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Saturday, 21 March 2020

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw concludes voting on proposed amendments to Constitution



Pyidaungsu Hluttaw convenes its 27th day meeting of 15th regular session in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. PHOTO: SOE WIN TUN

THE 27th-day meeting of the Second Pyidaungsu Hluttaw's 15th regular session convened yesterday, where 629 MPs attended and 25 were on leave.

The final day of constitutional amendment proposals

voting

The Hluttaw continued voting on proposals to amend the Constitution and Hluttaw representatives cast secret ballots on the category (5) which contained 14 proposed amendments.

None of the proposals acquired the number of votes

needed for them to be approved. In detail, the proposal to amend Section 405-(a) received 404 votes in favor; Section 437-(a) received 395 votes, Chapter 14 received 405 votes, Section 441 received 407 votes, Section 442 received 406 votes, Section 443 received 406 votes, Section 444-(a) received 406

votes, Section 444-(b) received 407 votes, Section 445 received 408 votes, Section 446 received 399 votes, Section 447 received 404 votes, Section 448 received 404 votes, Section 449-(a) received 407 votes, and Section 449-(b) received 407 votes.

The Pyidaungsu Hluttaw

Speaker then announced that voting for proposals to amend the Constitution has concluded. Among the 55 proposals related to Section 436-(a) and (b), only 2 proposals garnered more than 75 per cent of votes in favor of the entire assembly.

SEE PAGE-2

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Yangon (Myanmar Jade Crown ; E/Dagon)

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Mawlamying

Naypyidaw

Manya

Magway

Taunggyi

All information and illustrations are based on data available at the time of publication and subject to change without notice.

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw concludes voting on proposed amendments to Constitution



Hluttaw Representatives voting for the constitutional amendment during the 27th day meeting of the Second Pyidaungsu Hluttaw's 15 regular session being held in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

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They were Sections 32-(a) and (b).

Among the 80 proposals related to Section 436-(b), only 2 proposals gained the support of more than 75 per cent of MPs. They were Section 261-(a) and Section 344.

MPs debate IDA loan for MoHS

Next, Hluttaw representatives debated a motion forwarded from the President's Office to acquire US\$ 10 million

from the International Development Association (IDA) for the Ministry of Health and Sports. Dr San Shwe Win of Yekyi constituency approved the motion, saying that the nation will receive both financial assistance and technical knowhow from a global financial institution like the World Bank.

U Sai Aung Kyaw of Kyaytee constituency also approved the motion, saying that the loan will enable the health ministry to continue its work uninterrupted and provide healthcare services

for the people. U Kyaw Swe Win of Kawhmu constituency also approved the motion, saying that in the age where the economy is shifting to a human resource-based system, investing in the people's healthcare would be invaluable. The motion was further debated by seven MPs.

The 28th-day meeting of the current Pyidaungsu Hluttaw session will convene on 24 March. —Aung Ye Thwin, Aye Aye Thant

(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)

Nippon Foundation pledges \$ 23.6 mln for Kayin, Mon states development

THE Ministry of Border Affairs and Nippon Foundation signed an MoU on multi-sector development in Kayin State and Mon State yesterday.

The signing ceremony took place at the ministry building in Nay Pyi Taw and was attended by Union Minister for Border Affairs Lt-Gen Ye Aung, Deputy Minister Maj-Gen Than Htut, directors-general, and officials from the ministry's departments, and Executive Director Mr Yuji Mori and officials from Nippon Foundation.

The Union Minister first delivered the opening address

and Mr Yuji Mori explained the content of the MoU. This was followed by the Director-General of Progress of Border Areas and National Races Department U Ye Naing, and Mr Yuji Mori signing and exchanging the MoU documents.

The MoU states that US\$ 23.622 million will be handed over 1.2 years, starting from 20 March, for the development of Kayin State and Mon State. The projects involve constructing 1,260 houses, 25 schools, 7 rural health sub-departments, 33 wells, a vocational training centre, 2 community centres,



Director-General U Ye Naing of rogress of Border Areas and National Races Department and Mr Yuji Mori signing the MoU documents in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

implementing 10 water-supply processes, agricultural training, and installing solar lights in Kayin State.

As for Mon State, the construction of 330 houses, 6 schools, 2 rural health sub-departments and installing solar lights will be

carried out. The projects cover 74 villages in 11 townships. — MNA

(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)

Thanlyin People's Hospital receives K11 mln to combat COVID-19



The donors and officials pose for a group photo yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

A private donation of K11.1 million and 9 hospital equipment was made to Thanlyin People's Hospital to help in protecting against COVID-19

yesterday.

Thiri Thudamma Mani Zaw Thadara U Zaw Win (Chairman, Zaw Htet Paing Engineering and Construction Group of Companies), his wife Daw Mi Mi Tin (Chanmyae Metta Specialist Hospital) and their daughter Ma Ei Mon Mon (CEO, Chanmyae Metta Specialist Hospital-Thanlyin) handed over the donations to the hospital's medical superintendent Dr Cho Cho Lwin and officials. — MNA

(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)

Over 300,000 University, College students sit for 1st-semester exams

THE Ministry of Education announced over 300,000 students are sitting for the first semester exams of universities, degree colleges and colleges for 2019-2020 academic year across the country.

Out of 302,051 registered students at arts/science universities, degree colleges, and colleges, a total of 290,941 students join the exams, while 111,10 were absent.

At the Technological Universities and Universities of Computer Stud-

ies, 32,777 students are present out of 33,408 and 631 students were absent.

At the education colleges, 10,777 students are present out of 10,782 registered students and 5 were absent.

The ministry has confirmed 334,495 students reached to exam rooms, out of 346,241 registered students, while 11,746 students failed to sit the exams. —MNA

(Translated by Kyaw Zin Lin)

“People are the key”

The Government to Step up Efforts to Enhance Provisions of Humanitarian Assistance to Affected Areas in Rakhine State

IN Rakhine, the destructive activities by the AA are continuing with greater intensity. These have led to clashes between the Security Forces and AA group, resulting in sizeable numbers of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) from various communities.

The Government is providing humanitarian assistance to the IDPs, and giving continued access to humanitarian partners, so far as security conditions allow.

Because of the intensity of armed clashes since

early January 2019, delivering humanitarian assistance and arranging access for humanitarian partners present considerable challenges.

Consultations were held recently among concerned ministries and the Government has decided to step up efforts to provide humanitarian assistance and to grant enhanced access to international humanitarian partners, including the ICRC, who are working in support of the Government’s humanitarian efforts in Rakhine State. Consultations will be made

with the United Nations and the ICRC on detailed arrangement for effective humanitarian assistance in Rakhine.

The Government will continue to take all necessary measures to ensure the protection of civilians and the prevention of civilian casualties.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Nay Pyi Taw
20 March 2020

Additional Precautionary Restrictions for travellers visiting Myanmar To Prevent Spread of COVID-19

1. With a view to preventing importation and spread of COVID-19, the Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar is obliged to take additional precautionary measures to control and limit the risk that travellers from countries with very high numbers of cases may pose to the populations in Myanmar.
2. The following additional temporary restrictive measures will take effect starting from 21 March 2020, 0000 hours at the port of departure:-
- 2.1 Temporary restrictive measures on additional countries with very high numbers of cases
- All incoming travellers including Myanmar nationals arriving from or having visited **USA, Switzerland, UK, the Netherlands, Austria, Belgium, Norway, Sweden and Denmark** in the past 14 days shall be subject to 14-day facility quarantine on their arrival in Myanmar. As for diplomats accredited to Myanmar and resident United Nations officials, they will be encouraged to take home quarantine for 14 days on their arrival in Myanmar. All are required to present Medical Certificate issued by a medical facility recognized by the health authorities of the respective states, of having no symptoms of acute respiratory illness (fever and cough or shortness of breath), before boarding any airline destined to Myanmar.
- 2.2 Temporary Suspension of Visa on Arrival and e-visa
- The Myanmar Government temporarily suspends issuance of Visa on Arrival (VOA) and e-visa for all countries until 30 April 2020.
- However, diplomats accredited to Myanmar, the resident UN officials and any foreign national who intends to travel to Myanmar on compelling reason or on important official mission may contact nearest Myanmar Missions for necessary entry visa or for ease of the quarantine procedure.
4. The earlier precautionary measures issued on 15 March 2020 shall also remain in force until further notice. The updated list of additional quarantine measures for international travellers and Myanmar citizens is attached here with.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Nay Pyi Taw
Dated: 20 March 2020

The Updated List of Additional Quarantine Measure for International Travellers and Myanmar Citizens

Sr No	Countries	Travel Suspension	Quarantine		Active Health Surveillance
			Facilities	Home	
1	Republic of Korea	Any foreigner with a travel history to Hot Spot areas during the past 14 days	Myanmar citizens with a travel history to Hot Spot areas during the past 14 days	Anyone with a travel history during the past 14 days	

2	People’s Republic of China	Any foreigner with a travel history to Hot Spot areas during the past 14 days	Myanmar citizens with a travel history to Hot Spot areas during the past 14 days		Anyone with a travel history during the past 14 days
3	Italy		Anyone with a travel history during the past 14 days	Diplomats, UN Officials	
4	Iran		Anyone with a travel history during the past 14 days	Diplomats, UN Officials	
5	France		Anyone with a travel history during the past 14 days	Diplomats, UN Officials	
6	Spain		Anyone with a travel history during the past 14 days	Diplomats, UN Officials	
7	Germany		Anyone with a travel history during the past 14 days	Diplomats, UN Officials	
8	The United States of America		Anyone with a travel history during the past 14 days	Diplomats, UN Officials	
9	Switzerland		Anyone with a travel history during the past 14 days	Diplomats, UN Officials	
10	The United Kingdom		Anyone with a travel history during the past 14 days	Diplomats, UN Officials	
11	Netherlands		Anyone with a travel history during the past 14 days	Diplomats, UN Officials	
12	Norway		Anyone with a travel history during the past 14 days	Diplomats, UN Officials	
13	Denmark		Anyone with a travel history during the past 14 days	Diplomats, UN Officials	
14	Sweden		Anyone with a travel history during the past 14 days	Diplomats, UN Officials	
15	Austria		Anyone with a travel history during the past 14 days	Diplomats, UN Officials	
16	Belgium		Anyone with a travel history during the past 14 days	Diplomats, UN Officials	

Note: this will come into effect starting 00:00 hours Myanmar Standard Time (MST) on 21st March 2020.

It will be in effect until further notice.

COVID-19 central committee’s daily meeting continues on video conferencing



Union Minister Dr Myint Htwe attends the coordination meeting of the Central Committee on Prevention, Controlling and Treatment of COVID-19 yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

THE Central Committee on Prevention, Controlling and Treatment of COVID-19 held coordination meeting (37/2020) through video conferencing yesterday morning.

Union Minister for Health and Sports Dr Myint Htwe said this regular meeting will help strengthen information network- ing among all health officials across Myanmar. He said video conferencing, email groups, Viber groups and internet network- ing will be practiced in the future as well. Ministry staff were also

advised to work from home if they were experiencing high fe- vers, dry coughs and joint aches or stiffness.

The Union Minister said the virus spread rate has been decreasing in China and this achievement should be close-

ly studied. He said China and South Korea had effective virus containment methods and this was partially due to their pub- lic actively participating in the process.

He urged the elderly and those with chronic illnesses in Myanmar to remain in their home and avoid going to crowd- ed places so as to avoid infecting others or contracting the virus. He said if everyone treats this matter as their own personal issue, then Myanmar will be able to properly contain and prevent the virus.

The Union Minister said the spread of the virus and deaths it causes are increasing outside China every day. The Direc- tor-General of WHO has warned that the virus can enter an un- affected nation without warning, two days ago, and the ministry has been making similar state- ments.

The Union Minister said the different process and courses

of action to be taken if a lab result shows positive for COV- ID-19 should be represented in a flowchart and distributed to all concerned personnel as soon as possible. He said they are now also running lab tests on people who exhibit suspect- ed symptoms and not just those who have a history of traveling to infected nations or being in close contact with infected patients.

The Union Minister said the states/regions need to quickly compile a list of necessities and submit it and the donations re- ceived from the public should be systematically used and dis- tributed on the same day. He said they may have to collabo- rate with relevant ministries to arrange separate buildings for Myanmar nationals returning from abroad to stay in before the Thingyan period. He said the list of countries temporarily barred from entering Myanmar will be increased.—MNA (Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)

News release on
monitoring of COVID-19
(9:30 pm, 20-3-2020)

1. The Ministry of Health and Sports is running lab tests on quarantined patients across the states/regions for COVID-19 at the National Health Laboratory (Yangon).

2 The results 17 quarantined patients returned at 8 pm on 20-3-2020 and show they do not have COVID-19.

3. The lab results of a 73-year-old male from Pyu Town- ship, Bago Region, who passed away in the 1000-bed hospital in Nay Pyi Taw on 18-3-2020 and the 30-year-old male from Mongpyat Township, Shan State (East), who passed away in Kengtung General Hospital on 17-3-2020 show they did not have COVID-19.

4. The lab result of a 71-year-old female from Minhla Township, Bago Region, who passed away in a private hospital in Kyopingauk on 19-3-2020 show she did not have COVID-19.

5. The lab result of seven Myanmar nationals quar- antined in South Okkalapa Maternal and Child Hospital on 20-3-2020 show they do not have COVID-19.

6. There are currently 12 quarantined patients in hos- pitals as of 9:30 pm, 20-3-2020, and the results of their lab tests will be made public in real-time.

Ministry of Health and Sports
(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)

Tatmadaw troops thwart AA group surrounding Meewa Camp in Paletwa

TATMADAW forces thwarted the AA group surrounding the Meewa Camp for over 40 days, according to the Office of the Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services.

Since 5 February, the mem- bers of the AA group, using ex- cessive force, had attacked the Tatmadaw’s camp located at the strategic point at the junction of the Paletwa-Kyauktaw Route and Mesar-Matupi Route.

Following the attacks, the Tatmadaw sent its reinforced troops to the area and retaliated the AA, and put the Tinma Village and surrounding areas under its control on 11 March, Pyaingtaing Village and surrounding areas on 13 March, Montthantpyin Village and surrounding areas on 14 March respectively. In the attacks, some officers and other ranks sacrificed their lives and some members of AA were also found dead, said the statement released by the Office of the C-in-C of Defence Services.

The reinforced columns of the Tatmadaw could rescue 13 troops who had lost contact with their unit. Some officers and other ranks are still missing and efforts are being made to rescue them.

AA group attacked Hnonbu Camp that controls Paletwa and Kyauktaw area and water routes in December 2019, and other border outposts in the north-west of Paletwa in February, 2020, and military columns on regional security duty near Yetkhontaing and around Yaysoechaung Village in Buthidaung-Yathedaung region on 2 and 10 February. However, the Tatmadaw columns’ coun- ter-attacks led to their retreat, ac- cording to the statement.—MNA (Translated by Kyaw Zin Lin)



Arms and ammunition seized from AA group. **PHOTO: OFFICE OF THE C-IN-C OF DEFENCE SERVICES**

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T& C Ministry, KOICA sign RoD to establish VIMS

THE Ministry of Transport and Communications signed a Record of Discussion (RoD) with the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) concerning the ‘Establishment of Vehicle Information Management System (VIMS) for Vehicle Inspection, Registration and Driving Licence in Myanmar yesterday.

The signing ceremony took place at the ministry building in Nay Pyi Taw and was attended by Union Minister U Thant Sin Maung, Deputy Minister U Thar Oo, ROK Ambassador Mr Lee Sang-hwa and officials from KOICA Myanmar Office.

The Union Minister and ROK Ambassador first delivered separate addresses and then, Road Transport Administration Department Director-General U

Zaw Min Oo and KOICA Myanmar’s Chief Representative Ms Lee Youn Soo signed the RoD.

KOICA will provide USD 10 million to the project, which aims to develop a virtual private network through a fibre network between the Road Transport Administration Department’s main office and 55 branch offices. This will help speed up the department’s main duties concerning inspection and registration of vehicles and issuing driving licences through online applications. The project is slated to finish by 2030.

This project will be uploaded to the government’s Project Bank website as it conforms with the Myanmar Sustainable Development Plan.— MNA

(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)



Director-General U Zaw Min Oo and KOICA Myanmar’s Chief Representative Ms Lee Youn Soo sign the Record of Discussion in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. PHOTO: MNA

Union Civil Service Board suspends training courses

U Win Thein, Chairman of the Union Civil Service Board, inspected preparations to protect examinees from COVID-19 during their evaluation period from 15 to 23 March in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

In addition, the UCSB has suspended new courses at the Central Institute of Civil Service and is sharing methods to protect

against COVID-19 there as well. Trainees who have arrived for the training courses have been arranged to return to home in the meantime.

A report has been submitted to the President’s Office to allow early graduation for ongoing training courses that are almost completed. These courses include Batch No.15 of Advanced

Civil Servant Management Course and Batch No.212 of Basic Civil Servant Course of the Upper Myanmar of Central Institute of Civil Service, and Batch No.60 of Basic Civil Servant Course of the Lower Myanmar.

If approval is given, the graduation ceremony will be held on 26 March. — KayTar

(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)

Thai-Myanmar friendship bridge (1) closed for 14 days

THE Thai-Myanmar Friendship Bridge (1) in Myawady, Kayin State, will be temporarily closed for 14 days starting from 21 March, according to Kayin State Hluttaw representative U Thant Zin Aung of Myawady constituency 2.

The closure is a preventive measure against COVID-19 but friendship bridge (2) will still be open, said U Thant Zin Aung. He added that the closing period may be extended in the future but travel on the second bridge with temporary border passes and border passes will still be allowed. The move is meant to concentrate screening for the virus in one place.

Residents on both sides



Officials give healthcare education to public in Myawady. PHOTO: ZAW GYI

of the border can still travel on the friendship bridge (2) after being screened for body temperature and having a border pass. —Ye Kaung, Zaw Gyi (Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)

People requested to donate cash to Central Committee on Prevention, Controlling and Treatment of COVID-19

1. To prevent Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) which is declared a global pandemic, the State has been scaling up its efforts as national tasks to prevent and control and give treatment the disease.
2. Besides, on 16 March, 2020, the State Counsellor said in her recently televised message, that a fund for prevention, control and treatment of COVID-19 will be raised with public contributions, urging the people to make contributions to this fund.
3. Hence, companies, associations and public are requested to contribute cash to the fund in efforts to prevent and control the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) through the following bank accounts.

(A) Myanma Economic Bank	– Myanmar Kyat Account
	– CF 004880
Foreign Currency Account	– EDN 600010
(B) Kanbawza Bank	– Myanmar Kyat Account
	– 034 103 034 0232 8301
Foreign Currency Account	– 034 109 034 0232 8301
(C) Ayeyawady Bank	– Myanmar Kyat Account
	– A/C 000 110 501 002 5635
Foreign Currency Account	– A/C 000 110 503 000 0425
(D) CB Bank	– Myanmar Kyat Account
	– 0093 1005 0000 1333
Foreign Currency Account	– 0093 1012 0000 2957

4. Those wishing to donate medicines, medical equipment/ machines to hospitals can contact Office of the Ministry of Health and Sports, Nay Pyi Taw Council, offices of the regional and state Public Health and Medical Service Departments and hospitals.

National-Level Central Committee on Prevention, Controlling and Treatment of Coronavirus COVID-19 disease

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Due to limitation of space we are only able to publish "Letter to the Editor" that do not exceed 500 words. Should you submit a text longer than 500 words please be aware that your letter will be edited.

Over 150,000 sit for matriculation exam on ninth day

THERE are a total of 157,973 students sitting for the History subject at exam centres locally and abroad on the ninth day of the matriculation exam for 2020.
The number of exam centres totaled 1,560 with 5 locations overseas and 1,555 nationwide.
Out of 157,973 students sitting for their exams on a ninth day, 20 are taking their exams at hospitals. Meanwhile, 30 visually impaired persons, 7 hearing-impaired persons, 20 physical disabilities persons, 113 prisoners, and 14 students from Myawady, Kayin State took their exam. — MNA
(Translated by TTN)



Students seen after sitting their ninth-day matriculation exam in Tamway Township, Yangon yesterday. PHOTO: MNA



A volunteer drops sanitizer on hand of a passerby at the Maha Bandoolla Park in Yangon in efforts to prevent outbreak of the COVID-19 disease. PHOTO: ZAW MIN LATT



A staff screening the body temperature of a visitor at the Yangon City Hall yesterday. PHOTO: ZAW MIN LATT

Sending workers to foreign countries suspended, contacts released for overseas workers

AS part of efforts for preventing the Coronavirus spread, the Labour Departmen has suspended sending workers to foreign countries as from 18 March, according to the Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population.
Besides, the ministry also suspended the signing Employ-

ment Contracts-EC between employers and employees in Yangon, Hpa-an, Myawady and Kawthoung, issuing labour identity cards, opening overseas jobs courses and overseas job seeking processes of the employment agencies.
In the statement released

by the ministry yesterday, U Myo Aung, Permanent Secretary of the ministry has requested the Myanmar migrant workers in overseas countries to follow the directives of the respective countries in efforts to prevent the Coronavirus spread and infection. The statement also

advised the overseas workers to contact the labour attaches in respective countries in case they need help.
Following are the names and contact numbers of labour attachés.—Khin Yadana
(Translated by TTN)

Country	Labour Attaché	Phone number
Republic of Korea	U Zeyar Tin Win Htin	(0082) 010 3799 4690
Thailand	U Myo Myint Naing	(0066) 094 8845 484
	U Kyaw Soe Wai	(0066) 065 2206 951
	U Ye Yan Aung	(0066) 065 2206 952
	U Wai Lin Maung	(0066) 065 2206 953
	U Zaw Min Htwe	(0066) 099 0592 352
Malaysia	U Kyaw Lin Tun	(0060) 017 223 6490
	U Aung Zaw Min	(0060) 017 223 6515

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India to import 400,000 tonnes of mung bean from Myanmar in 2020-21FY



Labourers packaging the sacks of mung bean at a warehouse in Yangon. PHOTO: PHOE KHWAR

By Nyein Nyein
INDIA government has granted permission to import 400,000 tonnes of mung bean from Myanmar in the next fiscal of 2020-2021, said Secretary U Min Ko Oo of Myanmar Pulses, Beans and Sesame Seeds Merchants Association.

In response to the request made by President U Win Myint to purchase 400,000 tonnes of

beans from Myanmar during his visit to India at the end of February, the Indian government allowed their beans traders to import more tonnes of mung beans. In addition, mung bean is a staple food item of India, he remarked.

“We can see obviously that India is in great demand for mung beans to fulfill the needs of their country’s consumption.

In 2019-2020 FY, India announced that they would need an import quota of 150,000 tonnes of mung beans. At the end of December 2019, India wanted Myanmar to export 250,000 tonnes by 31 March. When we couldn’t export that amount within the deadline, they extended it until the end of April. Again, the President had also requested the Indian government to purchase 400,000 tonnes

more. India usually buys mung beans, pigeon peas, green grams, and yellow peas on a quota basis. But this time, India announced the permission to import 400,000 tonnes of mung beans only,” said U Min Ko Oo.

With permission to import 400,000 tonnes of mung beans in the next fiscal, it is likely that there will emerge a good beans market for the local farmers in the next beans season, according to the beans traders.

“We have a small beans market in Myanmar. This is good for beans growers as India has offered the guarantee to purchase the beans from 2020-21 beans season,” said U Min Ko Oo.

After the announcements, the mung bean price goes up for a reasonable percentage in the market. Now, the price of the mung bean is K950,000 per tonne.

Myanmar embassy in New Delhi, India announced that India granted to import 400,000 tonnes of mung beans from Myanmar in 2020-2021FY, which have been restricted as import commodity since 2017 by the Indian central

government according to 2015-2020 foreign trade policy.

On 17 March, the India Ministry of Commerce and Industry announced that this restriction is not really concerned with the bilateral Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). Additionally, India has permitted to import 250,000 tonnes of mung beans from Myanmar, extended its deadline to the end of April for 2019-2020 FY, under the permission of the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) on 3 March.

On 19 March, the directorate also announced that the import of 400,000 tonnes of mung beans, allowed for the 2020-2021FY, will be undertaken from 1 May 2020 to 31 March 2021. The local bean mills and bean cleansing businessmen are required to apply for the quota through the directorate Website from 20 to 31 March. The beans exporting companies have to export the beans to India not later than 31 March 2021 as there will no longer be an extension of the import of the mung beans. (Translated by Hay Mar)

MEODA prohibits stockpile of edible oil amid Covid-19

By Nyein Nyein
MYANMAR Edible Oil Dealers Association (MEODA) has urged the people not to over-stockpile the edible oil to ensure its price stability in the market.

“On account of the global outbreak and spread of COVID-19, the people in Myanmar are now stockpiling the edible oil excessively and this can cause price instability of edible oil. This being so, people should buy it, as usual,” said MEODA Chairman U Myint Kyu. “People are also

panic-buying the dried rations in excess due to false rumours on social media like Facebook. As they are purchasing five times more than as usual, it is hard to find the number of goods in the same place. We are making arrangements to ensure a sufficient supply of goods in town by manufacturing the products locally and importing them. The edible oil is being sold at the normal price in the supermarket. So, we would like people to know that they need not worry about the

possible shortage of the goods and we want them to buy usual quotas,” he added. The association has announced on 19 March that they are taking measures to prevent the insufficient supply of edible oil and to ensure the fair price prevailing in the market.

They are also making necessary measures to ensure regular operation of the edible oil mills for sufficient supply in the local market, prior storage of the raw materials to avoid the crisis, and continuous importing of

high-quality edible oil. The edible oil-exporting countries such as Malaysia and Indonesia are still running their mills and they do not suspend the exports of edible oil. The MEODA is now collaborating with the government to overcome the health and socio-economic issues caused by the pandemic disease.

Moreover, they will release real-time information and announcements concerning the status of import and distribution of edible oil locally. The government

has been making prevention and response measures against the Covid-19. A national-level central committee was also formed on 13 March to prevent, contain and respond to the Covid-19. “We welcome this national task force as the State Counsellor is its Chairperson. We will cooperate with UMFCC and its affiliated organizations as well as with relevant committees formed by the Government,” MEODA Chairman U Myint Kyu stressed.

(Translated by Hay Mar)

Corn exports to Thailand via Mese border camp record high

THE export to Thailand via Mese border camp of corn, yielded from Kayah State, is a record high, said camp in-charge U Soe Naing.

The market is in regular operation because the corns have been exported to Thailand through the Mese border camp since the beginning of this fiscal year. Myanmar exported 2,248.1 tons of corn, worth US\$ 314,734 (one ton of corn = \$140) from 7 to 29 February and 2,672.50 tons of corn, worth \$374,150 from 1 to 18 March.

Although the demand for

corn from China has declined, Myanmar has exported the corn, yielded from Kayah State and Pekon, Hsi Hseng, Moepyae from Shan state to Thailand via Mese border camp.

“Currently, the corn is sold for K 400 per viss. When we export to Thailand, the price of corn is K 475 per viss depending on the exchange rate in Thailand. Previously, the corns were sent only to the Yangon market. Now the Mese border camp is open and it can save time compared to sending of the corn to the Yangon

market. Sometimes, however, the payment from Thailand traders is a bit delayed,” said a corn trader.

In the corn season, Myanmar exports corn to Thailand under the bilateral tax exemption. Each corn bag weighs 50 kilogrammes. The corn exported through the Mese border camp is cleaned with the machines in Thailand. Then, Thailand re-exported it to the international market.

The corns, exported to the Thai market, were loaded onto the trucks in Mese BP 13 border crossing. When they load the



Merchants check the goods at Mese broder camp. PHOTO: WITT YEE (IPRD)

corn bags, they have to pay K 100-K150 per bag to the freight handlers. So, the local residents

from Nam Man village are earning K 15,000 per day.—Witt Yee (IPRD) (Translated by Hay Mar)

Heeding expert advice, acting responsibly, key to weathering a possible COVID-19 outbreak

THE Central Committee on Prevention, Controlling and Treatment of Coronavirus COVID-19 disease has requested donors, including the public, business groups, civil society organizations and partner countries, to donate cash to the committee, as it scales up efforts to control and prevent the spread of the infectious disease.

This announcement came after State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, in her recently televised message, said that a fund for prevention, control and treatment of COVID-19 will be raised with public contributions, urging the people to make contributions to this fund.

In fact, in this time of crisis the government needs not only cash contributions, but also cooperation from the people by paying heed to the advice of experts.

We, with our partners, are acting now, catalyzing change and scaling up high-level commitments for the long haul, so that collectively we leave no one behind.

The people, in turn, should remain calm and avoid panic-buying, as the country has sufficient food to feed the people. But instead of panicking, the best thing people in the country can do to brace for the threat is heed the advice of the health authorities.

The measures that people should take include following simple health precautions, such as frequently washing one's hands, avoiding people who are sick and not touching one's mouth, eyes and nose.

Meanwhile, it is recommended that the public does not believe misinformation that is being sent through social media about coronavirus. Relying only on credible sources, such as official sources, including the Ministry of Health and Sports and the Ministry of Information, is paramount and will only become more critical in the event of an outbreak in the country. So think twice before hitting the share button.

The coronavirus is coming. That's concerning, no doubt — but we can weather a possible crisis by following expert advice and acting responsibly.

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The challenges and opportunities of e-Govt reform

By James Owen

FOR years, when Kyaw Htet set out for work before dawn, he feared oncoming cars and trucks. It was too dark to see clearly in Mawlamyine, where the street lights go out at 5:30 AM, almost an hour before sunrise in January. Kyaw Htet had recently learned of a new way to highlight issues to the local authorities. He took out his phone, downloaded an application and reported the problem. Within a week, the Engineering Department fixed the problem on all four main streets in the city. Welcome to Myanmar in the 21st century.

The first inroads into e-Govt have been made by forward thinking local officials. They have introduced ICT systems to improve processes and interactions with the public, with much of the innovation occurring in cities. The Taunggyi municipality talks with 12% of the city's population through its Facebook page and has launched a Facebook Messenger ChatBot to streamline issue reporting. MCDC has AI-assisted traffic management and YCDC has introduced an online construction permit process. In Bago citizens can text in feedback on government services and the Kayah GAD is testing ways to digitalize paper-based record keeping.

Alongside these pioneering local experiments, the Union government is rolling out the 'Myanmar e-Governance Master Plan'. The plan sensibly contains a strategy that calls for testing within cities as part of learning from initiatives



Taunggyi City Development Committee's Facebook ChatBot allows residents to report issues in a few clicks in their Facebook Messenger app, without having to speak to an official.



within Myanmar and abroad. It identifies a pipeline of priority national ICT procurements and has set up governance structures. State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi acts as "patron" of its Steering Committee and recently argued that e-Government has a "crucial role in implementing sustainable development and poverty alleviation".

In tandem, States and Regions have begun conducting large scale e-government tenders to buy up hardware and software that ranges from data centers to fingerprint scanners and digital revenue management systems.

These initiatives are encouraging and there is a lot

of excitement in these early phases of reform. Yet all must deal with the unfortunate reality that around the world many government ICT projects fail. According to a US survey of ICT projects, government projects had a dismal 18% success rate (compared to 59% in the retail sector).

Sometimes these failures incur phenomenal costs to taxpayers. The UK government's National Health Care Records Service was initially budgeted at GBP 4.6 billion but because the cost and scope was underestimated the budget rose to GBP 24 billion. That cost overrun is ten times what the Myanmar Union government plans to spend on education and health

in 2019-20!

So should the government just give up on e-Govt reform? Well no, e-Govt can be transformative, improving services and supporting wider public sector reform. But success will hinge on (a) a widespread understanding of the typical reasons for failure (b) strategies to try and mitigate these and (c) greater realism about what can be achieved so early in Myanmar's adoption of e-Govt. The government's own Master Plan notes that "it is important to identify the causes of change management failure" and cites many of the typical reasons. Three common reasons for failure are complexity,

commitment, and capture.

As the complexity of a project grows the risk that it fails will grow. A bigger scope, more stakeholders or more locations mean many more potential problems. These problems, and all their interconnections, are hard to anticipate and become harder to address as complexity grows.

Commitment and leadership from senior officials is essential and must be consistent over time. Implementation is critical and it requires constant oversight, direction and support. Some countries have created Chief Information Officers to steer reforms. Beyond the creation of a new position what is clear is that frequent changes in senior leaders or project managers can cripple projects.

Finally, government ICT projects risk being captured by well-connected business leaders in the ICT sector. Due to low ICT and technical capacity governments often turn to ICT businesses to help them plan projects and assess the quality of proposals, ignoring their potential vested interests. Experienced in ICT procurement officials favour larger ICT firms who they believe they can trust. This leads to a less competitive market with smaller more innovative providers pushed out. The US is now correcting for this mistake by modifying its procurement rules to ensure smaller firms have a fair chance.

These lessons from ICT projects around the world also resonate with our own experience of supporting e-Govt reforms in townships across

Myanmar. Since 2015 The Asia Foundation has been working with township authorities to develop an 'Integrated Township Management System' (ITMS).

ITMS is a modular, complementary system that includes digital tools to strengthen township administration at two levels. It supports individual township departments to carry out their core, routine work of planning, service delivery, administration, revenue collection and data collection. Additionally, it supports departments to break through their siloes and collaborate with one another and the communities they serve to solve the local problems that impact people's everyday lives.

ITMS has evolved over time in response to user needs and many lessons learned from success and failure. To help government in its ambitious reform agenda, we've sought to document the lessons from ITMS's evolution in 'Developing Myanmar's Local Data Ecosystem'[JO1]. A key insight is that continued space for local experimentation with e-Govt can help accelerate overall learning about what works in this context. When lessons are shared, they can act as the light to guide government as it sets off down the road of e-Govt reform.

James Owen is Urban Program Manager at The Asia Foundation, Myanmar. Urban program's projects are supporting e-Govt reforms in 14 townships and cover 15 government departments.



Singapore launches smartphone app for efficient COVID-19 contact tracing

The app identifies people who have been in close proximity to coronavirus patients by using wireless Bluetooth technology.

SINGAPORE on Friday launched a smartphone application 'TraceTogether' that allows local authorities to quickly track people who have been in close proximity to confirmed coronavirus cases in the city-state.

Using wireless Bluetooth technology

The app, created by the Government Technology Agency

(GovTech) in collaboration with the Ministry of Health (MOH), identifies people who have been in close proximity -- within 2 meters of the user and for at least 30 minutes -- to coronavirus patients by using wireless Bluetooth technology, as per a report by The Strait Times. By downloading the app and enabling push notification and location permissions, users can help authorities easily identify potential cases. It works like this

-- Should one of the app users be tested positive for coronavirus, the Ministry of Health will be able to quickly find out which other users they had been in close contact with.

The developers said that the application would be particularly useful in cases where the infected persons do not know everyone whom they had been in close proximity with for an extended duration.

Singapore has so far reported 313 cases of the novel coronavirus. Worldwide, the virus has infected more than 209,000 people and killed more than 8,700 others, as per the latest data available on the World Health Organisation.

Consent to participate

Users would have to give explicit consent to participate in TraceTogether and for their mobile number and data to be

used for contact tracing, as per a release by the Smart Nation and Digital Government Office (SNDGO).

"When requested by MOH, users can send their TraceTogether logs to facilitate the contact tracing process. Up to that point, the authorities, including MOH and GovTech, have no knowledge of the user's TraceTogether data," said SNDGO.

It may be noted that records

of the encounters of users will be stored locally in their smartphones and they will be only be asked to share these records with the concerned authorities when contacted by the Ministry of Health during the tracing procedure. At that point, if they refuse, they may be prosecuted under the Infectious Diseases Act.

REFERENCE

ANI News Update

Myanmar Gazette

Heads of Service Organizations confirmed and appointed

1. The President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has confirmed the following persons as Heads of Service Organizations shown against each of their names on the expiry of one-year probationary period.

Name	Appointment
(1) U Ba Myint	Managing Director Myanma Railways Ministry of Transport and Communications
(2) U Zaw Lwin Oo	Principal Myanmar Mercantile Marine College Ministry of Transport and Communications
(3) U Ko Lay Win	Director-General Basic Education Department Ministry of Education
(4) Dr Zaw Win	Director-General Department of Alternative Education Ministry of Education
(5) Dr Sai Kyaw Naing Oo	Director-General Department of Monitoring and Evaluation (Research) Ministry of Education

2. The President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has appointed Director U Shwe Maw of the Sale and Distribution Department of Myanmar Petroleum Products Enterprise under the Ministry of Electricity and Energy as Managing Director of the same enterprise on probation from the date he assumes charge of his duties.



Myanmar Daily Weather Report

(Issued at 7:00 pm Friday 20th March, 2020)

BAY INFERENCE: Weather is partly cloudy over the Andaman Sea and Bay of Bengal.

FORECAST VALID UNTIL NOON OF THE 21st March, 2020: Rain or thundershowers are likely to be isolated in Naypyitaw, Sagaing, Mandalay, Magway and Taninthayi Regions, Kachin, Shan, Chin and Northern Rakhine States. Degree of certainty is (60%). Weather will be partly cloudy 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 Sagaing, Mandalay and Magway Regions, Kachin, Shan, Chin and Northern Rakhine States.

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 21st March, 2020: Likelihood of isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (60%).

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 21st March, 2020: Partly cloudy.

FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 21st March, 2020: Likelihood of isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (60%).

WEATHER OUTLOOK FOR WEEKEND: Likelihood of isolated rain or thundershowers in Mandalay Region and weather will be partly cloudy in Naypyitaw and Yangon Region.

United Nations Secretary-General's Message on the International Day of Forests

21 March 2020

Forests cover some 30 per cent of our planet's land area and are home to 80 per cent of all terrestrial species. The ecosystem services they provide to humanity range from purifying air and water to producing foods, medicines and wood and paper products. Forests sustain essential watersheds and influence the global climate and rainfall patterns.

Forests also act as important carbon sinks, absorbing about 2 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide annually. Sustainably managing forests is therefore critical for closing the emissions gap and limiting global temperature rise to 1.5°C from pre-industrial levels.

Given the vital role of forests in capturing carbon dioxide, it is alarming that forests are increasingly victims of drought conditions induced by climate change. The past year has seen enormous forest fires, from the Canadian Arctic and Siberia to California and Australia. As well as heart-breaking losses of lives, homes and livelihoods in populated areas, these fires have been responsible for massive carbon dioxide emissions.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognizes the vital role of forests for our future. In 2017, the first United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests 2030 was adopted by the UN General Assembly. The Plan includes a set of six Global Forest Goals and 26 associated targets to be achieved by 2030. These targets are laudable, but we are not on track.

Deforestation is mainly caused by the conversion of habitats for large-scale agriculture. Increasing agricultural production without replacing natural forests is a key challenge. Over the past 25 years, the annual rate of net global deforestation has slowed by over 50 per cent, which is a credit to the efforts of governments and other stakeholders working to sustainably manage forests. Yet, vast areas of forest continue to be lost.

This year's International Day of Forests highlights the connections between forests and the rich biodiversity they support. Last year, the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services sounded the alarm that the health of our ecosystems was declining at unprecedented speed and species extinction rates were accelerating. We must act quickly to reverse this. Safeguarding forests is part of the solution.

2020 has been referred to as a "Nature Super Year" and must be the year where we turn the tide on deforestation and forestry loss. The 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in October aims to adopt a Global Post-2020 Framework for Biodiversity. This framework must comprise new ambitious targets to protect nature and address the underlying drivers of nature loss, coupled with robust implementation and financing mechanisms.

Our global environment is being degraded by our unsustainable choices. The way we consume natural resources is accelerating biodiversity loss and exacerbating climate change. On this International Day, I urge all governments, businesses and civil society to take urgent action to halt deforestation and restore degraded forests, so future generations can enjoy a greener, healthier future.

United Nations Information Centre, Yangon.

Former Google engineer agrees to plead guilty to secrets theft

MENLO PARK — A former Google star engineer charged with stealing trade secrets from its self-driving car program has agreed to plead guilty in a deal with prosecutors, according to court documents filed Thursday.

Anthony Levandowski, 39, was a founding member of an autonomous vehicle project in 2009 called "Chauffeur," one of

Google's more ambitious undertakings.

Several years later Levandowski began thinking of leaving Google for another self-driving endeavor that was eventually named "Otto," the plea deal said.

He began negotiating with ridesharing giant Uber to invest in or buy Otto while he was still

working at Google, and admits having downloaded a whole series of documents a few months before his resignation in January 2016.

"Prior to my departure, I downloaded thousands of files related to Project Chauffeur," Levandowski said in court documents.

Levandowski was leader of the light-detecting and ranging (LiDAR) team when he resigned from Google without notice.

The technology is important for self-driving cars to measure distances and avoid obstacles.

Levandowski will plead guilty to a count of theft and attempted theft of trade secrets in exchange for prosecutors dropping the rest of the charges filed against him, the court filing showed. He could face up to 10 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine under sentencing guidelines, but a federal judge would be free to determine the punishment. — AFP ■



A Waymo self-driving car. The allegations against Levandowski came out when Waymo accused Uber of stealing trade secrets. **PHOTO: AFP**

Virus-hit Air New Zealand offered US\$515 mn bailout

WELLINGTON — Air New Zealand has been offered a NZ\$900 million (US\$515 million) loan to help the flag carrier survive the coronavirus crisis, the government said Friday.

"Without this intervention, New Zealand was at risk of not having a national airline," Finance Minister Grant Robertson said.

Air New Zealand shares, which had been in a four-day trading halt, slumped as much as 45.45 per cent before recovering slightly to be down 32.47 per

cent at NZ\$1.04 mid-afternoon.

The airline has been hit hard by the crisis, as the government has sealed off borders to non-residents and advised against all overseas travel.

Even before the unprecedented measures, it had already cut long-haul flights by 80 per cent and warned that one-third of its 12,500 workforce could lose their jobs.

Robertson said Air New Zealand played a critical role in the remote South Pacific nation, and that it was vital to retain

flights to key international destinations throughout the crisis.

"This agreement means that Air New Zealand is in a position to play its part in making sure Kiwis can return home from overseas and that essential flights and freight lines for goods like pharmaceuticals remain open," he said.

Under the deal, the government — which owns 52 per cent of Air New Zealand — will extend up to NZ\$900 million of credit to the airline over the next two years. — AFP ■



Air New Zealand has taken a hard hit from the coronavirus crisis, so the government stepped in. **PHOTO: AFP FILE**

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Malaysia to deploy military to enforce coronavirus lockdown order

KUALA LUMPUR — Malaysia said Friday that the military will be deployed starting Sunday to assist the police with the enforcement of the country's partial lockdown order to contain the spread of the new coronavirus.

Malaysia, which reported 1,030 confirmed COVID-19 cases as of noon Friday, the highest number among Southeast Asian countries, began a "movement control order" nationwide on Wednesday, essentially forcing its population of 32 million to stay home for two weeks except those whose job entails an essential service like healthcare, law en-

forcement or transportation.

"We are confident with the assistance of the military, we can better control the situation," Defense Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob told reporters after chairing a special meeting on COVID-19.

The decision came as the police on Thursday reported that roughly 30 per cent of people were not adhering to the order.

Ismail said police found restaurants still flouting the rules with people dining in instead of getting takeout, while some mingled and played in parks.

The police have been



A shopping complex in Malaysia's Johor Bahru is closed on 18 March, 2020, after the country imposed a two-week nationwide lockdown to curb the spread of the new coronavirus. **PHOTO: KYODO NEWS**

conducting roadblocks since Wednesday night to ensure that only those on urgent matters are out of their homes.—Kyodo News

NEWS In BRIEF

S Korea seeks cooperation from Japan, China in tackling coronavirus

SEOUL — South Korea's Health and Welfare Ministry highlighted the need for cooperation with Japan and China to overcome the rapidly spreading new coronavirus, during a briefing with major foreign news agencies, including Kyodo News, on Friday.

"As the three countries are so closely interrelated, they are in a position that all can successfully come out of the situation as long as all three countries effectively contain (the spread of the virus)," the ministry's spokesman Son Yong Rae said.

"Not only our three countries, but the whole world will be involved in the end, but it is very important to see improvements through cooperation between the countries," said Son, adding that it is essential to share "know-how" as South Korea, China and Japan were countries that were critically hit by COVID-19 at an earlier stage of the pandemic. — Kyodo News

China pledges to help India in fighting Covid-19

BEIJING — Chinese Ambassador to India Sun Weidong on Friday said that China will cooperate with India in fighting the Covid-19.

China held a video conference with Eurasian and South Asian countries on ways and means to combat the deadly coronavirus. A delegation of Indian officials from the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and Ministry of External Affairs joined in. "China held Video Conference on Covid-19 with Eurasian and South Asia Region. Indian officials and scientists from the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and Ministry of External Affairs discussed efforts in combating epidemic with Chinese counterparts," Sun said. Earlier, Minister of State in the MEA, V Muraleedharan had told the Lok Sabha in a written reply that, "the Government of India provided 15 tonnes of medical assistance comprising masks, gloves and other emergency medical equipment to China on 26 February 2020."— ANI ■

At least 24 Afghan security forces killed in insider attack

KABUL — At least two dozen Afghan security forces were killed Friday in an insider attack on their base in southern Afghanistan, officials told AFP, as fighting raged in the war-weary country while efforts to start talks with the Taliban stalled.

The pre-dawn attack in Zabul province comes as Afghanistan is grappling with several crises including an increase in Taliban violence that has thrown a supposed peace process into turmoil, mounting coronavirus cases, and a political feud that has seen two men claim the presidency.

The attack in Zabul saw several "infiltrators" open fire

on their comrades as they slept, according to provincial governor Rahmatullah Yarmal, in one of the deadliest attacks since the US signed a withdrawal deal with the Taliban last month.

The pre-dawn raid targeted a joint police and army headquarters near Qalat, the provincial capital.

"In the attack, 14 Afghan army forces and 10 policemen were killed," Zabul provincial council chief Ata Jan Haq Bayan said. He added that four other Afghan service members were missing.

"The attackers had connections with the Taliban insurgents," Bayan said.— AFP ■



The brutal attack on Jyoti Singh sparked weeks of demonstrations in India. **PHOTO: AFP**

India hangs four over 2012 Delhi bus gang-rape

NEW DELHI — India executed four men on Friday for the gang-rape and murder of a woman on a Delhi bus in 2012 that sparked huge nationwide protests and international revulsion.

The four were hanged before dawn at Tihar Jail in the Indian capital, prison chief Sandeep Goel told AFP.

"The beasts have been hanged," the victim's mother told reporters outside the jail.

The brutal attack on Jyoti Singh sparked weeks of demonstrations and shone a spotlight on the alarming rates of sexual violence and the plight of women in India, where around 95 rapes are reported daily.

"We are satisfied that finally my daughter got justice after seven years," Singh's mother Asha Devi said, as a small crowd

celebrated outside the prison.

"Today all Indian women received justice," Delhi resident Meena Sharma told AFP, clutching an Indian flag.

"I came here around 3:00 am in the morning. I waited here as today is a great day for us."

Celebrations were also held in Singh's ancestral village in northern Uttar Pradesh state, where her extended family members exchanged sweets.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi responded to the execution on Twitter, saying "justice has prevailed".

"It is of utmost importance to ensure dignity and safety of women," he tweeted.

Many of his cabinet colleagues also expressed their satisfaction.— AFP ■



Afghan truck drivers talk while waiting near the closed Pakistan-Afghanistan border amid concerns over the spread of the COVID-19 novel coronavirus, in Torkham some 54 kms from Peshawar on 16 March, 2020. **PHOTO: AFP**

Greece battling virus with austerity-hit health system

ATHENS — Greece is battling hard to control the novel coronavirus but experts warn that its public health system has been drastically weakened by a decade of dwindling spending and staff cuts.

Since 12 March, when Greece registered its first death from the virus, the government has taken swift action to reduce social mixing — shutting businesses and public spaces, quarantining travellers and banning gatherings among other measures.

“If we manage to limit transmission, we will give our health system the time necessary to deal with emergencies,” Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis said in a televised address this week.

Penny Zorzou, an infectious diseases expert at Chios general hospital, said Greece had no



Since 12 March, the government has taken swift action to reduce social mixing. **PHOTO: AFP**

choice but to react quickly before its chronically underfunded

public health system was overwhelmed.

The system is “very weakened after the debt crisis”, she

told AFP. A quarter of national output was wiped out and official unemployment soared to nearly a third of the workforce during the 2010-2018 crisis, originally sparked by reckless state spending and misreporting of fiscal data to the EU.

Thousands of trained doctors emigrated during the crisis, most of them to Germany and Britain. Sotiria Hospital in Athens, the top facility for respiratory illness, is a stark example of the shortage in medical staff, according to Theodoros Vassilakopoulos, a pulmonology professor at Athens University.

“Before the crisis, the hospital had around 130 pulmonologists-in-training and 60 doctors. Today it has 30 trainees and around 40 doctors,” Vassilakopoulos told state TV ERT.— AFP ■

Paralysis for Latin America with Argentine lockdown, Rio beach closures



Soldiers wear face masks as they stand guard outside a medical center in Concepcion, Chile, on 19 March, 2020. **PHOTO: AFP**

RIO DE JANEIRO — Brazil on Thursday announced it was closing land borders and prohibiting entry to people from European and many Pacific Asian countries to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, as Mexico and Peru reported their first virus deaths.

And Argentina said it would go on a “preventative and compulsory” lockdown from Friday until 31 March in an effort to contain the virus.

Brazil’s Rio de Janeiro state also said it would bar people from its world famous beaches including Copacabana and Ipanema.

Chile, rocked by months of social protests, unveiled an \$11.75 billion economic stimulus package to cope with the effects of the virus on the giant copper producer, but also announced it

was postponing a referendum on changing its constitution.

Meanwhile, a plane operated by Spanish carrier Iberia sent to Ecuador to pick up stranded foreigners was prevented from landing at an airport in Guayaquil, which is under lockdown.

Brazil said its two-week border closure would affect all neighboring countries, with the exception of Uruguay to the south, after shutting its border with Venezuela on Tuesday.

Its new restrictions against travelers from Europe and the Asia Pacific are set to last 30 days, according to a ministerial decree.

They apply to people coming from the European Union, Britain, Iceland, Norway and Switzerland, as well as China,

Japan, South Korea, Australia and Malaysia who are not Brazilian residents or do not have valid work or family reasons to travel.

Latin America’s largest country, with a population of 210 million, has so far registered 621 cases of the coronavirus, with six deaths. Rio state governor Wilson Witzel said from Saturday he would close all beaches, bars and restaurants.

He also announced a measure to cut transport links with other Brazilian states with reported virus cases, although that needs to be ratified by federal authorities. Mexico reported its first coronavirus death — a 41-year-old man with diabetes who died on Wednesday in Mexico City. Mexico has recorded 118 virus cases.— AFP ■

Anxiety grows for Egypt jail inmates at time of virus shutdowns

CAIRO — In Egypt’s overcrowded and putrid jails, families of prisoners fear a potentially catastrophic coronavirus outbreak and are calling for their imminent release as the rest of the country hunkers down.

Egypt has halted family visits to inmates at least until the end of this month citing the “public health and safety of inmates”.

This has meant relatives cannot bring medicine, clean clothes and fresh food directly to those incarcerated.

For Ekram Yousef, a well-known writer and mother of lawyer and former lawmaker Zyad al-Elaimy whose health is slowly failing, the anguish is palpable.

“My son has diabetes, high blood pressure, ulcers and most of all a nagging respiratory disease,” she told AFP, anxious that he is at a high risk of contracting the coronavirus.

“There are no phone calls so I have to guess which medicines he is running out of.”

The 40-year-old, a key figure in the 2011 revolution, was jailed in June last year and is awaiting trial for promoting “unrest against the state”.

He was also sentenced last week to one year in prison in another case for “broadcasting false news” for comments he made in a BBC interview.

“We have a feeling of extreme helplessness,” his mother said. “What are the priorities with this pandemic: should we continue punishing people or take care of the health of the population at large?” Yousef asked.

She suggested, as proposed by groups such as Human Rights Watch, a conditional release for prisoners of conscience and those who do not pose a threat to society.— AFP ■



An Egyptian policeman stands guard at Tora prison in Cairo. **PHOTO: AFP**



Electronic wristbands have been used to follow people placed under home quarantine. **PHOTO: AFP**

Asia deploys innovative, if invasive, tech to curb virus

HONG KONG — Electronic bracelets and phones that report your whereabouts, text messages if you stray too far from quarantine and digital detectives tracking where you’ve been — Asian countries have embraced innovative, if somewhat invasive, tech to counter the coronavirus pandemic.

When Hong Kong stylist Declan Chan flew home from Zurich earlier this week he was greeted by officials who placed an electronic device on his arm.

The wristband was connected to an app that he had to install on his phone as he headed into two weeks of compulsory self-quarantine at home.

It allows authorities to check his location as Hong Kong tries to halt fresh infections from people returning from overseas after two months of making impressive headway against its own outbreak.

Speaking to AFP by phone from home Chan, 36, said he was getting used to having a tracker that alerts authorities if he leaves his apartment.

“That’s a bit mind boggling,”

he said. “But I would rather be in home quarantine than in a government centre.”

Hong Kong’s health authorities have held daily briefings on the outbreak. But the new bracelets were announced in a late night government press statement on Monday with little fanfare. Some 5,000 wristbands were ready for use with another 55,000 on their way, authorities said. On Thursday, Hong Kong began ordering all arrivals from overseas to wear the bracelets.

Live maps and tracing

The city is not alone in using such measures. South Korea, China, Taiwan and Singapore — all of which have had success in curbing the spread of the coronavirus — have employed a range of tech solutions. Taiwan’s centralised epidemic control centre links multiple government agencies and uses big data to look for potential carriers and monitor those quarantining. Smartphones with GPS are given to those isolating at home, with local officials tracking them via the Line messaging app.—AFP ■

Oil extends gains but stays below \$30

SINGAPORE — Oil rose further Friday after a dramatic rebound from multi-year lows but stayed below \$30 a barrel on fears the deadly coronavirus will push the world into recession with an oversupply.

US benchmark West Texas Intermediate (WTI) was up 3.65 per cent to \$26.14 a barrel in mid-day Asian trade.

Brent climbed 2.14 per cent to \$29.08 a barrel.

On Thursday, WTI rebounded by more than 23 per cent following US government moves to help American crude producers weather a slump in demand caused by the coronavirus pandemic, recovering almost as spectacularly as it had plunged in recent days.

Crude slumped to 18-year lows Wednesday, with travel restrictions and other measures aimed at combating the virus hitting demand and major producers Saudi Arabia and Russia locked in a price war by ramping

up production.

“Oil prices are recovering... as the three-day collapse saw some bottom fishing after WTI failed to break the \$20 a barrel level,” said OANDA senior market analyst Edward Moya.

“The oil rebound also extended higher after (US) President (Donald) Trump stated he would get involved in the oil price

war at the appropriate time,” Moya said in a note.

“The Trump administration is now showing signs they will try to defend the shale industry and stabilise oil prices.”

The US Department of Energy said Thursday it will carry out Trump’s directive to top up the Strategic Petroleum Reserve to its maximum capacity.—AFP ■



FILE: The US Department of Energy said Thursday it will carry out Trump’s directive to top up the Strategic Petroleum Reserve to its maximum capacity. **PHOTO: AFP**

Markets rally on huge economic support plans

HONG KONG — Asian and European stock markets rallied Friday at the end of another exceptionally volatile week, as weary investors welcomed a worldwide fightback against coronavirus fallout by governments and central banks.

In the eurozone, markets jumped after the European Central Bank launched a vast stimulus this week, with Frankfurt, Paris, Milan and Madrid scoring gains of almost six per cent nearing the half-way mark Friday.

London’s stock market won about three per cent one day after the Bank of England slashed interest rates to a record-low 0.1

per cent and ahead of new UK state stimulus plans later Friday.

The dollar eased somewhat after a lengthy rally fuelled by traders cashing out of their investments, while the embattled oil market extended Thursday’s gains.

‘Big bazookas’

“The stock markets’ upside is a result of a number of big bazookas fired off by central banks,” Scope Markets analyst James Hughes told AFP, before sounding a note of grim caution.

“The markets hate uncertainty — and we could not be in a more uncertain time,” he added

in reference to the COVID-19 pandemic that has killed more than 10,000 people around the world.

“So overall I feel markets may recover from here in the short term, but we must remember it has been a week where this crisis escalated in an immeasurable and unprecedented way. Who knows what next week has in store.”

Coronavirus threatens to engulf the whole of Europe after it emerged Thursday that eurozone member Italy has overtaken China’s death total — and is now braced for an extended lockdown. — AFP

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V PRESIDIO VOY. NO. (035W/E)

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V PRESIDIO VOY. NO. (035W/E) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 21-3-2020 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of MIP/MITT where it will lie at the consignee’s risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S NEW GOLDEN SEA SHIPPING
PTE., LTD.

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V CHEVAL BLANC

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V CHEVAL BLANC VOY. NO. (20026) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 21-3-2020 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of MITT-5 where it will lie at the consignee’s risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S GLOBAL MARS SHIPPING

Phone No: 2301928

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V EVNIA

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V EVNIA VOY. NO. (20025) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 23-3-2020 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of MITT-4 where it will lie at the consignee’s risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S GLOBAL MARS SHIPPING

Phone No: 2301928

I ADMIT I show less interest on tours of Anya regions because of frightening to hotness and dryness of local climatic conditions. Actually, I on my trips to Anya regions grasped chances to observe different traditions and experiences from that of hilly regions. Although Pakokku was seemed to have least travel sites, I preferred it as a town with significant destinations. Even long Ayeyawady Bridge at the entrance to the town is attractive to the travellers.

to Pakokku should travel Bagan-NyaungU at first. Travelers may take highway express buses as well as ships to Pakokku. Those who make trip by air should take a car to Pakokku from Bagan-NyaungU airport along a 45-minute drive route. Travellers bound for Natma Hill in southern Chin State can also take a break in Pakokku. I arrived in Pakokku on my way to Bagan.

Why do you visit Pakokku?
It is because Pakokku is a part of Bagan. Ayeyawady River



A world famous throne built up with a backdrop decorated with wonderful masterpiece of Myanmar arts and crafts.

From Thahtokgu to Pakokku
I read a story that Bagan King Alaungsithu on his tour arrived at Pauk-in Village near the site of current Pakokku Ayeyawady Bridge. Unexpectedly, Mei Seint Nyo, a lower grade wife of the king, died in punishment during the royal trip. The king ordered to take out the embryo baby from the abdomen of the pregnant low grade queen and to bury the body of baby in a tomb on which a pagoda was built. Since then, the area had been named Thahtokgu and later, the title changed to Pakokku after passing many years.

To pay visit to Pakokku
Those wishing to pay visit

divides ancient Bagan city and Pakokku. Tantkyi Hill, one of locations for four sacred tooth relics of Lord Buddha, is situated on bank of Pakokku. Ancient cultural heritages mushroom in Pakokku.

Travelling sites in Pakokku
Travellers can tour many sites in a small town without need to take a long time. If they take an adequate time, they can see valuable historical heritages as Anya traditions in villages.

Shweku Pagoda and Thahtokgu
Thahtokgu is located at Shweku Pagoda. Prayer halls and tier-roofed buildings deco-

rated with Myanmar handicrafts were destroyed by fire. But there remains a throne built up with a backdrop decorated with wonderful masterpiece of Myanmar arts and crafts. In fact, the backdrop and the throne for the Buddha image were curved from a large trunk of tree. Sculptors took four years in curving the works of the throne and backdrop. Masterpieces of the backdrop mention performances of Jataka stories. A grandma clarifies the history related to the wonderful backdrop.

Thahtokgu Pagoda is located on the platform of Shweku Pagoda. Thahtokgu Pagoda was lost in scenes of other religious structures. Shweku Pagoda can

be seen on Bogyoke Road. One more pagoda takes position next to Shweku Pagoda. Then, the road from Shweku Pagoda leads to PhaungdawU Pagoda.

PhaungdawU Pagoda
On his way along Ayeyawady River, King Alaungsithu stopped over its royal raft because of a request by spirit Mei Seint Nyo. He ordered to build a pagoda at the site of stopover. But, the building shows strange architectural works related to Hinduism. The pagoda is on a small platform where a land of victory is arranged. A wide precinct of the pagoda can give a comfortable car park.

PhaungdawU Pagoda takes position on Thida Street where travellers have access to Myoma Street leading to Shwemuhtaw Pagoda.

Shwemuhtaw Pagoda
Shwemuhtaw Pagoda in Pakokku is one of nine pagodas under title of Muhtaw built by King Asoka. Young travellers pay visit to the pagoda for enjoying beauties of Ayeyawady River as well as panoramic views of paddy fields and bridge. A traditional salad shop crowded with customers sells various kinds of salads made of flowers from seasonal plants. Delicacies of salads are the same but leaves and fruits of plants can



Thihoshin Pagoda

Awesome Hours in Pakokku

By Thiha (the Traveller @ Thiha Lulin)



Pakhan Monastery.



Phaungdaw U Pagoda.



give relevant medicinal potencies to consumers.

Thihoshin Pagoda

Every Myanmar Buddhist may remember Thihoshin Pagoda whenever they hear the word of Pakokku. It is a Buddha image made of ten kinds of woods. Currently, the central image among the three is genuine Buddha image curved in Ceylon. Significantly, such an image went to Ceylon. It was reported that the image is locked by chains. The backdrop of the image was destroyed by fire. Souvenir shops and Thanakha grafts shops as well as snack shops mushroom around the pagoda.

The pagoda on Tantkyi Hill

Travellers need to drive along 32 miles route from Ayeyawady Bridge to the pagoda enshrined with a sacred tooth relic conveyed from Sri Lanka. The pagoda built by King Anawrahta.

Shwetanttit Tharekkhan Pagoda

It is seven miles from Ayeyawady Bridge. Two large lion

statues are symbol of the pagoda. The pagoda was enshrined with a Buddha image made of Tharekhan wood. Visitors can observe a throne built up with a backdrop decorated with triple floral works within three years.

Hsinkyoh Shweku Pagoda

The pagoda is 15 miles from Ayeyawady Bridge. One more Tharekkhan Buddha image can be seen at Hsinkyoh Shweku Pagoda.

Sithushin Buddha Image in Pakhangyi



Archaeology Art works at Pakhan Monastery.

works at Pakhan Monastery built of 254 teak posts. A gold box and a silver box of Ko Gyi Kyaw are kept in a monastery behind Pakhan Monastery. Travellers can pay visits to the gate of walls at Pakhangyi city. They should visit ShweUmin Monastery, north of the ancient city.

Pakhanngge (Lover Village) Monastery

Travellers should pay visit

to 160-year damaged monastery in Pakhanngge (Lover) Village, 24 miles from Pakokku’s Ayeyawady Bridge. It is the largest one among the wooden monasteries across Myanmar. Construction of the monastery took seven years with the use of 332 teak posts. As the original monastery had ruined, a scale model was built in the precinct. The damaged teak posts and brick ladders are displayed in maintenance.

Shinmataung Pagoda

King Asoka built a pagoda enshrined with a Tharekkhan Buddha image atop Shinma Hill.

serves good buffet breakfast to guests. During my trip, the hotel organized Htamane making contest taking applauses of local and foreign travellers with happiness. Fair room charges attract both local and international travellers. A lacquerware shop can be seen in front of the hotel. Ananda Temple is the closest to the hotel. Travellers can hire e-bike, tuk-tuk and car easily. You can dial 0951320821 of Bagan View Hotel for booking.

Eateries in Pakokku

Those wishing to taste beverages may join Excellent Restaurant and Bar as well as Popa View



Thahtokgu.

Bar & Restaurant on the retour.

Gifts for returnees

I would like to direct visitors to buy grafts of Shinmataung Thanakha and Yaw sarongs as gifts on their return from Pakokku. They may also buy plum juice and toffee, tamarind juice and toffee as Anya traditional snacks.

Regard to tour guides and photographers

It is very important for travellers. Travellers need tour guides for their trips not to waste time. Ma Thanda from Bagan can give the best services to travellers not only for the tours of Pakokku and Bagan but also for searching good scenes for photographs. If not, she can provide assistance to travellers for observing historical heritages. Travellers may call her by dialing 09-764317155.

Pakokku is full of historical heritages although it is just an Anya region without so many travelling sites I had seemed. Actually, globetrotters choose Pakokku as a wonderful destination on their trips.

Have a safe, healthy and happy trip.

Translated by Than Tun Aung



FIFA-recognized artificial turf available for public



The view of 200 LUX level artificial turf in Bahan seen at the night time. **PHOTO:MFF**

A FIFA-recognized artificial turf in Bahan, Yangon, which has 200 LUX Maintained Average Horizontal illumination level, is available for football fans and public, according to the official statement by the Myanmar Football Federation.

People can rent the international level football turf whenever Myanmar National Football squads take their break from training sessions on the turf.

The turf in Bahan, near the northern gateway of Shwedagon Pagoda, is currently the best in Myanmar and offering a convenient connection for football fans as it is located in the downtown area of Yangon, said MFF officials. The turf can be rented with

one match rate and special price rates are set for amateur football leagues, according to the MFF.

A match rate for the turf has set as K 100,000 per hour at the day time but K 60,000 would be added to the price at night for the extra cost of turf's lighting and illumination, MFF stated.

The turf is ordinarily taken by Myanmar National Footballers and Myanmar National League clubs thus football fans need to place a booking a week earlier, MFF officials said.

Interested persons can contact the official number 09-886933058 for the detailed information and booking process, the Myanmar Football Federation stated. —Lynn Thit (Tgi) ■

MNL U-19: Hantharwady beat Mawyawadi 2-0

HANTHARWADY United U-19 beat Mawyawadi FC by a score of 2-0 in a Week-10 match of U-19 Myanmar National League 2020 at Padonmar Stadium in Yangon yesterday. All the two goals for Hantharwady were scored by youth player Sithu Aung.

The match was a good one with back and forth actions of both teams. Hantharwady United got a leading goal at 10 minutes and the lone goal pushed them for more scores. After 1-0, Hantharwady United continued their attack and the team garnered a second goal at 26 minutes in the first-half. By taking opportunities over errors of the opponent's defense line, the goal was beautifully scored

by Si Thu Aung. The first half was ended with 2 goals, led by Hantharwady.

The second half saw better play of Mawyawadi FC but they could not convert scoring opportunities to goals and the win was sure for Hantharwady in the final whistle. Grabbing this win, Hantharwady United U-19 have already secured 17 points of five wins, two draws and three losses while Mawyawadi got four points of one win, one draw and eight losses.

In another matches played yesterday, Ayeyawady United played to a 1-1 draw against Myawady FC and Rakhine United secured a 4-0 win over Kachin United. —Lynn Thit (Tgi) ■



Mawyawadi goalkeeper (white) tries to grab the ball during the team match against Hantharwady U-19 at Padonmar Stadium in Yangon yesterday. **PHOTO: MNL**



Yangon United's defender Ernest Aboubacar Congo (No 32) seen at a Myanmar National League match. **PHOTO: MNL**

Yangon Defender Aboubacar to miss match against Magwe

OWING to his exclusive offense, Ernest Aboubacar Congo, defender of the Yangon United, will miss the upcoming Week-10 of Myanmar National League 2020 match against Magwe FC, according to the statement by the Myanmar National League.

The Yangon United vs Magwe match will be played at 4 pm on 14 March at Yangon United Sports Complex in Yangon.

The reason he will miss the match against Magwe FC is because he was fined three yellow cards in the previous MNL matches. Defender Aboubacar is

a former Burkina Faso footballer and he took part in the African Cup 2017. In 2017, AS FAR football club signed him with a loan deal. Next Aboubacar moved to Yangon United in 2019.

The 27-year-old defender Aboubacar had played for all nine matches for Yangon United in the Myanmar National League and he is one of the key defenders for the team. Currently, Yangon United is standing in the third place with 20 points collected while Magwe FC is standing in the eighth place with seven points only. —Lynn Thit (Tgi) ■