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## Despite having their different opinions, service personnel need to serve dutifully no matter what government takes office: Senior General



Chairman of the State Administration Council Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing delivers address at council meeting (7/2021) in Nay Pyi Taw on 22 March 2021.

THE State Administration Council held its meeting (7/2021) at the meeting room of the Council Chairman's Office in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday, with an address delivered by Chairman of State Administration Council Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing.

Also present were Vice-Chairman of the Council Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Commander-in-Chief (Army), Vice-Senior General Soe Win, members General Mya Tun Oo, Admiral Tin Aung San, General Maung Maung Kyaw, Lt-Gen Moe Myint Tun, Mahn Nyein Maung, U Than Nyunt, U Khin Maung Swe, Daw Aye Nu Sein, Jeng Phang Naw Taung, U Moungh Har, U Sai Lone Hsai, Saw Dennial and Dr Banyar Aung Moe, Secretary Lt-Gen Aung Lin

Dwe, Joint Secretary Lt-Gen Ye Win Oo and Union Minister for Home Affairs Lt-Gen Soe Htut.

In his address, the Senior General said missions of the Council were presented and discussed. The council members put forward region-wise situation and national requirements at the previous meetings. Thanks to realizing the meeting decisions through coordination, success has been achieved to

a certain degree. Regardless of their residential place, party and ethnic origin, the council members must collectively join hands with the desire to serve the national interest. Regarding the review of the laws discussed by them at the previous meetings, some of the enacted laws are under scrutiny to ascertain whether they meet the legal norms. As appropriate laws in connection with security have

been enacted, measures to exercise and control them should be taken into consideration.

Since it assumed the council duties, arrangements have been made to reopen schools. Some of the teachers of the basic education schools are staging CDM. Some teachers were absent from the refresher courses for the high and middle school principals, held as a part of a school reopening programme. It is found that they were under threat to join the CDM. Teachers of the institutions of higher learning and doctors of hospitals are also facing a similar threat. They should make a complaint to the respective authorities about the matter. Some teachers and doctors are still absent from work as they are worried that they may face punishment if they return to the unit, he said.

The majority of civil servants have been serving for many years. They are therefore urged to return to work. Despite having their different opinions, service personnel need to serve dutifully no matter what government takes office. They must follow the civil service rules and disciplines. Failure to shoulder their duties is not a crime but a violation of the civil service disciplines. For the first time, they will have to sign confessions. For further violation, actions will be taken against them in accord with the civil service rules and disciplines. Local people have demanded the Tatmadaw's help as some hospitals are closed due to doctors' participation in the CDM. Willing government staff are being allowed to resume their duties.

Regardless of their residential place, party and ethnic origin, the council members must collectively join hands with the desire to serve the national interest.

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## Five future programmes of State Administration Council

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

## Shops, markets in some townships reopen for public

ACCORDING to a Myanmar Police Force statement, markets and shops are reopening in some townships for selling essential foodstuffs and products to the public.

Gamone Pwint Super Market from No. 8 quarter, Botahtaung Township, Capital Hyper Market from Dawbon Township, City Mart from No. 94 quarter, Dagon Myothit (Seikkan) Township, Lahar Pyin Market from No. 7 quarter of Botahtaung Township, Nyaung-

bin Lay Market from No. 7 quarter of Lanmadaw Township, Lanmadaw Thanzay Market from No. 2 quarter of Latha Township, Theingyi Market from No. 2 quarter of Pabedan Township, temporary Tamway Market from Byine Kwat Thit quarter, Tamway Township, Byan Kya Market from Thingangyun Township, Sin Minn Market from Sin Minn quarter, Ahlone Township, Ahlone Market from Thitaw Street, Sawyan Paingtaung quarter, Ahlon

Township, Shwe Padauk Fishery Market from Bayint Naung Street, No. 4 quarter, Hline Township, Thonegwa Market from No. 4 quarter, Thonegwa Township, and Myoma Market from No. 3 quarter, Khayan Township are now reopening according to the officials.

In the other townships, security forces will be deployed to allow remaining markets and businesses to resume normal operations, officials added. — MNA



Customers are seen shopping at City Mart outlet in Dagon Myothit (Seikkan).

## Military hospitals continue providing healthcare to civilians

MILITARY hospitals in the townships of regions and states keep providing medical treatments to the people to solve their healthcare services difficulties. A total of 86,750 outpatients and 4,193 inpatients reached these hospitals from 5 February to date.

Senior medical experts, medics and nurses have conducted 4,007 major

operations and 2,130 minor operations. The senior doctors treat serious cases. These hospitals managed for the birth of 5,540 babies while bringing 5,540 pregnant women to the respective military hospitals. Of those 2204 cases are done in caesarean section and 3,336 cases in ordinary delivery.

Officials from the respec-

tive commands also provided the patients with foods, and medical workers were provided with cash assistance. — MNA

A local seen receiving dental treatment at the military hospital.

## Military medical corps provide healthcare in township hospitals



Tatmadaw medical team seen providing healthcare services to locals in Latpadan.

THE Tatmadaw medical teams comprising 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, otorhinolaryngology, gynaecology, hypertension and heart disease to the patients in healthcare services difficulties in Thazi Township Hospital, Hanza hospital, Yinmabin hospital, Tagaung Public Hospital in Thabeikkyin

Township, Sintgaing hospital in Kyaukse township, Yintaw hospital in Pyawbwe township, Welaung hospital in Taungtha Township, Public hospital in Kyaukpadaung Township, Public Hospital in Kyauktaga Township, Donzayit hospital in Shwegyin Township and Public hospital in Latpadan township yesterday.

Officials from respective commands also inspected the hospitals' medical services. They comforted the patients by providing food aids and necessary things. Locals are reportedly satisfied with the medical support of Tatmadaw. — MNA





## Only through better education will the country develop

PLANS are being made to reopen universities and colleges. There are education staff joining the CDM at some universities and colleges. Efforts are also being made to reopen basic education schools. As schools and universities' closure causes many losses to students and parents, the Senior General expressed his willingness to reopen them as quickly as possible. Permission has been granted to issue matriculation mark lists to join the university. For university entrance, students should be allowed to choose the subjects they are suitable for. Then, they will be able to gain credit in their respective subjects. So, the ministry concerned has been instructed to take such measures. It is necessary to learn respective subjects and pass examinations outstandingly at universities. Good libraries are also required, and tertiary education must be promoted. Only through better education will the country develop. Therefore, education must be promoted.

*(Excerpt from the speech to the 6/2021 meeting of the State Administration Council made by the Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Administration Council Chairman Senior General Min Aung Hlaing on 16 March 2021)*

## Despite having their different opinions, service ...

### FROM PAGE-1

For those who are unwilling to serve, replacements will be made.

Over the past month, democratically-staged protests have turned into riots and violence. First, protesters threw stones at the security forces handling the demonstrations. Second, they came to attack the security forces with jingalis, nuts, hand-made guns and swords and even killings of security personnel and among the people occurred. What's more, arson attacks on factories, an essential productive force of the State, running with local and foreign investments, and lootings occurred. Accordingly, martial law had to be imposed. Security forces are handling the protests under the law and step-step procedures.

Measures have to be taken to grant national registration cards to every eligible citizen

or ethnic-national without fail. In doing so, council members need to cooperate in the respective sectors. The scrutiny of the voter lists shows that many voters went to the polls in Kungyangon Township of Yangon Region even though they have no national registration cards. Among them were non-ethnic races of Myanmar. How many non-Myanmar nationals without NRCs there are nationwide cannot be known. The scrutiny also shows that there were extra published ballot papers. In contrast, hundreds of thousands of ballot papers went missing, and there were additional ballot papers.

The Central Bank has allowed the private banks to reopen in line with the rules and disciplines. Their closure without following the rules and disciplines adopted by the Central Bank means violating the law so that action will be taken against them in accord with the

discipline. Measures must also be taken to reopen the closed factories and SMEs, which are local production forces, to create job opportunities again. The Senior General then stressed the importance of respective sectors to operate transport services as regularly as ever for commodity flow.

Afterwards, council members U Thein Nyunt, Mahn Nyein Maung, U Khin Maung Swe, Jeng Phang Naw Taung, Daw Aye Nu Sein, U Sai Lone Hsai, Dr Banyar Aung Moe and Saw Daniel reported on continued efforts to remove Myanmar from the list of least developed countries as quickly as possible, prompt measures to effectively penalize those who committed murders in Hlinethaya Township, exposition of instigators who are behind CDM activities, giving of protection to civil servants, response to circulation of fake news, regular operation of administrative mechanism and education and health sectors, display and sale of jade at Myanmar Gems Emporiums, launch of government-to-government and bank-to-bank systems in border trade, review and reassessment of the associations contrary to the constitution, reconstitution of township development committees in respective regions, return of Rakhine IDPs to their homes, easing of travel restrictions, reoperation of private banks as regularly as ever, official reopening of Phayathonesu

It is necessary to reduce the exploitation of natural resources, which must be maintained as reserves of the country.

border gate, development of Phayathonesu region tourism and its transport, continued tasks for Yay-Dawei national grid connection, closer dealings with ethnic armed organizations and continued peace talks, holding of a free and fair election, systematic implementation of border trade activities with neighbouring countries, easing of taxation policies, control of entry of illegal foreigners to Myanmar and review of the establishment of factories in residential communities.

Then, Vice-Senior General Soe Win reported on clearing landmines in Kachin and Rakhine States.

After hearing reports, the Senior General said that measures would be taken for Myanmar's graduation from the least developed country status as soon as possible, and restrictions on tourism are being relaxed. Instructions will be given to resume the activities of township development affairs committees in respective states and regions, and steps will be taken for smooth transportation in the Phayathonesu region with a long term

view. The peace process is being implemented by forming leading committees and work committees. Four hydropower projects are being implemented in Myeik to supply the electricity in the region. Measures will be taken to continue to implement the Myeik fish auction market and Dawei industrial zone projects. It is necessary to reduce the exploitation of natural resources, which must be maintained as reserves of the country. Similarly, energy resources must be maintained, and it is necessary to generate electricity from renewable energy like hydropower and solar power. In exporting timber, it is required to export finished products. The natural environment must be conserved by replanting forests.

As members of the Council are well-experienced persons, it is necessary for all to do the best for the country and prove one's abilities based on the experience. It is fully confident that challenges will be overcome and success will be achieved by working together in consultation with one another. — MNA

Failure to shoulder their duties is not a crime but a violation of the civil service disciplines. For the first time, they will have to sign confessions. For further violation, actions will be taken against them in accord with the civil service rules and disciplines.



# Virtual meeting held for rice procurement, export issues

A virtual coordination meeting on the current rice market situation: rice procurement and export issues was held at the Conference Hall (1) of the Ministry of Commerce in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

Union Minister for Commerce Dr Pwint San said that the state should focus on the agriculture and livestock breeding sector's capabilities in other economic sectors.

"In setting the direction, the relevant departments and stakeholders from the private sector must work together for the continuous development of the rice supply chain," the Union Minister said.

He also stressed the need to work together to succeed in the activities under the Farmers' Rights Protection and Benefits Promotion Law.

Next, Union Minister for Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation U Tin Htut Oo briefed on the situation of monsoon paddy



Union Minister Dr Pwint San chairs the online coordination meeting to discuss rice procurement and export issues yesterday.

and summer paddy cultivation in the country, harvesting and transportation conditions and transition to mechanized farming to increase paddy yields and

increase access to irrigation water.

He also discussed the local rice market's current situation and the plans for issuing plant

pest control recommendations for smoother rice export.

Then, Union Minister for Investment and Foreign Trade U Aung Naing Oo said that the

Myanmar Rice Federation had lent 30 billion kyats for export financing to facilitate the export of 100,000 tons of rice to Bangladesh under the G to G program.

He said the Myanmar exporters should constantly monitor the changes in the international rice market and make preparations. He also added the government and the private sector must work more closely to ensure that Myanmar's rice exports to have a better balance.

Next, the Union Ministers and officials coordinated to solve the difficulties encountered by the businessmen.

Deputy Minister for Commerce U Nyunt Aung, Permanent Secretary, Directors-General, officials from Myanmar Rice Association, Myanmar Rice Traders Association and Myanmar Rice Entrepreneurs Association and stakeholders involved in the rice sector also attended the meeting. —MNA

## Hundi only option for Muse trade amid closure of private banks



The closure of private banks has forced the traders to use the hundi system since early February.

IN order to make transactions in the border trade amid the shutdown of the private banks, the traders in Muse turned to the operators running 'hundi', an informal money transfer system, said U Min Thein, vice-chair of Muse Rice Wholesale Centre.

The closure of private banks has forced the traders to use the hundi system since early February. Consequently, the hundi system caused damages to the traders, he continued.

"The private banks have closed down in Muse town

since 8 February. Only the state-owned Myanma Economic Bank and the military-owned Myawady Bank are opened in the town. Yet, the traders commonly conduct the transaction, remittance, saving and withdrawal at the private banks. This shutdown bitterly batters us," U Min Thein elaborated.

He stressed that hundi business is weak to protect transactions and less secure. Additionally, they charge too much for services. The maximum transfer amount via hundi agents is limited.

"Earlier, the remittance

service through the private banks was estimated only K2,000 for K10 million amount. Now, the hundi agents charge K20,000 for K10 million remittance. The hundi agents charge more. Furthermore, we can transfer K100 or K500 million via private banks. However, the hundi agents limited the transfer amount. The maximum transfer amount is set only K50-K100 million. This being so, we are utterly facing the transaction problem," he remarked.

Additionally, traders are experiencing the transaction problem triggered by the shutdown of the private banks. However, the border trade has returned to normal.

U Min Thein said around 1,000 trucks are daily seen flowing in and out of the Muse land border.

Myanmar is daily shipping rice, broken rice, green grams, peanuts, various pulses and beans, onion, chilli, fishery products, consumer goods, watermelon and muskmelon to China with over 700 trucks. Meanwhile, building materials, electric appliances, medical devices, consumer goods, and fertilizer are imported daily with 200 trucks. — NN/GNLM

## Lawsuit filed against former union minister Thura U Aung Ko

THE Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) set up a commission of inquiry to investigate allegations that Thura U Aung Ko had received cash and kind relating to the annual conferring ceremony of titles for outstanding individuals by the State during his tenure as Union Minister for Religious Affairs and Culture.

According to the investigation team, Thura U Aung

Ko had received K25 million worth of a golden plate (about 20 ticals) without any payment during his tenure as the Union Minister for Religion Affairs and Culture. He will be charged under Section 55 of the Anti-Corruption Law.

The Anti-Corruption Commission has informed that the first complaint was lodged at the relevant police station in Nay Pyi Taw. —MNA

### Press briefing 3/2021 of Information Team to be broadcast live

THE press briefing 3/2021 of the Information Team of the State Administration Council will be broadcast live on MRTV and MITV and aired live on Myanma Radio starting from 1:00 pm on 23 March, at the meeting hall of the Ministry of Information. — MNA

### 18 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 22 March, total figure rises to 142,264

MYANMAR'S COVID-19 positive cases rose to **142,264** after **18 new cases** were reported on 22 March 2021 according to the Ministry of Health and Sports. Among these confirmed cases, **3,203 died**, **131,765** have been discharged from hospitals.—MNA



### Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Administration Council Nine Objectives

#### 1. Political affairs

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

#### 2. Economic affairs

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

sectors of the economy as well

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

#### 3. Social affairs

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

# Announcement on resumption of Road Transport Administration Department’s services for licences

ROAD Transport Administration Department has been providing initial licences for vehicles since 1 December 2020 at its offices. Now, with the permission of the Central Committee on Prevention, Containment and Treatment on COVID-19, the department will resume its services for annual registration for vehicles as of 22 March 2021 (Monday).

- Vehicles/motorcycles are needed to extend their licences during the periods underneath without fail regarding the month when their vehicle licences are expired.

(A) The vehicles with the licences which expired

in June 2020 and the vehicles with licences that expired in September 2020 are needed to extend their licences from 22 March 2021 to 31 May 2021.

( B ) The vehicles with licences that expired in October 2020 and in November 2020 are to extend their licences from 22 March 2021 to 30 June 2021.

(C) The vehicles with licences expired in December 2020, and January 2021 are needed to extend their licences from 22 March 2021 to 31 July 2021.

(D) The vehicles which licences which expired in February 2021 and in March 2021 are needed to extend their

licences from 22 March 2021 to 31 August 2021.

Vehicles with licences that will expire from April 2021 to September 2021 extend their licences in the designated period.

Those vehicles which extend the licences during the designated periods will be granted free from fines. Besides, the department will provide vehicles, except public transport vehicles, with services for extending their licences without inspecting the cars.

The vehicles with registration licences that would be abolished due to failure to extend the licences for five consecutive

years can extend their licences during the following periods. If they fail to do during the designated periods, the licences will be abolished in accordance with the Road Safety and Vehicle Management Law.

The vehicles with licences that expired on 30 June 2015 and 30 September 2015 can extend the licences from 22 March 2021 to 31 May 2021 (Except vehicles with licences that expired in July 2015 and August 2015)

( B ) The vehicles with licences expired on 31 October 2015 and 30 November 2015 are needed to extend licences from 22 March 2021 to 30 June 2021.

( C ) The vehicles with li-

centences expired on 31 December 2015 and 31 January 2016 are needed to extend the licences from 22 March 2021 to 31 July 2021.

(D) The vehicles with licences that expired on 29 February 2016 and on 31 March 2016 are needed to extend the licences from 22 March 2021 to 31 August 2021.

The vehicles with licences expired on 30 April 2016, 31 May 2016, 30 June 2016, 31 July 2016, 31 August 2016 and 30, September 2016 are needed to extend the licences during the designated period.

Road Transport Administration Department

# Union Education Minister visits refresher courses in Nay Pyi Taw

UNION Minister for Education Dr Nyunt Pe accompanied by Deputy Ministers Dr Zaw Myint, U Zaw Win, and officials visited administrative refresher courses including management, finance and education sectors for principals of the basic education high schools opened at No. (12) Basic Education High School, Otthara Thiri Township, and No. (13) Basic Education High School, Pubbha Thiri Township.

While visiting the refresher courses, the Union Minister met education officers and principals. He said that he would like to express heartfelt thanks to the principals for attending the refresher courses despite the hot summer.

The Union Minister urged the principals to exchange experiences with each other, work together to improve the country’s

quality of education, clean the school environment for reopening the basic education schools, and start preparations for the school’s good character.

“In order to present the requirements for the reopening of the schools, it is necessary to have the courage to ask for what is really needed at the grassroots level, and the relevant authorities will meet the requirements as soon as possible as per the procedures,” the Union Minister said.

“Teachers are the guides of good sons and daughters of the future. When schools reopen, students should be taught to read and write and be clever. Teachers involved in some CDM activities are urged to return to their duties and attend the refresher courses following the civil service rules and regu-



Union Minister Dr Nyunt Pe meets principals of the basic and high schools attending refresher course in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

lations. Teachers who have returned from the CDM movement for various reasons should be warmly welcomed”, the Union Minister added.

The Union Minister also urged the education officers to have necessary utensils for the classrooms and school buildings.

After that, the Union Minister and responsible persons inspected the school’s preparations and gave necessary comments. —MNA

## Announcement of Union Election Commission

### 22 March 2021

- Regarding the Multiparty General Election held on 8 November 2020, the Union Election Commission has inspected the voter lists and the casting of votes of Taungoo and Kyaukkyi townships in Bago Region.
- Findings in each township were as follows:

#### Findings on voter lists in each township

Sr	Township and numbers of polling stations	Township sub-commission	List from Immigration department	Those involved in voting list without citizenship scrutiny cards	Those involved in voter list more than three times holding one CSC	Those involved in voter list more than two times holding one CSC
1	193 polling stations in Taungoo township of Bago Region	199,902	190,392	25,873	2,035	23,376
2	146 polling stations in Kyaukkyi township of Bago Region	87,881	57,464	16,093	659	8,390

- The Union Election Commission has inspected the withdrawal/receipt/use/remaining of ballot papers used for Pyithu Hluttaw Election of Taungoo and Kyaukkyi townships in Bago Region, together with the respective township election sub-commission, head of police force, Immigration and Population and administrator according to the Hluttaw Election Law Section 53.
- According to the ground inspection, a total of 339 polling stations of these two townships took out 322,700 ballots and used 204,979. It left 114,131 ballots instead of 117,721. The difference was 16,107 ballots and it found 12,517 extra ballots. The extra/shortage ballots and illegal extra ballots were found at respective poll stations. The extra ballots were found and so the ballots were printed illegally. The findings in each township are as follows:

#### Findings on ballot papers for Pyithu Hluttaw election in each township

Sr	Township	Total polling station	Withdraw	Used	Exact remaining	Remaining on the Ground	Difference	
							Missing	Extra
1	Taungoo	193	220,700	145,074	75,626	74,341	4,602	3,317
2	Kyaukkyi	146	102,000	59,905	42,095	39,790	11,505	9,200
	Total	339	322,700	204,979	117,721	114,131	16,107	12,517

#### Findings on ballot papers for Pyithu Hluttaw Election in Taungoo Township

- According to the inspection, a total of 193 polling stations in 27 Wards and 37 village-tract of Taungoo Township took out 220,700 ballots. Pyithu Hluttaw ballots from polling station no (3) Nay Pu Kone village-tract were not found. The extra/shortage ballots were found as follows:

Sr	Subject	Withdrawal	Used	Exact remaining	Remaining on the ground	Difference	
						Missing	Extra
1	Ward/Village-tract ballots	211,050	140,067	70,983	67,302	4,602	921
2	Township advance ballots	5,007	5,007	-	-	-	-
3	Township remaining ballots	4,643	-	4,643	7,039	-	2,396
<b>Total</b>		<b>220,700</b>	<b>145,074</b>	<b>75,626</b>	<b>74,341</b>	<b>4,602</b>	<b>3,317</b>

- It found 4,602 ballots missing together with 921 extra ballots at 193 polling stations in 27 Wards and 37 village-tract of Taungoo Township. The township sub-commission have 7,039 ballots instead of 4,643 it found 2,396 extra ballots.
- Findings in Taungoo Township were as follows:

Sr	Ward/village tract	Total polling stations	Withdrawal	Used	Exact Remaining	Remaining on the Ground	Difference	
							Missing	Extra
1	Htee Hlaing	1	2,550	1,965	585	585		
2	Rakhine Su, Nay Pu Kone	3	9,000	6,060	2,940	2,940		
3	Yodar tan	1	2,000	1,513	487	487		
4	Kyet tee	1	1,050	794	256	256		
5	Pabedan (south)	1	900	658	242	242		
6	Pabedan(north)	1	1,750	1,253	497	497		
7	Shantan Kway	1	800	554	246	246		
8	Kan Taw	3	5,100	3,700	1,400	1,400		
9	Zaung Chan south	1	2,100	1,611	489	489		
10	Mann	1	2,550	1,598	952	952		
11	Zaytan	1	2,250	2,184	66	566		500
12	Lan Ma Kyel	1	1,150	727	423	273	150	
13	Zay	1	1,500	1,053	447	347	100	
14	Taung Kway	1	1,500	1,126	374	374		
15	Nat Shin Naung	3	4,000	2,495	1,505	1,455	50	
16	Tabin Shwe Htee	4	3,900	2,558	1,342	842	500	
17	Minn Gyi Swe	1	1,650	1,110	540	540		
18	Ngephe inn	5	3,600	2,602	998	848	150	
19	Zee dine	3	4,150	2,743	1,407	1,207	200	
20	Kin Seik	6	5,150	3,733	1,417	1,415	2	
21	Lebu	1	2350	1848	502	452	50	
22	Sin Seik	7	5,500	4,264	1,236	1,436		200
23	Phra Hnasu	1	1,150	899	251	251		
24	Bo Kataw	3	2,750	1,896	854	754	100	
25	Htan Kone	1	700	551	149	149		
26	Sue Tap	3	1,750	1,239	511	511		
27	Chaung Phyu	1	1,350	988	362	362		
28	Pe Chet Kone	2	1,400	947	453	453		
29	Myauk Yekyi	6	3,750	2,598	1,152	1,162		10
30	Nay Pu Kone	6	3,250	2,355	895	1,044		149
31	Kyun Kone	4	5,000	3,394	1,606	1,456	150	
32	Mahin	7	6,100	4,556	1,544	1,244	300	
33	Kan Yoe	2	3,700	2,659	1,041	791	250	
34	Wet Khaut Sein	7	2,950	1,637	1,313	863	450	
35	Sabar Kywe	4	2,800	1,910	890	890		
36	Ze Kone	5	3,500	1,934	1,566	1,566		
37	Kahnyin Myaung	6	3,200	1,873	1,327	1,327		
38	Oak Kyut Tan (south)	1	1,600	1,057	543	543		
39	Oak Kyut Tan (north)	1	2,700	1,983	717	717		



40	Oak Kyut Tan (east)	1	2,200	1,587	613	613		
41	Ngwe Hlan Oye Kone	2	6,400	4,156	2,244	2,194	50	
42	Tat Myay	2	7,150	4,537	2,613	2,613		
43	Myo Gyi	3	6,450	3,408	3,042	2,796	246	
44	Zaya Khin Oo	2	3,500	1,895	1,605	1,005	600	
45	Min Gyi Nyo	4	6,000	4,047	1,953	1,953		
46	Chintay Nyo	2	4,500	2,696	1,804	1,750	54	
47	Tawun Nge	1	1,000	638	362	412		50
48	Doo Inn	4	3,400	2,140	1,260	1,160	100	
49	Pade	1	1,850	1,195	655	655		
50	Ku Yin Chaung	2	3,100	1,926	1,174	1,174		
51	Ashay Sin	5	3,100	1,617	1,483	1,383	100	
52	Anout Sin	2	2,200	1,459	741	741		
53	Ta Phan Pin	5	3,550	2,494	1,056	956	100	
54	Moe Kaung	4	5,850	3,522	2,328	2,330		2
55	Kan Nee	7	3,450	2,192	1,258	908	350	
56	Kwan Pin	5	2,950	1,675	1,275	1,275		
57	Kyauk Tain	6	4,050	1,925	2,125	2,125		
58	Doe Taung	5	7,450	5,443	2,007	2,017		10
59	Shan Su Gyi	3	2,750	1,934	816	816		
60	Shwe Inlay	4	3,050	2,057	993	993		
61	Shauk Pin Chaung	3	1,400	724	676	626	50	
62	In Dine	2	2,750	1,925	825	825		
63	Ngar Mauk	5	3,150	1,976	1,174	1,174		
64	Seik Phue (south)	5	7,650	4,274	3,376	2,876	500	
	Ward Total	193	211,050	140,067	70,983	67,302	4,602	921
	Township advance ballots		5,007	5,007				
	Township Exact ballots		4643	-	4,643	7,039		2,396
	Township Total		220700	145074	75,626	74,341	4,602	3,317

**Findings on ballot papers for Pyithu Hluttaw election of Kyaukkyi Township**

8. According to the inspection, a total of 146 polling stations in 7 Wards and 34 village-tract of Kyaukkyi Township. took out 102,000 ballots and used 59,905. It left only 39,790 ballots instead of 42,095. The extra/shortage ballots were found as follows:

Sr	Subject	With-drawal	Used	Exact remaining	Remain-ing on the ground	Difference	
						Miss-ing	Extra
1	Ward/Village tract ballots	101,000	59,119	41,881	30,426	11,505	50
2	Township advance ballots	786	786	-	-	-	-
3	Township remaining ballots	214	-	214	9,364	-	9,150
	Total	102,000	59,905	42,095	39,790	11,505	9,200

9. A total of 11,505 ballots were missing and 50 extra ballots at 146 polling stations in 7 Wards and 34 village-tracts of Kyaukkyi Township. The township sub-commission have 9,364 ballots instead of 214 and so it found 9,150 extra ballots.

10. Findings in Kyaukkyi Township were as follows:

Sr	Ward/Village tract	Total polling stations	With-drawal	Used	Exact remaining	Remain-ing on thw Ground	Difference	
							Miss-ing	Ex-tra
1	Nga/htwe Sout	5	3800	1,986	1,814	1,254	560	-
2	Wel Gyi	5	3600	2,225	1,375	1,125	250	-
3	Mone	13	11750	6,483	5,267	4,117	1,150	-
4	Taung Lel	8	4600	2,675	1,925	1,665	260	-
5	Tet Kone	4	3750	2,042	1,708	1,108	600	-
6	Nyaung Pin Thar	6	5750	3,150	2,600	1,550	1,050	-
7	Myawe Twin	5	3400	1,908	1,492	892	600	-
8	Taw Pu	4	2900	1,477	1,423	1,123	300	-
9	Mee Tain Taw	6	4700	2,707	1,993	1,543	450	-
10	Myaung Yoe Gyi	2	1100	543	557	407	150	-
11	Kyun Pin Seik	3	2200	1,327	873	373	500	-
12	Naung Bo	2	1450	983	467	317	150	-
13	Bago	2	2000	1296	704	604	100	
14	Sar Tan	1	400	256	144	44	100	
15	Kyat Kyee	1	700	481	219	219	-	
16	Thein Tan	2	2700	1,775	925	825	100	
17	Taungoo Tan	1	1200	732	468	468	-	
18	Mitta	2	1850	1,166	684	384	300	
19	Laung Pot	1	800	520	280	280	-	
20	Maubin	6	4700	2,813	1,887	1,637	250	
21	Mee Chaung Goung	1	450	212	238	188	50	
22	Kyauk Pon Lel	1	300	133	167	82	85	
23	Tone Gyi	6	3350	1,905	1,445	895	550	
24	Kyauk Pon (south)	1	400	240	160	160	-	
25	Inn Net	7	3550	2,065	1,485	685	800	
26	Gamone Ine	1	400	172	228	78	150	
27	Pattalar	4	1700	1,127	573	423	150	
28	Wet Lat Taw	2	1200	835	365	315	50	
29	Ma Mayan	2	1050	714	336	236	100	
30	Kywel Ta Lin	2	800	409	391	141	250	
31	Lel Wine Gyi	1	300	159	141	41	100	
32	Hto War Sike	4	2100	1,086	1,014	664	350	
33	Kyauk Sa Yet	5	2900	1,599	1,301	751	550	
34	Daung Moeh	3	1700	920	780	530	250	
35	Ye Lel	6	2750	1,668	1,082	482	600	
36	Nat tan Kwin	11	8200	4,834	3,366	3,066	300	
37	Ywar Gyi Kwin	3	1600	1,035	565	465	100	
38	Naung Kone	4	2550	1,921	629	679		50
39	Ma Pote	1	950	682	268	168	100	
40	Ket Pal Lan Khwe	1	600	452	148	98	50	
41	Khe Doe	1	800	406	394	344	50	
	Ward Total	146	101000	59,119	41,881	30,426	11,505	50
	Township advance ballots		786	786				
	Township Remaining ballots		214		214	9,364		9150
	<b>Township Total</b>		<b>102,000</b>	<b>59,905</b>	<b>42,095</b>	<b>39,790</b>	<b>11,505</b>	<b>9,200</b>

Union Election Commission

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# Cattle farming needs to adapt to modern ways

To promote the livelihood of farmers who make up over 70 per cent of the total population of Myanmar, we need to fulfil the needs of the farmers and make legislation that can protect them when crops, cattle, or machinery fails.

Between 1,500 to 2,000 live cattle are daily exported to China through the Muse border under a legal route. Around 10,000 herds of cattle planned to export to China were stuck in the Muse trade zone at the end of last year. In such kind of incident, the unnecessary burden of labour wages and feedstuff for the cattle fall on the traders.

By expanding the export market and encouraging the farmers to adapt to modern ways of cattle farming to make good profits, we must promote the livestock farming sector, especially for cattle.

Our live cattle export is highly relying on the China market for a reasonable price though there are cattle trading other external markets such as Laos, Thailand, Malaysia and Bangladesh.

By expanding the export market and encouraging the farmers to adapt to modern ways of cattle farming to make good profits, we must promote the livestock farming sector, especially for cattle.

It means livestock farmers need to farm breeds that have a high tolerance of heat and ideally suited to tropical conditions because most of our country's cattle farms are in Mandalay, Sagaing and Magway areas located in an arid region.

To tackle the current challenges of the shortage of pastures for cattle, we need to grow Napier grass, also known as elephant grass, that enables cattle to gain weight faster than unimproved pasture. Besides, Napier grass has low water and nutrient requirements and also improves soil fertility. The modern pasture with the Napier grass can help farmers overcome the challenges of pasture shortage for the cattle. Only then can they

abandon their traditional way of feeding cattle straw mixed with water or allow them to graze on pasture with a few grass.

When it comes to establishing agro-livestock based economic zones, the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation should take the aforementioned needs into consideration.

Besides, we should seize an opportunity for producing more value-added beef products in the zones as the supply in the world's food security would significantly increase.

We are confident that the coming agro-livestock based economic zones would benefit cattle farmers immensely as it aims to mitigate the risk of livestock loss due to climate change and disasters.

# COVID-19 crew change crisis still a challenge - IMO Secretary-General

The crew change crisis caused by COVID-19 restrictions continues to cause challenges, despite some improvement in the numbers, the Secretary-General of the International Maritime Organization has warned.

In a statement, Secretary-General Kitack Lim said that based on industry analysis, the numbers of seafarers requiring repatriation after finishing their contracts had declined - from a high of around 400,000 in September 2020 - to around 200,000 as of March 2021, with a similar number waiting to join ships. However, this number could rise again. But the crew change crisis is far from over. Importantly, issues around vaccination need to be resolved.

Now, more than ever, seafarers need to be designated as key workers to ensure priority vaccination and access to safe transit and travel, Mr Lim said.

"One year ago, as the world plunged into the COVID-19 crisis, I spoke of our voyage together and

the need for collaboration and co-operation. I am glad to say that over these past 12 months, we have worked intensely with many different stakeholders to address challenging conditions.

The maritime sector has continued to deliver the vital supplies that people need. Seafarers have worked tirelessly, at the heart of this trade, to keep goods flowing. Despite difficulties with port access, repatriation, crew changes and more, there can be no denying that seafarers have gone beyond the call of duty.

Hundreds of thousands of seafarers have been forced to work long beyond their contracted time. We have estimated that throughout the last months of 2020 and up to the beginning of this year, 400,000 seafarers still needed to be repatriated, with a similar number needing to join ships.

Thanks to concerted efforts by Governments, shipowners and others, this figure is now estimated at 200,000 seafarers needing repatriation and a similar number



The crew change crisis caused by COVID-19 restrictions continues to cause challenges, despite some improvement in the numbers, the Secretary-General of the International Maritime Organization has warned. PHOTO:AFP

needing to join ships. One of the major achievements of last year contributing to this was the adoption of the United Nations Assembly resolution calling on UN Member States to designate seafarers and other marine personnel as key workers and to implement relevant measures to allow stranded seafarers to be repatriated and

others to join ships, and to ensure access to medical care.

But we cannot be complacent. Fewer than 60 countries so far have heeded our call for seafarers to be designated as key workers. More countries need to do so if we are to resolve this crisis and ensure seafarers are treated fairly and so that their travel to

and from their place of work is properly facilitated. There is still a long way to go before we are back to a normal crew change regime.

As vaccination is rolled out in many countries, I urge Governments to prioritize seafarers in their national COVID-19 vaccination programmes.

Governments should also

identify and prepare for the challenges of the vaccination of seafarers who spend long periods of time away from their home countries. We need to continue to work together to develop relevant protocols and guidance around vaccine certification. This is particularly important as any barriers to travel created by national vaccine protocols may further complicate an already difficult crew-change situation.

On our voyage through this pandemic, which has been challenging for the whole world, I recognize that many seafarers have endured intense hardship as they have worked to keep trade flowing. I wholeheartedly thank seafarers for this.

We will continue to work with our sister UN agencies, with industry bodies and with Governments to address the ongoing needs of seafarers. We will also be looking towards taking the lessons learned going forward, so we can be better prepared in the future."

Source: IMO

# Vaccine Jabs Top 400 Million



A woman receives the AstraZeneca vaccine against the COVID-19 coronavirus at a hospital in Phnom Penh on 10 March, 2021. PHOTO: AFP

More than 400 million doses of vaccines have been given around the world as of 21 March, according to a media tally.

Despite the suspension of the AstraZeneca shot in more than a dozen countries, vaccination campaigns against COVID-19 continue to pick up speed,

the count based on official sources found.

In a sign of how the pace is picking up, the last 100 million people vaccinated got their jabs in 11 days - six times faster than it took to give the first 100 million.

By Thursday at 1630 GMT, at least 402.3 million doses had been administered in more than

158 countries around the world.

While rich countries have fared best, vaccination in the poorer countries is at last starting under the free COVAX programme.

Israel Goes Further Ahead

Israel is still leading the race by far, with nearly three out of five of its population having re-

ceived at least one dose. Around a half of Israeli have received a second dose.

The United Kingdom (UK) (38 per cent), the United Arab Emirates (between 35 and 70 per cent), Chile (28 per cent), the United States (US) (22 per cent), Bahrain (22 per cent) and Serbia (16 per cent by 12 March) are also doing well.

In terms of pure numbers, the US is way ahead with 113 million jabs given before China with 65 million (as of 14 March), India (39 million) and the UK with 27.6 million.

European Union countries have given 54.4 million doses to 8.5 percent of the bloc's population.

Poorer Countries Now Benefit

Out of 13 of the poorest countries which have started their vaccination campaigns, nine started in early March using vaccines delivered for free under the COVAX scheme launched by the World Health Organization (WHO), the Gavi

vaccine alliance and the CEPI coalition.

Only 0.1 per cent of the doses injected around the world were given in these poor countries, home to nine per cent of the global population.

In contrast, the richest countries - which have 16 per cent of humanity - have had 58 per cent of the doses.

More than a quarter of all doses given so far (28 per cent) were in the US.

AstraZeneca In Lead

The vaccine developed by AstraZeneca and Oxford University has already been administered in some 100 countries or territories, outshining its competitors.

Although low cost, it is being widely used in richer countries such as the UK and the EU as well as in poorer countries, thanks to the COVAX scheme.

It is also being administered in India, where it is also made.

The Swedish-British vaccine has however been dogged by problems, after blood clots

were observed in a number of vaccinated people. But the EU regular said Thursday that it was not linked to an increased risk of blood clots.

Where Jabs Are Being Used

The vaccines produced by US-German Pfizer/BioNTech - which is being used in more than 70 countries - and the American Moderna, used in more than 40, are more expensive and harder to store. They are mainly used in the rich countries.

Russia's Sputnik V vaccine, in use in more than 20 countries, and China's Sinopharm and Sinovac jabs - which are used in 20 and a dozen countries respectively - have been administered mostly in their home markets as well as emerging and developing countries.

The American Johnson & Johnson vaccine, the first to require just one dose, has been approved in the US, Canada and the EU but has so far only been rolled out in the US and South Africa.

SOURCE: AFP

## Objectives of 76<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Armed Forces Day

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

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

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

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

### MYANMAR GAZETTE

## Transfer and appointment of Head of Service Organization

Dr Wah Wah Maung, Director-General of the Pension Department under the Ministry of Planning, Finance and Industry is transferred and appointed by the State Administration Council as the Director-General of Union Minister's office of the Ministry of Investment and Foreign Economic Relations.



နေ့စဉ်ထုတ်ရောင်းခံသတင်းစာများကို ဖတ်ရှုလိုပါက ဖော်ပြပါ ဖုန်းနံပါတ်များသို့ ဆက်သွယ်မှာယူနိုင်ပါသည်။



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# Legume price plunges for lack of foreign demand



Now, the pulses price has fallen to as low as K2,000 or 3,000 per basket in the market.

PHOTO: TIN ZAR HLAING

THE legume price plunged starting from the first week of February for lack of demand from foreign countries and that of the traders from Yangon, according to an official from Monywa Commodity Depot.

“There is no demand from other countries and also from Yangon traders. There is also a cash transaction problem. That is the reason why the price of pulses is stable. The red bean is sold for K27,000 per basket in the harvest season. Now, the red bean price has dropped to K20,000 per basket. The price

of the bean species plunged to K28,000 per basket from K31,000 per basket. The pigeon pea price also fell to K24,200 from K26,500 per basket. The price of all kinds of pulses has significantly dropped by K2,000 or K3,000 per basket because there is no buyer,” he added.

Since the first week of February, there has been no trading in the Monywa commodity depot. And, the traders from commodity depots are trading only by phone.

“The production of the pulses has been reduced by half this

year. The price could not go up in this situation because of lower pulse production. If the farmers harvested about 500 baskets of beans last year, they could expect the yield this year to be only over 200 baskets. The pulses’ farmlands are affected by the erratic weather,” he added.

Now, the pulses price has fallen to as low as K2,000 or 3,000 per basket in the market. This steep fall in prices has upset the growers. Besides, the production of the various beans has plummeted significantly. — Lulay/GNLM

# Myanmar exports plummet to \$6.9 bln in current FY2020-2021

MYANMAR’S exports over the past five and half months of the current financial year 2020-2021 financial year touched a low to US\$6.9 billion, reflecting a tremendous drop of over \$1.5 billion compared with a year-ago period of the previous FY, according to data from the Ministry of Commerce.

During the corresponding period in the previous FY, exports stood at \$8.4 billion, according to data released by the ministry.

The pandemic deals a severe blow to the manufacturing, mineral and other service sectors as it shut down the events. Additionally, people demand only staple food.

The drop in exports in natural gas, gems and jewellery, and CMP garments contributes to the slump in exports, the ministry stated.

Both sea trade and border trade dropped amid the coronavirus impacts and the transaction problem due to private banks’ closure.

Of the seven export groups, agricultural exports increased \$774 million against a year-ago period, while exports of other goods were also seen a slight rise. Meanwhile, exports of

livestock, forest products, minerals, fishery products and finished industrial goods declined.

Between 1 October and 12 March of the current FY, export values were registered at \$2.6 billion for agro products, \$15.9 million for livestock, \$396.58 million for fishery products, \$495.9 million for minerals, \$59 million for forest products, \$3.137 billion for manufactured goods, and \$198 million for other goods.

The country’s export sector relies more on the agriculture and manufacturing sectors. At present, CMP garment exports drastically dropping since the western countries cancelled order following the COVID-19 impacts. The country’s export sector is likely to extend its drop due to the current political climate, an exporter shared his opinion.

The Ministry of Commerce is focusing on export promotion and market diversification. Since 2011, the Ministry of Commerce has adhered to its reform policy. A series of moves to liberalize and open the economy have been introduced through policy development to improve the trade environment. — KH/GNLM

## Request to health workers

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

Ministry of Health and Sports  
8 February 2021

# Myanmar-Bangladesh border trade sees drop

The bilateral border trade between Myanmar and Bangladesh hit US\$ 20.13 million as of 12 March in the current financial year 2020-2021, according to an official report from the Ministry of Commerce.

According to statistics, the border trade during this period had seen a dramatic drop, decreasing by \$5.85 million, compared with that of the same period last year when the total bilateral border trade was \$25.98 million.

Myanmar-Bangladesh total border trade during the period included Myanmar’s export of \$6.95 million and its imports of \$13.17 million.

Myanmar exports goods to Bangladesh through both maritime and land routes. Bilateral border trade is conducted mainly through the Sittway and Maungtaw points of entry.



Myanmar exports goods to Bangladesh through both maritime and land routes. Bilateral border trade is conducted mainly through the Sittway and Maungtaw points of entry.

The products traded between the two countries include bamboo, ginger, peanuts, salt-water prawns and fish, dried plums, garlic, rice, mung beans, blankets, candy, plum jams, foot-

wear, frozen foods, chemicals, leather, jute products, tobacco, plastic, wood, knitwear and beverages.

Meanwhile, Myanmar’s border trade with four neigh-

bouring countries, China, India, Thailand and Bangladesh, totalled \$4.99 billion, shared by \$3.24 billion in exports and \$1.76 billion in imports. — ACM/GNLM



## NATO chief says 'all options open' on Afghan withdrawal

NATO Secretary - General Jens Stoltenberg on Monday said "all options remain open" on Afghanistan, as allies wait for Washington to decide on a looming withdrawal deadline.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken is heading to Brussels for two-days of meetings with NATO foreign ministers, looking to shore up ties on his first official trip to Europe.

High on the agenda is the future of the alliance's 9,600-strong mission in Afghanistan after former US leader Donald Trump struck a deal with the Taliban to withdraw troops by May 1.

"There are no easy choices and for now, all options remain open," Stoltenberg said at a press conference.

"The security situation is difficult and we will take all the necessary measures to keep our troops safe."

Current US President Joe



NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg holds a press conference ahead of a foreign ministers meeting in Brussels, on 22 March 2021. PHOTO: AFP

Biden is reviewing the accord and said last week it would be "tough" for Washington to meet that date. That prompted outrage from the Taliban, who warned that the US would be "responsible for the consequences".

NATO allies have said they are willing to stay in Afghanistan

longer, if Washington decides to remain as well. There are some 2,500 US troops in the country and American support is vital to keep the NATO mission going.

Stoltenberg said the allies would "consult closely" with Blinken at the upcoming meeting.

Under the deal with the US,

the Taliban vowed to engage in peace talks with the Afghan government, but the talks have made almost no progress and fighting has worsened — particularly in rural areas. Major urban centres are also in the grip of a bloody terror campaign in the form of attacks targeting politicians, civil

servants, academics, rights activists and journalists.

The US is scrambling to inject fresh impetus into a peace process that has dragged on in Doha since September, with feuding parties unable even to agree on an agenda. Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin made an unannounced visit to Afghanistan Sunday for talks with President Ashraf Ghani.

Last week Moscow hosted a gathering of stakeholders in a bid to break the deadlock, but even that ended without any concrete proposals.

An even broader conference is now scheduled to be hosted by Turkey next month. The US and its allies are desperate to avoid seeing Afghanistan slip back into being a haven for terror groups, two decades after they intervened in the wake of the September 11, 2001 attacks in the United States. —AFP ■

## US House again hears arguments for capital statehood



Activists hold signs as they take part in a rally in support of DC statehood near the US Capitol in Washington, DC on 22 March 2021. PHOTO: AFP

DEMOCRATS emboldened by their control of the US House, Senate and White House launched a fresh push Monday for statehood for the nation's capital Washington, beginning with a high-profile congressional hearing addressing the issue.

More than 700,000 Americans live in the District of Columbia, a Democratic stronghold with a population greater than two states, Wyoming and Vermont, and comparable to two others. But while capital residents can cast ballots in US presidential elections, they have no voting representation in Congress.

"The sun is rising, DC! On behalf of 712,000 residents, we will demand full citizenship today," Washington Mayor Muriel Bowser, the top witness before the House Oversight

Committee beginning at 11:00 am (1500 GMT), said on Twitter ahead of the hearing.

It will be a long, uphill road for statehood, and the bill is not expected to win approval in the evenly-divided Senate, where Republicans are likely to block the measure through use of a filibuster. But Democrats are using their control of Congress to highlight the issue. And polling from February by Data For Progress shows 54 per cent of likely voters nationwide believe Washington DC should be a state, a record level of support.

Washingtonians gathered on several street corners early Monday to proclaim their support for statehood. In the shadow of the US Capitol they chanted "No more wait for a DC state!" and "51 in 21!" as some held up placards de-

manding "statehood for the people of DC".

### Statehood 'on the horizon'?

Last June in a historic vote, the House of Representatives passed the symbolical-titled bill HR 51, which would create the state of Washington, Douglass Commonwealth, named for 19th century abolitionist Frederick Douglass. The measure died in the Republican-controlled Senate.

But with the Senate now in the hands of Democrats and President Joe Biden in the White House, the party is seizing the momentum. Biden himself backs the initiative. "He believes they deserve representation, that's why he supports DC statehood," White House press secretary Jen Psaki told reporters on Thursday last week.

Eleanor Holmes Norton, who represents the district in the House as a non-voting delegate, reintroduced the measure earlier this year.

"As support and majorities for HR 51 grow with the exposure today's hearing will again give our bill, we dare believe that statehood is on the horizon," Norton said Monday.

The DC statehood measure would give the capital two US senators and a voting representative in the House. —AFP ■

## Italy coastguard blocks German migrant rescue ship

A German rescue ship that took nearly 400 migrants to Sicily earlier this month has been impounded by the Italian authorities because of safety issues, the charity that operates it said Monday.

The Sea-Watch 3 vessel, run by the Sea-Watch organisation, is being held by the Italian coastguard in the Sicilian port of Augusta, where it docked on 3 March with 363 migrants on 3 March picked up in the Mediterranean.

The action was ordered after the ship was found in breach of regulations on navigation safety, on board fire prevention, environmental protection and crew training, a coastguard statement said.

"Since last night #Sea-Watch3 is under administrative detention in Augusta. They are again accusing us of having rescued too many people," the Sea-Watch charity tweeted.

"Should we have let 363 human beings die because of the indifference of the authorities, which continue to provide no alternative to our presence at sea?"

Meanwhile, the Ocean Viking, another charity vessel that picked up 116 migrants in the Mediterranean last week, was stuck in high seas south of Malta, waiting

for permission to enter a port.

It is not the first time that the Italian coastguard has blocked charity vessels, and groups targeted by the measures have routinely called them unjustified and politically motivated.

The aid groups have also faced accusations of colluding with Libyan migrant traffickers to bring people to safety on European shores — charges they strongly deny.

Prosecutors in Sicily have investigated Doctors without Borders (MSF) and Save the Children over the allegations, and are expected to demand a trial.

Italy is a prime entry point for Europe-bound migrants, but the sea stretch between Sicily and North Africa is one of the world's deadliest migration routes.

Almost 530,000 migrants have landed on Italian shores since the start of 2015, including some 6,000 in the year to date, according to the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

Since January, there were also 232 migrants who died or went missing on the sea journey to Italy or Malta, compared to 983 over the course of 2020, the UN agency estimates. —AFP ■



## Tunisia engineers reach for stars with satellite launch

TUNISIA celebrated the launch Monday of its first domestically made satellite, hoping it would inspire young engineers to reach for the stars at home rather than join those emigrating overseas.

Challenge-1, built by a team from telecommunications giant TelNet, blasted off along with 37 other satellites aboard a Russian Soyuz rocket from the Baikonur cosmodrome in Kazakhstan on Monday.

That made Tunisia the sixth African country to manufacture its own satellite and see it reach space.

"It's a source of pride to have taken part in this project," said Khalil Chiha, 27, who trained at Tunisia's National Engineering School in the central city of Sfax.

"Working in the aeronautical or aerospace sector is a dream."

Tunisia had been struck by an economic crisis and skyrocketing unemployment even before the coronavirus pandemic, and recent months have seen growing anti-government protests.

Several thousand engineers leave each year to seek work abroad.

Many of the Challenge-1 engineers were educated in Tunisia and are aged between 25 and 30 years old.



Employees of Tunisia's Telnet telecommunications group watch the launch of Russia's Soyuz-2.1a carrier rocket from the Baikonur cosmodrome in Kazakhstan carrying 38 foreign satellites among them Tunisia's first satellite Challenge-1, in Tunis on 22 March 2021.

PHOTO: AFP

Officials hope the success will show young people there is a future for them in the North African nation.

The Challenge-1 is set to collect data including temperature, pollution and humidity readings over areas without internet coverage, as part of efforts to gather such information from areas beyond terrestrial phone networks.

"We are very emotional, after three years of intense work," said engineer Haifa Triki, 28, who followed the flight live from Tunis.

"We made a lot of sacrifices, but it was worth it".

**Dream come true**

President Kais Saied, joined

engineers and journalists to watch the launch live on screen at TelNet headquarters in Tunis.

"Our real wealth is the youth who can face obstacles," Saied said, stressing that Tunisia lacks not resources but "national will" amid its dire social and political crises.

"We are proud of our youth," he said.

The Challenge-1 team was supported by expatriate Tunisian engineers, one of whom took part in NASA's Mars Perseverance mission.

"It really is a dream come true," TelNet project manager Anis Youssef told AFP, ahead of the launch. —AFP ■

## AstraZeneca hails US trials but poll shows European worries

PHARMACEUTICAL giant AstraZeneca said Monday that US trials showed its Covid-19 vaccine was 100 per cent effective in preventing severe disease, even as a poll showed trust in the jab had plunged in many European countries.

The AstraZeneca shot is cheaper and easier to store than many of its rivals, but its use was thrown into chaos when several nations in Europe and other parts of the world last week suspended their rollouts because of isolated cases of blood clots.

Vaccination drives are seen as crucial to overcoming the pandemic that has killed more than 2.7 million people since first emerging in China in late 2019.

They are also the most likely route out of lockdowns and restrictions that continue to paralyze economies, with frustrated crowds in several cities in Europe protesting against the curbs over the weekend.

Britain has doled out more than 11 million of the jabs developed by Anglo-Swedish company AstraZeneca and Oxford University, but public confidence has been damaged in EU countries.

A survey by British pollsters YouGov showed Monday that a majority of people in the biggest EU states—including Germany, France, Spain and Italy — view the vaccine as unsafe.

The EU's regulator and the World Health Organization have

however deemed it safe and said there is no evidence of a link between the drug and the blood clots, leading countries including France and Germany to resume vaccinations.

And AstraZeneca said Monday that US tests on more than 30,000 people showed no increased risk of thrombosis.

It said the jab was 79 per cent effective at preventing symptomatic Covid-19 in the overall population, 100 per cent effective at preventing severe disease and hospitalization and 80 per cent effective at preventing the disease in the elderly.

"This analysis validates the AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccine as a much-needed additional vaccination option," said Ann Falsey, a professor responsible for the trial.

The company is preparing to submit its findings to the US Food and Drug Administration to authorize the shot for emergency use.

**We vaccinated, baby**

More than 430 million jabs have now been rolled out around the world, with the US accounting for more than a quarter.

The US remains the worst affected country overall, but the acceleration of its inoculation campaign has led to a celebratory mood, particularly in Miami where students were gathering in force to celebrate spring break. —AFP ■

## Germany set to carry virus curbs into April as cases surge

GERMANY is poised to prolong and tighten a partial lockdown into April as new virus cases soar, according to a draft document seen by AFP ahead of a strategy meeting on Monday.

Europe's biggest economy had begun easing restrictions, first reopening schools in late February, before allowing hairdressers and some shops to resume business in March.

The meeting between

Chancellor Angela Merkel and the leaders of Germany's 16 states was originally scheduled to discuss a further relaxation, but a third wave of the virus driven by new variants has changed the agenda dramatically.

Lifting restrictions on dining, cultural and leisure facilities will now have to be delayed and instead, worst-hit areas may from Monday have to reimpose measures and or-

der shops and some schools to close again.

"Without significant restrictions, the number of new infections will increase to the point that the health system risks being overwhelmed by April," the draft reads.

Requirements that employees work from home whenever possible will be extended to April 18, according to the document, instead of ending on 28 March. —AFP ■



A vial of the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine is seen during the opening of a vaccination centre at the Cypriot port of Larnaca, on 22 March 2021.

PHOTO: AFP

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### ADVERTISING & MARKETING

(+95) (01) 8604530,  
Hotline - 09 974424848  
marketing@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com  
subscription@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

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## Don Quijote chain operator opens 1<sup>st</sup> “Donki” outlet in Malaysia

THE operator of Japanese discount store chain Don Quijote has opened its first outlet in Malaysia, offering a wide variety of products and goods imported from Japan to shoppers in downtown Kuala Lumpur.

The Jonetz by Don Don Donki Lot10 store was an instant hit as a long line of people formed in front of its entrance before it opened on Friday morning in the busy Bukit Bintang district in the Malaysian capital, where its operator, Pan Pacific International Holdings Corp., has ambitious business expansion plans.

The new shop occupies three floors of the Lot10 commercial complex and Friday's opening came after two years of negoti-

ations between PPIH and YTL Land Sdn. Bhd., the owner of the facility and a wholly owned subsidiary of YTL Corp. Bhd.

Tokyo-based PPIH is focused on locals and Japanese residents as the main targets as a number of shops in the Bukit Bintang area, which relies on inbound demand, are reeling amid pandemic-triggered restrictions.

“We want to attract as many Malaysian customers as possible,” Satoshi Machida, president of Pan Pacific Retail Management (Malaysia) Sdn. Bhd., a local unit of PPIH, told NNA as he explained the sales plan for the new shop.

Machida said priority will be given to providing



People form a long queue in the morning of March 19, 2021, to wait for the opening of Pan Pacific International Holdings Corp.'s first “Donki” outlet in Malaysia. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

food items that sell well among Malaysian people, such as fresh vegetables

and fruits from Japan, sashimi raw seafood, meals cooked inside the

shop and confectionary.

Certified halal foods for Muslims are also of-

fered by the shop, which carries the original brand name — a combination of the word Jonetz, coined from the Japanese word “Jonetsu” meaning passion, and the existing Don Don Donki brand for Asian markets outside Japan.

PPIH hopes the shop will serve as a gateway to the Malaysian market as the company plans to open 10 more shops in the Southeast Asian country by June 2024.

Next up on the list is an outlet at the Tropicana Gardens complex in Kota Damansara in suburban Kuala Lumpur that is set to open later this year. Machida said detailed plans to launch a third store are expected shortly. —Kyodo News ■

## Germany appoints new head of troubled finance watchdog

GERMANY has tapped Mark Branson from Swiss financial regulator Finma to head its beleaguered financial watchdog Bafin, the finance ministry said Monday.

Branson, a mathematician with Swiss and British citizenship, will take up the new post “in the middle of the year”, the ministry said in a statement.

He will succeed Felix Hufeld, who was sacked in January over Bafin's failure to prevent the Wirecard fraud — Germany's biggest accounting scandal in living memory.

Branson will be charged with implementing reforms announced in February designed to enable the regulator to identify fraud more quickly and effectively, with a bigger focus on whistleblowers.

With Branson “at the helm”, the regulator will continue with the reforms aimed at

giving it “more teeth”, Finance Minister Olaf Scholz was quoted as saying.

Branson, 52, has been head of the Swiss financial market regulator Finma since 2014, having joined in 2010.

He was previously a senior executive at two Swiss banks, including UBS, where he managed Tom Hayes, a trader jailed in 2015 for conspiring to rig the benchmark Libor interest rate.

Bafin has been accused of lax oversight and of missing early warning signs at Wirecard, which collapsed last June after admitting that 1.9 billion euros (\$2.1 billion) was missing from its accounts.

The regulator has also faced criticism that it acted too late in the case of Greensill Bank, declared insolvent last week after the collapse of its British owner, financial services firm Greensill. —AFP ■

## Deliveroo eyes £8.8 bn valuation at London float

British meal delivery app Deliveroo is aiming for a higher-than-expected valuation of up to £8.8 billion when it launches shortly on the London stock market, the company said Monday following a pandemic-fueled boom in demand.

The Amazon-backed company, in line with other home-delivery firms, says it has seen demand soar in the past year as locked-down households called in food.

The big listing, expected in April, is seen as a major boost to London's financial sector which has been hit by Brexit turmoil.

London's financial sector, known as the City,

recently lost its European share trading crown to Amsterdam following Britain's exit from the European Union.

Eight-year-old Deliveroo's market capitalisation on listing is set to be between £7.6 billion and £8.8 billion (\$10.5 billion-\$12.2 billion, 8.9 billion euros-10.3 billion euros), it said in a statement Monday.

“We are proud to be listing in London, the city where Deliveroo started,” company founder and CEO Will Shu said.

“Becoming a public company will enable us to continue to invest in innovation, developing new tech tools to support

restaurants and grocers, providing riders with more work and extending choice for consumers,” he added.

The offer price range has been set at between £3.90 and £4.60 per share, Deliveroo said.

It will sell around £1.0 billion worth of new shares, while current investors in the company plan to sell part of their holdings.

The share price range “is higher than previously expected and makes it the biggest IPO in London for some time,” said Neil Wilson, chief market analyst at Markets.com.

A recent fundraising round had valued the company at more than \$7.0

billion.

### ‘Strong start to 2021’

The listing update was published alongside news that Deliveroo's app transactions ballooned by 121 percent in the first two months of 2021. “We have seen a strong start to 2021 and we are only at the start of an exciting journey in a large, fast-growing online food delivery market, with a huge opportunity ahead,” Shu said.

Deliveroo earlier this month announced that it made an underlying loss of £223.7 million in 2020. That was despite the value of transactions rocketing 64 percent to £4.1 billion. —AFP ■

### CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V OLIVIA VOY. NO. (110S/111N)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V OLIVIA VOY. NO. (110S/111N)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **23-3-2021** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **MITT** where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

Phone No: 2301185

Shipping Agency Department  
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

M/S SEALAND MAERSK ASIA PTE LTD

### CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V BLPL TRUST VOY. NO. (2103S)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V BLPL TRUST VOY. NO. (2103S)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **23-3-2021** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **AWPT** where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

Phone No: 2301185

Shipping Agency Department  
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

M/S BLPL SHIPPING LINE



# Japan, Germany sign intel-sharing pact to boost defence cooperation



Japanese Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi (R) and Ina Lepel, German ambassador to Japan, pose for a photo after signing an agreement to facilitate the exchange of classified information to strengthen defence cooperation in Tokyo on 22 March 2021. **PHOTO: KYODO NEWS**

JAPAN and Germany on Monday signed an agreement to facilitate the exchange of classified information to strengthen defense cooperation.

The signing of the pact at the Foreign Ministry in Tokyo between Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi and Ina Lepel, German ambassador to Japan, came as the major European country seeks to boost its presence in the Indo-Pacific region amid China's rapid rise.

Since February 2019, when German Chancellor Angela Merkel was in Tokyo for talks with then Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, the two countries had negotiated toward the signing of such a treaty, also aimed at

appropriately protecting their sensitive information.

Motegi told Lepel that Japan welcomes Germany's Indo-Pacific policy guidelines compiled last year and a planned dispatch of its frigate to the region, according to the ministry.

In the guidelines, Germany underscored its intention to increase engagement with Asia, noting its economic potential and China's rising power in the region.

Japan already has similar intel-sharing pacts with the United States, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Australia, Britain, France, India, Italy and South Korea, according to the ministry.—Kyodo News ■

## Italy's Amazon workers on 24-hour national strike

AMAZON workers in Italy held their first nationwide strike on Monday as unions claimed employees were being pushed harder than ever during the coronavirus pandemic.

The US e-commerce giant employs around 9,500 people in Italy, but unions say the protest also involves suppliers and delivery drivers.

In a joint statement, unions said employees are called "indispensable" but "are not treated as such," calling them "an army of some 40,000 workers who never stop."

The Filt Cigl, Fit Cisl and Uiltrasport unions claimed that an average 75 percent of workers stayed out, rising to 90 percent in some areas.

"Amazon made huge profits thanks to the pandemic-era boom in online commerce and it is right that it should share part of these profits," the unions said in a statement.

Workers should have lower work burdens, better pay, more union rights and an indemnity in case they fall ill with Covid-19, unions said, accusing Amazon of refusing to talk to them.

Drivers, they said, have come under huge pressure as online orders boom during the pandemic, delivering as many as 180-200 packages per day. As its profits have continued to rise, Amazon has come under increasing pressure over the past year to improve pay and working conditions.—AFP ■

## Russia court rejects Navalny complaint over poisoning

A Russian military court on Monday rejected a complaint from jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny over the lack of a criminal investigation into his poisoning.

The 235th military court in Moscow dismissed the complaint from Navalny, who accuses Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) of carrying out the poisoning, a spokesperson told AFP.

The opposition figure, who is serving a two-and-a-half year

sentence in a penal colony east of Moscow, was not present in court and refused to take part via video link.

Navalny has accused Russian investigators of not launching criminal proceedings to find those responsible for his attack in the Siberian city of Tomsk in August last year. Navalny fell violently ill on a flight over Siberia in August and within days was airlifted to Germany for treatment, where he spent months in recovery.—AFP ■

## Netanyahu ahead but win uncertain in new Israel vote

ISRAELI voters readied for a fourth election in under two years Tuesday, with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu ahead in the polls but uncertain of clinching a governing majority.

The veteran leader hopes Israelis will thank him for a world-leading Covid-19 vaccination campaign, and for the diplomatic coup of normalising ties with the United Arab Emirates and three other Arab nations.

But although his right-wing Likud party is leading in the polls, it will need coalition partners to secure a 61-seat majority in the 120-seat Knesset.

That means Israel is looking at three possible outcomes: another coalition under Netanyahu, an ideologically divided government united only by its opposition to him, or a looming fifth election.

An unprecedented period of political deadlock has seen Netanyahu, Israel's longest-serving prime minister, repeatedly trying and failing to secure a stable coalition.

The election Tuesday may not bring immediate certainty, said Dahlia Scheindlin, a political analyst and pollster.

"The question is whether there can be some sort of determining result that gives either side -- the pro-Netanyahu parties or the parties that are trying to form a coalition without Netanyahu -- a clear enough advantage," she said.

"At present, it doesn't look like either side has sufficient votes to reach a decisive answer."

### Right-wing shift

Scheindlin noted a reality that has shaped Israeli politics since the turn of the century:

the electorate's right-ward drift, especially concerning the Palestinian conflict.

"Whoever becomes prime minister, the country is likely to espouse a right-wing direction," she said.

With polling projecting right-wing parties winning nearly 80 seats, Netanyahu has multiple ideological partners to form a government with.

But the divisive 71-year-old leader, who is standing trial over corruption, has alienated former allies.

Former senior Likud member Gideon Saar -- whose New Hope party could win up to 10 seats -- has ruled out joining a Netanyahu-led government.

Former defence minister and religious nationalist Nafthali Bennett has campaigned against the prime minister and not ruled out joining a coalition to oust him.

Bennett's Yamina party is therefore seen as a likely king-maker.

### 'Extortion?'

For Netanyahu, who portrays himself as the only leader capable of keeping Israel safe, forming a government may require dealing with extremists.

On that list is the new Religious Zionism alliance that includes Itamar Ben-Gvir, who has voiced admiration for the mass-murderer of 29 Palestinian worshippers in Hebron in 1994, Baruch Goldstein.—AFP ■



Supporters of Israel's Likud party walk with posters depicting Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu during an election campaign tour at Mahane Yehuda market in Jerusalem, on 21 March 2021 ahead of March 23's Israeli election. **PHOTO: AFP**



# Thousands evacuate as Sydney sees worst floods in decades

TORRENTIAL downpours lashed Australia's east Monday, forcing thousands to flee the worst flooding in decades and pushing communities already battling drought, bushfires, and the coronavirus pandemic to "breaking point".

Around 18,000 residents were told to evacuate their homes, as days of relentless rainfall caused rivers in Australia's most populous state, New South Wales, to their highest levels in 30 years.

"The devastation is quite unbelievable," said Port Macquarie cafe owner Marten Clark, who waded through waist-deep water to find his furniture washed away, and freezers, fridges and cooking equipment destroyed.

Aerial images from hard-hit areas showed the flood consuming rows of houses, with only their roofs above the water.

As some coastal communities received three months worth of rain in a few hours, emergency services said they rescued hundreds from floodwaters and fielded more than 8,800 calls for help.

In some areas, emergency workers travelled inland on "Surf Lifesaving" ocean rescue boats to reach stranded people.

So far, no fatalities or serious injuries have been reported.

But with more rain expected, eight million residents in Sydney and across the state were on Monday told to work from home if possible and avoid unnecessary travel.

"The water is still rising," said Jo Dunstan, who owns a florist shop in the outer Sydney suburb of Windsor, as she watched debris-littered stormwater race past neighbouring homes.

"It's scary, very eerie to say the least."

Just over 12 months ago the region was parched: suffering prolonged drought, water restrictions and unprecedented bushfires.

"When you have been through three or four incidents that are life-changing on top of each other, it can make you feel like you are at breaking point," said New South Wales Premier Gladys Berejiklian.

"I don't know any time in a state history where we have had these extreme weather conditions in such quick succession in the middle of a pandemic."

## Australia 'tested once again'

Scientists have warned Australia can expect more frequent and more extreme weather events as a result of climate change.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison, whose conservative government has been accused of dragging its feet on climate action, said Australia was "being tested once again" by a "terrible event".

He told parliament that Australia's defence force was expected to be called in to assist with the clean-up and recovery.

New South Wales's Mid North Coast has been particu-



An inundated barn is seen in the floodwaters in the residential area of Richmond suburb on 22 March 2021, as Sydney braced for its worst flooding in decades after record rainfall caused its largest dam to overflow and as deluges prompted mandatory mass evacuation orders along Australia's east coast. PHOTO: AFP

larly badly affected, with Berejiklian declaring the region had been struck by a "one in 100 year" disaster.

In Sydney's vast Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley, swollen rivers were at levels not seen since 1990, after the Warragamba Dam, the city's main drinking water source, spilled over Saturday. Around 500 gigalitres of water were drained from the dam -- roughly equivalent to 200,000 Olympic size swimming pools or the total volume of water in Sydney Harbour.

Residents in some affected areas were allowed to return to their homes Monday after waters receded, but others were placed on high alert as floods

moved toward their regions.

Education authorities said more than 200 schools were closed, including some that were damaged in the floods.

Andrew Hall, CEO of the Insurance Council of Australia, said it was too early to understand the extent of destruction and to "estimate the insurance damage bill".

## 'A dangerous situation'

The Bureau of Meteorology has forecast "treacherous" conditions Monday before the wild weather eases later in the week.

Flood operations manager Justin Robinson warned the rain was expected to cause flooding in previously unaffected areas as well as "renewed flooding in

many of those communities that have already been impacted".

"It is quite a dangerous situation that New South Wales is currently facing," he said.

Rainfall records were expected to keep tumbling in the coming days as the deluge spreads into the state's northwest, and further north into Queensland state where weather warnings were also issued.

Flash flooding occurred at the Gold Coast -- almost 10 hours' drive from Sydney -- as the tourist hotspot was drenched.

Health officials have said the rain and floods will delay the already halting rollout of coronavirus vaccines in Sydney and surrounding areas. —AFP ■

## Taiwan pilot killed, another missing after fighter jets collide

A Taiwanese air force pilot was killed and another was missing on Monday after their fighter jets disappeared in a suspected mid-air collision off the island's southern coast, officials said.

The two F-5E jets disappeared from radar around 3 pm (0700 GMT) some 2.6 kilometres (1.6 miles) off the coast of rural Pingtung county, the National Rescue Command Centre said.

They were among four F-5Es that took off some 30 minutes earlier for a routine training mission, the centre said, adding helicopters and coastguard ships had joined the search.

One of the pilots was found unconscious in the sea but could not be resuscitated and was pronounced dead at hospital.

Rescuers were still searching for the remaining pilot.

Police confirmed they found a seat with parachute attached on a local highway.

Taiwan's ageing fighter fleet has suffered a string of fatal accidents in recent years as the island's air force is kept under constant pressure by China.

Beijing views democratic and self-ruled Taiwan as its own territory and has vowed to one day seize it, by force if necessary.

Under President Xi Jinping, China has become markedly more hostile towards Taiwan and last year, incursions by Beijing's fighter jets reached record highs.

The incursions force outgunned Taiwan to regularly scramble its jets and keep pi-

lots trained on a round-the-clock war footing that takes its toll on ageing aircraft and those flying them.

In October, an F-5E pilot was killed when his plane crashed off the island's eastern coast.

A month later, Taiwan temporarily grounded all F-16 fighters for safety checks after one went missing during a training exercise.

Last year, Chinese military jets made a record 380 incursions into Taiwan's defence zone, with some analysts warning that tensions between the two sides were at their highest since the mid-1990s.

The F-5E is an older generation fighter with a design that dates back to the 1960s. —AFP ■

## Indian firm to make 200 mn doses of Russia's Sputnik V

THE backer of Russia's Sputnik V coronavirus vaccine said Monday it had signed an agreement with an India-based pharmaceuticals giant for the production of up to 200 million doses of the jab a year.

The Russian Direct Investment Fund (RDIF), the country's sovereign wealth fund, said in a statement it has partnered with the Virchow Group to produce up to 200 million doses of the two-dose vaccine in India every year. Virchow Biotech, a subsidiary of the Virchow Group, is expected to start full-scale commercial production in the first half of 2021, it said.

RDIF CEO Kirill Dmitriev said the agreement was "an important step to facilitate the

full-scale local production" of the two-dose Sputnik V vaccine in India and to supply partners around the world.

In a separate statement, RDIF said that over the past week it had secured production agreements with two other Indian manufacturers: Stelis Biopharma and Gland Pharma.

The companies will produce enough doses for 300 million people a year, RDIF said.

It added that Sputnik V has "production capacity for more than 700 million people secured in 10 countries", without providing further details. According to RDIF, Russia's vaccine, which is named after the Soviet-era satellite, has been registered in 54 countries. —AFP ■



## Portugal lose injured Pepe for World Cup qualifiers



Porto's Portuguese defender Pepe celebrates after scoring a goal during the Portuguese League football match between Porto and Pacos Ferreira at the Dragao stadium in Porto on 14 March 2021. **PHOTO: AFP**

PEPE has withdrawn from Portugal's first three upcoming World Cup qualifiers after suffering an injury in a league match for Porto, the Portuguese Football Federation (FPF) said.

Sporting defender Luis Neto will take Pepe's place in coach Fernando Santos' squad, the FPF said in a statement on Sunday evening.

Pepe was due to return to

the Seleccion for the first time since October. The 38-year-old former Real Madrid defender picked up a "muscle injury in his right leg" in a 2-1 league win at Portimonense on Saturday, Porto said.

Portugal will begin their 2022 World Cup qualifying campaign for Qatar against Azerbaijan in Turin on Wednesday in a match relocated to Italy for health reasons.

The European champions then travel to Serbia on Saturday and Luxembourg three days later.

Goalkeeper Rui Patricio has also been forced to withdraw from the squad after failing to recover from a head injury sustained playing for his club Wolverhampton.

He was replaced by Olympiakos goalkeeper Jose Sa. — AFP ■

## A new star is born': Malaysia celebrates Lee's All England win

LEE ZII JIA was hailed as a "hero" Monday after winning the All England Open and igniting Malaysia's hopes of success at the Tokyo Olympics, even without retired legend Lee Chong Wei.

The young Malaysian star defeated Denmark's Viktor Axelsen 30-29, 20-22, 21-9 Sunday to win the All England, one of the sport's most prestigious tournaments, for the first time.

On his way to victory, the 22-year-old also beat two-time world champion Kento Momota, who was returning to international action after being injured in a car crash in Malaysia last year.

"Well done Lee Zii Jia! You

are a national hero," Malaysian Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin posted on Facebook. "Use this victory as a catalyst to work harder and to become greater in future." The Star newspaper praised 10th-ranked Lee's victory as a "smashing breakthrough on the international stage", and declared: "A new star is born".

The win added to hopes that Malaysia has found a player to continue the country's success in badminton following the 2019 retirement of Lee Chong Wei.

The elder Lee was a three-time Olympic silver medallist and one of the greatest players of his generation.

Norza Zakaria, president of the Badminton Association of

Malaysia, praised Lee Zii Jia's victory as a "real achievement".

"It augurs well with our plan to bring in new young players after the retirement of Lee Chong Wei... and to maintain Malaysia's presence on the international stage as a powerhouse," he told AFP.

It came just months before the virus-delayed Tokyo Olympics but some Asian countries, notably powerhouse China, did not send players to the All England tournament. And Norza refused to be drawn on the younger Lee's chances at the Games.

"I don't want to pressure him. My advice to him is to stay grounded — it's a marathon, not a sprint." —AFP ■

## Olympics: Tokyo Games will not accept foreign volunteers in principle

THE Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic organizing committee said Monday it will not accept volunteers from overseas in principle as a precaution to stop the spread of the novel coronavirus.

Foreign volunteers with special skills necessary for the smooth running of the Olympics and Paralympics this summer may be allowed into Japan under special entry rules, organizing committee CEO Toshiro Muto said. Sources close to the matter said the exception could be made for around 500 volunteers. People whose roles cannot easily be performed by somebody living in Japan, such as experts in certain languages,

will be selected from a pool of roughly 2,000 volunteers living overseas. According to the organizers, foreign nationals made up roughly 10 per cent of a total 80,000 volunteers before the pandemic forced the one-year postponement of the games. The organizing bodies of the Olympics and Paralympics formally decided Saturday that the games will be staged without overseas spectators due to the pandemic.

The government will consider ways to permit the entry of the specialist volunteers from overseas. Japanese citizens living outside Japan are expected to be allowed to volunteer. — Kyodo News ■

## Juve's title hopes rocked as Milan keep pressure on Inter

JUVENTUS' hopes of winning a 10th consecutive Serie A title took another blow on Sunday with a 1-0 home loss to lowly Benevento as AC Milan closed the gap on leaders Inter Milan with a hard-fought 3-2 win at Fiorentina.

Adolfo Gaich scored the only goal in the 69th minute at Juve's Allianz Stadium following a bad pass across his own penalty area by midfielder Arthur. Andrea Pirlo's side stay third, 10 points behind Inter whose match against Sassuolo was postponed because of a Covid-19 outbreak at the league leaders.

Second-placed Milan are four points ahead of the reigning champions after they recovered from their Europa League exit to Manchester United by cutting the deficit to Inter to six points with a 3-2 win over Fiorentina.

For Juve, who have 11 games left to play this season, it was another blow after being dumped out of the Champions League at the last 16 stage by

Porto earlier this month. "We performed poorly, in every aspect," said Pirlo. "We have to continue to believe in the title. The objective does not change, it's the mindset which must." Serie A top scorer Cristiano Ronaldo, who has netted 23 times in the league this season, drew a blank in Turin a week after reaching 770 goals to beat Pele's all-time mark of 767, with Benevento goalkeeper Lorenzo Montipò pulling off a string of fine saves.

### Zlatan hails 'important' win

Benevento broke the deadlock following Arthur's horrendous pass across the face of goal towards Danilo, which allowed Gaich to pounce and score his second goal in five games since arriving on loan from CSKA Moscow. Montipò denied Ronaldo twice late on as Juve pushed for a leveller, first from close range with 10 minutes to go and again in the final minute, with Danilo sending the subsequent rebound over the bar. —AFP ■



Juventus' Portuguese forward Cristiano Ronaldo reacts during the Italian Serie A football match Juventus Turin vs Benevento on 21 March 2021 at the Juventus stadium in Turin. **PHOTO: AFP**