

Spreading rumours, fake news on social media punishable under law

FALSE reports and rumours about the coronavirus outbreak have been doing the rounds on social media of late, creating fear and panic among the people.

On Thursday, a hoax voice message claiming the first case of COVID-19 had been confirmed at the Yangon General Hospital spread quickly on Facebook messenger. The message, recorded in a male voice, said the hospital's deputy medical superintendent had confirmed the coronavirus case.

Due to growing fears of the virus's spread, people have been flocking to buy necessities and food.

The Ministry of Health has warned the public that rumours circulating on COVID-19 cases in the province are all false, and that there are currently no confirmed cases of the virus in Myanmar.

People have been advised not to believe the rumours and fake information. Those spreading fake information and rumours on social media are violating the law. Those found spreading rumors intentionally to cause panic will be punished according to the law.

Rumours and misinformation spread fast when people are afraid.

With the World Health Organization declaring COVID-19 a pandemic on 11 March, the government yesterday announced the suspension of public gatherings, including the New Year water festival, until 30 April, adding

that if needed, the suspension period will be extended.

The WHO's announcement has called on countries, including Myanmar, to strengthen and speed up plans to respond to the virus, which include reducing long-term negative consequences as a result of the virus, increasing effectiveness of health regulations to prevent its spread, reducing negative effects on the national economy, other sectors, and potential losses, and disseminating health precautions and guidelines to the general public.

People must take note that there are no confirmed cases of COVID-19 in our country yet, and the government's measures are intended to check any coronavirus infection as the virus can spread rapidly in crowded places.

After declaring the COVID-19 a pandemic, the WHO has made six recommendations to the public to prevent the transmission of the virus: activate emergency response, organize public participation in disease control measures, identify cases and quarantine confirmed patients, conduct laboratory tests in suspected cases, and follow personal hygiene.

Instead of falling for fake news and rumors about the coronavirus, people have been advised to adhere to the general health guidelines and precautionary measures issued by the Ministry of Health and Sports.

Anyone found spreading fake information and rumours on social media about coronavirus in the country will be punished according to the online law.

Representative responded to the Special Rapporteur on Human Right

DURING the Interactive Dialogue with Ms. Yanghee Lee, Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Myanmar, held in the morning of 10 March 2020 at the on-going 43rd session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva, Permanent Representative of Myanmar U Kyaw Moe Tun made a rebuttal statement as a concerned country.

In his statement, he stressed that sustainable peace and sustainable development are the two sides of the same coin that is inevitable part of the path towards democracy and apprised the Council of the Government's utmost efforts, since taking office in 2016, in striving to realize all-round sustainable peace and development in the country despite various constraints.

He stated that Myanmar is the home of multi-ethnicity and multi-religion. Hence, concluding with ones' own narra-

tive without understanding the unique history and cultural background of all different communities will further create misunderstanding among different communities in the country, he continued.

Regarding the national reconciliation and peace process, he informed the Council of the positive result achieved at the 8th Joint Implementation Coordination Meeting on Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement held in January 2020 and of the 4th session of the Union Peace Conference-21st Century Ponglong scheduled to be held in the first 4 months of this year.

In the endeavour to achieve sustainable development, he highlighted a number of measures taken by the Government in balancing business development and protection of human rights for responsible investment, including Business and Human Right Initiatives conducted in cooperation with UNDP and pro-

motion of responsible business conduct cooperating with OECD and the Myanmar Centre for Responsible Business (MCRB).

Furthermore, he updated the Council on the status of several legal reforms taken place in the country, among others, including submission Bill on Prevention and Protection of Violence against Women to the Parliament.

He also added that proposed amendments of the 2008 Myanmar Constitution have been discussed heatedly at the Parliament since 25 February 2020. He said, "We are resolute for realizing our goal of a democratic federal union". "It needs time and space".

Speaking of the upcoming General Elections in later part of 2020, he informed the Council that measures have been taken in preparation of the elections, including cooperation with relevant stakeholders to tackle fake news and hate speech online and



Permanent Representative of Myanmar U Kyaw Moe Tun. PHOTO: MNA

offline. He also said to be mindful of the importance to strike the balance between the Right and Responsibility, so as between freedom of expression and hate speech.

Turning to the repatriation process, while sharing concern of the displaced person from Rakhine State, he mentioned that

more than 300 displaced persons returned to Rakhine State from Bangladesh on their own volition though no official repatriation has taken place. He, therefore, called for Bangladesh to strictly adhere to the bilateral agreements signed between the two countries. Moreover, he underscored some of the Government

efforts to create conducive environment for verified returnees in implementing quick impact projects under trilateral MoU with UNDP and UNHCR, and working with ASEAN.

He reiterated that the Special Rapporteurs must conduct its mandate in an impartial and objective manner in good faith in order to recommend for improving human rights situation of a country. Moreover, he said, "it is of paramount importance for Special Rapporteurs to listen to all sides of the stakeholders in a professional manner and to strictly adhere to the code of conduct".

He concluded by saying that as Myanmar steps towards another phase in its history for democracy, it is important to caution that non-constructive measures, retributive actions, ill-intention are the obstacles that will only lead to disunity and mistrust among different communities of the country.—MNA

Japan's Diet gives Abe power to declare emergency amid viral fears

JAPAN enacted a time-limited law revision on Friday, enabling Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, if he deems it necessary, to declare a state of emergency to cope with the spread of the new coronavirus.

After only three days of deliberations, parliament gave such authority to Abe, who has come under fire for being slow to act to contain COVID-19, the illness caused by the virus. The Tokyo Olympics are scheduled to start in just over four months.

The swift reworking of the legal framework is intended to prepare for a worst-case scenario but has still raised concerns that bolder preventive steps, once a state of emergency is declared, could infringe upon people's rights.

Latest global developments Olympic torch relay in Greece suspended

The Greek Olympic committee said Friday it will suspend the rest of the torch relay in that country for this summer's Tokyo games, due to concerns over the spread of the new coronavirus.

The decision was made a day after the Greek leg of the relay



Passengers travelling to India from Italy and South Korea will have to present a certificate of having tested negative for coronavirus. (AFP)

started following a lighting ceremony in ancient Olympia.

Borders close

The Czech Republic has joined the list of countries closing its borders. The measure applies equally to foreigners wanting to enter and well as Czechs who want to leave, from Monday.

Slovakia also closed its borders to all foreigners, except

for Poles.

Schools closed, gatherings banned

France, Belgium and Portugal joined the list of countries closing their schools.

All schools, creches and universities closed from Friday in Ireland.

Disney will close its giant theme parks in Florida, Califor-

nia and Paris this weekend until the end of March.

New York has banned gatherings of more than 500 people, including in Broadway theatres.

Latin America cuts off

Venezuela and Bolivia suspend flights to and from Europe for a month. Paraguay ends them until further notice, as does Peru. Argentina suspends for a month

flights from the most hard hit countries.

Latin America's biggest Airline Latam, slashes its international flights by 30 percent for two months.

Spain virus toll jumps

Coronavirus infections in Spain soared to more than 4,200 on Friday, as the number of deaths rose by some 50 percent to 120, the health ministry said.

As of 1200 GMT, there were 4,209 cases in Spain, up from 3,004 on Thursday evening, when the number of deaths had stood at 84.

Ukraine reports first death

Ukraine said Friday it is closing its borders to foreign nationals for at least two weeks to prevent the spread of the novel coronavirus.

"Ukraine's borders will be closed to foreign citizens for two weeks," Oleksiy Danilov, secretary of the country's Security and Defence Council, told reporters, adding that the measure will take effect in 48 hours.

The country also reported its first coronavirus-related death.

Roche's new and faster COVID-19 test

Swiss pharmaceutical giant Roche announced Friday it had received emergency approval from US regulators for a new and much faster test for diagnosing the deadly new coronavirus.

The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has given the green light to commercialise the SARS-CoV-2 Test to detect the virus that has sparked the global COVID-19 pandemic, Roche said in a statement.

White House infections possible

A senior Australian politician tested positive for the new coronavirus and entered hospital quarantine Friday, days after returning from Washington where he met Ivanka Trump and US Attorney General William Barr.

State of emergency declared

Bulgaria has become the latest European country to declare a state of emergency in response to the coronavirus crisis.

REFERENCES

Kyodo; AFP Updated News

Announcement

THE Central Bank of Myanmar released Directive No. 1/2020 on amending the interest rates on 12 March 2020.

The new interest rates, which are aimed at boosting the country's economy, will be effective from 16 March, 2020 instead of 1 April, 2020.

The Central Bank of Myanmar



Myanmar Daily Weather Report

(Issued at 7:00 pm Friday 13th March, 2020)

BAY INFERENCE: Weather is a few cloud over the Andaman Sea and Bay of Bengal.

FORECAST VALID UNTIL NOON OF THE 14th March, 2020: Weather will be partly cloudy in Upper Sagaing, Taninthayi Regions and Kachin State and generally fair in the remaining Regions and States.

STATE OF THE SEA: Sea will be slight to moderate in Myanmar waters. Wave height will be about (4-7) feet off and along Myanmar Coasts.

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Likelihood of isolated rain or thundershowers in Upper Sagaing and Taninthayi Regions, Kachin, Eastern Shan, Kayin and Mon States.

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 14th March, 2020: Generally fair weather.

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 14th March, 2020: Generally fair weather.

FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 14th March, 2020: Generally fair weather.

WEATHER OUTLOOK FOR WEEKEND: Weather will be generally fair in Nay Pyi Taw, Yangon and Mandalay Regions.

Invitation to young writers for Sunday Special

The Global New Light of Myanmar is accepting submissions of poetry, opinion, articles, essays and short stories from young people for its weekly Sunday Next Generation Platform. Interested candidates can send their work to the **Global New Light of Myanmar** at No. 150, Nga Htat Kyee Pagoda Road, Bahan Township, Yangon, in person, or by email to ce@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com with the following information: (1) Sector you wish to be included in (poetry, opinion, etc.), (2) Own name and (if different) your penname, (3) Your level of education, (4) Name of your School/College/University, (5) A written note of declaration that the submitted piece is your original work and has not been submitted to any other news or magazine publishing houses, (6) A color photo of the submitter, (7) Copy of your NRC card, (8) Contact information (email address, mobile number, etc.).— Editorial Department, The Global New Light of Myanmar