting list, the Tatmadaw assumed the State responsibilities in accord with Sections 417 and 418 of the Constitution starting from 1 February 2021 and formed the State Administration Council under Section 419. The council was constituted with military and civilian persons in balance, and civilians were appointed as chairmen of region and state administration councils. In fact, the Tatmadaw is taking responsibilities in a short period to ensure genuine democracy and disciplined and firm democracy. Although the first week of

Announcement of Union Election Commission

19 March 2021

- The Union Election Commission inspected voter lists and withdrawal, receipt, use and ground stocks of ballots used in the multiparty democracy general election held on 8 November 2020 in Pabedan, Sangyoung, Kayan, Kawhmu and Dala townships of Yangon Region.
- Findings of voter lists in respective townships were as follows:

Findings on voter lists in each township

Sr	Township and number of polling station	Township Sub-commission list	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	26 polling stations in Pabedan Township of Yangon Region	25,408	31,449	597	12	718
2	52 polling stations in Sangyoung Township of Yangon Region	81,775	73,541	506	18	2,228
3	204 polling stations in Kayan Township of Yangon Region	128,116	141,538	25,836	154	6,024
4	161 polling stations in Kawhmu Township of Yangon Region	98,678	76,055	10,565	217	5,400
5	182 polling stations in Dala Township of Yangon Region	130,599	107,488	30,179	433	8,384

- The Union Election Commission together with those from respective township election sub-commissions, heads of Township Police Forces, heads of Township Immigration and Population Departments and township administrators inspected withdrawal, receipt, use and ground stocks of ballots used in the election for the Pyithu Hluttaw in Pabedan, Sangyoung, Kayan, Kawhmu and Dala townships of Yangon Region in accord with Section 53 of the Hluttaw Election Law.
- With regard to the ground inspection, a total of 625 polling stations in five townships drew 524,293 ballots in total and used 334,545 ballots. There remained 173,374 ballots on the ground instead of 189,748 ballots. The difference was 21,930 ballots and it found 5,556 extra ballots. Loss and shortage of ballots and illegally extra ballots were found at respective townships. As ballots were printed in set amount for respective constituencies, numbers of extra ballots were seen as illegally printed ones. The findings in each township were as follows:

Findings on ballot papers for Pyithu Hluttaw in each township

Sr	Subject	Total polling station	Withdrawal	Used	Exact remaining	Remaining on the ground	Difference	
							Missing	Extra
1	Pabedan	26	27,549	15,590	11,959	11,782	263	86
2	Sangyoung	52	86,563	48,662	37,901	30,544	9,517	2,160
3	Kayan	204	149,266	100,499	48,767	45,437	5,807	2,477
4	Kawhmu	161	114,822	78,268	36,554	35,259	1,891	596
5	Dala	182	146,093	91,526	54,567	50,352	4,452	237
	Total	625	524,293	334,545	189,748	173,374	21,930	5,556

- According to the ground inspection, 26 polling stations for 11 wards of Pabedan Township in Yangon Region took out 27,549 ballot papers and used 15,590 receipts of ballot. There remained 11,782 ballot papers on the ground instead of 11,959. It was found that extra ballot papers and loss of ballots happened in respective polling stations. The findings were as follows:

Sr	Subject	Withdrawal	Used	Exact remaining	Remaining on the ground	Difference	
						Missing	Extra
1	Ward/Village-tract ballots	26,053	15,294	10,759	10,582	263	86
2	Township advance ballots	1,496	296	1,200	1,200		
3	Township remaining ballots						
	Total	27,549	15,590	11,959	11,782	263	86

- Twenty-six polling stations in 11 Wards of Pabedan Township lost 263 ballot papers and used 86 extra ballots. Findings on ballot papers in the Pyithu Hluttaw held in Pabedan Township were as follows:

Sr	Ward	Total polling stations	Withdrawal	Used	Exact remaining	Remaining on the ground	Difference	
							Missing	Extra
1	No 1 ward	2	2,503	1,247	1,256	1,261		5
2	No 2 ward	2	2,010	961	1,049	1,052		3
3	No 3 ward	3	3,106	1,782	1,324	1,326		2
4	No 4 ward	2	2,600	1,562	1,038	1,051		13
5	No 5 ward	2	2,401	1,320	1,081	1,101		20
6	No 6 ward	3	2,371	1,427	944	699	245	
7	No 7 ward	3	3,054	1,998	1,056	1,048	8	
8	No 8 ward	3	3,103	1,843	1,260	1,250	10	
9	No 9 ward	2	1,300	912	388	404		16
10	No 10 ward	2	2,000	1,190	810	820		10
11	No 11 ward	2	1,605	1,052	553	570		17
	Ward total	26	26,053	15,294	10,759	10,582	263	86
	Township remaining ballots		1,496	296	1,200	1,200		
	Township total		27,549	15,590	11,959	11,782	263	86

Findings on the ground inspection for ballots of Pyithu Hluttaw in Sangyoung Township

- Fifty-two polling stations in 18 wards of Sangyoung Township in Yangon Region took out 86,563 ballot papers and used 48,662 ballots. It was scrutinized that there remained 30,544 ballots on the ground instead of 37,901. Extra and missing ballots in respective polling stations were as follows:

Sr	Subject	Withdrawal	Used	Exact remaining	Remaining on the ground	Difference	
						Missing	Extra
1	Ward/Village-tract ballots	82,641	46,990	35,651	28,294	9,517	2,160
2	Township advance ballots	3,922	1,672	2,250	2,250		
	Total	86,563	48,662	37,901	30,544	9,517	2,160

- A total of 9,517 ballots went missing at 52 polling stations in 18 wards of Sangyoung Township with using 2,160 extra ballots. A total of 1,672 ballot papers were used more than the advance ballots of the township, and remaining 2,250 ballots were kept in the township.

- Findings on ground inspection for ballots of Pyithu Hluttaw in respective wards of Sangyoung Township in Yangon Region were as follows:

Sr	Ward	Total polling stations	Withdrawal	Used	Exact remaining	Remaining on the ground	Different	
							Missing	Extra
1	Weiluwun (north) ward	3	3,880	2,036	1,844	1,116	728	
2	Weiluwun (south) ward	2	2,410	1,725	685	726	288	329
3	Montlotsaunggon (north) ward	3	3,390	2,302	1,088	1,046	42	
4	Montlotsaunggon (south) ward	4	9,560	4,281	5,279	2,821	2,468	10
5	Thantantar ward	2	3,476	2,215	1,261	1,527		266
6	Linlon (north) ward	4	5,960	3,667	2,293	1,966	453	126
7	Linlon (south) ward	4	5,295	3,352	1,943	2,049	16	122

8	Kyuntaw (north) ward	2	2,900	1,746	1,154	1,100	57	3
9	Kyuntaw (middle) ward	2	3,780	2,364	1,416	586	830	
10	Kyuntaw (south) ward	4	6,055	3,847	2,208	2,350	685	827
11	Sangyoung (north) ward	4	6,295	2,617	3,678	2,511	1,288	121
12	Sangyoung (south) ward	3	5,700	3,489	2,211	2,111	108	8
13	Shinsawpu ward	2	2,650	1,446	1,204	1,154	150	100
14	Thirikhaymar ward	2	3,160	1,766	1,394	1,039	355	
15	Aungchantha	1	1,980	1,245	735	708	27	
16	Holn Lan Station	2	2,775	2,069	706	685	25	4
17	Myaynigon (north) ward	4	6,645	3,180	3,465	2,905	804	244
18	Myaynigon (south) ward	4	6,730	3,643	3,087	1,894	1,193	
Ward total		52	82,641	46,990	35,651	28,294	9,517	2,160
Township remaining ballots			3,922	1,672	2,250	2,250		
Township total			86,563	48,662	37,901	30,544	9,517	2,160

Findings on the ground inspection for ballots of Pyithu Hluttaw in Kayan Township

10. A total of 204 polling stations in 13 wards and 53 village-tracts of Kayan Township in Yangon Region took out 149,266 ballot papers and used 100,499 ballots. It was scrutinized there remained 45,437 ballots on the ground instead of 48,767. Extra and missing ballots in respective polling stations were as follows:

Sr	Subject	Withdrawal	Used	Exact remaining	Remaining on the ground	Different	
						Missing	Extra
1	Ward/Village-tract ballots	134,016	99,985	34,031	31,250	5,258	2,477
2	Township advance ballots	15,250	514	14,736	14,187	549	
Total		149,266	100,499	48,767	45,437	5,807	2,477

11. The ground inspection showed that 204 polling stations in 13 wards and 53 village-tracts of Kayan Township lost 5,258 ballots with 2,477 extra ballot papers. The township used 514 ballots for advance voting. There remained 14,187 ballots instead of 14,730 ballots. The township maintained 14,187 ballots with 549 ballots missing.

12. Findings on the ground inspection for ballots of Pyithu Hluttaw in respective wards/village-tracts of Kayan Township in Yangon Region were as follows:

Sr	Ward	Total polling stations	Withdrawal	Used	Exact remaining	Remaining on the ground	Different	
							Missing	Extra
1	No 1 ward	3	2,050	1,588	462	462	50	50
2	No 2 ward	2	1,800	1,424	376	367	50	41
3	No 3 ward	6	4,450	3,516	934	734	200	
4	No 4 ward	1	650	529	121	121		
5	No 5 ward	2	1,700	1,344	356	441		
6	No 6 ward	3	1,550	961	589	289	350	50
7	No 7 ward	4	3,450	2,746	704	1,114		410
8	No 8 ward	2	1,650	1,169	481	381	100	
9	No 9 ward	3	2,550	2,068	482	505		23
10	No 10 ward	3	1,700	1,397	303	391	10	98
11	No 11 ward	4	2,700	2,199	501	501	100	100
12	No 12 ward	4	3,600	2,823	777	731	46	
13	Kwammoedane ward	2	1,350	1,111	239	239	50	50
14	Paukpin Village tract	4	2,600	2,063	537	487	50	
15	Kamarmat Village tract	3	2,450	1,875	575	425	150	
16	Matkathan Villate tract	2	1,000	800	200	203		3
17	Gyongyonkya Village tract	3	2,050	1,621	429	385	44	
18	Ookpho Village tract	3	2,000	1,692	308	362		54
19	Maungma Village tract	5	3,000	2,312	688	698	150	160
20	Kyutaw Village tract	3	2,600	2,150	450	450		
21	Kamarchaik Village tract	3	2,350	1,678	672	622	100	50
22	Ahlaeywar Village tract	3	1,850	1,560	290	290		
23	Ayeywar Village tract	3	1,550	949	601	455	146	
24	Swekatar Village tract	3	1,800	1,382	418	418		
25	Painkan Village tract	4	2,800	2,163	637	590	47	
26	Hlabilu Villate tract	3	1,800	1,193	607	257	350	
27	Magyikan Village tract	2	1,600	1,277	323	323		
28	Yoegy Village tract	2	1,450	1,018	432	282	150	
29	Kyontu Village tract	2	1,400	933	467	367	100	
30	Tamangyi Village tract	5	3,700	2,813	887	985	2	100
31	Kamarkaloat Village tract	4	2,950	2,240	710	606	104	
32	Kayinkan Village tract	3	2,150	1,657	493	443	50	
33	Kannyinaung Villate tract	1	950	767	183	183		
34	Kyunetalin Village tract	5	3,566	2,632	934	834	116	16

35	Thetkyekon Village tract	2	1,800	1,274	526	626		100
36	Khamat Village tract	4	2,400	1,804	596	597		1
37	Kanbe Village tract	2	1,950	1,475	475	275	200	
38	Nyaungpinkwin Village tract	7	4,400	3,456	944	894	100	50
39	Bagantaung Village tract	6	3,200	2,256	944	694	250	
40	Pantawchaung Village tract	2	1,450	1,064	386	386	50	50
41	Daepauk Village tract	5	3,350	2,630	720	495	250	25
42	Kayinsu Village tract	5	2,250	1,714	536	586		50
43	Phayarypyo Village tract	4	2,600	1,869	731	674	57	
44	Kwinhlarshae Village tract	3	1,750	1,227	523	423	150	50
45	Htayakan Village tract	5	2,400	1,394	1,006	743	400	137
46	Thabyukan Village tract	2	1,150	898	252	285		33
47	Palukan Village tract	4	2,450	1,812	638	637	51	50
48	Takawkan Village tract	4	2,250	1,388	862	673	239	50
49	Kyinchauung Village tract	4	1,900	1,258	624	432	260	50
50	Pyinmagon Village tract	5	2,250	1,582	668	668		
51	Kyarkan Village tract	4	2,050	1,479	571	521	50	
52	Palu Village tract	3	2,200	1,360	840	611	229	
53	Aungchantha Village tract	1	1,300	845	455	453	2	
54	Bogalay Village tract	3	1,350	971	379	379		
55	Sinkyun Village tract	1	450	242	208	108	100	
56	Kankaung Village tract	1	350	249	101	101		
57	Yaykyaw Village tract	3	1,750	1,223	527	527		
58	Ohnpin Village tract	2	1,100	774	326	268	109	51
59	Nyaunglann Village tract	1	600	432	168	168		
60	Sinminai Village tract	2	1,000	710	290	290		
61	Kinmonchon Village tract	3	2,350	1,407	943	937	6	
62	Zibyupin Village tract	3	2,000	1,461	539	589		50
63	Kyonkan Village tract	2	900	1,121	-221	219		440
64	Nyaungpintha Village tract	2	1,450	1,074	376	286	90	
65	Sakhangyi Village tract	2	1,250	906	344	294	50	
66	Kantha Village tract	2	1,550	980	570	470	100	
Ward total		204	134,016	99,985	34,031	31,250	5,258	2,477
Township remaining ballots			15,250	514	14,736	14,187	549	
Township total			149,266	100,499	48,767	45,437	5,807	2,477

Findings in ground inspection on ballots for Pyithu Hluttaw in Kawhmu Township

13. The ground inspection mentioned that 161 polling stations in 62 wards/village-tracts of Kawhmu Township in Yangon Region took out 114,822 ballots and used 78,268 ballots. There remained 35,259 ballots instead of 36,544. Extra and missing ballots were found in respective polling stations. Findings on inspection were as follows:

Sr	Subject	Withdrawal	Used	Exact remaining	Remaining on the ground	Different	
						Missing	Extra
1	Ward/Village-tract ballots	108,075	77,722	30,353	29,133	1,769	549
2	Township advance ballots	825	546	279	326		47
3	Township remaining ballots	5,922		5,922	5,800	122	
Total		114,822	78,268	36,554	35,259	1,890	596

Announcement of Union Election Commission

FROM PAGE-5

14. It was found that 161 polling stations in 62 wards/village-tracts in Kawhmu Township lost 1,769 ballots with 549 extra ballot papers. Forty-seven ballots for township advance voting exceeded more than the issued. A total of 122 ballot papers went missing on list of remaining township ballots. Findings on ground inspection for ballots of Pyithu Hluttaw in respective wards/village-tracts of Kawhmu Township were as follows:

Sr	Ward/village-tract	Withdrawal	Used	Exact remaining	Remaining on the ground	Difference	
						Missing	Extra
1	Myomapine ward	1,350	978	372	122	250	
2	Myothit ward	1,552	1,162	390	488		98
3	Magyitan ward	750	575	175	175		
4	Tarlanthit ward	1,050	840	210	210		
5	Pyitawthar ward	850	672	178	178		
6	Taungpaine ward	1,070	794	276	206	70	
7	Payarlan ward	1,650	1,234	416	416		
8	Magyikan Village-tract	3,250	2,461	789	689	100	
9	Natsingone Village-tract	5,400	3,847	1,553	1,303	250	
10	Ahpyauk Village-tract	2,850	2,063	787	737	50	
11	Htamanaing Village-tract	2,350	1,658	692	745		
12	Mawun Village-tract	1,150	822	328	328		
13	Kyweluai Village-tract	700	555	145	145		
14	Phayonchaung Village-tract	700	546	154	154		
15	Kanthonkan Village-tract	600	439	161	161		
16	Koetaung Village-tract	1,900	1,329	571	621		
17	Yephyutwin Village-tract	1,350	981	369	369		
18	Kyarkan Village-tract	1,200	876	324	324		
19	Myatsanni Village-tract	950	680	270	270		
20	Ywartanshae Village-tract	1,400	1,056	344	344		
21	Nyaungpinthar Village-tract	2,250	1,351	719	719		
22	Boedin Village-tract	1,050	751	299	299		
23	Pyarmut Village-tract	850	563	287	287		
24	Wahbalaukthaunk Village-tract	3,600	2,624	976	977		1
25	Kharaitkhani Village-tract	1,200	803	397	397		
26	Kamarkane Village-tract	950	474	476	376	100	
27	Htantapin Village-tract	1,500	909	591	491	100	
28	Kyodayae Village-tract	1,800	1,228	572	672		100
29	Thakyutpin Village-tract	2,900	2,108	792	792		
30	Kyutawchaung Village-tract	1,050	786	264	264		
31	Sartaingmut Village-tract	900	574	326	326		
32	Thayettaw Village-tract	1,050	830	220	220		

33	Thaminchan Village-tract	1,350	1,052	298	298		
34	Tarteik Village-tract	900	639	261	263		2
35	Letkhit Village-tract	2,550	1,915	635	635		
36	Zayetkon Village-tract	751	581	170	170		
37	Painhnekon Village-tract	2,150	1,576	574	574		
38	Lawati Village-tract	2,000	1,458	542	492	50	
39	Hsapagan Village-tract	1,902	1,272	630	578	52	
40	Taungchaung Village-tract	1,500	1,081	419	419		
41	Myaukchaung Village-tract	2,550	1,891	659	659		
42	Htanpinchaung Village-tract	650	434	216	216		
43	Hnetawsan Village-tract	1,200	541	659	210	449	
44	Takupon Village-tract	1,500	1,178	322	322		
45	Natyetwin Village-tract	1,400	878	522	522		
46	Sharbwar Village-tract	3,100	2,107	993	998		5
47	Kahnyingu Village-tract	1,400	1,051	349	299	50	
48	Taloathtaw Village-tract	2,500	1,851	649	649		
49	Khalaung Village-tract	2,200	1,622	578	578		
50	Yekyaw Village-tract	2,750	2,026	724	774		50
51	Pyinkadoe Village-tract	1,300	958	342	342		
52	Nyaunggon Village-tract	1,800	1,395	405	359	46	
53	Masaeseik Village-tract	4,500	3,454	1,046	996	50	
54	Warthinkha Village-tract	2,100	1,579	521	521		
55	Hmawtaw Village-tract	1,850	1,282	568	607		39
56	Poppa Village-tract	1,700	1,256	444	394	50	
57	Kyeikhtaw (north) Village-tract	3,450	2,397	1,053	1,203		150
58	Kyeikhtaw (south) Village-tract	2,100	1,559	541	542		1
59	Aukyaung Village-tract	2,150	1,314	737	687	50	
60	Thamae Village-tract	1,350	1,012	338	288	50	
61	Kyonlater Village-tract	850	585	265	263	2	
62	Sankauk Village-tract	1,400	930	470	470		
Ward total		108,075	77,722	30,353	29,133	1,769	549
Township advance ballots		825	546	279	326		47
Township remaining ballots		5,922		5,922	5,800	122	
Township total		114,822	78,268	36,554	35,259	1,891	596

Findings on the ground inspection for ballots of Pyithu Hluttaw in Dala Township

15. The ground inspection stated that 182 polling stations in 47 wards/village-tracts of Dala Township in Yangon Region took out 146,093 ballots and used 91,526 ballots. It was found that there remained 50,352 ballots instead of 54,567 ballots. Extra and lost ballots were found in respective polling stations. Findings on inspection on extra and missing ballots were as follows:

Sr	Subject	Withdrawal	Used	Exact remaining	Remaining on the ground	Difference	
						Missing	Extra
1	Ward/Village-tract ballots	136,450	90,715	45,735	41,520	4,452	237
2	Township advance ballots	899	811	88	88		
3	Township remaining ballots	8,744		8,744	8,744		
Total		146,093	91,526	54,567	50,352	4,452	237

16. A total of 4,452 ballots went missing in 182 polling stations in 47 wards/village-tracts in Dala Township. Ballots in hands of ward/village-tract election sub-commissions exceeded 237 more than the ballots issued by the Township Election Sub-commission. Findings on the ground inspection for ballots of Pyithu Hluttaw in respective wards/village-tracts of Dala Township were as follows:

Sr	Ward	Total polling stations	Withdrawal	Used	Exact remaining	Remaining on the ground	Difference	
							Missing	Extra
1	Thamadakanchay ward	6	3,950	2,732	1,218	1,217	1	
2	Ahngyi Ashae ward	6	4,700	3,169	1,531	1,381	150	
3	No 6 ward	2	2,200	1,598	602	352	250	
4	11/14 ward	6	5,000	3,236	1,764	1,766		2
5	Nyaungkon ward	6	4,500	3,145	1,355	1,305	50	
6	Myoma 1 ward	2	950	747	203	202	1	
7	Myoma 2 ward	2	1,450	959	491	391	100	
8	Myoma 3 ward	1	500	344	156	156		
9	Myoma 4 ward	5	3,800	2,593	1,207	1,217		10
10	Aung Mingalar ward	4	2,300	1,714	586	575	11	
11	Bo Yanpyay ward	4	3,100	2,094	1,006	1,007		1
12	Ahgyi Anauk ward	6	4,450	3,016	1,434	1,385	49	
13	Kamarkathwe ward	5	3,350	2,319	1,031	1,031		

14	Setmyay ward	4	2,900	1,788	1,112	962	150	
15	Kamarkasit ward	10	9,500	5,505	3,995	3,944	51	
16	Hmawset ward	6	5,400	2,823	2,577	1,927	650	
17	Wunhtan Einyar ward	4	2,950	1,415	1,535	1,136	399	
18	Banyadala ward	4	2,900	1,900	1,000	1,050		50
19	Yazathingyan ward	7	5,550	3,077	2,473	2,423	50	
20	Sarparchaung ward	4	3,100	2,268	832	831	1	
21	Kyansitthar ward	13	11,350	7,371	3,979	3,789	190	
22	Thapinshwehti ward	9	5,350	3,570	1,780	1,682	98	
23	Bayintnaung ward	4	2,800	1,490	1,310	910	400	
24	Targyi ward	4	3,100	2,226	874	774	100	
25	Thabyaygon Village tract	3	4,400	2,255	2,145	995	1,150	
26	Nyaunggotto Village tract	1	100,0	778	222	222		
27	Yechaung Village tract	3	1,300	1,038	262	262		
28	Yechaungwa Village tract	1	650	569	81	81		
29	Htoogy Village tract	3	2,100	1,688	412	424		12
30	Htawauk Village tract	3	1,900	1,510	390	392		2

Announcement of Union Election Commission

FROM PAGE-6

Sr	Ward	Total polling stations	Withdrawal	Used	Exact remaining	Remaining on the ground	Different	
							Missing	Extra
31	Pyawbwegyi Village-tract	6	4,400	3,472	928	927	1	
32	Shwehlaychaung Village-tract	2	1,250	931	319	369		50
33	Thabanchaung Village-tract	3	1,950	1,605	345	345		
34	Thayawtan Village-tract	2	1,200	897	303	313		10
35	Yakhinechaung (south) Village-tract	2	1,300	960	340	290	50	
36	Yakhinechaung (north) Village-tract	2	1,650	1,207	443	493		50
37	Tonetingan (south) Village-tract	4	2,400	1,891	509	459	50	
38	Tonetingan (north) Village-tract	1	400	254	146	146		
39	Nyaungchaung Village-tract	2	1,100	873	227	177	50	

40	Danoat Sanpya Village-tract	2	1,500	1,134	366	416		50
41	Toepyuchaung Village-tract	2	900	600	300	300		
42	Nyaungpin Village-tract	3	1,050	770	280	230	50	
43	Kyweluai Village-tract	3	1,750	1,276	474	376	98	
44	Khanaung Shansu Village-tract	1	550	384	166	166		
45	Khanaung Ywama Village-tract	3	2,550	1,666	884	864	200	
46	Khanaung Ahtet Village-tract	1	550	370	180	80	100	
47	Tantachaung Village-tract	5	5,450	3,488	1,962	1,960	2	
Ward total		182	136,450	90,715	45,735	41,520	4,452	237
Township advance ballots			899	811	88	88		
Township remaining ballots			8,744		8,744	8,744		
Township total			146,093	91,526	54,567	50,352	4,452	237

Union Election Commission

Tatmadaw officials donate offertories, medical items to monks, nuns



TATMADAW (Army, Navy and Air) officials donated rice, oil, salt, peas, COVID-19 prevention devices and offertories to the monasteries and nunneries in Paung Township in Mon State; Hmawby Township in Yangon Region; Haka Township in Chin State; Toungoo Township in Bago Region yesterday.

The military officials also donated meals to the monks and nuns in a total of 15 monasteries and nunneries in Myanaung Township in Ayeyawady Region; Haka Township in Chin State, Patheingyi Township, Pyigyitagon Township in Mandalay Region and Toungoo Township in Bago Region.

The members of the Tatmadaw Army, Navy and Air have been donating rice, oil, salt, peas and other offertories as well as providing meal and medical care to the monks and nuns in monasteries, nunneries in respective townships in respective military commands.—MNA

A Sayadaw seen receiving offertories from the Tatmadaw officials in Paung Township, Mon State yesterday.

Myanmar Railway runs Mandalay-Nay Pyi Taw- Ywarthagyi freight train

THE Mandalay-Nay Pyi Taw-Ywarthagyi Road No. (924) down freight train and two freight trains, RBE 25100 and RBE 25107, started running from Mandalay Central Station in the morning on 17 March.

The No. (924) freight train departing from Mandalay connected 19 trucks and one break at Thazi station and arrived in Nay Pyi Taw at 9:30 pm. The train left Nay Pyi Taw at 7 am on 18 March and arrived at Pyuntanza station at 9:15 pm. The train came to its destination Ywarthagyi at 5:15 pm yesterday.

During the journey, it was found that terrorists removed two rails of the railway and 19 concrete sleepers and 38 rail control clips around Milestone (320/1), and six rail control clips between Shwehlay and Bago stations. Tatmadaw members, police and Myanmar Railway workers had to conduct repair work.

Myanmar Railways will take legal action against the perpetrators of such acts and sabotage at the relevant local police station.—MNA



Damaged rails are being repaired by Tatmadaw members, police and Myanmar Railways workers.

Experimental cultivation of Taiwan jackfruit succeeds in Kyaukpadaung

THE local farmers from Lae Gwa village in Kyaukpadaung township grew the Taiwan jackfruit on a trial basis. Their cultivation has succeeded, said U Taung Tin, a Taiwan jackfruit grower from Lae Gwa village.

The Taiwan jackfruit has started to blossom the fruit in a three-year period and begin commercialization in the four-year period.

There are seven villages in Kanpetlet village-tract in Kyaukpadaung township. Among them, six villages are being engaged with the agriculture sector. They are growing long-term crops such as India drumstick, kilo guava, unseeded guava, Seintalone mango, Mya Kyauk mango, R2E2 mango, dragon fruit, banana, Taiwan papaya, betel leaf and Santalum

flower species.

They have been growing Taiwan jackfruits since April 2017. They bought 120 Taiwan jackfruit nursery plants for K2,000 per plant from PyinOoLwin. The Taiwan jackfruit trees started to blossom in 2019. After the fourth year of growth, the fruits could be picked up and sold in the market, said U Thaug Tin.

After growing a jackfruit tree for five years, the jackfruit tree will yield 20 or 30 fruits per tree. Each fruit weighs seven to 14 visses. The Taiwan fruits are ripe and sold by viss. It is priced at K1,000 per viss. If the fruit is seven visses, it will earn K7,000, and if the fruit is 14 visses, it will earn K14,000. The local growers are urged to cultivate Taiwan jackfruits, he added.

The jackfruit usually yields from March to August. The traders from Pakokku, Meiktila, Nyaung-U, Myingyan, Kyaukpadaung and Popa reached the jackfruits' farmlands. The jackfruit cultivation cost is not very high, and the fruits can be sold as soon as it is ripe. — Myint Kay Khaing / Ko Htein—KPD/ GNLM

Fish processing zones at borders steps towards fishery sector recovery

The fishery sector occupies an important place in our country's economy. Our country has a lot of potentials to earn billions of dollars from fisheries export.

To put our fishery sector, which was hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic, on the right path to recovery in a short period, the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation is taking steps to establish fish processing economic zones at border towns to produce value-added fishery products for export and local consumption.

Fish farming is the key to food security and can be a significant contributor towards our economy if managed correctly and supported by all the stakeholders.

Myanmar's fishery sector operates with over 3,200 offshore fishing boats, nearly 19,200 offshore fishing boats, 260 transporting vehicles at coastal areas. Besides, there are about 500,000 acres of fish and prawn farms and 124 cold storage factories in the regions and states. Regional fishery industries and fishery authorities are working together to continue to export fish to neighbouring countries through the border amidst challenges from the pandemic.

However, fishing communities in coastal areas, factories, workers and businesses are still suffering from negative consequences of the pandemic.

Fish farming is the key to food security and can be a significant contributor to our economy if managed correctly and supported by all the stakeholders. Let us hope that "all hands are on the plough!"

Amidst COVID-19, there have been some positive outcomes such as the revival of local food networks thanks to logistics with health guidelines and increases in local sales through direct marketing and deliveries.

We welcome the projects, and we are confident that these projects will bring a ray of rosy hope to put our economy, which was hit by the pandemic, on the road to recovery.

Meanwhile, we need to encourage the emergence of private laboratories meeting international standards for aquaculture products, capacity building for workers in the marketing and upgrading the cold storage facilities.

It is worth noting that the ministry is also drawing plans for establishing agro and farming based industrial zones, which will help the coming fish processing zones overcome the challenges on the fishery sector's way from exporting raw fish to producing value-added products both for export and local consumption. We also need to attract foreign investments, which can also offer modern technology by showing that we have the potential to develop from all sides.

COVID-19: Virus variants, vaccine inequity, contribute to rising caseload

COVID-19 cases globally are on track to rise for a fourth consecutive week, the World Health Organization (WHO) reported on Friday.

After six weeks of decline in January and February, cases are now increasing in most regions of the world. Meanwhile, deaths are falling, though at a slower rate.

"These are worrying trends as we continue to see the impact of variants, opening up of societies, and inequitable vaccine rollout", said WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, speaking during his regular briefing from Geneva.

More than 21.4 confirmed cases of COVID-19 were recorded as of Friday, including some 2.6 million deaths.

Keep using AstraZeneca vaccine

WHO is also urging countries to continue using the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine.

The agency's Global Advisory Committee on Vaccine Safety met this week to review data on the vaccine, after reports of blood clotting in some people who had received it.

The committee announced its conclusion on Friday that the



With health protocols, a worker carries out food at a restaurant in Redondo Beach, a coastal city in Los Angeles County, California, United States. PHOTO: PATRICK T. FALLON/AFP

available data do not suggest any overall increase in clotting conditions, such as deep venous thrombosis or pulmonary embolism, following administration of the vaccine.

With advice that largely echoed the crucial European Medicines Agency (EMA) report on Thursday, following the decision by many European countries to suspend use of the AstraZeneca

shots, the WHO vaccine safety committee said the jabs had "tremendous potential to prevent infections and reduce deaths".

"Reported rates of thromboembolic events after COVID-19

vaccines are in line with the expected number of diagnoses of these conditions", the committee said in its statement.

"Both conditions occur naturally and are not uncommon. They also occur as a result of COVID-19. The observed rates have been fewer than expected for such events."

Tedros said the AstraZeneca vaccine is especially important because it accounts for more than 90 per cent of stocks being distributed through COVAX, the global vaccine equity initiative.

Mayors appeal for vaccine equity

During the WHO briefing, mayors from three major cities appealed for greater equity in the production and distribution of COVID-19 vaccines to protect people everywhere and end the pandemic.

"If you could prioritize the sharing of the surplus doses procured by rich countries, that will help us so that we can get more of the vaccine", said Mohammed Adjei Sowah, Mayor of Ghana's capital, Accra.

"The second recommendation also is that if you will accelerate the technology transfers of

vaccines for other manufacturing countries also to take up, so that we can have more of the vaccines and then we will be able to reach herd immunity as quickly as possible."

While acknowledging the "miracle" of developing the new vaccines within a year, Claudia Lopez, Mayor of Bogotá, Colombia, remarked "nonetheless, we see that right now there is a lack of global production capacity so that there is greater access".

Speaking in Spanish, she stressed that countries and cities need to "have the knowledge", for both the short and long term, "so that they can produce different types of vaccines, not only COVID vaccines."

Although the pandemic's toll on Freetown, Sierra Leone, which has recorded just over 2,200 cases and 80 deaths, might be less than on other cities, Mayor Yvonne Aki-Sawyer said the economic impact has been significant.

"What we don't want to see is greater inequality being driven by the inequality of a vaccine rollout", she warned. "And this is really a possibility."

Source: UN News

Australia fires spewed as much smoke into stratosphere as volcano - study

The bushfires that ravaged Australia between 2019 and 2020 were so huge that they spewed as much smoke into the stratosphere as a large volcanic eruption, with serious consequences for the environment, according to a study published in the journal Science.

The stratosphere is the second layer of the atmosphere, right above the troposphere where we live.

"For us it was a huge surprise" to see such a significant effect, study co-author Ilan Koren, a professor at the Weizmann Institute of Science in Israel, said.

"I never saw such an injection (of smoke) to the stratosphere," he said.

The amount of smoke released into the atmosphere by the fires is comparable to that put out by the eruption of Mount Pinatubo in the Philippines in 1991, which was the second-largest of the 20th century.

Researchers noted that the smoke drifted away from Australia to the east, and then returned again from the west two weeks later.

"We could see the smoke completing a whole circulation in two weeks," Prof Koren said. "I never saw such a strong event spread so fast."

The phenomenon can be explained by three factors, according to the study.

First, the fires themselves were intense. Second, they occurred in an area of far southern Australia where the distance between the troposphere and the stratosphere is smaller than elsewhere. And lastly, the fires took place near strong storms, which helped draw the smoke up higher into the atmosphere.

The fact that the smoke was able to billow so high is crucial to understanding its environmental impact as usually, such smoke might only stay in the lower part

of the atmosphere for a few days or weeks.

"But once it gets to the stratosphere, it stays between months to years," Prof Koren explained.

The winds are stronger up there, allowing the smoke to be dispersed farther and faster than might otherwise be possible.

"Basically what we get is a very thin smoke blanket that covers the whole hemisphere for many months," he said.

Researchers could see the smoke in the stratosphere for six months, from January to July 2020, via satellite monitoring.

Eventually, it became too difficult to separate the smoke from the Australian bushfires from smoke in the stratosphere that might have come from other sources.

"But most likely there is still today a signature of the smoke in the stratosphere," Prof Koren said.

The main effect of the smoke



Researchers could see the smoke in the stratosphere for six months, from January to July 2020, via satellite monitoring. A firefighter in Australia hoses down trees to protect nearby homes from bush fires near the town of Nowra in the state of New South Wales on December 31, 2019 as the fires led to the evacuation of popular tourist areas in the state. PHOTO: AFP

staying in the atmosphere for so long is that it can reflect radiation coming from the sun.

According to Prof Koren, that "definitely has a cooling effect overall," especially on the

ocean, potentially disrupting processes such as algae photosynthesis in the southern hemisphere.

The smoke can also absorb solar radiation, which can have

a localised warming effect.

"The consequences of the warming of the smoke in the stratosphere are not clear yet," he said.

Source: AFP

Objectives of 76th Anniversary Armed Forces Day

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

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

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

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

State Administration Council Information Team to hold press briefing 3/2021

THE Information Team of the State Administration Council will hold a press briefing 3/2021 at the meeting hall of the Ministry of Information office in Nay Pyi Taw at 1 pm on 23 March. Local and foreign media are invited to press conference—MNA



Myanmar Daily Weather Report

(Issued at 7:00 pm Saturday 20 March 2021)

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

FORECAST VALID UNTIL AFTERNOON OF THE 21 March 2021: Light rain or thundershowers are likely to be isolated in Taninthayi Region and Kachin State. Degree of certainty is (60%). Weather will be partly cloudy in Sagaing, Mandalay, and Magway regions and Shan, Chin, Rakhine, Kayin and Mon states and generally fair in the remaining regions and states.

STATE OF THE SEA: Seas will be slight to moderate in Myanmar waters. Wave height will be about (3-6) feet off and along Myanmar Coasts.

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Likelihood of rain or thundershowers in Bago, and Taninthayi regions and Kachin, Shan, Kayah, Kayin and Mon states.

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 21 March 2021: Generally fair weather.

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 21 March 2021: Generally fair weather.

FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 21 March 2021: Generally fair weather.

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Ceremony for conveying Bhumi Phassa Mudra Sitting Buddha Statue held



The modular trailers seen carrying the throne sections of the Bhumi Phassa Mudra Sitting Buddha Statue.

THE ceremony for conveying the statue of the Bhumi Phassa Mudra Sitting Buddha and the pieces of the throne to Nay Pyi Taw was held yesterday at Semikhone port, Myingyan Township, Mandalay Region.

“This is the fifth conveying ceremony with the help of modular trailer,” officials said.

Sayadaws and monks, to-

gether with the State Central Working Committee of the Sangha Sayadaw Bhaddanta Man-nitha from Ngazun Township, Mandalay Region, Commander of the Central Command, Brig-Gen Ko Ko Oo, on behalf of the Senior General and military officials and invited guests attended the ceremony for conveying the throne of the Buddha statue.

First, Sayadaws and monks recited the Paritta Suttas.

Next, Sayadaws and officials sprinkled the scented water onto the Bhumi Phassa Mudra Sitting Buddha Statue’s throne sections.

The weights of the fourth section and the pair of the Bhumi Phassa Mudra sitting Buddha statue were 800 tonnes and 563 tonnes respectively. — MNA

Nominations for 27th Yamagata Banto prize to be submitted

NOMINATIONS can be submitted for the 27th Yamagata Banto Prize, an award given to writers who can make the international community better understand Japanese culture, according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The Yamagata Banto Prize has been awarded annually by the Osaka Prefectural Government since 1982 as the Osaka International

Cultural Awards in honour of the late Edo-era scholar Yamagata Banto of Osaka, Japan.

The nominee for the Yamagata Banto Prize may include the name of an author and the books he or she has written. Applicants can contact bunka@sbox.perf.osaka.lg.jp by June 30, and the list of winners will be released in March 2022. — MNA

Military medical corps provide healthcare in township hospitals with no civilian doctors

THE Tatmadaw medical teams consisted of Tatmadaw doctors, specialists, and nurses, have been providing necessary medical treatments to the patients in military hospitals and public hospitals.

The Tatmadaw medical team continued to provide healthcare services such as surgery, dental and oral healthcare, osteoporosis, obstetrics, gynaecology, hypertension and heart disease to the patients in Thazi Township Hospital, Hanza hospital, Yinmabin hospital, Tagaung Public Hospital in Thabeikkyin Township, Sintgaing hospital in Kyaukse township, Yintaw hospital in Pyawbwe township, Kyauktaga Public Hospital, Donzayit hospital in Shwegyin Township and Latpadan township hospital yesterday.

Upon the residents’ request in Taungtha Township in Manda-

lay Region, Tatmadaw doctors and nurses from the Central Command reached to provide necessary healthcare to the patients in Wai Laung hospital in Taungtha Township, and they were welcome by about 500 locals.

Veteran members in Taungtha Township and residents donated 1 million kyats, and officials

from the Kyaukpadaung Battalion donated foods to the hospital. Officials from respective commands also inspected the hospitals’ medical services and comforted the patients by providing food aids and necessary things. Locals are reportedly satisfied with the medical support undertakings of Tatmadaw. — MNA



Tatmadaw medical team seen providing healthcare services in township hospitals without civilian doctors.

Two dead in Hline Township, 5 possessing riot equipment arrested in Bahan Township

SECURITY forces on the duty of community peace and tranquillity and the rule of law in Hline Township of Yangon Region removed barriers on the roads. They took security measures on the evening of 19 March. At about 10 pm, two rioters holding knives attacked security forces. In opening warning fire, two unknown men were dead with injuries.

Five petroleum bottles for fire, two iron rods, two catapults, an about one-foot-long knife, one about two-feet-long knife, one gas goggle, one rucksack and related accessories were seized from the dead persons.

Security forces sent the dead bodies to local military hospitals, and local police station opened files of death cases.

Likewise, security forces called two suspects on

Oththaphaya street in Kyaik-kasan Ward in Bahan Township at about 9 pm on 19 March. Those persons were Aung Kyaw Moe, son of U Su and Zaw Lin Soe, son of U Myint Soe.

According to the investigation, security forces searched the house of U Ye Myint, son of U Chit Pe, at No 20 on Oththaphaya street and found Daw Khin Win Kyi and Kyaw Phone Myat in addition to U Ye Myint. Nine shields made of plywood, 13 steel shields, two iron sheet shields, one rubber rod, one bottle for fire, six hand speakerts, six helmets for construction sites and related equipment used in riots were seized from the house.

Deterrent action will be taken against them under the law for keeping equipment used in violent acts in possession. —MNA



Equipment used in riots are seized.

Military hospitals provide healthcare nationwide

MILITARY hospitals in the townships of regions and states provide medical treatments to the people to solve their difficulties in healthcare services. A total of 83,648 outpatients and 4,001 inpatients reached these hospitals from 5 February to date.

Senior medical experts, medics and nurses have conducted 3,874 major operations

and 2,065 minor operations. The senior doctors treat serious cases. These hospitals managed for the birth of 5,939 babies, while 5,939 pregnant women were taken to the respective military hospitals.

Officials from the respective commands also provided the patients with foods, and medial workers were provided cash assistance. — MNA

Rio closes beaches to curb virus, Bolsonaro objects

RIO DE JANEIRO closed its famed beaches Friday in a bid to contain a surge of Covid-19, a move criticized by anti-lockdown President Jair Bolsonaro, who said sun-deprived citizens risked a lack of vitamin D.

Rio Mayor Eduardo Paes said the situation in the iconic beach city was “very critical,” and urged residents to stay home to slow the spread of the virus.

Covid-19 is raging in Brazil, where intensive care units are more than 80 per cent full in 25 out of 27 states.

In Rio, the rate is 95 per cent. Brazil registered its second-deadliest day of the pandemic Friday, with 2,815 deaths in 24 hours and a record 90,500 cases.

But Bolsonaro, who has railed against stay-at-home measures and face masks, continued his campaign to keep



In this photo taken in the early morning of April 13, 2020 a woman walks past flag poles marking where beach kiosks renting chairs and selling drinks would normally be, on Copacabana beach, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil amid the coronavirus pandemic. **PHOTO: AFP**

the economy fully open, criticizing Rio’s beach closure on the grounds that it would deprive residents of needed sunshine.

“Vitamin D is a way to pre-

vent the virus from seriously affecting you. And where do you get vitamin D? From the sun. Such hypocrisy,” said the far-right leader. —AFP ■

Record rains, flooding prompt evacuations in Australia



Forecasters warned the heavy rains were set to continue through Saturday ‘potentially leading to life-threatening flash flooding.’ **PHOTO: AFP**

MASS evacuations were ordered in low-lying areas along Australia’s east coast Saturday as torrential rains caused potentially “life-threatening” floods across a region already soaked by an unusually wet summer, officials said.

Record rains and widespread flooding prompted evacuations along Australia’s east coast Saturday and threatened the most serious overflow of Sydney’s main reservoir in 30 years, officials said.

Authorities warned of potentially “life-threatening” flash

floods as the torrential rains pummeled a vast coastal region already soaked by an unusually wet summer.

“It’s a very significant, record-breaking event with the rainfall that we have seen,” said Agata Imielska of the Bureau of Meteorology.

Police said hundreds of people had flocked to evacuation centres in areas north of Sydney in New South Wales state, and they expected many more to seek shelter as the rains moved south down the coast.

The Bureau of Meteorolo-

gy reported flooding levels surpassing record 2013 floods along the Hastings River outside Port Macquarie, about 400 kilometres (240 miles) north of Sydney, though the river levels started descending later Saturday.

Towns in the area have already seen record rainfall of more than 400 millimetres (16 inches) since Friday morning, the bureau said. It warned the heavy rains were forecast to move down the coast over the weekend, “potentially leading to life-threatening flash flooding” in some areas. —AFP ■

Hong Kong’s fragile coral reefs boosted by 3D printing

IN jade waters off Hong Kong’s eastern shoreline, scientists are thrilled to spot a cuttlefish protecting her eggs inside an artificial, 3D-printed clay seabed helping to restore the city’s fragile coral reefs.

On postcards and in the popular imagination Hong Kong is a byword for urban density, a thicket of towering skyscrapers crammed along the harbour or clinging to the vertiginous hillsides above.

Yet it is circled by a surprising array of nature and the small number of coral reefs are some of the city’s best-kept secrets.

Around 84 species of coral are found in Hong Kong’s waters, scientists say, more diverse than those found in

the Caribbean Sea.

Most can be found on remote inlets, far from the sediment-filled Pearl River Delta and its busy shipping channels.

But like all reefs in a rapidly warming world, they are under enormous pressure.

Which is where Vriko Yu and her team of fellow marine scientists come in.

They have begun using 3D printed tiles that work as an artificial bed for corals to latch onto and thrive, with promising results.

“The first time we put down the tiles, there were a few fish around,” she told AFP on a recent inspection by University of Hong Kong (HKU) researchers. —AFP ■



Marine scientist Vriko Yu from the University of Hong Kong. **PHOTO: AFP**

NEWS IN BRIEF

Icelandic volcano subsiding after first eruption in 900 years

A volcano that spewed glowing red lava near Iceland’s capital Reykjavik after awakening for the first time in 900 years appeared to be subsiding on Saturday, posing no danger to people, experts said. Streams of red lava bubbled and flowed out of a fissure in a valley in Geldingadalur, close to Mount Fagradalsfjall on the Reykjanes peninsula in southwestern Iceland.

As the lava flow slowed under rain showers on Saturday, a blue gas plume and a vapour cloud rose from the site, just 40 kilometres (25 miles) from the capital and near a popular tourist destination, the Blue Lagoon geothermal spa. —AFP ■

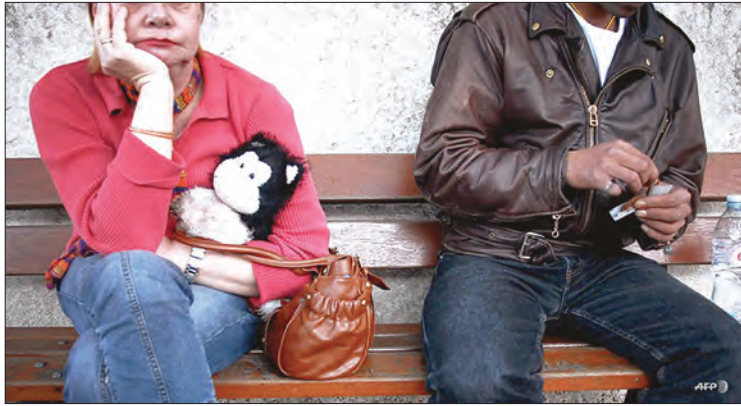
Von der Leyen threatens to ban AstraZeneca exports if EU pledge not met

EU chief Ursula von der Leyen threatened Saturday to halt exports of AstraZeneca’s Covid-19 vaccines if the bloc did not receive its promised deliveries first, escalating a row that has fanned international tensions.

“We have the option of banning a planned export. That’s the message to AstraZeneca: you fulfil your contract with Europe first before you start delivering to other countries,” von der Leyen told Germany’s Funke media group.

The warning comes as the European Union struggles to speed up its inoculation campaign, just as many member states face a third coronavirus wave and renewed curbs on public life. —AFP ■

WHO pushes for financing facilities to prevent future mental health crisis



Many people in all age groups have seen their lives turned upside down by laid-offs, closing businesses and school closures among many other events. **PHOTO: AFP**

SPEAKING about the “very grave crisis” in mental health that many countries might face

in the future, officials of the World Health Organization (WHO) on Friday urged to finance “un-

der-invested” health and mental-health facilities around the world.

“We’ve seen a pandemic of the virus, a pandemic of misinformation, hatred in many cases, and also a growing mental strain on people,” said Mike Ryan, Executive Director of WHO Health Emergencies Programme, at a virtual press conference from Geneva on Friday.

He urged countries to not only invest in ending this phase of the COVID-19 pandemic but look to the future recovery, which he described as being really important.

Ryan explained that “health services need to come back on line, mental health services need to be invested in. They were massively underinvested in before this pandemic”. As many people in all age groups have seen their lives turned upside down by laid-offs, closing businesses and school closures among many other events, studies have been brought up to show the “mental strain” on population, as a research by Royal Philips presented this week showed that 70 percent of 13,000 adults in 13 countries suffered sleep deprivation.—Xinhua ■

Europe resumes AstraZeneca jabs, US to hit 100 million vaccines

SEVERAL European countries were resuming AstraZeneca vaccinations Friday after an all-clear from EU regulators, as US President Joe Biden was set to meet his goal of having 100 million Americans inoculated weeks ahead of schedule.

Days of commotion around AstraZeneca’s Covid-19 vaccine, over fears it may cause blood clots, saw countries from Venezuela to Indonesia pause its use in a major setback for the drive to vaccinate populations against a virus that has killed nearly 2.7 million people.

France, Germany and Italy – all countries attempting to fight

off a third wave of the coronavirus – announced they were using the jab again as of Friday after the European Medicines Agency said it was “safe and effective”.

French Prime Minister Jean Castex is due to get the AstraZeneca jab Friday in a bid to reassure citizens that it is safe as his country fights an infection surge.

Millions across France were preparing to enter a new month-long, limited lockdown from Saturday after the country recorded its highest new caseload in nearly four months. Non-essential businesses will close in Paris and other areas hit by the new restrictions, mainly in northern France,



Vials with the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine against the novel coronavirus are pictured at the vaccination center in Nuremberg, Germany. **PHOTO: AFP**

although schools will stay open.

Bulgaria, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Por-

tugal, Slovenia and Spain are also ending their suspension of the vaccine.—AFP ■

Germany experiencing ‘exponential’ virus spread, new rules expected Monday

CORONAVIRUS infection numbers in Germany are rising at a “very clearly exponential rate” as highly contagious variants drive up case numbers in the EU’s biggest country, health authorities said Friday.

The vice president of the Robert Koch Institute (RKI) for infectious diseases, Lars Schaade, told reporters that highly contagious virus variants were getting the upper hand, wiping

out progress seen last month in containing the pandemic.

“It is very possible that we will have a similar situation over Easter to the one we had before Christmas, with very high case numbers, many severe cases and deaths, and hospitals that are overwhelmed”. The RKI on Friday reported 17,482 new infections in the previous 24 hours and 226 deaths in Germany, with the seven-day incidence rate soaring

to 96 per 100,000 people despite a months-long shutdown of large swathes of public life. German leaders agreed earlier this month to impose new restrictions in regions where the seven-day incidence rate surpassed 100. The country’s second city of Hamburg said it would pull the “emergency brake” from Saturday after exceeding the 100-mark three days in a row. Brandenburg, the state surrounding Berlin, also crossed

the benchmark on Friday. “We are in the third wave of the pandemic, the numbers are rising, the percentage of virus mutations is high,” Health Minister Jens Spahn told the news conference.

Spahn, who this week faced growing calls to resign amid frustration with the government’s pandemic management, called on Germans to refrain from spring break travel to help curb infections.—AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Thousands protest Covid measures in Switzerland

THOUSANDS of demonstrators descended on the small northern Swiss town of Liestal Saturday to demand an end to anti-Covid measures that have shut restaurants and other venues for months.

Between 3,000 and 5,000 people, many wearing white protection jumpsuits, gathered in the small town in the Basel canton for what they have called a “Silent Protest”, according to estimates by journalists on site. The protesters, many not wearing facemasks, held signs with messages reading “Enough!”, “Vaccines kill” and “Let love guide you, not fear”.

They accuse the Swiss government of using dictatorial powers to impose restrictions aimed at reining in Covid-19 transmission.—AFP ■

US says three feet distancing in schools enough in most cases

US health authorities on Friday revised downward their recommendations on the amount of distance needed between school students, citing the latest research on limited coronavirus spread among children as the government pushes to reopen schools.

The announcement by the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reduces the minimum distance for students in elementary schools – generally ages five to 11 – from six feet (two meters) to three feet (one meter) whatever the current rate of community transmission. Similar guidance applies to middle schools, – ages 11 to 13 – and high school, which covers up to age 17 or 18, except when community transmission is high, in which case the six-foot rule still applies.—AFP ■

Erdogan sacks central bank chief after interest rate hike

TURKEY braced on Saturday for a new spell of financial turbulence after President Recep Tayyip Erdogan sacked his market-friendly central bank chief and replaced him with a former ruling party lawmaker.

A presidential decree published late on Friday gave no explanation as to why Erdogan was replacing Naci Agbal with Sahap Kavcioglu in the key post.

But the decision was announced just a day after the central bank sharply raised the main interest rate to 19 per cent to fight inflation.

Kavcioglu has written columns for a pro-government newspaper heavily criticizing Agbal's propensity to raise rates.

Analysts say the new central banker subscribes to Erdogan's unorthodox belief that higher interest rates cause inflation.



President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's dislike of high interest rates has remained a constant in Turkish politics. PHOTO: AFP

Most economists believe it slows inflation down by raising the cost of doing business.

"The shock decision by Turkey's President Erdogan to sack central bank governor Naci Agbal late on Friday is likely to trigger large falls in the lira when markets open on Monday," analyst Jason Tuvey

of Capital Economics wrote in a research note.

"It looks like the central bank's efforts to fight the country's inflation problem may come to an end, and a messy balance of payments crisis has become (once again) a real possibility," Tuvey warned. —AFP ■

Overworked US bankers plead for maximum 80 hour work week



Overworked and stressed-out new hires at the Goldman Sachs investment bank are asking that their work week be limited -- to 80 hours. PHOTO: AFP

OVERWORKED and stressed-out new hires at the Goldman Sachs investment bank are asking that their work week be limited -- to 80 hours.

They made their case in an 11-page, official looking presentation of the kind the bank

would prepare for a client, complete with statistics and graphs.

It stems from a poll of 13 first-year Goldman Sachs employees who said they have worked an average of 98 hours a week since the beginning of the year and generally go to bed

around 3:00 am.

They said their physical and mental health are suffering: 77 per cent said they are "victims of workplace abuse."

"I can't sleep anymore because my anxiety levels are through the roof," one worker says in the presentation.

"I didn't come into this job expecting... 9 am-5 pms, but I also didn't expect consistent 9 am-5 ams either," another complained. In order to "rectify the situation," the proposal said an 80-hour work week should be considered "max capacity."

The presentation began to circulate on social media Wednesday before becoming available on Twitter Thursday. —AFP ■

China's postal sector sees robust revenue growth in Jan.-Feb.

CHINA'S postal industry reported a substantial yearly increase in business revenue over the first two months of 2021, official data showed.

The business revenue of the sector amounted to 187.38 billion yuan (about 28.78 billion U.S. dollars) in the January-February

period, surging 45.7 per cent year on year, according to the State Post Bureau.

In February alone, the sector raked in 70.45 billion yuan in business revenue, up 30.8 per cent from the previous year.

During the first two months, the number of parcels handled

by China's courier companies totaled 13.11 billion, more than double the figure from a year ago.

The business revenues of China's courier companies jumped 59.9 per cent year on year to 138.33 billion yuan over the first two months. —Xinhua ■

Berliners plot radical referendum to fight housing

AT the Kottbusser Tor roundabout in Berlin's fashionable Kreuzberg district, 29-year-old Jannick is waiting in line to sign a petition which he says has captured the "zeitgeist" in the German capital.

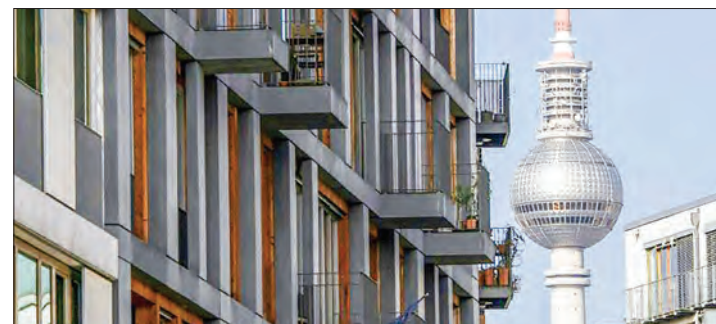
He is one of 170,000 signatories needed to launch a referendum on expropriating large property developers, a drastic and unprecedented move in the fight against Berlin's spiralling housing crisis.

"Everyone has the right to have a place to live," Jannick tells AFP as he waits to add his name to the list of those

urging the state to forcibly buy back properties from large real estate companies.

The "Expropriate Deutsche Wohnen & Co." initiative, named after the biggest property company in Berlin, targets companies with more than 3,000 apartments in their portfolios.

Unthinkable just a few years ago, the initiative is gaining more and more support from Berliners exasperated by ever-rising rents and a housing crisis which threatens to get even worse due to the coronavirus pandemic. —AFP ■



Berlin's world-famous TV tower looms over a block of flats with a 'for sale' sign. PHOTO: AFP

NEWS IN BRIEF

Rising prices can't stop US real estate boom

Mortgage rates are finally ticking up in the United States, one year after the Federal Reserve cut its lending rate to boost the economy as the Covid-19 pandemic arrived, but that's not expected to cool the hot housing market.

While the wider US economy has struggled after states restricted business to stop Covid-19, real estate was one of the few bright spots in 2020, boosted both by low mortgage rates and the shift towards remote work caused by the pandemic. —AFP ■

Asia markets retreat as rate fears trump recovery

Most stocks fell in Asia yesterday as the euphoria from the Federal Reserve's upbeat economic outlook was replaced by fears the recovery will fan inflation and force policymakers to wind back on their pledge to maintain record interest rates for as long as needed.

While mind-boggling amounts of government stimulus and central bank support have helped the global economy bounce back from last year's virus-induced collapse, traders have been battling to reconcile the bright outlook and the danger of runaway prices.

The Fed on Wednesday sought to placate the pessimists by once again promising it will not touch rates until it is satisfied unemployment has been controlled and inflation is running hot for an extended period.

Bank boss Jerome Powell and Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen have repeatedly said the expected lift in inflation this year would be short-term and that a rally in benchmark Treasury yields - a guide to future rates - was a sign of confidence in the economy.

After dipping on Wednesday, yields hit a 14-month high on Thursday, sparking a plunge in United States (US) markets with the Nasdaq more than three per cent down as tech firms are more susceptible to higher interest rates. —AFP ■

US House passes immigration bills including pathway for 'Dreamers'



One bill offers a citizenship pathway for undocumented young people. PHOTO: AFP

THE US House of Representatives has passed two immigration bills that would provide legal status for millions of undocumented immigrants, but the measures have an uncertain

future in the evenly divided Senate.

Rather than trying to ram through comprehensive immigration reform similar to the massive effort that failed

in 2013, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi opted for a different strategy.

She aims to coax a pair of more modest measures through Congress and towards

President Joe Biden's desk.

Yesterday, the White House endorsed the two bills, including one that offers a citizenship pathway for undocumented young people, known as "Dreamers", who were brought to the United States as children.

The American Dream and Promise Act passed on a vote of 228 to 197, with support from nine Republicans.

The other formalizes the legal status of migrant farmworkers - who the White House notes are "living in the shadows and vulnerable to exploitation" - and offers them an opportunity to earn citizenship.

The Farm Workforce Modernization Act would permit farmworkers and their families to remain in the country, and in many cases become US citizens, through continued employment in agriculture. — AFP ■

'Huge success' as half of UK adults receive Covid-19 vaccine

THE British government on Saturday hailed its coronavirus vaccination programme as "a huge success" after announcing half of the adult population had now received a jab.

Health Secretary Matt Hancock said the biggest vaccine drive in the country's history, which began in early December, was "making massive strides" following a record number of inoculations Friday.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson was among those to get a jab that day, receiving a first dose of AstraZeneca's vaccine at the same London hospital where he fought for his life almost a year ago after contracting Covid-19.

Britain has vaccinated nearly 27 million people, and administered on average more than

421,000 doses a day in the week to Monday, according to the latest health ministry statistics.

However, the state-run National Health Service (NHS) in England warned this week in a letter to local vaccination centres that doses will be "significantly constrained" from March 29 for four weeks.

The setback means the next phase of the inoculation campaign, covering people in their 40s, will have to be suspended until May, the letter said.

The government has insisted the change, caused by a supply shortfall from the Serum Institute of India, the world's biggest vaccine maker, would not derail its plan to ease Covid-19 lockdowns in the coming months. —AFP ■

Parisians flee capital as new lockdown looms



Parisians are getting away while they can. PHOTO: AFP

PARISIANS packed inter-city trains leaving the capital on Friday hours ahead of a new lockdown in the French capital imposed to combat a surge in coronavirus infections.

The new restrictions, announced by Prime Minister Jean Castex late on Thursday, apply to around a third of the country's population affecting Paris and several other regions in the north and south.

The government has insisted that the new month-long lockdown will be more limited than the two others imposed last year, with schools open and outdoor exercise allowed for an un-

limited amount of time.

But the approach of the new curbs in Paris from midnight Friday encouraged many to leave the notoriously cramped city for areas without the measure, such as Brittany, the southwest Atlantic coast and Lyon in the southeast.

A spokesperson for national rail operator SNCF told AFP that trains for those destinations were now fully booked after having a 60-70 per cent level of occupancy on previous Fridays.

Trains leaving Montparnasse station in Paris -- which serves destinations in Brittany and the southwest -- were completely full after a rush of bookings late Thursday. —AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Biden nominates former Democratic senator as Nasa chief

THE White House announced today that President Joe Biden was tapping Bill Nelson, a former Democratic senator for Florida who once flew on a Space Shuttle and helped craft key space legislation as his Nasa chief.

The nomination appears to confirm Biden's interest in maintaining US leadership in space as Nasa prepares to return to the Moon under the Artemis programme, while pivoting towards commercial partnerships for missions in low-Earth orbit.

Biden has also signalled that climate change research will be a top priority for the agency.

If confirmed, Nelson will succeed ex-administrator Jim Bridenstine, who was picked by former president Donald Trump and stepped down on January 20.

Bridenstine's own nomination was initially met with deep skepticism as a result of his controversial political positions when he was a Republican member of the House of Representatives, including opposing the scientific consensus on climate change.

But he came to be respected as an able Nasa administrator, and his experience in Congress proved invaluable in marshalling support for the agency's goals. He also reversed his position on climate. —AFP ■

State of emergency in Slovakia to be extended for 40 days

AS Covid-19 cases spike in the central European country, parliament is expected to approve the government's move to extend the state of emergency.

In addition to existing restrictions, the government is planning to ban holidays abroad. A loophole in current regulations means that travel between regions within Slovakia is prohibited, while travel outside the country is still allowed. The Slovak government also plans to pay nearly 60,000 euros in compensation to families of frontline medical staff who have died following workplace exposure to Covid-19. —AFP ■



A nurse passes a sign indicating a Covid-19 Vaccination Centre at the Royal Free Hospital in London. PHOTO: AFP

Lithuanian hotels roll out red carpet for film festival

WITH Lithuania's cinemas still shut due to the pandemic, local movie-lovers will be able to enjoy a cherished film festival in a novel way – from the comfort of a hotel room.

Organizers of the International Vilnius Film Festival, which began this week, are inviting residents of the capital to check into one of its hotels to watch the films beamed to their rooms.

“The pandemic took a toll on mental health and people need entertainment. It also gives some support to the hard-hit hotel industry,” festival CEO Algirdas Ramaska told AFP.

“Some 200 rooms were booked in hotels for an opening night and they are almost sold out for weekends,” he said, before greeting guests in dinner



Festival CEO Algirdas Ramaska says the pandemic has taken a toll and people need entertainment. **PHOTO: AFP**

jackets and dresses for their tailor-made festival experience.

The hotel rooms are decorated with festival signs and there is a hand-written postcard from the organisers.

Prices for the experience, which runs until April, vary from

80 to 300 euros (\$95 to \$358) per night. Vilnius businesswoman Kristina Sermuksnyte-Alesiu-niene said she would visit three different hotels in the coming weeks. “I did not miss a single Vilnius film festival in the last decade and cannot miss this one.

And this year it offers a once-in-a-lifetime experience,” she told AFP in her room, as she settled in to watch the opening ceremony online.

Lithuanian actor Gabija Siurbyte, another festival fan, said the experience will be helpful towards returning to the habit of leaving home to watch movies when the pandemic ends.

“It felt so good to open a wardrobe for a dinner dress and put on heels again,” she said at hotel PACAI, a converted 17th-century palace located in the heart of Vilnius’s baroque old town.

Last year’s edition of the festival had to switch to an on-line-only format and organizers had been hopeful that the 26th edition in 2021 could be different.—AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Japan lifts tsunami advisory after strong quake off northeast

JAPAN'S meteorological agency lifted a tsunami advisory around an hour after a strong 7.2-magnitude earthquake struck off the country's north-eastern coast on Saturday, causing no immediate damage or injuries.

The quake hit at 6:09 pm (0909 GMT) in Pacific waters off Miyagi region with a depth of 60 kilometres (37 miles), the JMA said, issuing an advisory for tsunami waves of around one metre.

Thousands of households received evacuation warnings over the tsunami alert, which was lifted around 7:30pm (1030 GMT), prompting municipalities to also end the evacuation measures.

Local utilities and the nation's nuclear authority said the region's nuclear plants did not show any abnormalities after the latest quake, although local railway firms suspended services, including the high-speed shinkansen bullet trains.—AFP ■

Turkey condemned for pulling out of landmark treaty protecting women



A recent protest for women's rights in Istanbul. **PHOTO: AFP**

TURKEY sparked both domestic and international outrage Saturday after it withdrew from

the world's first binding treaty to prevent and combat violence against women.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's government announced the decision before dawn Saturday, the latest victory for conservatives in his nationalist party and their allies who argued the treaty damaged family unity.

The 2011 Istanbul Convention, signed by 45 countries and the European Union, requires governments to adopt legislation prosecuting domestic violence and similar abuse as well as marital rape and female genital mutilation.

Europe's top rights body, the Council of Europe, denounced Turkey's withdrawal from a treaty it sponsored and

expressed concern about global efforts to protect women and girls.

“This move is a huge setback to these efforts and all the more deplorable because it compromises the protection of women in Turkey, across Europe and beyond,” Council of Europe Secretary General Marija Pejcinovic Buric said.

The treaty “is widely regarded as the gold standard in international efforts to protect women and girls from the violence that they face every day in our societies,” she added.—AFP ■

G7 backs 'sizeable' IMF aid for Covid-hit poor nations

G7 finance ministers have agreed to support new IMF aid for the poorest nations hit by the Covid pandemic, Britain said Friday after hosting an online gathering.

British finance minister Rishi Sunak and his G7 counterparts “support a new and sizeable International Monetary Fund (IMF) special drawing rights (SDR) allocation, helping vulnerable countries get through the current crisis”, said a statement from the Treasury.

“This significant milestone lays the groundwork for a potential agreement at the G20 and International Monetary and Financial Committee meetings in April,” it added.

Friday's gathering, held virtually due to the coronavirus pandemic, follows a similar event in February and comes before a G7 summit in Britain later this year.—AFP ■

Greek tourism on course to open on 14 May

GREEK Minister for Tourism Haris Theoharis said that tourists would be welcome if they have been vaccinated, have antibodies, or a negative Covid-19 test.

“We aim to open tourism by 14 May, with specific rules and updated protocols. Until then, we will gradually lift the restrictions if conditions allow.”

All needs that may arise in relation to Covid 19 (eg hospitalisation) will be provided by the Greek State at no cost to tourists.

Theocharis pointed out that the country would strengthen the structures of the public health system in all destinations, “as we did last year to ensure proper care for citizens and visitors.” In addition, in view of the opening of the season, “the vaccination of the people of tourism is prioritized, if the vaccination of the vulnerable groups is completed, while we will proceed with the updating of the health protocols, utilising the experience of last year”. —AFP ■



Tourists take pictures during a dolphin watching tour from a boat in the Ambracian Gulf, in Preveza, northwest Greece, on August 6. **PHOTO: AFP**

ONE Championship: Eersel beat Haida to retain kickboxing world title



Regian Eersel (right) show just why he is the reigning ONE Championship lightweight kickboxing champion with his insane high kick on Friday night. **PHOTO: ONE CHAMPIONSHIP**

REGIAN Eersel of Suriname retained his ONE Championship kickboxing world title by beating Mustapha Haida of Italy in the main card of the

ONE Championship Fists of Fury III event under the Men's Lightweight Kickboxing World Championship category held on 19 March at Singapore In-

door Stadium, Singapore.

In the main bout, both fighters relied on incredible power and stamina, but better fighter managed to shape the victory, and after the entire fight, the Immortal (alias) Regian Eersel defeated "Dynamite" (alias) Mustapha Haida via unanimous decision. In the Atomweight Muay Thai bout, "JT" (alias) Janet Todd beat Alma Juniku via unanimous decision.

In the Strawweight bout, Hiroba Minowa made a win against "Little Rock" (alias) Alex Silva via a split decision. In the other Strawweight bout, Jenelyn Olsim claimed the victory after knocking out Maira Mazar via submission (power guillotine) at 0:41 minute of round three. In the Flyweight fight, Roshan Mainam earned a sweet win by knocking out "The Krauser" (alias) Aziz Calim via submission (rear-naked choke) at 2:45 minute of round one.

In the other Flyweight event, "Wolf Warrior" (alias) Hu Yong beat "Y2K" (alias) Yodkaikaew Fairtex via unanimous decision.—GNLM ■

Johor crown prince eyes stake in Manchester United

KUALA LUMPUR— Tunku Ismail Sultan Ibrahim, crown prince of Johor said Friday (March 19) he is eyeing a stake in English Premier League side Manchester United, just weeks after triggering speculation of a takeover bid for Spanish club Valencia.

During a press conference, the 36-year-old said that he was "open to any shares in football in Europe".

He singled out Manchester United, adding that he knew there was an opening to invest in the club by buying a stake of

three to five per cent. "Manchester United is a club which will take decades for its commercial value to go down," he said.

"In terms of sustainability they are superb. So that is why I will try to have a meeting."

Earlier this month, Tunku Ismail sparked speculation that was interested in buying Valencia with a series of Instagram posts. He had said the club needed someone who is "hungry for success", adding that he was motivated by "creating history". —AFP ■



Tunku Ismail Sultan Ibrahim, crown prince of Johor, is eyeing a stake

Eagle brace lifts Wise into PGA Honda Classic lead

PALM Beach Gardens, Florida — American Aaron Wise fired his second straight six-under par 64 on Friday to seize a three-stroke lead after the second round of the US PGA Tour Honda Classic.

The 24-year-old South Af-

rican-born US golfer made two eagles, five birdies and three bogeys to stand on 12-under 128 after 36 holes at PGA National in Palm Beach Gardens, Florida.

"Playing great," Wise said. "Off the tee, I've hit it pretty solid and my iron play has been

dialled in. I've made so many bonus putts from outside 10 feet I can't complain."

The 64s allowed Wise to match his career-low 36-hole start, set on his way to his only US PGA win at the 2018 Byron Nelson, and match the low 36-

hole start in tournament history, set by Dan Pohl in 1989.

"They were different rounds but equally impressive in my eyes," Wise said. "Today I had a couple sparks in there. Yesterday was consistently good golf."

Australia's Matt Jones, who

opened by matching the course record on 61, settled for a 70 Friday to share second on 131 with American Brandon Hagy, who shot a bogey-free 62 before about 10,000 spectators allowed under state Covid-19 rules. —AFP ■

Tokyo Olympic organizers meet on overseas fan ban



The National Stadium (seen from the Shibuya Sky observation deck) is the main venue for the much-delayed Tokyo Games. **PHOTO: KYODO**

TOKYO — Olympic organizers meet Saturday (Mar 20) for talks expected to bar overseas fans from this summer's pandemic-delayed Tokyo Games, in a bid to reduce virus risks and win over a sceptical public.

The move would be an unprecedented decision that will further scale back once-grand ambitions for the pandemic event.

When the decision to postpone the Games was taken last year, officials said the delay would allow them to hold the event as "proof of humanity's triumph over the virus".

But instead, the Games are shaping up to be a largely television event for most of the world,

with little of the international party atmosphere that usually characterises an Olympics.

Saturday's meeting will bring together officials from the International Olympic Committee, International Paralympic Committee, Tokyo 2020 organisers, the Tokyo city government and Japan's government.

Their decision has been widely anticipated in recent weeks, with leaks suggesting organizers believe a bar on overseas fans is the only option as they work to make the Games safe despite the pandemic. The IOC has reportedly sought limited exemptions for some overseas guests, but the rules are likely to be strict. —AFP ■