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THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

Vol. VIII, No. 29, 8th Waxing of Kason 1383 ME

www.gnlm.com.mm

Tuesday, 18 May 2021

Yadanabon Hall with facilities gives seats to 1,200 guests for holding various kinds of ceremonies as well as regional development tasks, market fests and international expositions: Senior General



State Administration Council Chairman Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and party are posing for the documentary group photo at the unveiling ceremony of the Yadanabon Hall in Mandalay on 17 May 2021.

THE ceremony to commission Yadanabon Hall in Mandalay into service aims to contribute to the growth of the State economy and the socio-economic development of the local people, hold economic, social, educational and cultural ceremonies, including State-level gala ceremonies, and polish the prestige of the city, said State Administration Council Chairman Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing at the in-

auguration of Yadanabon Hall in Mahaangmyay Township of Mandalay yesterday morning.

The Senior General unveiled the signboard of the hall and sprinkled scented water on the plaque.

Speaking on the occasion, the Senior General said that the newly-opened Yadanabon Hall is a building giving better services for economic, social and cultural sectors with enhancing the living standard of the local people from Mandalay and its environs.

Mandalay City, located in the centre of transportation, is a commercial hub in upper Myanmar with the economy's growth. Alinkakyawswa Sayagyi Myoma Nyein is a symbol of Mandalay. Sayagyi Myoma Nyein and Myoma Band are inseparable. The Senior General expressed thanks to Myoma Band for its entertainment at the ceremony.

In his tenure, King Mindon settled various persons in their respective plots under their jobs

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Yadanabon Hall is a building giving better services for economic, social and cultural sectors with enhancing the living standard of the local people from Mandalay and its environs.

Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Administration Council Nine Objectives

1. Political affairs

- (a) To build a Union based on democracy and federalism, through a disciplined and genuine multiparty democratic system that is fair and just.
- (b) To emphasize the achievement of enduring peace for the entire nation in line with the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA).
- (c) To continue implementing the principle of peaceful co-existence among countries through an independent, active and non-aligned foreign policy.

2. Economic affairs

- (a) To enhance production based on agriculture and livestock through modern techniques and strengthen all-round development in other sectors of the economy.

- (b) To develop a stable market economy and promote international investment in order to enhance the economic development of the entire National people.
- (c) To promote and support local businesses to create employment opportunities and increase domestic production.

3. Social affairs

- (a) To ensure a strong and dynamic Union spirit, the genuine spirit of patriotism.
- (b) To respect and promote the customs and traditions of all National peoples and preserve and safeguard their cultural heritage and national characteristics.
- (c) To enhance the health, fitness and education quality of the entire nation.

Five-Point Road Map of the State Administration Council

1. The Union Election Commission will be reconstituted and its mandated tasks, including the scrutiny of voter lists, shall be implemented in accordance with the law.
2. Effective measures will be taken with added momentum to prevent and manage the COVID-19 pandemic.
3. Actions will be taken to ensure the speedy recovery of businesses from the impact of COVID-19.
4. Emphasis will be placed on achieving enduring peace for the entire nation in line with the agreements set out in the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement.
5. Upon accomplishing the provisions of the state of emergency, free and fair multiparty democratic elections will be held in line with the 2008 Constitution, and further work will be undertaken to hand over State duties to the winning party in accordance with democratic standards.

Five special appeal cases for crime heard



THE special appeal court comprising Chief Justice of the Union U Tun Tun Oo and Supreme Court Judges U Myint Aung, U Kyi Thein, U Khin Maung Gyi and U Tin Hong heard five exceptional appeal cases for crime at office 1 of the Supreme Court of the Union at 9 am yesterday. —MNA

Tatmadaw provides treatment to over 200,000 outpatients

TATMADAW keep providing healthcare services for the patients at the military hospitals and temporary treatment regions and states.

The Tatmadaw medical teams comprising Tatmadaw doctors, specialists, medical assistants and nurses, have been giving medical treatments to the people to solve their difficulties in healthcare services. A total of 207,240 outpatients and 63,566 inpatients reached these hospitals from 5 February to date. Senior medical experts, med-

ics, medical assistants and nurses have conducted 9,682 major operations and 4,913 minor operations. The senior doctors gave intensive treatment the severe cases.

These hospitals managed for the birth of 12,412 babies to date. Of those, 5,014 cases are done in the caesarean section and 7,398 cases in ordinary delivery.

In addition to providing medical care to patients in need of hospitalization, Tatmadaw is making arrangements for the well-being of hospitalized patients and caregivers. —MNA

32 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 17 May, total figure rises to 143,097

MYANMAR'S COVID-19 positive cases rose to **143,097** after **32 new cases** were reported on 17 May 2021 according to the Ministry of Health and Sports. Among these confirmed cases, **132,123** have been discharged from hospitals. Death toll stands at 3,213 after one died. —MNA

It is necessary to manufacture sufficient products of foodstuffs at home . . .

IN undertaking the agriculture and livestock tasks in the country, animal feedstuffs are imported abroad for breeding farms. As raw agricultural products are abundant in the country for animal feedstuff production, sufficient production of the feedstuffs can reduce foreign exchange spending. It is necessary to manufacture sufficient products of foodstuffs at home to distribute the foodstuffs to the people at fair prices.

(Excerpt from the speech to the Management Committee meeting made by the Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Administration Council Chairman Senior General Min Aung Hlaing on 11 May 2021)

Yadanabon Hall with facilities gives seats to 1,200 ...

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and national names in four dimensions outside the royal palace. They were allowed to faith in their respective religions freely and build individual religious edifices. According to the data, Mandalay, the commercial hub of central and upper Myanmar, had a 1.4 million population, 93.8 per cent of whom were Buddhists, 0.6 per cent Christians, 0.8 per cent Hindus, four per cent Muslims and 0.8 per cent others.

The Senior General said it could be seen that Mandalay needed a great hall to give the best services with a larger capacity of guests, modernity and technical applications with many investments. Construction of the hall started on 17 February 2018 and completed on 30 November 2020. The hall decorated with Myanmar royal handcraft and modern designs is located on six acres of land at the 78th and 38th streets.

The Yadanabon Hall facilitated with the lift, escalator, sound effects, fire extinguishers, and security system can

give seats to 1,200 guests for holding the various kinds of ceremonies as well as regional development tasks, market fests and international expositions.

The land of 38th street close to the newly-opened Yadanabon Hall was owned by the military in the past. In his tenure as the Senior General, the Tatmadaw handed over the land to the Mandalay City Development Committee to construct the road to be used for the people. Likewise, a cantonment area owned by the Tatmadaw near the World Treasury Bank was handed over for construction of 117th street because local people detoured the cantonment along Yangon-Mandalay highway from the Myothit near Kywehsekan Industrial Zone-2. Moreover, as Phonetawtoe Ward, where 611 houses of 789 households are located near Mandalay Hill is situated in the Cantonment area, the land was handed to Mandalay Region government for the sake of the local people and region. Such act contributed to improve living standards of



State Administration Council Chairman Senior General Min Aung Hlaing is addressing at the unveiling ceremony of the Yadanabon Hall in Mandalay on 17 May 2021.

the people, urban development and smooth transportation, and the layout of the town plan.

Construction of infrastructures in Mandalay City will help the local people hold the various kinds of ceremonies on a grand scale and contribute towards the improvement of the nation and all-round development of

the people. The Council will strive for ensuring the economic and educational development of the region in its short term

the construction of Yadanabon Hall and its services.

Chairman of Mandalay Region Administration Council U

The Council will strive for ensuring the economic and educational development of the region in its short term period of the State of Emergency.



State Administration Council Chairman Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and party are making a tour in the Yadanabon Hall.

period of the State of Emergency. As Mandalay is engaged in the cultivation of bean, sesame and chilli, including perennial crops, production of textile including embroidery and silk ware, livestock farming and local product-based industries, efforts should be made for the production of value-added products based on agricultural and livestock breeding products.

Projects Director U Khin Maung Soe of Myanmar Economic Corporation reported on

Maung Ko thanked the Council for constructing a grand hall for Mandalay and the Senior General for allowing the construction of roads on the military-owned lands.

The Myoma Band performed entertainments of dances and songs to the audience. The Senior General presented gifts and cash award to the band.

The Senior General and party visited the Yadanabon Hall. — MNA

Participation of education staff and administrative bodies will ease tensions of students in learning: Senior General



State Administration Council Chairman Senior General Min Aung Hlaing meets the Mandalay Region Administration Council members and departmental personnel in Mandalay on 17 May 2021.

STATE Administration Council Chairman Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing yesterday met members of Mandalay Region Administration Council and departmental personnel at the office of Mandalay Region Council Office.

Mandalay Region Administration Council Chairman U Maung Ko reported to the Senior General on social and economic affairs, health and regional development tasks undertaken in Mandalay Region, the progress of COVID-19 vaccination, and general matters. Chairman of Mandalay City Development Committee Mayor U Kyaw Hsan reported on under-

takings of development tasks, electrification, water supply and future tasks.

Speaking on occasion, the Senior General recognized that Mandalay City gains all-round development after having progress for the last ten years. Public participation is of importance in undertaking municipal tasks for sanitation and the beautifying of the city.

With regard to the underground water supply, the Senior General urged officials not to tap the underground water as much as possible and pump the water from Ayeyawady and Myitnge rivers for consumption. The electricity that will need in implementing the river water

pumping projects must be applied through the solar system. As Mandalay Region faces 68 per cent of rice sufficiency, local people buy rice outside the city. Paddy must be cultivated with increasing per-acre yield and cultivation of summer paddy to have 40 per cent of rice sufficiency based on the purchase of rice outside the city.

Moreover, the Senior General stressed the need to set motorcycle ways on local roads and disseminate agricultural knowledge for increasing per-acre yields of crops.

The Senior General noted that the literacy campaigns must be drawn to solve the education problems for teaching

3-Rs education to those who never learned. Currently, the State Administration Council is striving to reopen basic education schools while some unscrupulous persons are committing the disturbance not to reopen the schools through ways and means. All need to solve the losses caused by brainless persons without focusing on the interests of the State, and these losses were not based on natural disasters. The participation of education staff and administrative bodies will ease the tensions of students in learning. If the education sector lagged behind the development, it would cause much loss to the State in the long run.

The Senior General discussed the establishment of agriculture and livestock institutes, colleges and universities in the long term plan.

The Council will strive for improvement of the sports sectors of the country. A plan is underway to forge the nationalistic spirit through success in sports. As such, the Senior General instructed officials to build the stadiums comprising 400 metres tracks in regions and states as well as townships.

Then, the Senior General and party inspected Bahtoo Stadium in Chanayethazan Township and instructed officials to upgrade the stadium. — MNA

State Administration Council Press Release Re-invitation to Myanmar citizens who arrive in various regions for many reasons

1. Some student youths, State service personnel and citizens, evaded to areas of EAOs and foreign countries with worries because of incitement and intimidation of NLD members, the extremists who support that party, CRPH unlawful association, incitement of CDM and persons and organizations at home and abroad not wishing to restore peace and stability of the State since after 1 February 2021 when the Tatmadaw assumed the State responsibility.
2. They are further worried about the dictatorship statement and speeches of CRPH unlawful association and some relevant persons. As they face no security guarantee and difficulties in socio-economic life in their areas, they wish to return to their native lands.
3. As those who evaded from their native areas are also citizens, the State Administration Council will arrange their returns from evaded areas to various regions of Myanmar.
4. Information was released that if those who evaded to various areas except the persons who committed any kinds of crime wish to return to their native lands in Myanmar of their own accord, the citizens abroad are to contact nearby ward, village, township and district administration bodies and relevant embassies, military attaché offices and consulates without facing action taken in accord with the law.

Information Team
State Administration Council

Every Tatmadaw member must take training to be healthy and strong, follow military discipline and order for capacity building: Senior General



State Administration Council Chairman Senior General Min Aung Hlaing is greeting the officers and other ranks from the Thabeikkyin Station yesterday.

THE Tatmadaw's main duty is to defend the State, and academic and skill training, as well as suitable training for respective ranks, are being given at respective training schools for the capacity building of every Tatmadaw member. And they need to serve dutifully as good soldiers in shouldering their duties, said State Administration Council Chairman Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing in meeting with officers and other ranks from Thabeikkyin Station and trainees from the local advanced military training depot yesterday afternoon.

Speaking on occasion, the Senior General said when it comes to Tatmadaw training, such training courses are be-

ing conducted to promote the capacity of individual soldiers and to ensure that they are fully skilled and qualified in serving their duties. The Tatmadaw's advanced military training depots are upgrading the skills of soldiers individually and in groups. Only if they can study the skills being taught during the course in a systematic manner, will they be able to apply them correctly in a practical field. Without enough strength in serving battlefield duties, they will not be able to perform their tasks dutifully. By undergoing correct training in individuals and groups, they need to stay as healthy and robust as they should as Tatmadawmen, the Senior General stressed.

Speaking about the soldiers

and the Tatmadaw trying to become skilled and qualified, the Senior General said every Tatmadaw member is voluntarily serving in the Tatmadaw with their noble aim of protecting the State and the people without persuasion from anyone. As the skills and knowledge taught by the training schools are mainly theoretical, they should try to come to terms with the difficulties facing on the ground with their own initiatives. They need to review the difficulties they are facing and use their initiatives and wisdom to overcome them. Being able to do this requires knowledge, so they need to read knowledgeable books in their spare time. Discipline is the backbone of the Tatmadaw, and they must follow the disci-

pline even in small things. They must follow the rules and disciplines adopted for the capacity building of individuals and their respective military units and act correctly. As they can work only when they are healthy, every soldier must train to be healthy and robust and endure hard work.

Speaking about the country's political changes, the Senior General said that Tatmadaw had to take over State responsibilities as entrusted by the Pro Tem President due to the political situations. The Tatmadaw officially and legally requested those responsible for resolving massive vote-rigging in the 2020 multiparty democracy election. But there was no solution, and what's more, there were attempts to grab State power.

Consequently, the country has reached such a situation. The Tatmadaw is assuming State responsibilities just temporarily as the call for a demand. It is necessary to understand that the Tatmadaw is just controlling the country according to the 2008 Constitution. Except for seven townships with martial law imposition, other townships are under civilian rule. They are going with the government administrative machinery. So, everyone needs to shoulder their duties assigned. As the Tatmadaw is part of the State and the people, they must try to live and act as good soldiers trying their best to serve the interests of the country and the people, the Senior General commented. — MNA



Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice-CCPCJ holds 30th meeting

THE Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice-CCPCJ held its 30th meeting in Vienna of Austria yesterday afternoon through videoconferencing, attended by Deputy Director-General U Kyaw Kyaw Naing of the Office of the Attorney-General of the Union.

Representatives of the global countries also attended the meeting organized by UNODC.

It will last from 17 to 21 May to focus on preventive procedures depending on crime, practical works and cooperation measures. — MNA

State Administration Council Member Lt-Gen Soe Htut, Union Ministers from relevant ministries meet local authorities

UNION Minister for Home Affairs Lt-Gen Soe Htut, State Administration Council member, currently in Mandalay, met civil servants from Mandalay Region General Administration Department, administrators from townships and wards in Mandalay district at the meeting hall of the Mandalay Region Administration Council office yesterday afternoon.

At first, U Myint Lwin, the commissioner of Mandalay Region, clarified the department's progress with the help of PowerPoint, and those present put forward reports on administrative matters to be fulfilled. After hearing the reports, the Union Minister gave directions to necessary tasks.

Similarly, Dr Nyunt Pe, Union Minister for Education, met district education officers, township education officers and school heads from Mandalay



Region at the meeting hall of No 16 Basic Education High School in Chanayethazan Township. The Union minister explained the reopening of schools men-

tioning that CDM teachers can get back to work. Then he attends to the needs after hearing the reports.

Likewise, Dr Thet Khaing

Win, Union Minister for Health and Sports, met officials from 550-bed children's hospital and 300-bed teaching hospital in Chanayethazan Township.

The Union minister urged officials and staff to carry out healthcare tasks in full swing and follow the rules of civil servants.

He also mentioned that actions would be taken against those threatening the health workers not to go to work and inspected the construction site to extend the 550-bed children's hospital.

Similarly, U Maung Maung Ohn, Union Minister for Hotels and Tourism, visited Pullman Hotel and inspected preparatory tasks for reopening the hotel according to the directives issued by the ministry. The Union minister gave necessary instructions after being conducted by the officials inside the hotel.

The hotel has 368 rooms where national-level ceremonies, international ceremonies and meetings can be held on a grand scale. —MNA

Union Minister Dr Pwint San conducts field visit to Magway Region

UNION Minister for Commerce Dr Pwint San conducted a field visit to the domestic production sector sites and facilitated trade in Magway Region on 15 May.

First, officials from Good Brothers Company explained the establishment of a cattle-breeding farm in Yae Pyae village, Myothit Township, Magway District.

Next, Union Minister Dr Pwint San discussed preparing necessary arrangements in order to facilitate the flow of goods and foreign trade, export agricultural products and cattle to foreign countries, have food safety and necessary health recommendations for cattle export, and systematically obtain relevant certificates.

The Union Minister also called for disseminating tech-

nology and support to those who want to carry out modern livestock farming in the region.

Next, Union Minister Dr Pwint San visited the Amay Htwar groundnut oil mill in Magway. The Union Minister said that he would make arrangements to support the improvement of domestically produced oil.

Afterwards, the Union Minister and party met with traders and industrialists in Magway Region.

First, the Magway Region Administration Council Member (2) stated that the production of oilseeds like sesame, the plans to establish livestock breeding zones, and further plans to develop livestock farming and manufacture value-added local products of



Magway Industrial Zone were discussed. Next, Magway Region Chairman of the Chambers of Commerce and Industry and members of the association stated processes of agricultural products being exported to the Muse border and issues

of regional trade and flow of goods and finding methods to grow more oilseeds in the oil industry were also discussed.

Then, Union Minister Dr Pwint San coordinated the necessary measures to increase

the production of oilseeds.

Next, the Union Minister and party visited the Sesame Powder Mill of the Myay Latt Thar General Trading Cooperative Society in Magway and coordinated the necessary matters. —MNA/ GNLM

Training courses to polish skills of staff officers, senior auditors



ACCOUNTS proficiency courses are conducted in line with the

human resource development programme of the Office of the

Auditor-General of the Union under the guidance of the State Administration Council Chairman in order to understand and apply the economics and law subjects, said Auditor-General of the Union Dr Kan Zaw at the ceremony to open the staff officer refresher course 1/2021 and senior auditors' capacity building course 36 yesterday.

The training courses were

organized at the hall of the Office of the Auditor-General of the Union through a virtual system.

The Auditor-General of the Union stressed the need for the trainees to notice that they all are service personnel. The Public Service Personnel Law, handbook and rules prescribe entitlements, duties and social security for service personnel meeting the international stand-

ard. He urged them to stay away from party politics as they are service personnel. He called for serving the duty to accomplish the plans adopted for the State, citizen and government.

A total of 109 trainees are attending the staff officer refresher course and 58 at the senior auditors' capacity building course 36. The courses last for two months till 16 July. —MNA

73rd Tipitakadhara Tipitakakovida Selection Examination held in Yangon

THE opening ceremony for the 73rd Tipitakadhara Tipitakakovida Selection Examination was held at Wizaya Mingala Dhamma Thabin Hall of the Kaba Aye Hill in Yangon yesterday morning.

The event was attended by State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee Sayadaws led by Chairman Abhidhaja Maha Rattha Guru Abhidhaja Agga Maha Saddhamma Jotika Bhamo Sayadaw Dr Bhaddanta Kumara Bhivamsa, Sayadaws of Tipitakadhara Tipitakakovida Selection Board, Members of the Sangha, Union Minister for Religious Affairs and Culture U Ko Ko, Chairman of Yangon Region Administration Council U Hla Soe, Deputy Minister for Religious Affairs and Culture U Tun Ohn, the permanent secretary of the ministry and other departmental officials.



First, the congregation led by Union Minister U Ko Ko received the Five Precepts from Chairman of Tipitakadhara Tipitakakovida Selection Board Hlinethaya Township Sasana Gonyee Monastery Sayadaw Abhidhaja Maha Rattha Guru Bhaddanta Pannissara Bhivamsa,

and listened to the Parittas recited by Members of the Sangha.

Afterwards, Chairman Sayadaw of State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee delivered an Ovadakatha, followed by the Union Minister supplicating religious matters.

The Union Minister and officials donated cash and offertories to members of the Sangha and the congregation listened to the sermon delivered by Yangon Region Thanlyin Minkyaung Pahtamapyan monastery Sayadaw Agga Maha Pandita Bhaddanta Candima Bhivamsa, and

shared the merits they gained.

In the afternoon, the 73rd Tipitakadhara Tipitakakovida Selection Examination was held at the ordination hall of the Maha Pasana Cave, where the Union Minister donated K300,000 as nine prerequisites each to ten Sayadaws.

The Tipitakadhara Tipitakakovida Selection Examination has been annually held since 1310 Myanmar era. During the 72 exams, the number of Tipitakadhara Tipitakakovida recipient Sayadaws was 15 in total and there were 7 members of the Sangha who fully passed the oral recitation of Tipitaka and its written test.

The 73rd Tipitakadhara Tipitakakovida Selection Examination with the participation of a total of 171 monks will go on until 21st May. — MNA

Teachers urged to teach pupils without discrimination



THE Ministry of Education will accept teachers who delayed joining their jobs for various

reasons within six months, said Union Minister for Education Dr Nyunt Pe in meeting educa-

tion officers at different levels and school heads of basic education schools in Mandalay Re-

gion at No 16 Basic Education High School in Chanayethazan Township yesterday.

The Union minister invited education families to report their difficulties. He noted that as the prestige of teachers is the noblest, they have to accept the concept of the perpetual teacher to turn out good and able generations for the State. He reminded the teachers to teach pupils without discrimination by giving an equal term of rights.

Education officers and school heads reported on requirements of teachers, build-

ings and libraries. The Union minister attended to the needs.

The Union minister met faculty members from universities and colleges under the Department of Higher Education at Mandalay University on 16 May, calling for managing education families under the disciplines and inviting the reports on requirements of their institutions.

The faculty members reported on completed tasks and tasks underway, infrastructures and academic matters. The Union minister fulfilled their needs. — MNA

MoSWRR holds meeting on implementation of temporarily-halted works

THE meeting on the implementation of temporarily-stopped works of Social Welfare Department affected by COVID-19 was held at the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement office yesterday.

Present at the meeting were Union Minister Dr Thet Thet Khine for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement, the deputy minister, the permanent secretary, the directors-general, the deputy permanent secretary, the deputy directors-general, the assistant secretary and the directors.

At the outset, the Union Minister said projects are of importance with regard to the

implementation of the ministry's temporarily-stopped works affected by COVID-19. Plans are underway to open the pre-primary schools according to the social distancing directed by the Ministry of Health and Sports. The Union Minister also mentioned that COVID-19 rules ought to be discussed. The reporting system is also important. Now the monsoon climate has already set in. Thus the disaster management department can gather the information that can be predicted in advance to be able to prepare for the disaster. For instance, in case of danger, it is necessary how to carry out awareness pro-

grammes extensively.

Next, the deputy minister also said that particular emphasis should be placed on further tasks to be carried out and the opening of private schools.

With regard to the further tasks of the Social Welfare Department to be carried out, the relevant officials explained the amendment to the formation of the Myanmar National Committee for Women's Affairs, prevention of the violence against women, the implementation of a national-level strategic project on the development of women, plans to reopen seven schools of the disabled and private disa-



bled vocational training schools, a draft of child care policy, the plans to carry out the tasks of youth affairs, preparatory measures for reopening of pre-primary schools with the use of

PowerPoint.

Afterwards, those present discussed and coordinated the matters followed by the instructions of the Union Minister and the deputy minister. —MNA

Loans, capital in agricultural sector to launch operations

THOSE who participate in the agricultural sector also need the loans as capital or investment for doing their businesses. In this regard, farmers operate cultivation of crops while operators wish to give their services for farmlands with the use of agricultural machinery. Meanwhile, businesspersons are engaging in trading of crops, milling of rice, beans and other crops and processing of fruits. Producers emphasize manufacturing of value-added agricultural products, whereas exporters are eager

But we all need to seek the best way how to spend the loans on such an industry. Hence, all should not need to forget the best way for the best performances.

to send out the agricultural products to domestic and international markets. They all wish to seek loans for operating their businesses as well as extending their work establishments. That is why it can be said that the loan is of great importance for the persons who join the agricultural sector.

In successive government tenures, the authorities have managed the disbursement of agricultural loans not only for paddy but also for other crops. In fact, such an amount of loans could be spent only on the expenditure of land preparations and the purchase of a small number of agricultural inputs. Farmers could not spend the loan on effective work plans.

Moreover, businesspersons also wish to seek loans to operate their small-scale industries related to the production of agricultural products and expand their works. But they faced hindrances to seeking the loans.

We need to encourage the farmers and those related to the agricultural sector to improve their living standard and businesses. Only when they meet development will the agricultural sector improve.

Authorities need to analyze the root cause of somebody who was difficult to pay back the loans to the departments concerned, how to spend the loans and how to overcome the challenges in spending the loans. We should conduct the surveys on needs, difficulties and hindrances to the development of the agricultural sector.

All participants in the agricultural sector should seek the best answer for their respective works in seeking and spending the loans. The loans should be spent on the agricultural sector in a correct way. But we all need to seek the best way how to spend the loans on such an industry. Hence, all should not need to forget the best way for the best performances.

Despite half million death toll, misinformation still fueling concerns

False claims that COVID-19 vaccines can cause infertility are discouraging Americans from receiving the shots and leaving health professionals to persuade patients that scare stories they have read online are unfounded.

AMONG the worst examples of such misinformation spread on Facebook are that immunized men can render unvaccinated women sterile through sex, that 97 per cent of vaccine recipients will become infertile and that the jabs could be “sterilizing an entire generation”.

With vaccine uptake already slowing, the claims are a threat to the Biden administration’s goal of achieving herd immunity in the US. Research published earlier in May showed about two-thirds of those who said they will “definitely not” get a vaccine were worried about the impact on their fertility.

Vaccine may negatively impact

And about half of unvaccinated people say they are concerned “the COVID-19 vaccine may negatively impact their fertility in the future”, Ashley Kirzinger, associate director of public opinion

and survey research at Kaiser Family Foundation, a health policy nonprofit that conducted the study, told AFP. Some 50 per cent of women and 47 per cent of men aged 18 to 49 who had not yet been vaccinated say they have such fears.

The initial exclusion of pregnant women from COVID-19 vaccine trials created space for falsehoods, and the latest effort by anti-vaccine groups coincides with fewer people stepping forward for inoculations.

“They are largely just recycling things that scare people about previous vaccines onto these new vaccines, whether or not it makes scientific sense,” said Devon Greyson, health communications professor at the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

The messages are targeting women because “fertility is just one of those things that we



Oliver Comfort, 12, gets a shot of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine at the First Baptist Church of Pasadena Friday, May 14, 2021, in Pasadena, California, the US. PHOTO: GLOBAL TIMES/XINHUA

react so strongly to, and it’s so personal,” Greyson added. “So if you’re looking for a bogeyman, ‘It will make you infertile’ is a really

good one.” **Concerns about fertility** Katharine O’Connell White, associate professor of obstet-

rics and gynecology at Boston University School of Medicine, agreed, saying that “concerns about fertility with the vaccines

strike at the heart of what it means to be a woman, for a lot of women.”

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, the American Society for Reproductive Medicine, and the Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine said in a joint statement that “there is no evidence that the vaccine can lead to loss of fertility.”

Despite more than half a million Americans dead from COVID-19, vaccine hesitancy persists and it has left physicians having to assure patients that their fears about not being able to have children are misplaced.

“I tell my patients all the time, print out whatever you find that makes you nervous, makes you scared. And let’s talk about it,” White said.

But most vaccine skeptics do not believe their doctor or do not seek their advice.

SOURCE: AFP

Indian Covid variant sparks concern, and questions

The coronavirus strain first linked to the Covid epidemic in India has now spread to at least 44 countries and been classified as a “variant of concern”, but health authorities still know relatively little about it.

SPOTTED for the first time in October 2020 in India, it this week joined the British, South African and Brazilian variants in the World Health Organization’s (WHO) highest threat category.

Here is what we do and do not know about the strain. **One variant or three?**

The name “Indian variant” describes a strain – B.1.617 – that in fact groups together three distinct subvariants sharing some, but not all, of several mutations.

Two of the three have been detected in dozens of countries around the world, while the third has not spread much beyond India.

The WHO said on Tuesday that although there “may be important differences among the three sublineages”, there is currently not enough evidence to tease out individual classifications, so it grouped them together as a single “variant of concern”.

More transmissible?

In India, where the number of officially-recorded Covid-19 deaths has passed a quarter of a million, there are suspicions that this new variant may have accelerated the virus spread.

But it is more complicated than that, according to the WHO. It said there were potentially several factors driving the exploding epidemic, including variants that could be more transmissible; religious or political mass gatherings that increased social mixing; and reduced use of public health measures.

“The exact contributions of each of these factors on increased transmission in India are not well understood,” it said.

However, it did say that the three sublineages “appear to have higher rates of transmission”. They have been observed, for example, to spread more rapidly in other countries once they gain a foothold.

Other health bodies around the world have also warned about signs of heightened contagion. **Greater transmissibility**

Indeed, all three subvariants contain a pair of mutations associated with greater transmissibility. In a report released on Thursday, Public Health England looked at one of the sublineages – B.1.617.2 – which has “grown rapidly in England”, with more than 1,300 cases identified across the United Kingdom.

It said this version of the coronavirus is “at least as transmissible” as the so-called English variant, which itself is faster-spreading than earlier versions.

But assessments of transmissibility depends a lot on who is and is not being tested.

The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control has warned that targeted genetic testing of travellers from India may have caused an “overrepresentation” of the Indian variant in the UK and the EU surveillance.

More dangerous? The ECDC says there is no information available on the severity of symptoms caused by the Indian variant.

There is also only very limited data on how well the variant evades the body’s immune response, and the WHO says the potential impact on vaccine efficacy and the risk of re-infection remains unclear.

A recent study that has not yet been peer reviewed noted a reduction in the efficacy of BioNTech/Pfizer and Moderna vaccines

on the B.1.617.1 sublineage.

This sublineage has a mutation to the virus’ spike protein, E484Q, that is similar to the one found in the South African and Brazilian variants, both of which are suspected of leading to reduced vaccine efficacy and an increased risk of re-infection.

But the ECDC points to small studies suggesting that B.1.617.1 can be neutralised by monoclonal antibodies, as well as blood plasma from previously infected or vaccinated people.

It said there was no data for the second sublineage, which does not include the E484Q mutation.

So far “we are pretty confident overall that the vaccines generally will be covering this variant”, Marco Cavaleri, the European Medicines Agency head of vaccine strategy, said this week. But faced with a host of uncertainties over the variant’s impact on the virus itself and how this affects public health measures, the WHO said further robust studies are “urgently needed”.

SOURCE: AFP



Frontline workers wait to be inoculated with the Covid-19 coronavirus vaccine at a mass vaccination camp in Chennai on 20 March 2021. PHOTO: AFP/ARUN SANKAR

MYANMAR GAZETTE

Heads of Service Organizations transferred, confirmed and appointed

- 1 The State Administration Council has transferred and appointed Dr Khin Malar Tun, Rector of University of Computer Studies (Patheingyi), Higher Education Department, Ministry of Education, as Rector of Hpa-an University of Computer Studies (Hpa-an) of Higher Education Department from the date she assumes charge of her duties.
- 2 The State Administration Council has confirmed the appointment of Dr Thein Soe as Managing Director of No. 1 Mining Enterprise under the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation on the expiry of the one-year probationary period.
- 3 The State Administration Council has appointed Dr Than Than Myint, Deputy Director-General of the Monitoring and Evaluation Team (Education) under the Ministry of Education, as Director-General of the Monitoring and Evaluation Team (Research) under the Ministry of Education on probation from the date she assumes charge of her duties.

Public information

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

Phone numbers: 01 830 1975, 01 830 2175
Yangon Region Administration Council

သတင်းစာစတင်ပြည့်သူများအနေဖြင့် မြန်မာ့အလင်း ကြော်ငြာ
The Global New Light of Myanmar ရောင်းချသတင်းစာများ မှာယူပတ်ဝတ်စုံခြင်းနှင့် သတင်းစာများရောက်ရှိမှု မရှိခြင်းတို့ကြောင့် အခက်အခဲများဖြစ်ပေါ်ပါက အောက်ဖော်ပြပါ ဖုန်းနံပါတ်များသို့ ဆက်သွယ်နိုင်ပါသည်-

> သတင်းစာအယ်ဒီတာချုပ်(ရုံးချုပ်)၊ နေပြည်တော်	> ကိုယ်ပွားသတင်းစာတိုက်(စစ်တွေ)
ဖုန်း-၀၆၇-၃၅၁၂၀၀၊ ၀၆-၄၀၀၀၀၁၆၂	ဖုန်း-၀၄၃-၂၀၂၅၀၆၁၊ ၀၄၃-၂၀၂၅၀၆၀
> နေပြည်တော်သတင်းစာတိုက်(ဧရာဝတီမြို့နယ်)	> ကိုယ်ပွားသတင်းစာတိုက်(တောင်ကြီး)
ဖုန်း-၀၆၇-၃၆၁၀၇၁၊ ၀၆-၄၂၀၇၀၆၈၆၇	ဖုန်း-၀၈၁-၂၁၂၁၀၆၄
> မြန်မာ့အလင်းသတင်းစာတိုက်(ရန်ကင်း)	> ကိုယ်ပွားသတင်းစာတိုက်(မကွေး)
ဖုန်း-၀၁-၉၅၄၄၅၃၅၊ ၀၉-၄၄၀၀၄၂၁၁၄	ဖုန်း-၀၆၃-၂၀၂၅၀၆၂
> နေပြည်တော်သတင်းစာတိုက်(မန္တလေး)	> ကိုယ်ပွားသတင်းစာတိုက်(ကချင်)
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> The Global New Light of Myanmar (ရန်ကင်း)	> ကိုယ်ပွားသတင်းစာတိုက်(ကလေး)
ဖုန်း-၀၁-၉၆၀၄၅၃၅၊ ၀၉-၉၈၃၉၂၅၅၅၁	ဖုန်း-၀၇၃-၂၀၂၅၀၆၃
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> ကိုယ်ပွားသတင်းစာတိုက်(မော်လမြိုင်)	> ကိုယ်ပွားသတင်းစာတိုက်(ရန်ကင်း)
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၂၀၂၁ ခုနှစ်အတွက် အချိန်ပြန်လှည့်ခြင်းနှင့် မြန်မာ့အလင်း ကြော်ငြာ
GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR သတင်းစာစတင်ပြည့်သူများ

Files opened against health staff who participated in CDM activity with attempts to deteriorate peace and stability of the State











THE following nurses have been charged under Section 505-A of the Penal Code for inciting State service personnel and health staff to participate in CDM activities, themselves participating in it, supporting CDM activities and CRPH unlawful association with the aim of deteriorating the State administrative machinery.

v	Name	Hospital	Address	Section of Penal Code	Photo
1	Daw Aye Aye Soe (Senior Nurse)	Pyinmana Hospital	Toungoo Town, Bago Region	505-a	
2	Daw Khin Shwe Sint (Senior Nurse)	Aungban Station Hospital	Aungban Town, Shan State (South)	505-a	
3	Daw Sint Sint Win (Senior Nurse)	Taninthayi Hospital	Taninthayi Town, Taninthayi Region	505-a	
4	Daw Ann Seng Kong (Senior nurse)	Kutkai Hospital	Kutkai Town, Shan State (North)	505-a	
5	Daw Thet Htar Wai (Senior Nurse)	Zalun Hospital	Zalun Town, Ayeyawady Region	505-a	
6	Daw Wint Wah Htwe (Nurse)	Waw Hospital	Waw Town, Bago Region	505-a	
7	Daw Ei Zin Phyoo (Nurse)	Ponwoe Station Hospital	Momeik Town, Kachin State	505-a	
8	Daw Nway Thazin Hlaing (Nurse)	Myeik Hospital	Taninthayi Town, Taninthayi Region	505-a	
9	Daw Ohmar Than (Nurse)	Mohnyin Hospital	Mohnyin Town, Kachin State		
10	Daw Su Myat Kyaw (Nurse)	Mawlamyine Hospital	Mawlamyine Town, Mon State	505-a	

As tasks are being carried out to arrest those nurses charged, people are urged to inform nearby police station about these persons and action will be taken against the the persons who admitted them under the law for the supporting those nurse who participated in CDM and CRPH activities. -MNA

Files opened against education staff who participated in CDM activity with attempts to deteriorate peace and stability of the State

THE following teachers have been charged under Section 505-A of the Penal Code for inciting State service personnel and education staff to participate in CDM activities, themselves participating in it, supporting CDM activities and CRPH unlawful association with the aim of deteriorating the State administrative machinery.

Sri	Name	Occupation	Address	Section of Penal Code	Photo
1	U Myo Min Ko	Lecturer, Maubin University, Maubin Town	Maubin Town, Ayeyawady Region	505-a	
2	Daw Ei Ei Myint	Assistant Lecturer, Myitkyina University, Myitkyina Town	Myitkyina Town, Kachin State	505-a	
3	U Chan Tha	Assistant Engineer, Myitkyina University, Myitkyina Town	Myitkyina Town, Kachin State	505-a	
4	U Thiha Kyaw	Assistant Engineer, Myitkyina University, Myitkyina Town	Myitkyina Town, Kachin State	505-a	
5	Daw Thae Su Hlaing	Deputy Tutor, Agricultural Institute (Pyinmana), Pyinmana Town	Meiktila Town, Mandalay Region	505-a	
6	Daw Estar Lynn Hton Ewl	Assistant (Field), Agricultural Institute (Pyinmana), Pyinmana Town	Mindat Town, Chin State	505-a	
7	U Sithu Aung	Deputy Assistant Supervisor, Office of Township Education Officer, Indaw Town	Indaw Town, Sagaing Region	505-a	
8	U Nay Lin Aung	Headmaster, BEPS (Thaegon), Letpadan Township	Letpadan Town, Bago Region	505-a	
9	Daw Aye Aye San	Senior Assistant Teacher, BEHS-1, Bago Town	Bago Town, Bago Region	505-a	
10	U Pyae Phyoo Kyaw	Junior Assistant Teacher, BEHS (Thazinyegyaw), Nyaungdon Township	Nyaungdon Township, Ayeyawady Region	505-a	

As tasks are being carried out to arrest those education staff charged, people are urged to inform nearby police stations about those education staff, action will be taken against the persons under the law for admitting those education staff. -MNA

Myanmar rice export down by US\$ 30 mln in seven months of this FY

MYANMAR has exported over 1.28 million tonnes of rice and broken rice as of 7 May this financial year (2020-2021), generating US\$490.45 million, stated the Ministry of Commerce.

However, Myanmar rice export has dropped by 512,589 tonnes in the seven months of this FY compared to last year. The export value of rice has also declined by \$33.92 million this FY.

According to an announcement of the Ministry of Commerce, the volume of rice and broken rice between 1 October and 7 May in the last financial year 2019-2020 reached over 1.79 million tonnes, worth \$524.4 million. The country exported over 700,000 tonnes of rice, generating an income of \$198.870 million and over 500,000 tonnes of broken rice, earning \$191.584 million this FY.

China is the primary buyer of Myanmar rice. The Philippines, Côte d'Ivoire and Cameroon and

Guinea are the second, third, fourth and fifth largest buyers of Myanmar rice, respectively.

Countries in the European Union account for over 20 per cent of Myanmar's rice exports. In comparison, 25 per cent of the rice produced by the nation goes to African countries. Myanmar mainly exports broken rice to Belgium, followed by Indonesia, China, UK, and the Netherlands.

Last FY, Myanmar exported rice and broken rice to more than 60 countries worldwide. China is the largest buyer of rice from Myanmar. However, demand from the Philippines, Malaysia, Madagascar, Poland, Guinea, Belgium, Senegal, Indonesia, the Netherlands, and the UK has risen through the years.

Around 16 per cent of exports are conducted at the border while the remaining is exported by sea. — ZYA/GNLM



Myanmar has exported over 1.28 million tonnes of rice and broken rice as of 7 May this financial year (2020-2021), generating US\$490.45 million.

YGEA attempts to control gold price under special investigation team

YANGON Region Gold Entrepreneurs Association (YGEA) made an effort to stabilize the gold price as per the instructions of the special investigation team.

During the investigation period, some social media users reportedly shared unidentified fake news referencing mainstream news media to intentionally damage the association's reputation. That info and the fake news are not associated with the association, and the YGEA is not liable

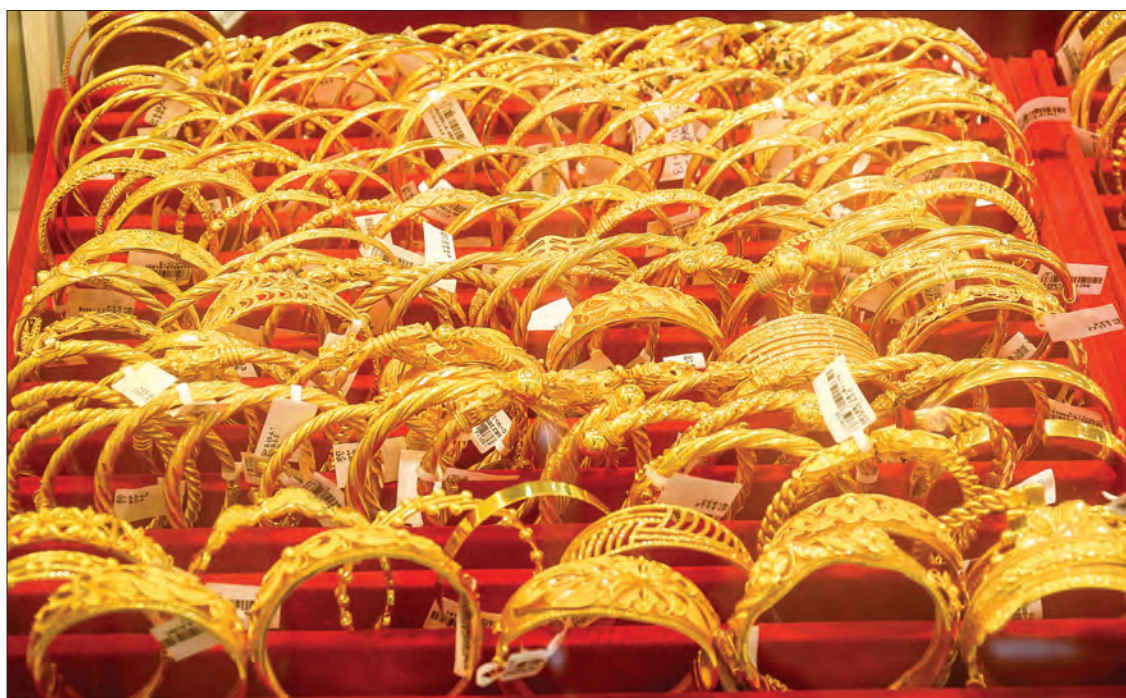
for any problem incurred. They are subject to those users who shared the fake news, according to the YGEA's notification dated 17 May.

At present, YGEA has restricted buying from regions and state other than Yangon. Additionally, YGEA has urged the members to run cash only for the gold transaction.

Moreover, the illegal importers and the person who practises overtrading with negligence will face serious legal action.

On 12 May, the price of precious yellow metal hit the all-time highest of K1,709,000 per tical (0.578 ounces, or 0.016 kilograms) in history. The pure gold price has decreased to K1,595,000 per tical on 17 May, dropping significantly by K110,000 per tical within a week.

Meanwhile, international gold price stood at US\$1,852 per ounce on 17 May. The dollar exchange rate against Kyat is valued at K1,675. — NN/GNLM



The pure gold price has decreased to K1,595,000 per tical on 17 May, dropping significantly by K110,000 per tical within a week.

Sino-Myanmar bilateral trade exceeds US\$4.85 bln in five months

THE value of Myanmar's trade with China through maritime and sea trade channels totalled over US\$4.85 billion in October and February of the 2020-2021 financial year, including \$2.54 billion worth of exports and \$2.3 billion for import, according to data released by the Ministry of Commerce.

Myanmar primarily exports agro products to China through the border gates. However, the trade of agricultural products is frequently halted on account of China clamping down on illegal trade at the border checkpoint. Furthermore, China has been stepping up border control measures to contain the spread of the COVID-19, hindering the border trade at present.

In a bid to lower trade barriers and offer relief to Myanmar traders through the border trade channel, the Ministry of Commerce, the related depart-

ments and the Republic of the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry have been negotiating with China counterparts.

The two countries are making efforts to set up more border economic cooperation zones and promote border trade.

The value of bilateral trade with China stood at \$12 billion in the 2019-2020FY, \$11.36 billion in the 2018-2019FY, \$6 billion in the past mini-budget period, \$11.78 billion in the 2017-2018 budget year and \$10.8 billion in the 2016-2017FY respectively.

Rice, various types of peas, sesame seeds, corn, fruits and vegetables, dried tea leaves, fishery products, rubber, minerals and animal products are exported to China, whereas machinery, plastic raw materials, consumer products and electronic tools flow into Myanmar. — GNLM

Coronavirus: Latest global developments

HERE are the latest developments in the coronavirus crisis: **20 mn fully vaccinated in UK**

Britain passes the milestone of vaccinating 20 million adults — 38.2 per cent of the adult population — with two doses of the coronavirus jab, a day before a raft of restrictions are lifted across most of the country.

Two Eurovision teams to sit out opening

A member of Iceland's delegation to Eurovision has tested positive for Covid-19 hours ahead of the glitzy competition's grand opening in the Dutch port of Rotterdam.

The Icelandic delegation is the second to miss the music pageant's opening after a member of the Polish delegation tested



A screen showing the arrival of several flights from the United Kingdom scheduled for today is pictured at Faro airport in Algarve, south of Portugal, on 17 May 2021. **PHOTO: AFP**

positive on Saturday.

Portugal opening up

Portugal will open to tourists from nearly all European coun-

tries from Monday, says the interior ministry.

Travellers from most EU countries, the 26-nation Schen-

gen Area and the UK can make "all types of visits to Portugal, including even non-essential visits".

Lockdown in India's Bengal

The Indian state of West Bengal, stricken by coronavirus after mass rallies were held for a key election, orders a two-week lockdown in a bid to halt the spread.

All offices, stores and public transport are told to close after the region reported its biggest surge yet in deaths and infections.

Argentina deaths top 70,000

Health authorities in Argentina say the country's death toll has passed 70,000 and the average daily number of new cases is more than 20,000.

Virus-free Giro

Organisers of the Giro d'Italia peloton say all riders and their entourages have tested negative for Covid-19. At the 2020 cycling event two entire teams were taken out after positive cases, but after this second round of testing in 2021 no member of the 23 teams has yet tested positive.

3.3 million dead

At least 3,372,445 people have died since the coronavirus outbreak emerged in China in December 2019, according to an AFP tally from official sources at 1800 GMT Sunday. The United States is the worst-affected country with 585,708 deaths, followed by Brazil with 434,715, India with 270,284 Mexico with 220,384 and Britain with 127,679. — AFP ■

Monster cyclone heads for Covid-stricken India

A major cyclone packing ferocious winds and threatening a destructive storm surge bore down on India on Monday, disrupting the country's response to its devastating Covid-19 outbreak.

At least six people died over the weekend in torrential rains and winds as Cyclone Tauktae, according to press reports the biggest to hit western India in 30 years, swept over the Arabian Sea with Gujarat state in its sights.

The "Extremely Severe Cyclonic Storm" was due to make landfall on Monday between 8-11 pm (1430-1730 GMT) with winds of 155-165 kilometres per hour (95-100 miles per hour) gusting up to 185 kmph, the Indian Meteorological Department said.

It warned of storm surges of up to three metres high (10 feet) in some of Gujarat's coastal districts.

The colossal swirling system

visible from space exacerbated India's dire problems dealing with a huge coronavirus surge that is killing at least 4,000 people every day and pushing hospitals to breaking point.

In waterlogged and wind-swept Mumbai, where authorities on Monday closed the airport for several hours and urged people to stay indoors, authorities on Sunday shifted 580 Covid patients "to safer locations" from three field hospitals.

In Gujarat, where on Sunday and overnight more than 100,000 people from 17 districts were evacuated, all Covid-19 patients in hospitals with five kilometres of the coast were also moved.

Authorities there were scrambling to ensure there would be no power cuts in the nearly 400 designated Covid hospitals and 41 oxygen plants in 12 coastal districts where the cyclone was expected to hit hardest. — AFP ■



A man walks past a fallen tree on a street following heavy rains from Cyclone Tauktae in Mumbai on 17 May 2021. **PHOTO: AFP**

Gaza pummelled by fresh Israeli strikes, more than 200 dead in a week



Israeli Artillery Corps deploy along the border with the Gaza Strip, on 17 May 2021. **PHOTO: AFP**

ISRAELI air strikes hammered the Gaza Strip Monday, after a week of violence between the Jewish state and Palestinian militants left more than 200 people dead as international calls for de-escalation went unheeded.

Overnight Sunday to Monday, Israel launched dozens of strikes in the space of a few minutes across the crowded coastal Palestinian enclave controlled by Islamist group Hamas, according to AFP journalists and the army.

Flames lit up the sky as explosions shook Gaza city.

The strikes caused widespread power cuts and damaged hundreds of buildings, local authorities said. No casualties were immediately reported.

West Gaza resident Mad Abed Rabbo, 39, expressed

"horror and fear" at the intensity of the onslaught.

"There have never been strikes of this magnitude," he said.

Israel's army said in a statement that it hit the homes of nine "high-ranking" Hamas commanders, without providing details on casualties.

The overnight bombardment also included a third round of strikes on what the army calls the "Metro," its term for a Hamas underground tunnel network.

Fifty-four fighter jets pounded 15 kilometres (nine miles) of tunnels, which the army has previously acknowledged runs in part through civilian areas.

Gazan Mani Qazaat said Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu "should realize we're civilians, not fighters",

adding "I felt like I was dying".

'Legitimate'
The renewed strikes come a day after 42 Palestinians in Gaza — including at least eight children and two doctors, according to the health ministry — were killed in the worst daily death toll in the enclave since the bombardments began.

In total, 197 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza, including at least 58 children, and more than 1,200 wounded since Israel launched its air campaign against Hamas on May 10 after the group fired rockets. The heaviest exchange of fire in years was sparked by unrest in Jerusalem.

In Israel, 10 people, including one child, have been killed and 294 wounded by rocket fire launched by armed groups in Gaza. — AFP ■

China retail sales slow, raising economic recovery concerns

CHINESE retail sales grew at a slower pace than expected last month, data showed Monday, raising concerns about the recovery in the world's number two economy.

China was the first major economy to bounce back from the coronavirus pandemic thanks to tight lockdowns and mass testing, with factories doing most of the heavy lifting as companies producing everything from protective gear to electronics and other goods sold around the world.

There is a general consensus that as they slowly returned to their normal lives, the country's army of cashed-up consumers would then take over the reins, and while data in recent months has suggested that was the case the latest figures show

the rebound will not be smooth.

Retail sales expanded 17.7 per cent on-year in April, according to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), well below the 25 per cent forecast in a Bloomberg survey and almost half the previous month's reading. The exceptionally high figures are mostly down to the fact they have a very low base of comparison owing to the economy essentially shutting down last year.

UOB economist Ho Woei Chen told AFP this was the "more worrying aspect", given that retail sales was expected to take over the lead in driving growth from the second and third quarters on.

"Private consumption is expected to pick up going forward, but the April data shows it is still lagging," she said, adding

that consumer caution due to virus-related uncertainties was likely behind this.

Analysts expect faster retail sales growth in May, as China's army of consumers came out in force during the Labour Day holiday.

But Nomura chief China economist Lu Ting cautioned: "The recent small virus outbreak in Anhui and Liaoning provinces may have some small impact on recovery momentum of the hospitality services sectors."

Urban jobless rate falls

There are also concerns that surging inflation could dent the economic recovery, with prices expected to spike over the next few months as life gets back to normal and people spend.

The country's factory prices rocketed at their fastest pace

in nearly four years last month, driven by a sharp rise in demand for key commodities such as copper and iron ore, and observers say those rises could seep through to consumers.

Meanwhile, industrial output rose 9.8 per cent, in line with forecasts but also slower than March.

"Production demand continued to grow... and the economy continued to stabilize and resume development," said NBS spokesman Fu Linghui, though he cautioned that the global epidemic situation remained "complicated, and the recovery of the world economy is very uneven".

Julian Evans-Pritchard, senior China economist at Capital Economics, added that month-on-month changes showed "momentum in industry

continued to soften", partly due to supply constraints.

Still, there was more positive news on unemployment, with the urban jobless rate falling to 5.1 per cent, which UOB's Ho said was the most positive of Monday's data, given it is the "lowest since November 2019".

"If the labour market continues to improve, there are prospects for retail sales to improve further," she said.

With vaccines being rolled out around the world, especially in the key US market, and economically painful lockdowns being eased, demand for China's goods picked up this year after falling off a cliff in 2020.

Analysts say that April's data points to a more moderate growth outlook in the second quarter. — AFP ■

Indonesian unicorns to merge, creating tech giant

TWO of Indonesia's most successful start-ups are to merge, the companies announced on Monday, creating the largest tech firm in the world's fourth most populous country.

Ride-hailing and payments giant Gojek and e-commerce firm Tokopedia — which generated transactions worth a combined \$22 billion in 2020 — agreed to form the GoTo Group, they said in a statement.

The deal will form an Indonesian tech giant combining e-commerce and financial services with on-demand offerings such as ride-sharing in what will be the first such platform in Southeast Asia.

"The GoTo Group will

tap into the huge potential of Southeast Asia's largest economy with its fast-growing middle class and young, tech-savvy population," the statement read.

The companies did not disclose the expected value of the new firm, but said the combined past valuation of Gojek and Tokopedia was \$18 billion based on historical fundraising.

The combined business of two of Indonesia's top unicorns — start-ups with a valuation of more than \$1 billion — will be led by Gojek's Andre Soelistyo as GoTo Group CEO and Tokopedia's Patrick Cao serving as GoTo Group president. — AFP ■



This undated handout photo received from GoTo Group on 17 May 2021 shows a Gojek rider delivering a Tokopedia package to a customer in Jakarta, as it was announced 17 May that Gojek and Tokopedia are to merge, creating the largest tech company in the world's fourth most populous country. PHOTO: AFP

Asian markets mixed as traders weigh recovery and new infections



People stand in front of an electronic quotation board displaying the closing numbers of share price at the Tokyo Stock Exchange in Tokyo on 17 May 2021. PHOTO: AFP

ASIAN markets were mixed Monday as optimism about the global recovery was offset by concerns about a spike in new infections in several countries that have officials battling to avert new lockdowns.

Wall Street provided another strong lead after data showed US retail sales were flat last month, which helped ease traders' fears that a surge in inflation could force the Federal Reserve to wind back its ultra-loose monetary policies sooner than expected.

However, a fall in consumer confidence owing to rising prices indicated the issue was unlikely to go away any time soon, and analysts said central bank officials had to tread a fine line between

getting the economy back on its feet and keeping inflation under control.

"On the one side, we have the Fed's view, apparently embraced by equity investors, implying there is nothing to see here, given that base effects and reopening dynamics mean we should expect volatility in the data and no one said reopening was going to be cheap," said National Australia Bank's Rodrigo Catril.

"On the other side of the argument is rising concerns that inflation is becoming unanchored with a decline in consumer sentiment a reflection of the negative impact inflation is having on disposable income. So at what point does higher inflation be-

come problematic for policy?"

Focus this week is on the release of minutes from the Fed's latest policy meeting at the end of last month, which will be pored over for an idea about members' views on inflation in light of surging commodity prices, supply bottlenecks and economic reopenings. "Record highs in copper prices and fears over extended oil price gains will be hard to ignore" heading into the second half of the year, said Eric Robertsen at Standard Chartered. "The Fed believes this is part of the economic reopening narrative" and will hold off making any moves now, he added. "But it might start looking over its shoulder if prices stay high." — AFP ■

Britain proposes G-7 to agree on ending coal-fired power generation



File photo taken in February 2021 shows a coal-fired power plant under construction in Yokosuka. **PHOTO: KYODO NEWS**

BRITAIN has proposed that the Group of Seven nations call for ending coal-fired power generation as soon as possible in a joint statement when their leaders gather next month, Japanese

and foreign sources said Monday.

The move comes as G-7 summit host Britain apparently seeks to increase momentum toward reducing global greenhouse gas emissions.

While Japan seeks to achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2050 like many other countries do, it could be left behind other G-7 members in departing from coal-fired power as it heavily relies on it, especially since the Fukushima nuclear crisis in 2011 that has halted nuclear plants for safety checks.

Among the G-7 members, Britain, France, Germany, Italy and Canada have already said they will abandon coal-fired power. The United States has also called the abolition a top priority issue.

Britain has also proposed suspending finances to developing nations' use of coal fuels, including natural gas, but multiple countries have expressed opposition to the plan, according to the sources. The proposals are expected to be discussed at the online G-7 climate and environment ministers' meeting to be held from Thursday, in which Environment Minister Shinjiro Koizumi and industry minister Hiroshi Kajiyama are scheduled to take part.

UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres has urged members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development to gradually abolish coal-fired thermal generation by 2030 and G-7 members to present concrete plans for realizing it by the June summit. — Kyodo News ■

Macron hosts summit to boost Sudan post-Bashir

FRENCH President Emmanuel Macron on Monday hosts African leaders, diplomats and lenders at a summit aimed at helping Sudan after years of conflict-riven authoritarian rule.

Several heads of state will gather in Paris to discuss investment in Sudan and negotiate its debt to help the government of Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok in the transition after the 2019 ouster of longtime strongman Omar al-Bashir.

The next day, a summit on African economies will try to fill a financing shortfall of almost \$300 billion caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Both meetings, held in a temporary exhibition centre near the Eiffel Tower in Paris, will be a chance for Macron to show himself as a statesman on Africa whose influence goes beyond the continent's Francophone regions.

The meetings will both mark a return to in-person top-level gatherings after the Covid-19 pandemic made video conferences the norm.

Among those attending both meetings will be Rwandan President Paul Kagame in a rare visit to France as Paris presses for reconciliation with Kigali after a historic report made clear French failings over

the 1994 genocide.

Also expected to attend on both days is Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, making another journey to key ally France after his state visit in late 2020 enraged rights activists.

'Explore opportunities'

France wants the Sudan summit to send a signal of the help African countries can receive if they embrace democracy and turn their backs on authoritarianism.

"The Sudanese transition is considered by us — but also by the entire international community — as an example of democratic transition in Africa and as such deserves special attention," said a French presidential official who asked not to be named.

The official said the summit aims to unite the international community around helping Sudan, in particular addressing its vast debt pile.

IMF chief Kristalina Georgieva will be present as well as top European diplomats, including German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas and EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell.

Hamdok told AFP ahead of the meeting that he hopes Sudan can help wipe out a \$60 billion foreign debt bill this year by securing relief and investment deals at the Paris conference.

Sudan's debts to the Paris Club, which includes major creditor countries, is estimated to make up around 38 per cent of its total \$60 billion foreign debt.

"We are going to the Paris conference to let foreign investors explore the opportunities for investing in Sudan," Hamdok said.

"We are not looking for grants or donations," he added.

Hamdok and his government have pushed to rebuild the crippled economy and end Sudan's international isolation under Bashir, whose three-decade iron-fisted rule was marked by economic hardship and international sanctions.

Africa summit

Sudan was taken off Washington's blacklist of state sponsors of terrorism in December, removing a major hurdle to foreign investment. But many challenges still lie ahead.

Also attending will be President Sahle-Work Zewde of Ethiopia, whose country has been locked in a long dispute with Sudan over water resources that has sometimes threatened to erupt into open conflict.

Africa has so far been less badly hit by the Covid-19 pandemic than other global regions — with a total of 130,000 dead across the continent. —AFP ■

India's capital to keep coronavirus lockdown for over 1 month



An Indian medical personnel prepares to fit an oxygen mask for a coronavirus patient, as the patient's son helps, at a government hospital in Rajasthan, India on 15 May 2021. **PHOTO: KYODO NEWS**

INDIA'S capital region of Delhi announced Sunday a one-week extension of its coronavirus lockdown until 24 May, keeping the tight measure in place for over a month, local media reported.

The lockdown, originally imposed on 19 April, was set to end Monday. The capital region had confirmed over 28,000 new virus cases on 20 April, but the number fell to 6,430 on Saturday.

Arvind Kejriwal, chief minister of the Delhi government, said the local government is loath to lose what has been attained through the lockdown, expressing hope that the latest extension will further improve the situation.

As cases surged, the capital region saw an acute shortage of hospital beds and medical oxygen. Kejriwal indicated later that the oxygen shortage has eased, but according to local reports about 90 per cent of intensive-care-unit beds remain occupied, leaving the region in the throes of a health care crisis.

On Sunday, India reported about 311,000 new infections, with the number of confirmed daily cases exceeding 300,000 since 22 April and the cumulative number of infected people reaching about 24.68 million.

Over 4,000 COVID-19 deaths were also recorded, bringing the total to over 270,000 fatalities. — Kyodo News ■

Bookings begin for state-run vaccination centres in Tokyo, Osaka

ONLINE bookings for elderly people to receive COVID-19 shots at large state-run vaccination centres in Tokyo and Osaka started Monday, as Japan tries to accelerate its vaccine rollout amid a fourth wave of infections.

Residents of the capital's 23 wards aged 65 in the current fiscal year through March or older were able to make appointments via the Defence Ministry's website and the Line messaging app service at around 11 a.m., before the launch of the centre in central Tokyo on 24 May. According to the ministry, 21,000 bookings were made in just 45 minutes.

Bookings for the vaccination center in the city of Osaka, also set to open on May 24, started from around 1 pm. All 25,000 slots were booked within 25 minutes, the ministry said.

Both facilities will be predominantly staffed by Self-Defense Forces doctors and nurses.

Elderly people living in Tokyo and the neighbouring prefectures of Saitama, Chiba, and Kanagawa as well as in Osaka and nearby Kyoto and Hyogo

prefectures will be eligible for inoculation at the state-run vaccination centres, provided they have not already received a vaccine shot.

Japan began inoculating its elderly population of about 36 million in mid-April, after its vaccination campaign for health care workers started in February, but only around 3 per cent of its population of 126 million has received at least one shot of vaccine, the slowest vaccination rate among major economies.

The government of Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga has set a target of completing vaccinations of the elderly by the end of July. At present, local municipalities are in charge of the inoculation campaign.

"It will be the first operation of its kind in SDF history. Please give it your best to complete the mission," senior vice defense minister Yasuhide Nakayama told doctors and nurses at the Tokyo vaccination center as staff training began Monday.

To avoid overwhelming the system, online bookings will be



A state-run, large-scale vaccination centre in Tokyo, to be predominantly staffed by the Self-Defense Forces, is shown to the press on 17 May 2021, a week before its opening. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

restricted to residents of Tokyo's 23 wards and Osaka city until next Sunday.

Some municipalities in Japan that run group inoculation venues have experienced problems processing appointments as phone lines and computer systems have become overloaded.

The Defence Ministry said it had secured sufficient internet server capacity and implemented cyberattack countermeasures to avoid problems. The ministry

plans to expand booking eligibility each week, accepting appointments from all seven prefectures from 31 May.

Daily vaccination capacity at the large centers has been initially set at 5,000 shots in Tokyo and about 2,500 in Osaka, as staff get used to procedures. Inoculation capacity will later be increased to a maximum 10,000 in Tokyo and 5,000 in Osaka, according to the ministry. — Kyodo News ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

China takes Covid-19 controls to Everest with climber ban

CHINA has banned attempts to scale Everest from its side of the world's highest peak, as Beijing takes its unflinching Covid-19 controls to the Roof of the World.

The block on climbing was announced over concerns of the risk of Covid-19 infection by climbers starting out in Nepal, where the pandemic is raging.

China was the first country hit by the pandemic in late 2019, but has since largely contained the disease with strict border controls. — AFP ■

Indonesia suspends AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine batch after death

THE Indonesian government said Sunday it has suspended the distribution and use of a batch of AstraZeneca Plc's coronavirus vaccine following the death of a 22-year-old man a day after his inoculation with the vaccine.

The Ministry of Health called the suspension "a prudent effort by the government to ensure the safety of the vaccine," and said it plans to continue to use other batches of the vaccine it has received.

The results of sterility and toxicity tests by the Drug and Food Monitoring Agency are expected to come out within one to two weeks. — Kyodo News ■

Thai economy shrinks 2.6% in first quarter

THAILAND'S economy shrank in the first quarter, official data showed Monday, as it was battered by coronavirus restrictions that have hit the key tourism sector hard.

The kingdom last year suffered its worst full-year performance since the Asian financial crisis of 1997 with a 6.1 per cent contraction.

The Office of the National Economic and Social Development Council (NESDC) said gross domestic product shrank 2.6 per cent on-year in the first three months. — AFP ■

Singapore warns new virus strains infecting more children, shuts schools



Children walk home with their guardians after school in Singapore on 17 May 2021, as the country prepares to shut all schools and switch to home-based learning until the end of the term due to a rise in the number of Covid-19 coronavirus cases. PHOTO: AFP

SINGAPORE will close schools from Wednesday as authorities warned new coronavirus strains like the one first detected in India were affecting more children in the city-state.

The government has been tightening restrictions following a recent rise in local transmis-

sions after months of near-zero cases.

At a virtual news conference late Sunday, authorities announced that primary and secondary schools as well as junior colleges would shift to full home-based learning from Wednesday until the end of the

school term on 28 May.

Hours before Sunday's news conference, Singapore confirmed 38 locally transmitted coronavirus cases, the highest daily count in eight months. Some of the cases involved children linked to a cluster at a tuition centre.

Health Minister Ong Ye

Kung, citing a conversation he had with the ministry's director of medical services Kenneth Mak, told a news conference Sunday that the B.1.617 strain "appears to affect children more".

The strain was first detected in India.

"Some of these mutations are much more virulent and they seem to attack the younger children," Education Minister Chan Chun Sing said at the news conference.

"This is an area of concern for all of us," he said, adding however that none of the children who had been infected were seriously ill.

The government is "working out the plans" to vaccinate students under the age of 16, Chan said in a Facebook post.

The financial hub joins Taiwan in shutting down schools to stem the surge in infections.

Taiwan's capital Taipei and adjacent New Taipei City announced Monday that schools would suspend classes from Tuesday until May 28. — AFP ■

AFC postpone draw programme for Women's Asian Cup 2022 qualifiers

THE Asian Football Confederation (AFC) has postponed the AFC Women's Asian Cup India 2022 Qualifiers Draw Programme, set initially to hold on 27 May 2021 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, the football confederation source said.

"Taking into careful consideration current challenges and logistical arrangements, AFC agreed that the draw postponement was a necessary step due to rising COVID-19

cases in the host nation as well as across the Continent in order to keep in mind the well-being and safety of all teams, players, officials and relevant stakeholders.

More details on the new

arrangements for the draw for Asia's flagship women's tournament will be announced in due course," AFC officials said.

"Meanwhile, the draw for the qualifying matches of both the AFC U20 Women's Asian

Cup Uzbekistan 2022 and the AFC U17 Women's Asian Cup Indonesia 2022 will proceed as planned on the same day. The details will be confirmed closer to the draw date," officials added. —GNLM ■

Djokovic admits 'long shot' to beat Nadal at Roland Garros

NOVAK Djokovic admitted Sunday that he's "a long shot" to win Roland Garros where he would likely have to dethrone rival and 13-time Paris champion Rafael Nadal.

Djokovic may be world number one, but it's Nadal who is the undisputed king of clay in the French capital where he has lost just twice in 102 matches since 2005.

On Sunday, Djokovic again felt the full, raw power of Nadal on clay as the Spaniard clinched a 10th Italian Open title with a 7-5, 1-6, 6-3 win in the final.

In the pair's 57th meeting, the victory also took Nadal level with his Serb rival on 36 Masters 1000 titles.

"Going into Paris brings me a good sensation," insisted Djokovic despite a roller-coaster clay court swing which yielded a round-of-16 exit in Monte Carlo and a semi-final loss on home ground in Belgrade.

Nadal, by comparison, has two titles in Rome and Barcelona but sobering quarter-final losses in Monte Carlo and Ma-



Serbia's Novak Djokovic (L), holding the finalist's trophy and Spain's Rafael Nadal, holding the winner's trophy, pose after the final of the Men's Italian Tennis Open at Foro Italico on 16 May 2021 in Rome, Italy. PHOTO: AFP

drid.

"I actually now started to feel like I actually want to feel on clay," added Djokovic.

"So I think if I manage to play the way I played last night (against Lorenzo Sonego in a three-set semi-final) and today, I think I have a good chance to go all the way in Paris.

"Of course it's a long shot."

Djokovic has 18 Grand Slam titles to his name — two behind

the record of 20 shared by Nadal and Roger Federer.

However, only one of those has been captured at Roland Garros, in 2016 when Nadal withdrew with a wrist injury after the second round.

Djokovic was swept aside by Nadal in the 2020 final. Before that, he had lost three other finals in Paris, two also to Nadal and one against Stan Wawrinka.

— AFP ■

'Perfectionist' Swiatek on high before Roland Garros title defence

FRENCH Open champion Iga Swiatek warned she would not be satisfied with just one Grand Slam as she heads for Paris after claiming her first WTA 1000 trophy in style in Rome on Sunday. The 19-year-old demolished world number nine Karolina Pliskova 6-0, 6-0 in just 45 minutes on the red clay of the Foro Italico.

"I'm surprising myself actually when I'm not doing well because I'm pretty ambitious," said the player from Warsaw, who was unknown a year ago, before winning her first career title in Paris. "There are many players that regress after winning their first Grand Slam. I always though try to be different. I'm a perfectionist."

Swiatek has now won three titles, following on from Roland Garros with Adelaide in January, and now Rome, and will move into the top 10 for the first

time on Monday.

She showed no fatigue after back-to-back matches on Saturday, when she defeated two-time Rome winner Elina Svitolina and American teenager Coco Gauff and nearly three-and-a-half hours on court. — AFP ■



Poland's Iga Swiatek poses with the winner's trophy after defeating Czech Republic's Karolina Pliskova during the final match of the Women's Italian Tennis Open at Foro Italico on 16 May 2021 in Rome. PHOTO: AFP

French title chase down to wire after PSG move point behind Lille



Paris Saint-Germain's French forward Kylian Mbappe (front) is challenged by Reims' Serbian goalkeeper Predrag Rajkovic during the French L1 football match between Paris Saint-Germain and Stade de Reims at the Parc des Princes stadium in Paris on 16 May 2021. PHOTO: AFP

LILLE'S bid to win the Ligue 1 title will go to the final weekend of the season after Sunday's goalless draw with Saint-Etienne allowed Paris Saint-Germain to move to within a point of the leaders. Reigning champions PSG strolled to a simple 4-0 win over 10-man Reims to pile the pressure on Lille, who will nonetheless claim the French title for the first time since 2011 if they win at mid-table Angers next Sunday. Christophe Galtier's Lille hit the post in the final seconds of a frustrating match with little in the way of goalmouth incident.

It was not the display the fans who had gathered to follow the team bus to the Stade Pierre Mauroy ahead of the match expected and will leave those supporters with frayed finger nails next weekend. "Our start was very sluggish. It was a little better afterwards, but we could not expect much success tonight because we played a very average game," said Galtier. "We are still ahead. We have a final in

Angers that we will have to win if we want to be champions."

PSG meanwhile were gifted a perfect start at the Parc des Princes when Yunus Abdelhamid handled Kylian Mbappe's shot in front of an empty goal, conceding a penalty and being sent off in the process. Neymar slotted home the spot-kick in the 13th minute and 11 minutes later Mbappe pounced on a wayward pass across the area by Thomas Foket to tap home the second.

Marquinhos made it three in the 68th minute with a thumping header from Neymar's corner. Moise Kean rounded off an easy win for PSG one minute from the end.

Monaco close gap

Monaco are also still in with a potential shout for the title after their 2-1 home win over Rennes moved Niko Kovac's third-placed side three points behind Lille with one to play. — AFP ■