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Tuesday, 3 March 2020

Farmland in Ayeyawady Region handed over on Peasants Day 2020



Ayeyawady Region Chief Minister U Hla Moe Aung and locals observe using drone in spraying pesticide over rice plantation. **PHOTO: MAUNG MAUNG MYINT**

PEAASANTS Day 2020 was commemorated at War-du Village-tract, Kangyidaung Township, Pathein District, Ayeyawady Region yesterday morning.

Firstly, Ayeyawady Region Minister for Agriculture, Live-stock, Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation U Tin Aung Win read the Message of Greetings from President U Win Myint on the occasion of Peasants Day.

Next, Ayeyawady Region Chief Minister U Hla Moe Aung delivered an address where he said Myanmar is a chiefly agriculture-based nation and that Ayeyawady Region, called the granary of Myanmar, has over 5.1 million acres for cultivating monsoon and summer crops.

He said that in addition to the paddy, the chiefly farmed crop, the region also grows chickpeas, green grams, lentils, oil-bearing crops, crops for

consumption and raw materials and many more that are mainly exported.

The Chief Minister said the regional government leads co-operation with all relevant departments and the cultivators for ensuring food security, sufficient nutrition and improving food safety practices. He said they also work to attract more domestic and foreign investors to Ayeyawady Region's agricultural sector so as to elevate the

livelihoods and ensure the full rights of farmers.

Next, Chief Minister U Hla Moe Aung, the regional Chief Justice, regional Hluttaw Deputy Speaker and regional ministers conferred certificates of honour and other rewards on farmers and staff who made outstanding contributions towards the development of the agricultural sector.

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Bored pile drilling almost complete 90 per cent at Myanmar-Korea Friendship Bridge project

DRILLING of bored piles at Myanmar-Korea Friendship Bridge project has completed 90 per cent at the side of Dala Township and 85 per cent at opposite river bank in downtown Yangon.

The bridge will link Bongyi Road in Lanmadaw Township and Bominyaung Road of Dala Township.

Deputy Director-General from the Bridge Management Department U Kyaw Kaung Cho said, "Our department has drilled the ground for 104 bored piles out of 117 at the side of Dala, and 50 out of 58 at the side of Yangon.

He added 7 per cent of the construction has been completed at the project. At the completion, the four-lane reinforced structure bridge with steel suspensions will have 1,867 metre in length, 26.5 meter in width for the maximum loading capacity of 75 tons.

The project is implemented by US\$157.83 million loan from South Korea and \$30.34 million of Myanmar government. The construction project was begun in May 2019 and is expected to complete in October 2022.—MNA

(Translated by Aung Khin)

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National Library Yangon to be open next month



Union Minister for Religious Affairs and Culture Thura U Aung Ko speaks at the coordination meeting on organizing the ceremony to open the National Library in Yangon. **PHOTO: MNA**

A coordination meeting to organize the opening ceremony of National Library was held yesterday afternoon. Officials discussed preparations for launching the library next month as an international-level facility with modern digital system for public services in studying a wide range of subjects, including literature, cultures and histories.

The meeting was attended by Union Minister for Religious Affairs and Culture Thura U Aung Ko, Union Minister for Construction U Han Zaw, Yangon Region Chief Minister U Phyo Min Thein, Deputy Ministers, Permanent Secretaries, Directors-General, Rectors, Deputy Directors-General, Patron and Chairman of Myanmar Library Association and officials.

At the meeting, Union Minister Thura U Aung Ko discussed the plan to open National Library (Yangon) in the first week of April, and expressed thanks to officials, intellectuals and intelligentsia for their contributions in the emergence of library that is located at No. 604/608 between 31st and 32nd Streets on Merchant Road in Pabedan Township.

Director-General U Aung Myint from the Department of Historical Research and National Library and the members of relevant sub-committees also presented their activities for opening ceremonies. —MNA ■

(Translated by Aung Khin)

Hindu families donate blood at National Blood Bank in Yangon

HINDU families collectively donated blood at the National Blood Bank in Yangon yesterday morning. Deputy Director-General Dr Daw Thida Aung from the Department of Medical Services explained the benefits of blood donation. Shri Saras Gupta from the blood donation group introduced with their blood donors for 10 times and above. The Thanantana Dhamma Palaka (Hindu) Association's Social Affairs In-charge T.K Paul and Ko Zaw Min Tun expressed thanks for accepting the bloods from over 100 of their people. — Ye Ye Myint ■

(Translated by Aung Khin)

Union Minister U Han Zaw inspects construction projects in Ayeyawady Region

UNION Minister for Construction U Han Zaw looked into infrastructural development projects in Ayeyawady Region on 1 March. He inspected paving concrete at Pathein-Kangone-Myaungmya road section, construction of a 240-metre-long new bridge and the resistance of old suspension bridge in Kyunggone on Ma-yanchaung-Ywathit road.

The Union Minister and party also arrived at upgrade of Wakema Bridge on Pantanaw-Shwelaung-Wakema-Kyongmangae road section. The old suspension bridge will be upgraded into a steel box girder with the floor of reinforced concrete.

They also visited the construction sites of Kyunpyathat Bridge and Sawke Bridge on Bogale-Mawlamyinegyun-Wakema-Myaungmya road section under the Road Network Development Project in Ayeyawady Region.

At the completions, these roads and bridges will help easy travels and commodity flows from Bogale and Mawlamyinegyun to Myaungmya and Pathein.

In the afternoon, the Union Minister also inspected the road sections of Maubin-Yelagale-Kyaukpi-Mawlamyinegyun and Maubin-Twantay-Hlinethaya.—MNA ■

(Translated by Aung Khin)



Union Minister for Construction U Han Zaw inspects the construction site of a bridge in Ayeyawady Region. **PHOTO: MNA**

Myanmar hosts Asia-Pacific Scout Region's workshop



Chief Commissioner of Myanmar Scout Association Dr. Tin Nyo delivers a speech at opening ceremony of National Workshop on Financial Management and Controls. **PHOTO: SUPPLIED**

THE Asia-Pacific Scout Region and the Myanmar Scout Association is jointly organizing a national workshop on financial management and controls at YMCA Hall in Yangon.

The opening ceremony was held yesterday, and it was attended by the APSR Support Centre's Regional Director J Rizal C. Pangilinan and its officials, Chief Commissioner of Myanmar Scout Association Dr. Tin Nyo, its Deputy Chief Scout U Thar Sein, education officers of respective Regions and States, senior scouts and team leader of Myanmar Rover Scout.

The Chief Commissioner of Myanmar Scout Association made an opening ceremony of workshop, saying the event could share international experiences on financial management which is necessary for the MSA.

The APR Support Centre's Regional Director also said their teams will discuss international financial management procedures in line with the framework of the World Organization of the Scout Movement during the event.

During the four-day event from 2 to 5 March, the experts from APR member countries Singapore, the Philippines, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Pakistan and China (Taipei).—MSA ■

(Translated by Aung Khin)

Union NREC Minister visits Shwesettaw Wildlife Sanctuary

UNION Minister for Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation U Ohn Win visited Shwesettaw Wildlife Sanctuary in Magway Region yesterday.

He observed the lake where the Eld's deer and birds come to drink water, the star tortoise breeding camp, and the elephant camp there.

The Union Minister first inspected the Sandawood planted by the Forest Department at Sandawood Monastery in Pwintbyu Township and gave necessary instructions.

From there, the Union Minister observed the 30-acre 1/2019 plantation and 20-acre 2/2019 plantation in Pwintbyu Township and then arrived at the Kandawgyi Lake in the wildlife sanctuary.

The Union Minister discussed how to ensure there is adequate water for the deer during

the dry season, to systematically record water donors and utilize them effectively, to keep a record of the deer population, planting edible plants and fruits for the deer along the lake, planting evergreen plants, and monitoring human entry into the sanctuary and looking out for fire hazards.

Later in the afternoon, the Union Minister visited the elephant camp, opened and organized by Myanma Timber Enterprise, and listened to Deputy General Manager U Thein Oo explain the formation of the camp, number of visitors, income flow and future plans.

The Union Minister then instructed on providing quality service to visitors, avoiding danger on elephant rides and displays, displaying do's and don'ts in Myanmar and English languages, recording entry to domestic and foreign visitors,



Union Minister for Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation U Ohn Win observes the measuring of a tree at the Shwesettaw Wildlife Sanctuary in Magway. PHOTO: MNA

and maintaining a clean environment.

From there, the Union Minister visited the star tortoise breeding camp and instructed

of plantations inside the Singaung-Zee Aing forest reserve in Minbu Township. — MNA ■

(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)

Tatmadaw postpones military parade for Armed Forces Day

Tatmadaw True News Information Team made an announcement on 1 March that the military parade for Armed Forces Day would be postponed.

The World Health Organization announced the Public Health Emergency of International Concern on 30 January over the outbreak of COVID-19 that has started since December 2019.

The Ministry of Health and Sports of the Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar issues notifications over the outbreak of COVID-19 in other countries and precautions daily to prevent from the deadly virus infection.

Although there is no confirmed COVID-19 case in Myanmar, more and more cases of COVID-19 were found in the Republic of Korea, Iran and Italy suddenly at the same time.

As Myanmar might face sim-

ilar circumstance at any time and place, the public has been notified to avoid public place as much as possible, to organize events that are inevitable, and to follow notifications and warnings issued by the Ministry of Health and Sports strictly if inevitable events are organized.

The government issued Order 19/2020 on 28 February 2020 to designate COVID-19 as highly infectious disease or a disease which requires to report its outbreak to authorities.

Therefore, the Tatmadaw has temporarily postponed the Diamond Jubilee of Armed Forces Day Parade scheduled on 27 March and measures are being taken to organize the Diamond Jubilee of Armed Forces Day Parade after the WHO and the international community announce something positive concerning the control of COVID-19. — MNA

Farmland in Ayeyawady Region handed over on Peasants Day 2020

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This was followed by a ceremony for handing over permits for working on relinquished lands in Danubyu, Maubin, Yekyi, Dedaye and Kyauggon townships of Ayeyawady Region. Chief Minister U Hla Moe Aung, in his capacity as Chairman of the regional Committee for Reviewing Confiscated Farmlands and Other Lands, and

other officials then handed over the permits to the farmers.

A farmer then expressed words of gratitude for the permits on behalf of all the farmers. The Chief Minister, officials and attendees then took a group documentary photo.

Next, the Chief Minister and officials observed a seed dispersal machine and aerial spraying drones in action. By the end of 2019, a total of 8,992 acres have been handed over to farmers in the Ayeyawady Region along with work permits. Yesterday's ceremony saw 2,965 acres handed over to 639 farmers along with permits. In addition, more than 3,000 farmers from 26 townships of the region were present at yesterday's event. — Thi Thi Min, Min Thit ■

(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)



Locals observe the model paddy plantation at the celebration of Peasants Day 2020 in Wardu Village-tract of Ayeyawady Region. PHOTO: NAY LIN

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Deputy Minister for Information meets with editorial team of GNLM

DEPUTY MINISTER for Information U Aung Hla Tun held a meeting with the editorial team of the Global New Light of Myanmar yesterday in Yangon to discuss improving the quality of English language newspaper.

At the meeting, the deputy minister stressed on maintaining the quality of the semi-government newspaper as it is the sole newspaper serving

as the mouthpiece of the government.

He discussed improving content, news selection, professional training for staff, and grooming the next generation of editors and contributors for the daily.

The meeting came to an end after the Deputy Minister made the concluding remarks.—MNA ■

(Translated by GNLM)



U Aung Hla Tun, Deputy Minister for Information, is seen making opening remarks at the meeting with the editorial team of the Global New Light of Myanmar in Yangon on 2 March. PHOTO: MNA

News release on COVID-19 virus: MoHS

1. The Ministry of Health and Sports is closely monitoring the COVID-19 outbreak and spread in China and 59 countries around the world, in cooperation with the international Health Ministries and the WHO, and sharing real-time updated information among these organizations.
 2. The MoHS is taking measures to prevent the infectious disease by monitoring the travellers who are entering Myanmar through international gateways. A very cautious priority is also given for their entry permit only after the travellers have completed all the information such as their health condition, location and phone numbers of the hotels they are going to stay in the health declaration card.
 3. In this regard,
 - (a) A 29-year-old Chinese male, who is working at a factory in Hlinethaya Township in Yangon Region, went to his residence in Taipei, on 18 February and came back to Myanmar on 25 February. He had fever, sore throat, coughing and shortness of breathing on 28 February. He was referred by the Panhlaing Hospital to the Waibargi Specialist Hospital on 1 March. He is now under quarantine and laboratory test is also underway.
 - (b) A 37-year-old male citizen of New Zealand, who is residing in Ahlone Township, Yangon Region, left Yangon International Airport for Kingston Airport passing through Hong Kong airport, JFK airport, and Miami airport. After he stayed in Kingston for eight days he arrived back at Yangon International Airport via Doha airport. He was suspected with similar symptoms like the COVID-19 disease on 29 February. He was referred by the Yangon General Hospital to the Waibargi Specialist Hospital on 2 March. He is now under quarantine and laboratory test is underway.
 - (c) A 32-year-old male, who have studied in Hunan Province of Central China for three years, arrived back in Myanmar on 18 February after a stopover in Malaysia. He suffered similar symptoms like the COVID-19 virus on 1 March. He was referred by Dagon Myothit (East) Hospital to the Waibargi Specialist Hospital on 2 March. He was put under quarantine for laboratory test.
 - (d) A 29-year-old male, who are residing in Ponnagyun Township, Rakhine State, arrived back in Myanmar from Thailand on 18 February. He suffered fever, coughing and abdominal pain on 21 February. He went to a private clinic on 2 March and was referred by the clinic to the Sittway General Hospital at the same day. He is now under quarantine and laboratory test is underway.
 - (e) Singaporean Ministry of Health informed the Ministry of Health and Sports on 1 March that a 25-year-old female, who is residing in Singapore, was staying close contact with an infected person and was then under home quarantine. After she had tested positive with the COVID-19 virus she was under treatment in Singapore. They also informed that a 26-year-old male, who was staying close contact with her in Singapore, arrived back in Myanmar from Singapore on 26 February.Upon this information, the MoHS has found out, after investigation into his health declaration card, that he arrived in Kyaukpadaung Township, Mandalay Region. He is now under quarantine along with his wife.
 4. Hence, it is notified that the travellers who entered Myanmar through air and water routes shall have to complete the health declaration card.
- The travellers, who stay close contact with anyone with the COVID-19 virus or come from the infectious areas and regions, may carry the disease despite no symptoms during the incubation period. The public are notified that both those persons and the public should inform to nearest health centres in order to put them under quarantine and travel restrictions. The notification informed that this is beneficial for all individuals, family members and friends.
- MoHS

(Translated by Aungthu Ya)

Baker Tilly Myanmar, Htun Than Associate to sign MoU

BAKER TILLY Myanmar, a member of an England-based accountancy firm, and Htun Than Associate Co Ltd will sign an MoU at Melia Hotel on 5 May where retired and experienced tax employees will lecture about the SAS system as well.

U Min Lwin Oo, retired Deputy Director for Internal Revenue Department, will be lecturing on the important role tax plays in national development. U Tun Than, a retired staff from the Internal Revenue Department, said the lecture will also explain the SAS system and tax-related

laws.

There is a presence of foreign companies in Myanmar that will convert to the SAS system and departments and staff in Myanmar require a lot of explanations on the private sector, hence the emergence of tax-related services.

Taxpayers who attend tax-related services training will be more knowledgeable about where the tax they are paying are being implemented and allow better facilitation.

— Than Htike ■

(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)

Stimulant tablets seized in Hsihseng, Mabein

A combined team including anti-narcotic drug force searched a mortorcycle driven by Than Tun near the station hospital in Saikhaung Village in Hsihseng Township on 1 March and arrested him together with 2,000 stimulant tablets.

Simarlarly, a Tatmadaw column inspected Eai Maung on

the road of Aleywar Village in Mabein Township and arrested him together with 19,500 stimulant tablets, a hand phone and a motorcycle on the same day. Myanmar Police Force have opened lawsuits against them under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Law, according to Myanmar Police Force. —GNLM



Report on Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

From (4-1-2020) to (2-3-2020)
(2-3-2020), 8: 15 pm

1. Situation update worldwide

(World Health Organization’s statement issued at 1:30 am (MMT) on 1-3-2020)

Total affected countries - 58
Total cases - 87,137
Total death toll - 2,977

- * The WHO has announced outbreak of disease has occurred in many countries in both imported cases and local transmission.
- * 20 Countries, territories or areas outside China with reported cases

Sr.	Regions in the list of WHO	Countries
1	Western Pacific Region	Republic of Korea, Japan, Singapore, Australia, Malaysia, Viet Nam
2	European Region	Italy, Germany, France, Spain, The United Kingdom, Croatia, San Marino, Norway, Netherlands
3	South-East Asia Region	Thailand
4	Eastern Mediterranean Region	Iran, United Arab Emirates
5	Region of the Americas	United States of America, Canada

According to the WHO’s Situation Report on 28-2-2020, the risk assessment on transmission of COVID-19 stated that the outbreak rate was defined as the Very High in China, Regional Level and Global Level.

2. Situation in Myanmar (Until 6:00 pm on 2-3-2020)

	Laboratory Test			Number of Patient
	Positive Result	Negative Result	Under test	
People under Investigation	-	43	5	48
Suspected cases	-	2	-	2
Total	-	45	5	50

- There are a total of 50 people under investigation across Myanmar from 31-1-2020 to 1-3-2020: 17 in Yangon Region, 12 in Shan State, 9 in Mandalay Region and 12 in other Regions and States.
- In preparation for COVID-19, the Ministry of Health and Sports is carrying out:
 - monitoring the persons (family members and health workers) who had close contacts with the patients and prevention and control measures against the disease at the hospitals and clinics
 - identifying suspected cases, quarantining them and providing effective treatments
 - giving instructions to the health workers to strictly follow preventive measures and make public awareness
 - publishing situation reports about Myanmar and other countries in the state-owned newspapers and the internet website of the Ministry (www.mohs.gov.mm) and social media pages (<https://www.facebook.com/MinistryOfHealthAndSportsMyanmar>) and (<https://www.facebook.com/MyanmarCDC>), with taking response to the fake news
 - coordination with relevant government agencies to lessen socio-economic impacts resulted from COVID-19
- Although Myanmar has not found any COVID-19 patient so far,
 - COVID-19 is spreading not only in China but also in Singapore, Republic of Korea, Italy, and Iran at high level
 - The chances of the travellers from the countries coming to Myanmar by flights, or through border crossings from other countries are high.
 - The ministry is increasing surveillance in upward momentum at the international airports.
 - The ministry is also closely monitoring the hotels, guest houses and houses where the foreign travellers will reside.
 - Local transmission was found in some countries where new cases occurred despite no close contacts with COVID-19 patients or no previous visit to the countries with the outbreak of disease
 - In the crowd, people can be infected the virus from COVID-19 patients and asymptomatic carriers.

- It is also possible that some cases could be found immediately, the people and social organizations are suggested:
 - to avoid crowded areas and festivals as much as possible
 - to organize only unavoidable public event
 - to restrict the number of attendees to those events where strictly measures must be posed to prevent the audience with fever or respiratory disease while following advises of the Ministry of Health and Sports. —MoHS
- (Translated by Aung Khin)



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The construction of the bridge that will link Bongyi Road in Lanmadaw Township, and Bominyaung Road of Dala Township is underway. **(NEWS ON PAGE-1) PHOTO: MNA**

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Monywa crop dryer under spotlight at agro-machinery expo

A machine that can dry paddy, maize and other crops in half an hour, and work through 30 tons in an hour, was the center of attention at the Myanmar International Agriculture Machinery Expo at Fortune Plaza in Thakayta Township, Yangon, yesterday.

The drying machine was invented and manufactured in Myanmar and takes half an hour to load in content. Rice cultivators and farmers were particularly attracted to the novel machinery.

Ko Aung Thu from Monywa industrial zone said the machine was invented with the aim to promote domestic machinery over foreign ones and provide farmers with reliable quality. He said this is their first success and has been in production since May 2019. He said ten of the machines will be sold at the base price of K58 million at the expo.

Changing from a traditional mode of agriculture into an industrial form requires innovation to promote the agricultural sector of the nation. The crop drying machine is the first of its kind to be produced in Myanmar.



A crop dryer is seen at the Myanmar International Agriculture Machinery Expo at Fortune Plaza in Thaketa Township, Yangon, on 2 March 2020. PHOTO: THAN SOE

Farmers and rice mill owners welcome domestically manufactured machinery as foreign imports, which are still the majority in use, present difficulties in the maintenance and repairing department.

Tha Yin, a rice mill owner from Myaungdaga in Hmawbi, said the price is reasonable because it is the same price as

those produced in neighbouring countries and the manufacturers can be easily contacted for inquiries or repairs. He said local people are ready to pour their support into domestic manufactured machinery, adding that price is not an issue as long as the quality can be ensured.

The machine is equippe-

daywith three layers of drying technology from Louisiana State University and reduces dust emitted from the dryer from polluting the environment. In addition, the stainless steel within the machine carries a 10-year guarantee. — Than Htike

(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)

Shwe Thaung Yan beach crowded with visitors during public holidays



Visitors taking photo at the Shwe Thaung Yan Beach. PHOTO: KO KO MAUNG

MORE travellers headed to Shwe Thaung Yan beach in Patheingyi District, Ayeyawady Region, from the Chaungtha beach on overnight trips or day journeys during the public holidays.

Travellers visited Shwe Thaung Yan beach as usual during the three-day public holidays. The water at Shwe Thaung Yan beach is clean as it is a natural beach. The beach is also home to crabs and snails.

Travellers prefer to enjoy the natural scenic views and take videos and photos. They live in hotels on Shwe Thaung Yan beach during overnight trips.

Travellers arrived at the Shwe Thaung Yan beach mainly by car or on board three-wheeled motorbikes during the holiday period after visiting Chaungtha beach.— Ko Ko Maung (Shwe Thaung Yan)

(Translated by Hay Mar)

Accident on Yangon-Mandalay highway kills six

SIX persons were killed on 1 March after the vehicle they were travelling in overturned on the Yangon-Mandalay Highway, according to the Highway Traffic Police (Tada-U Township).

Around 4 pm on 1 March, a Hijet truck with six men and seven women on board was on its way from Mandalay to Nay

Pyi Taw, when one of the front tires of the vehicle went flat. The vehicle struck the middle block between mileposts 329/2 and 329/3 on the Yangon-Mandalay highway and flipped over. Six passengers died on the spot.

As soon as they were informed about the accident, a combined team comprising

highway traffic police and fire service personnel from Sagarinn rushed to the scene along with an emergency ambulance team.

The injured passengers were taken to the Tada-U People's hospital on a highway police vehicle.

The truck was being driven by Zaw Zaw, 50, from Pyitawthar

Village, Wundwin Township. The damages to the truck have been estimated at K1.5 million.

The Sagarinn highway police have filed a case of reckless driving against Zaw Zaw under Sections 304-A, 338, and 337 of the Penal Code.—Ye Tint (IPRD)

(Translated by Hay Mar)

Trade Mark Ads

Call Thin Thin May,

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Myanmar exports onions worth \$3.56 mln to Bangladesh in Oct-Feb

MYANMAR exported more than 5,700 tons of onions, worth US\$3.56 million, to neighbouring Bangladesh through the Maungtaw border gate in the past five months of the current financial year, according to news released online by the Ministry of Commerce.

“At present, onion prices have plunged to K1500 per viss (one viss equals 1.6 kg) on account of newly harvested onions entering the market. In mid-February, one viss of onions fetched about K1,300,” said a trader.

In the 2019-2020 financial year, Myanmar’s exports onion to Bangladesh through Maungtaw gate stood at 1,175 tons, with an estimated value of \$69,660, in October; 1,074 tons, worth \$1,13,000, in November; 761 tons, worth \$1.02 million, in December; 1,102 tons, worth \$1.03 million in January; and 1,613 tons, worth \$1.33 million, in February.

Between 1 October 2019 and



Myanmar’s onions are primarily shipped to markets in China and Bangladesh. **PHOTO: THANT ZIN**

21 February 2020, the cross-border trade between Myanmar and Bangladesh crossed \$7 million from \$3.39 million in the same

period of last FY, data from the Commerce Ministry showed.

Last year, demand from Bangladesh and the local mar-

ket had lifted onion prices above K3,000 per viss, according to the Mandalay commodity depot.

Myanmar’s onions are pri-

marily shipped to markets in China and Bangladesh.

“We cannot export onions to China due to COVID-19. The demand from Bangladesh has nearly halted. Also, when supply exceeds demand, prices plunge. Summer onions have been freshly harvested in Mandalay, Sagaing, and Magway regions,” said U Win Myint from the Shwemanhla onion depot.

Myanmar’s onion exports to China through Muse were registered at 19,417 tons, worth \$7.797 million, in the 2017-2018 financial year, 28,659 tons, worth \$8.468 million, in the mini-budget period (April to September, 2018) and over 69,180 tons, worth \$15 million, in the 2018-2019FY, as per data released by the Trade Department at the Muse 105th mile trade zone. —Thant Zin/ Myint Maung

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

Hteekhee trade down \$66 mln in current FY

TRADE between Thailand and Myanmar via the Hteekhee border gate between 1 October and 21 February in the current financial year plunged to US\$704.6 million from \$770.7 million registered in the year-ago period, according to data from the Ministry of Commerce.

In the October-February period, exports through the Hteekhee gate reached \$697.17 million, while imports fell short of \$7.4 million.

In the 2018-2019FY, exports of natural gas from Taninthayi Region had contributed to an

enormous increase in exports through the Hteekhee gate, said an official from the ministry.

Earlier, the Myawady gate recorded the largest trade among the Myanmar-Thailand checkpoints. The rise in exports through the Hteekhee gate last year boosted the value of the Myanmar-Thailand border trade to more than double the amount registered a year earlier.

Of the seven border trade points between Myanmar and Thailand, the Hteekhee and Myeik gates have witnessed a decrease in trade in the current

financial year, while the remaining gates have reported an increase in trade.

Myanmar primarily exports natural gas, fishery products, coal, tin concentrate (SN 71.58 per cent), coconut (fresh and dry), beans, and bamboo shoots to Thailand. It imports capital goods such as machinery, raw industrial goods such as cement and fertilizers, and consumer goods such as cosmetics and food products from the neighboring country. — Ko Htet

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

Sesame prices decline at Magway depot

DIFFERENT varieties of sesame entered the Magway market this week and were selling well, much to the pleasure of growers. But, the price of monsoon sesame is on the decline on account of quality and low demand.

On 11 February, the price of black sesame ranged between K145,000 and K190,000 per bag (one bag weighs 45 viss), while the price of white sesame ranged between K128,000 and K133,000 per bag.

Meanwhile, the price of white sesame (irrigated) ranged between K122,000 and K125,000 per bag, while the price of red sesame hit K113,000 per bag, and brown sesame fetched K113,000 per bag.

The price of the different varieties of sesame declined on 11 February compared to the week ended 4 February. The price of black sesame dropped by K30,000 per bag, white sesame K2,000, white sesame (irrigated) by K5,000, red sesame by K12,000, and brown sesame by K12,000.

China is the main buyer of Myanmar sesame, which is also shipped to markets in Japan, South Korea, China (Taipei), UK, Germany, the Netherlands, Greece, and Poland.

The EU markets prefer organically farmed sesame seeds from Myanmar, said an official from the Trade Promotion Organization.

Japan prefers Myanmar’s black sesame seeds, cultivated under good agricultural practices (GAP), and purchases them after a quality assessment. Black sesame seeds from Myanmar are also exported to South Korea. Meanwhile, China purchases various coloured sesame seeds from the country.

Sesame is cultivated in Myanmar throughout the year. Magway Region, which has gained a reputation as the oil pot of Myanmar, is the main producer of sesame seeds. The seeds are also cultivated in Mandalay and Sagaing regions.

Of the edible oil crops grown in Myanmar, the acreage under sesame is the highest, accounting for 51.3 per cent of the overall oil crop plantation.

The volume of sesame exports was registered at over 96,000 tons, worth \$130 million, in the 2015-2016 FY; 100,000 tons, worth \$145 million, in the 2016-2017FY; and 120,000 tons, worth \$147 million, in the 2017-2018FY. — GNLM

(Translated by Hay Mar)

Agro exports up \$239.8 mln in 2019-2020FY

MYANMAR’S exports of agricultural products between 1 October and 21 February in the current fiscal year exceeded US\$1.5 billion, an increase of \$239.84 million from \$1.26 billion recorded in the corresponding period of the 2018-2019FY, according to trade figures released by the Ministry of Commerce.

In the export sector, the agriculture industry showed the best performance, along with the natural gas sector. The chief items of export in the agricultural sector are rice and broken rice, pulses, corn, and rubber. Myanmar also exports fruits and vegetables, sesame, dried

tea leaves, sugar, and other agro products to other countries.

The agro products are primarily exported to China, Singapore, Malaysia, the Philippines, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka. However, the export market remains uncertain due to unsteady global demand.

According to the Myanmar Rice Federation, quality control and food safety are key to the promotion of exports. Therefore, improved agricultural practices need to be developed.

In addition, the country requires specific export plans for each agro product, as they are currently exported to external

markets based on supply and demand. Contract farming systems and the involvement of regional and state agriculture departments, exporters, traders, and some grower groups are required in order to meet production targets, said an official from the Agriculture Department.

The Commerce Ministry is working to help farmers deal with challenges, such as high input costs, procurement of pedigree seeds, high cultivation costs, and erratic weather conditions. —Ko Htet

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

Helping farmers turn to mechanized agriculture, as envisaged by Constitution

THE demand for mechanization and automation in the field of agriculture is in response to the demand for high quality products and sophisticated production techniques in countries with high labour costs.

While making efforts for modernizing the agricultural sector, Myanmar is facing some challenges, including a shortage of farm labour. There are several ways to resolve the issue. Mechanized farming is one of the ways to overcome manual labour shortage, which is a major problem in the country.

With farmers understanding the benefits of using machinery, the purchase of agricultural machinery on installment from factories has become popular in rural areas.

However, farmers have faced some inconvenience while buying agricultural machinery from companies in some areas.

... the Ministry of Planning, Finance and Industry is planning to jointly operate agricultural machinery factories with private investors to produce quality products. Besides, the ministry has formed inspection teams to look into challenges faced by farmers in buying farm machinery on installment.

agriculture and farming to an industrialized one by providing technology, investment, machinery, and raw materials. The Agricultural Mechanization Department is leading the efforts on that front.

On November 17, 2017, the Ministry of Commerce issued Notification No. 55/2017, under Section (13) (B) of the Import and Export Law, granting permission for joint ventures (JV) between foreign and domestic companies to carry out retail or wholesale trade of agricultural machinery.

Imported machinery poses some shortcomings, such as difficulty in obtaining spare parts and unfamiliar technology, that can become a challenge for farmers.

Meanwhile, domestic production of agricultural machinery cannot meet demand.

Joint ventures between the government and local and foreign investors are the best way to overcome these challenges.

It is worth noting that as part of efforts for resolving such cases on the ground, Ministry of Planning, Finance and Industry is planning to jointly operate agricultural machinery factories with private investors to produce quality products.

Besides, the ministry has formed inspection teams to look into challenges faced by farmers in buying farm machinery on installment.

We welcome the efforts of the department as they are intended at promoting the growth and mechanization of the farming industry, guaranteed by the State Constitution.

According to the Constitution, the State must provide all possible help in the transition from traditional

FORMATION of the Amyotha Hluttaw Committees, Commissions and Bodies are being constituted in accordance with the stipulation of 147 (c) of the 2008 Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar. It is to ensure the rights of the citizens according to the Constitution, and also ascertaining not to deprive and divest of the basic legal rights of the citizens. Moreover, it protects the individual human rights and interests of the citizens.

The Committee has been uplifting the capabilities and capacities by engaging with motley assortments of bodies such as that of the Myanmar National Human Rights Commissions; that of the various bodies working in collaboration on the human rights issues, the religious matters, the internal conflicts, and the social affairs; that of the bodies working for economic matters; that of the civil society organizations and government bodies for the emergence of accountable and responsible business undertaking.

With the approval of Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker, the Committee has visited various prisons under the Myanmar Prisons Department for checking up the human rights conditions, and submitted its findings to the relevant ministries.

Moreover, the Committee has visited on an inspection tour of the fishery sector at Pyapon Township in Ayeyawady Region after slavery cases involving its fishing rafts attracted public criticism. With regards to the incoming letters of complaints and letters reporting cases of misconduct, inspections have been taken up into consideration.

Furthermore, the officials of the Committee have been engaged in relevant workshops, attended short term courses, and participated in foreign study tours. It is therefore, an interview has been conducted with U Myo Htat (alias) Salai Myo Htike, Secretary of Citizens Right, Democracy and Human Rights Committee of Amyotha Hluttaw, and presented in this article for the esteemed readers.

Question: Kindly explain the task and mission of the Citizens Right, Democracy and Human Rights Committee of Amyotha Hluttaw.

Answer: Our Committee has been engaging accordingly in the implementation tasks within the command, control and jurisdiction as entrusted by the Amyotha Hluttaw. The main focus in the task is to concentrate on the justice and

The Citizens' Fundamental Rights, Democracy, and Human Rights Committee of the Amyotha Hluttaw has been working zealously to ensure the citizens of the country enjoy the rights guaranteed to them by the Constitution, while making sure they are not deprived of their legal rights. Moreover, it is also working to protect the individual rights of citizens. The measures implemented by the Committee are hereby detailed for our esteemed readers.

The assigned tasks are being carried out with a focus on the human rights enjoyed by citizens, and they are not meant to deprive or divest the citizens of their basic rights.

Answered by U Myo Htat (alias) Salai Myo Htike, Secretary of Citizens Fundamental Right, Democracy and Human Rights Committee of Amyotha Hluttaw

Tasks being implemented by Citizens Fundamental Right, Democracy and Human Rights Committee of Amyotha Hluttaw

Interviewed by Nandar Win



Dr Htay Kywe.



U Myo Htat (alias) Salai Myo Htike.

equality of the citizens. In possible shortest term, it is to ensure them get the full rights of the citizens given by the state through the laws and by-laws of the country.

The Committee has the authority to legally intervene with the approval of the Hluttaw Speaker to probe on the tip-offs, the petitions and the submissions over the grievances of the citizens on human rights. It has the authority to submit through the Speaker to the Hluttaw on its finding with the recommendations after conducting field trips. This is the main function of the Committee.

Another aspect of the Committee is to invite the persons concern if there is suspicion on human rights abuse, and that the Committee could make actual field trips to the ground zero where problem originated. The Committee could attend the relevant workshops, the local and foreign meetings and seminars with the approval of Hluttaw Speaker. We have been doing our best for the progress and maturity of Citizens Right, Democracy and Human Rights within the framework and authority of the Committee.

Q: Are the citizens enjoying the full basic rights as they really deserve?

A: The public needs to understand

should not be gender inequality. Equality is mainly concern with own personal concern. It depends on own outlook, own conviction and own decision.

We have heard a lot of criticism that there is no gender equality at the workshops with regards to the disabled, handicapped and infirmed people.

With a view to eradicate such attitudes and misconceptions, the relevant ministries are conducting training courses and many workshops. In my opinion, I wish the gender equality avails among the disabled people. I wish others to discard discrimination, and I hope

the laws and by-laws being enacted and prescribed by the State. The citizens must understand the basic rights given in the State Constitutions and enacted laws including the rights with regards to the human rights. The deserving rights are already prescribed in the relevant laws and by-laws, and that all the people have the full rights to enjoy with equality. In my personal view, most of the people feel that they have not been fully accorded with the basic human rights.

Q: Please tell us about the gender equality.

A: With regards to the gender equality, womenfolk in our Chin nationals have no rights to enjoy legacy and inheritance in the family. Only the males have the rights to inherit the legacy. It was in the past, and now the situation has been changed. However, it could not be termed as full gender equality.

In my view, such inequality existed in the past, and now the situation should be changed. In today's world, there are many women prime ministers on this planet. Many women are holding the leading posts of the nations.

In our country, there are many exemplary people in the leading roles. In my opinion, there

tional cooperation.

More opportunities are to be created for their survivals. Their rights must be fully included in the framework of the existing laws. Our Committee has been frequently engaging with the disabled groups. We always listen to their suggestions.

Our findings have been submitted to the authorities concern through the Hluttaw Speaker. The task is carried out within the scope of our responsibility.

Whenever we met with them, we always think about the welfare of the disabled people and consider what the State could be

visit and see the workers on the rafts as they are working in the sea that is large about 30 miles in wide open space. Therefore, we met and discussed with the departmental officials of district level and township level. We have recorded the information given by the government officials. We will mention all the relevant factors in the report to the Hluttaw.

I would like to say that we are working to the best of our ability to get the rights of the citizens without any denial and deprivation. We also consider for the rights of the business owners to ensure their rights and benefits including

findings would be channeled to the relevant ministries through the Hluttaw. If and when the co-operation is needed, we are ready to engage positively with the relevant ministries.

Q: Please tell us about the tip off and secret information on misconduct.

A: We received a total of (1080) letters from aggrieved persons who complained and provide information on their loss. We checked and scrutinized the letters and sorted out (690) letters and taken action in this regards by the Committee. Through the Speaker of Hluttaw,

gion and other production sites and venues related with prisons.

Q: Please tell us more if you have things to add in this interview.

A: During the three years period of the current parliamentary terms of Hluttaw, our Committee has visited on field trips to many prisons with the approval of the Speaker. We have been to Yamethin Prison; Loikaw Prison; Thaton Prison; Yinn Nyein Production Station; Taunggote Production Station; Kalay Prison and Kalaywa Myoma Police Detention Cell; Yazagyo (1) and Yazagyo (2) Farming and Vocational Training Yard; Htonbo (1), Htonbo (2) and Htonbo (women) Production stations; and Mandalay Central Jail. We have visited to their vocational training sites.

We also visited Htonbo (1), Htonbo (2) and Htonbo (women) rock and stone production stations. Moreover, we met and discussed with the responsible officials at the Mandalay Central Prison. We went there with the main intention of facilitating and assisting to establish human rights in the prisons.

Their suggestions and advice are submitted to the relevant authorities through the Hluttaw. These are the tasks undertaken by our Committee during the three years period of field visits with the approval of the Speaker.

Regarding the letters reporting on misconduct, our Committee has visited to Myitkyinar with the approval of the Speaker. In connection with the issues of workers, we had been to Pyapon District area in the Ayeyawady Region and examined the situation of fishery workers assigned on the rafts. The finding would be included in the report to be submitted to the Hluttaw.

When the citizens submitted complain letters on their loss and deprivation, we tried our best in relieving their distress by the directive of the Hluttaw within the authority of our Committee. We sincerely desire no harm and loss incurred to the citizens.

We also wish that the government departments shoulder their jobs in sincere and earnest manners for the citizens. Our Committee has devoted and dedicated desire that all the citizens may have the conditions to enjoy human rights benefits in the context of existing laws. We wish all citizens may fully enjoy the basic human rights that they truly deserved. Thanks to all concerned.

Translated by UMT (Ahlon)



The Citizens Fundamental Right, Democracy and Human Rights Committee of Amyotha Hluttaw holds a coordination meeting. PHOTO: MNA

all to have gender equality.

Q: Please tell me what sort of tasks that your Committee is implementing with regards to the disabilities?

A: We send our representatives to the International Day of Persons with Disabilities celebrations, other events, and workshops. More educational chances are opened up for the disabled people. On the part of the State, the departments have accorded opportunities to the disabled people. Matters are taken up in the form of interna-

accorded to them. We have been cooperated in full to ensure the rights of the disabled people.

Q: Tell us more about the findings on the suffering of the workers who are working on the rafts in fishery sectors.

A: As there are recent incidents in the fishery sector, we went on field trips with the approval of the Speaker. We had visited to many villages in Pyapon Township. We met and discussed mainly with the owners of the fishery business.

It is unfortunate to make a

securing work licenses in accordance with the laws. On the part of the State, we ensure to get the relevant tax and revenues from the commercial sector. Our Committee is working with the aim and objective for equality, justice and fairness of human rights among the owners and the workers. All the findings in the field trips have been included in the report to be submitted to the Hluttaw.

The findings at the prisons under the Myanmar Prisons Department would be included in the reports for the Hluttaw. These

taw, we send the information to the relevant ministries. When we received back the advice from the Union Government, the ministries, the regional and state governments, we acted accordingly by informing the deprived persons in the matters.

Q: Please tell us with regards to the field trips.

A: We made field trips in the Kachin State. We also made field trips to the prisons in Mon State. The Committee members have been to prisons in Mandalay Re-

Kobe cruise ship operator goes bankrupt due to virus cancellations

OSAKA — An operator of a restaurant cruise ship in Kobe in western Japan said Monday it has filed for bankruptcy after being hit by a series of cancellations since January due to the new coronavirus outbreak.

Luminous Cruising Co.'s debts amounted to some 1.24 billion yen (\$11 million), according to credit research firm Teikoku Databank, adding it is the first time that a cruise ship operator has gone bankrupt due to the fast-spreading virus.

More than 950 infections have been confirmed in Japan, including over 700 people who were aboard the Diamond Princess cruise ship docked near Tokyo. Of the 12 deaths in the country, six were related to the cruise ship.

The company operated the ship Luminous Kobe 2, one of the largest restaurant cruise ships in Japan that offered daytime and nighttime cruises to up to 1,000 passengers around the port of Kobe with views of the city, Kobe airport, Mt. Rokko and the Akashi-Kaikyo Bridge, the world's longest suspension bridge. The Kobe District Court accepted the company's application for bankruptcy protection

under the civil rehabilitation law on Monday, it said. A parent company of the firm operating the cruise ship the Concerto will help Luminous Cruising's rehabilitation efforts.

The Luminous Kobe 2's operations will be closed for the time being from Monday, Luminous Cruising said. Passengers who have made reservations for the ship can transfer to the Concerto.

Luminous Cruising was already hit by rises in fuel costs and past cancellations caused by a series of natural disasters since 2018, such as a major earthquake and a series of typhoons.

The new coronavirus, which causes the disease officially known as COVID-19, has dealt a blow to the tourism sector across Japan, particularly since China, where the virus originated, banned all group travel to other nations in late January. The Japanese government's request last Wednesday to cancel or postpone big events for two weeks to curb the spread of the virus has also led to closures of theme parks, stadiums and other venues that attract mass gatherings, while more people are opting to stay indoors. — Kyodo News



Two men stand in the deserted court yard outside the closed Pyramid, the main entrance to the Louvre museum which was once a royal residence, located in central in Paris on 2 March 2020. **PHOTO: AFP**

Paris's Louvre museum shut for second day over staff coronavirus fears

PARIS (France) — The Louvre in Paris, the world's most visited museum, was closed for a second day running on Monday after staff again refused to work due to coronavirus fears, a union said.

The Paris museum insisted that closure was not necessary in response to fears over the virus, which has spread to over 60 countries after first emerging in China late last year.

Staff voted Monday at a meeting, as they had on Sunday, to exercise their legal right not to work due a threat to their life or health, Christian Galani, a staff representative at the Louvre and member of the CGT union, told AFP.

A committee on working conditions at the Louvre will meet this afternoon to decide the further course of action.

In a statement on its official

Twitter account, the Louvre said: "The museum cannot open at the moment."

It offered a refund for tickets bought in advance to visit the museum on Sunday or Monday.

The Louvre's management said that health and safety were its top priority but insisted that the closure of the museum was not necessary.

"The Louvre museum is fully mobilised. The management is following events in real time. The museum will take all measures needed to ensure the security of its staff and visitors," said the Louvre's general administrator Maxence Langlois-Berthelot.

But he added: "The authorities, culture ministry and health ministry have emphasised that the closure of the museum is not necessary," he added.

Staff representatives said Sunday they were demanding stepped up protective measures, including the provision of hand sanitising gel and glass barriers to separate cashiers from members of the public.

In January, workers also forced a one-day closure in a strike over the government's pension reform plans.

Earlier this week, the museum ended a special Leonardo da Vinci exhibition with an all-time visitors' record of nearly 1.1 million people.

France, which has 130 confirmed cases and two deaths from COVID-19, has said it would ban gatherings of 5,000 people or more, closing schools and cancelling religious services in some of the hardest-hit zones. Sunday's half-marathon in Paris was cancelled. — AFP ■



Luminous Kobe 2, one of the largest restaurant cruise ships in Japan, is pictured in Kobe on 2 March 2020. **PHOTO: KYODO NEWS**

Global virus death toll tops 3,000 as EU raises alert

BRUSSELS (Belgium) — The death toll from the new coronavirus epidemic surpassed 3,000 on Monday as more people died in China, Iran and the US and Europe raised its state of alert.

The virus has now infected more than 89,000, spread to over 60 countries and threatens to cause a global economic slowdown — after first emerging in China late last year.

With fears of a pandemic on the rise, the World Health Organization urged all countries to stock up on critical care ventilators to treat patients with severe symptoms.

In Brussels, EU president Ursula von der Leyen said the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) had increased its risk assessment for Europeans after Italy's outbreak doubled in

48 hours.

The death toll from the new coronavirus epidemic surpassed 3,000 on Monday as more people died in China, Iran and the US and Europe raised its state of alert.

The virus has now infected more than 89,000, spread to over 60 countries and threatens to cause a global economic slowdown — after first emerging in China late last year. — AFP ■

China promotes online vocational skills training

BEIJING — China has issued a circular to encourage online vocational skills training to improve workers' professional skills from 2020 to 2021.

The circular was released by the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security and the Ministry of Finance.

The goal for 2020 is to choose more than 50 high-quality

online vocational skills training platforms and provide training for about 1 million people with digital training resources covering over 100 types of work.

The goal for 2021 is to further optimize the management mechanism for online vocational skills training, expand the scale and boost the quality. — Xinhua ■

Australian summers grow longer due to climate change: study

SYDNEY (Australia) — Australian summers are lengthening by a month or more while winters are getting shorter due to climate change, according to an analysis by a leading think tank released Monday.

The Australia Institute said large swathes of the country were experiencing an additional 31 days of summer temperatures each year compared to the 1950s.

While Sydney was just under the average with an extra 28 hot days a year, Melbourne added 38 warmer days since the middle of the 20th century.

In some regional areas ravaged by bushfires in recent months, such as the New South Wales town of Port Macquarie, residents are now experiencing seven more weeks of typical summer temperatures.

"Temperatures which were considered a regular three-month summer in the 1950s now span from early-to-mid-Novem-

ber all the way to mid-March," Australia Institute climate and energy program director Richie Merzian said.

"Summers have grown longer even in recent years, with the last five years facing summers twice as long as their winters."

Australia's capital, Canberra, lost 35 winter days while the city of Brisbane, in the country's east, lost 31 cooler days.

Merzian said global warming was making the country's summers increasingly dangerous, with less time in winter to carry out bushfire prevention work and extreme heat causing health and economic impacts.

"Extreme heat events are the most fatal of all natural hazards and have been responsible for more deaths in Australia than all other natural hazards put together," he said.

Australia's latest summer heralded a devastating bushfire



The Australia Institute said large swathes of the country were experiencing an additional 31 days of summer temperatures each year compared to the 1950s. **PHOTO: AFP**

disaster in which more than 30 people died, thousands of homes were destroyed and at least a billion animals perished.

The crisis led to renewed calls for the country's conservative government to cut the

emissions contributing to global warming. But while Prime Minister Scott Morrison belatedly acknowledged the link between the bushfire disaster and a warming planet, he has been reluctant to reduce the country's reliance

on coal. Renewables accounted for just six percent of Australia's primary energy mix in 2018, according to government figures, while the country is one of the world's largest fossil fuel exporters. — AFP ■

'Call me stupid but I believe I can change' fashion giant, says Stella McCartney

PARIS (France) — Stella McCartney pledged Monday to try to change the world's biggest luxury fashion group from within after LVMH took a stake in her label, one of the most sustainable in the world.

The British designer made a spirited defence of her decision to become "personal sustainability adviser" to LVMH owner Bernard Arnault, who regularly swaps places with Amazon boss Jeff Bezos at the top of the list of the world's richest men.

"My mum (the late animal rights activist Linda McCartney) used to say infiltrate from within," McCartney told AFP hours

before her Paris fashion week show, which featured lots of vegan leather and a menagerie of furry-costumed animals who skins are used in fashion.

And she batted away fears that Arnault was using her for window dressing after he dismissed teenage Swedish activist Greta Thunberg as not "offering anything other than criticism".

"Call me stupid. I hope I am right," McCartney said, after inviting Christiana Figueres, the former UN climate chief who was engineered the Paris agreement, to meet a group of fashion movers and shakers on the eve of her show. "I choose to believe that

I can make change, that I can show them a great example of a different way of doing business," McCartney said.

'I won't let it go'

"If my business is healthy — which I need it to be to shout to them that this can be the future of fashion — then I believe they are not going to sit back and ignore me," she added.

LVMH "saw the quality of products I was making and they compared it to the quality being made by all the other brands that are killing millions of animals and the environment, and they said, 'Hey this looks the same,'" McCartney said.—AFP ■



British fashion designer Stella McCartney acknowledges the audience at the end of the Women's Fall-Winter 2020-2021 Ready-to-Wear collection fashion show in Paris, on 2 March 2020. **PHOTO: AFP**

NASA images show fall in China pollution over virus shutdown

WASHINGTON (United States) — NASA satellite images show a dramatic fall in pollution over China that is "partly related" to the economic slowdown due to the coronavirus outbreak, the space agency said.

The reduction in nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) pollution was first noticed near Wuhan, the epicentre of the outbreak, but eventually spread across China, according to NASA scientists who examined data collected by their and European Space Agency satellites.

Maps comparing NO₂ concentrations showed a marked decline between January 1-20, before a sweeping quarantine was imposed on Wuhan and other cities, and February 10-25.

"There is evidence that the change is at least partly related to the economic slowdown following the outbreak of coronavirus," NASA's Earth Observatory said in a statement. Chinese authorities have taken drastic steps to contain the virus, curbing the movement of people, temporarily closing factories across the country and quarantining central Hubei province, a key industrial region where the epidemic first appeared. NO₂ is a byproduct of fossil fuel combustion in vehicles and power plants and can cause respiratory problems, such as

asthma. "This is the first time I have seen such a dramatic drop-off over such a wide area for a specific event," Fei Liu, an air quality researcher at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center, said. The 2008 global financial crisis saw a decrease in NO₂ over several countries but it was a gradual fall, she said. This year's fall came during the Lunar New Year, when factories and businesses close, but researchers believe the decline is far greater than could be attributed to the holiday period.

NO₂ concentrations over eastern and central China were 10-30 percent lower than what is normally observed over the time period.

And there has not been a rebound in levels after the holiday.

"This year, the reduction rate is more significant than in past years and it has lasted longer," Liu said.

"I am not surprised because many cities nationwide have taken measures to minimize spread of the virus."

A separate study in February found China's carbon emissions had dropped by least 100 million metric tonnes in the previous fortnight — nearly six percent of global emissions during the same period last year.— AFP ■

Vatican opens archive on pope's silence during Holocaust

VATICAN CITY (Holy See) — Historians will begin combing the archives of the world's most contentious pope on Monday, hoping to glean why Pius XII stayed silent during the Nazi extermination of Jews in the Holocaust.

More than 200 researchers have applied for permission to settle in one of the small studies of the Vatican Apostolic Archives to begin poring over millions of letters and documents the Vatican had kept under lock and key.

The historic moment was preceded by decades of controversy and debate about why the pontiff, who headed the Catholic Church from 1939 until his death in 1958, never spoke out about the slaughter of six millions Jews in Nazi concentration camps across Europe.

"The Church is not afraid of history," Pope Francis declared when he chose to open one the Vatican's most painful moments up for world scrutiny a year ago.

"For millions of people, Catholic and Jewish, these

archives are of enormous humanitarian interest," Suzanne Brown-Fleming, international programmes director at the US Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, told AFP.

Years of work

The Vatican first published the essentials covering the Holocaust four decades ago, an 11-volume work compiled by four Jesuits priests.

But some crucial pieces are still missing, such as the pope's replies to notes and letters -- including those about the Nazi horrors.

The unsealed archives additionally cover a post-World War II era in which writers were censored and some priests hounded for suspected communist sympathies.

German researcher Sascha Hinkel was one of those to have gained access to the trove through the summer months.

"This is a great opportunity," said Hinkel, who is one of the re-

searchers assisting the religious history scholar Hubert Wolf, an expert on Pius XII and the Nazis.

Hinkel thinks it will take researchers about five years to answer the main questions, although the entire mountain of documents available for the first time "will occupy historians for at least 20 years".

The Vatican's focus on transparency was symbolised a few days ago by the presence of reporters' cameras in the bunker of the central archive -- officially known as the "secret archive" until as recently as last year.

The 85-kilometre (50-miles) web of dusty shelves includes a section dedicated to Pius XII, protected behind locked metal gates.

On this occasion, Archbishop Sargio Pagano, the central archives' manager, took out some tattered leaflets.

They were drawings and letters from German children thanking the pope for sending them first communion gifts in 1948. — AFP ■



The Vatican central archive was officially known as the "secret archive" until as recently as last year. PHOTO: AFP



Pakistani surgeon Shakeel Afridi, pictured in 2010, has been languishing behind bars for years since helping US agents track and kill Osama bin Laden in 2011. PHOTO: AFP

Bin Laden doctor launches hunger strike in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (Pakistan) — The Pakistani doctor who helped the CIA track and kill Osama bin Laden has launched a hunger strike from his prison cell, his lawyer and family said Monday.

Shakeel Afridi has been languishing behind bars for years since his fake vaccination programme helped US agents track and kill the Al Qaeda leader in 2011.

"It is to protest the injustices and inhumane attitudes being committed against him and his family," his brother Jamil Afridi told AFP after meeting with Afridi in a prison in central Punjab province.

His attorney Qamar Na-deem also confirmed the hunger strike.

Afridi was jailed for 33 years in May 2012 after he was convicted of having ties to militants, a charge he has always denied.

His sentence was later reduced by 10 years.

Some US lawmakers have branded the case as revenge for his help in the search for the Al Qaeda chief.

The 2011 killing of Bin Laden caused massive embarrassment

for Pakistan and particularly its powerful military.

For years Afridi has had no access to his lawyer, while his appeal against his prison sentence has stalled with scheduled court appearances repeatedly delayed.

His family has also complained of being targeted and harassed by authorities over the years.

US President Donald Trump vowed during his election campaign that he would order Pakistan to free Afridi, but since taking office has been largely silent on the issue.

The comments sparked a blistering rebuttal from Pakistan, whose interior minister at the time branded Trump "ignorant" and stated that the "government of Pakistan and not Donald Trump" would decide Afridi's fate.

In recent years Pakistani authorities have cracked down on nonprofits and forced them to leave the country, which analysts say was largely tied to the Afridi case due to the security establishment's fears that NGOs have provided cover for spying. — AFP ■

Taliban say will resume operations against Afghan forces

KABUL (Afghanistan) — The Taliban said Monday they were resuming offensive operations against Afghan security forces, ending the partial truce that preceded the signing of a deal between the insurgents and Washington.

The declaration comes only a day after President Ashraf Ghani said he would continue the partial truce at least until talks

between Afghan officials and the Taliban kick-off, supposedly on 10 March.

It ran for one week ahead of the signing of the historic accord in Doha on Saturday, and continued over the weekend.

"The reduction in violence... has ended now and our operations will continue as normal," Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid told AFP.

"As per the (US-Taliban) agreement, our mujahideen will not attack foreign forces but our operations will continue against the Kabul administration forces."

Fawad Aman, deputy spokesman for the defence ministry said the government was "checking to see if (the truce) had ended".

"We have not had any reports of any big attacks in the

country yet", he added.

Since the deal signing on Saturday, the Taliban have been publicly celebrating their "victory" over the US.

Under the terms of the deal, foreign forces will quit Afghanistan within 14 months, subject to Taliban security guarantees and a pledge by the insurgents to hold talks with the Kabul government.

The dramatic fall in attacks

due to last week's partial truce between the Taliban, US and Afghan forces offered Afghans a rare opportunity to go about their daily lives without fear of violence.

Ghani warned the insurgents Monday that he was not committed to a key clause in the Doha deal involving the release of thousands of Taliban prisoners. — AFP ■



Coronavirus could push world economic growth into reverse. PHOTO: AFP

Governments step up economic response to coronavirus

PARIS(France) — Governments and central banks on Monday stepped up efforts to shield the world economy from the impact of the coronavirus which experts say may have already sent growth into reverse.

Investors welcomed indications from leading central banks that they stood ready to intervene, with global stock markets shooting higher Monday after a brutal selloff last week.

US Federal Reserve boss Jerome Powell started the effort to calm market on Friday saying the US central bank “will use our tools and act as appropriate to support the economy”.

On Monday, the Bank of Japan said in a rare statement that it “will strive to provide ample liquidity and ensure stability in financial markets” after the disease infected nearly 90,000 people worldwide in 68 countries and caused more than 3,000 deaths.

The Bank of England said it was monitoring the situation and working closely with domestic “as well as our international partners to ensure

all necessary steps are taken to protect financial and monetary stability”.

Bank of France chief Francois Villeroy de Galhau, meanwhile, said that “targeted measures” from governments to support affected businesses were more appropriate than central bank action as ample cheap money was already available to companies.

But he also told French TV station BFM that “if we need to do more and we believe that it will be effective, we could do it, but we’re not there yet,” he said on French TV station BFM Business.

Call to ‘act swiftly’

Governments, meanwhile, appeared to be moving to coordinating their economic efforts to combat economic disruptions caused by the coronavirus.

G7 and eurozone finance ministers will hold conference calls on Wednesday to “coordinate their responses” to the impact of the coronavirus on the global economy, French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire said Monday. “We

will have that meeting by phone — because you need to avoid travelling too much — for the G7 to coordinate its response,” Le Maire said on France 2 television.

He said a similar meeting of eurozone finance ministers would also be held on Wednesday, adding “there will be coordinated action”. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development on Monday urged governments to “act swiftly and forcefully” to overcome the outbreak and take measures to protect the incomes of vulnerable social groups and businesses.

Governments could help by providing unemployment insurance for workers placed on unpaid leave and by covering virus-related health costs for all.

Measures that reduce or delay tax or debt payments or lower energy costs for firms in hard-hit regions and sectors should be considered, the OECD said, as well as temporary reductions in the level of reserves that banks are required to hold at the central bank.

—AFP ■

Stocks resume slump as EU raises coronavirus risk level

LONDON (United Kingdom)— European stocks slumped Monday, wiping out earlier gains, as the European Union’s disease control agency lifted its risk level for the novel coronavirus.

Having jumped around 2.0 per cent at the start, Frankfurt was down 2.2 per cent in early afternoon deals and Paris tumbled 2.1 per cent. Milan was down 3.8 per cent and London shed 1.3 per cent.

The EU’s disease control agency said it had raised its risk assessment of the coronavirus situation to “moderate to high” from “moderate” previously.

Analysts added that markets had quickly doubted the ability of central banks to intervene to prop up the global economy.

There is a “realisation that there could be a limited amount that the central banks could do in

terms of stimulus”, said Richard Hunter, head of markets at Interactive Investor.

Hunter pointed also to lower US futures markets ahead of the open on Wall Street. After last week’s coronavirus-fuelled plunge for world equities, European stocks surged early Monday as central banks including the Federal Reserve flagged support measures such as interest rate cuts to prop up the ailing economy.

Markets initially rallied “on a mixture of bargain hunting and, perhaps more importantly, on hopes of major stimulus from central banks”, said Russ Mould, investment director at AJ Bell.

“Markets typically rise on interest rate cuts.”

Investors are betting on a Fed rate cut at its March 17-18 policy meet-

ing after governor Jerome Powell made a rare unscheduled statement on the outbreak, which he said “poses evolving risks to economic activity”.

He said the central bank was “closely monitoring developments and their implications for the economic outlook”, adding: “We will use our tools and act as appropriate to support the economy.”

The Bank of England said in a statement Monday that it was “working closely” with “international partners to ensure all necessary steps are taken to protect financial and monetary stability”.

London’s FTSE had slumped 11.1 per cent last week as the coronavirus spread outside China.

At the height of the global financial crisis in October 2008, the FTSE tumbled 21 per cent in just one week. —AFP ■

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Negotiating positions in Britain and the EU are far apart. PHOTO: AFP

EU and UK begin talks on post-Brexit relationship

BRUSSELS (Belgium) — British trade negotiators begin a marathon of talks on Monday in Brussels aimed at forging a new post-Brexit relationship with the EU, but the two camps have drawn red lines that remain far apart.

The EU's chief negotiator Michel Barnier and his UK counterpart David Frost will lead the talks, which would be held over several weekly rounds in Brussels and London.

The negotiations start just over a month since Britain left the EU, and are meant to wrap up by the end of this year — an exceedingly tight timeframe that few see as feasible for anything but a bare-bones accord.

The deadline is effectively 31 December, the end of the UK's current transition period during which it trades like an EU member with no tariffs or other barriers.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson has ruled out extending the transition, though he has the option to do so, and both sides are looking to an EU-UK summit in June to decide whether it is worth continuing.

The negotiations have been clouded by mistrust and weeks of chest-beating as each side has accused the other of shifting away from goals set out in a non-binding political declaration struck late last year.

Mandates published last week highlighted the EU's aim of securing a "level playing field" to prevent Britain undercutting European standards on labour, tax, environment and state subsidies.

Meanwhile the UK is insisting on setting its own rules in the name of "economic and political independence".

'Pessimistic'

Experts warned that the two sides are on a collision course, with a deal highly unlikely without a major concession.

Fabian Zuleeg, head of the European Policy Centre, said he was "pessimistic" about the outcome, because of the UK's fervent desire to break from EU rules. "It's very difficult to see where they could meet to make this work," he said. If the British government "sticks to their line, there cannot be a deal".

Underlining tensions, Barnier, in an uncharacteristic display of podium-thumping, has warned Britain that any backsliding on its EU divorce terms would torpedo trade talks.

The Brexit deal notably requires checks on British goods crossing the Irish Sea into the UK territory of Northern Ireland that Johnson now says are unnecessary.

"Clearly, at the beginning of any negotiation, there's a bit of posturing. Both sides want to state the strongest possible case," said Zuleeg. Experts see a deal limited to goods as the most likely outcome, but that would still require customs checks for products crossing the Channel and lacks the ambition called for by businesses. But fishing — of relatively minor economic importance but of totemic significance to Britain and EU states such as France and Spain — could be the flashpoint that scuppers a deal.

Barnier has emphasised that fishing is "inextricably" linked to the whole agreement. The EU is demanding its fishing boats continue to have access to British waters in return for British fishermen being able to sell their catches to their biggest and closest market. —AFP ■

Israel seeks end to deadlock with third election in a year

JERUSALEM — Israel held its third election in less than a year on Monday seeking to break a grinding political deadlock, with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu chasing re-election while facing criminal indictment.

The campaign, which included tit-for-tat mudslinging between Netanyahu's right-wing Likud and main challengers Blue and White, was condemned by President Reuven Rivlin as "awful and grubby." Voicing the feelings of many ballot-weary Israelis after nearly a year of political stalemate and a caretaker government, Rivlin said the Jewish state does not "deserve this never-ending instability."

Election day is "normally a festive day," he added.

"But the truth is that I don't feel like celebrating. I only (feel) a sense of deep shame when I face you, my fellow citizens."

The vote comes just two weeks before Netanyahu, the longest-serving premier in Israeli history, stands trial after being formally charged in January

with bribery, fraud and breach of trust. But final polls indicated that Netanyahu, the first Israeli prime minister ever indicted in office, had not lost support since inconclusive elections in April and September.

Voting in the central town of Rosh Haayin, Blue and White leader Benny Gantz voiced hope that Israelis would finally "change the tune" after 11 years of the current Netanyahu tenure.

But Likud and the centrist Blue and White are both expected to fall well short of the 61 seats needed for a majority in Israel's parliament, the Knesset, and will have to strike deals with smaller parties to forge a stable coalition.

That proved impossible after the last two votes and a further stalemate remains possible, with few undecided in the divided country of 6.4 million eligible voters.

'Nothing else to vote for' Political leaders are keen to avoid a fourth vote given the damage done by the impasse, as the caretaker government's inability to

pass a budget has left key social programmes unfunded.

Netanyahu supporter Ella Levy told AFP that Israel was "flourishing" under the premier's leadership, downplaying the importance of the indictments.

"For me, he is innocent until they prove otherwise," she said at a polling station in Jerusalem.

The 70-year-old premier, who will face trial from 17 March, faces accusations including receiving improper gifts worth thousands of dollars and offering a media mogul lucrative regulatory changes in exchange for favourable coverage. His main opponent Gantz, a former military chief, has been accused of saying little about his vision for Israel, defining himself primarily as Netanyahu's clean rival. Blue and White supporter Inbal, who did not want to give her last name, said Gantz "doesn't really impress" her.

"I honestly think they are losers, Blue and White. But there is nothing else to vote for for people with my opinions," the 27-year-old math student said in Jerusalem. —AFP ■



Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu voted with his wife Sara, urging people to go to the polls despite coronavirus fears. PHOTO: AFP

Erdogan warns Europe it will have to share migrant 'burden'

ISTANBUL (Turkey) — Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan vowed Monday to keep the doors open for migrants heading for Europe, as he mounted pressure on Western countries to give Turkey more assistance with the Syrian conflict.

Erdogan also said he hoped to reach a deal on a ceasefire in Syria when he meets his Russian

counterpart Vladimir Putin later in the week following increasing clashes in the last rebel hold-out of Idlib.

He warned Europe that it will have to shoulder its part of the migrant "burden".

"After we opened the doors, there were multiple calls saying 'close the doors'," he said.

"I told them 'it's done. It's

finished. The doors are now open. Now, you will have to take your share of the burden'."

Some 13,000 migrants, including Afghans, Syrians and Iraqis, massed at Turkey's border with Greece over the weekend after Erdogan announced that Turkey would no longer prevent them from leaving towards the European Union. —AFP ■

North Korea fires ‘short-range ballistic missiles’

SEOUL (South Korea) — North Korea fired what appeared to be two short-range ballistic missiles on Monday, the South’s military said, weeks after Pyongyang threatened to demonstrate a “new strategic weapon” and its deadline for Washington to offer sanctions relief expired.

The launch was the nuclear-armed North’s first for more than three months and came as nuclear negotiations with the United States remain at a standstill.

The two devices were fired eastwards over the sea from the Wonsan area on the east coast and flew 240 kilometres (150 miles) at a maximum altitude of 35 kilometres, the South’s Joint Chiefs of Staff said.

They were “believed to be short-range ballistic missiles,” a JCS official said.

South Korea’s security ministers expressed “strong concern” the North was “carrying out actions giving rise to military tensions”, the presidential Blue House said.

Japan’s defence ministry said there was no indication of

anything coming down in its waters or exclusive economic zone, but added: “Recent repeated launches of ballistic and other missiles by North Korea are a serious issue.”

The launch came as Pyongyang battles to prevent a coronavirus outbreak and days after the one-year anniversary of the collapsed Hanoi summit between leader Kim Jong Un and US President Donald Trump.

Negotiations have since been deadlocked over sanctions relief and what the North would be willing to give up in return, despite a high-profile June meeting in the Demilitarized Zone that divides the peninsula.

Pyongyang carried out a series of weapons tests late last year, the last of them in November, often describing them as multiple launch rocket systems. It also carried out static engine tests, most recently in December.

At a party meeting at the end of that month, Kim declared that Pyongyang no longer considered itself bound by its moratoriums on nuclear and intercontinental ballistic missile tests, and threat-



North Korea’s leader Kim Jong Un recently declared that Pyongyang no longer considered itself bound by its moratoriums on nuclear and intercontinental ballistic missile tests. **PHOTO: AFP**

ened to demonstrate a “new strategic weapon” soon.

North Korea has a long history of seeking to demonstrate its military capability to try to obtain concessions.

“March is pretty reliably missile-testing season for North Korea,” tweeted Ankit Panda,

senior fellow at the Federation of American Scientists.

“Looks like COVID-19 hasn’t changed that (or Pyongyang is determined to make it appear as if it hasn’t),” he added.

Former State Department official Mintaro Oba said: “Coronavirus dominates our attention

at the moment, but this is a reminder that North Korea continues to advance its nuclear and missile programmes.”

It would “look for ways to gain leverage and reclaim the initiative as we get closer to the US presidential election”, he added.—AFP ■

South Korean sect leader apologises over coronavirus spread



Seoul city authorities have filed a murder complaint against Shincheonji leader Lee Man-hee for failing to cooperate in containing the epidemic. **PHOTO: AFP**

SEOUL (South Korea) — The elderly leader of a secretive South Korean sect linked to more than half the country’s 4,000-plus coronavirus cases knelt before the cameras Monday to apologise for the spread of the disease.

Shincheonji head Lee Man-hee’s plea for forgiveness came after Seoul city authorities filed a murder complaint against him for failing to cooperate in containing the epidemic.

South Korea’s case numbers — the largest total anywhere outside China — are expected to rise further as authorities

carry out checks on more than 266,000 people associated with the Shincheonji Church of Jesus, which is often condemned as a cult. “I would like to offer my sincere apology to the people,” said Lee, his voice breaking.

“Although it was not intentional, many people have been infected,” the 88-year-old said, twice bowing his head to the floor before reporters in Gapyeong.

“I seek the forgiveness of the people.”

“I am very thankful to the government for its efforts,” he added. “I also seek the forgive-

ness of the government.”

Lee is revered by his followers as the “Promised Pastor” who has taken on the mantle of Jesus Christ and will take 144,000 people with him to heaven on the Day of Judgement, which he will usher in within his own lifetime.

A 61-year-old female member developed a fever on February 10 but attended at least four services in Daegu — the country’s fourth-largest city with a population of 2.5 million and the centre of the outbreak — before being diagnosed.

At worship Shincheonji members sit close together on the floor and pray extensively in what critics say creates an ideal environment to spread viral infections.

Lee — whose organisation says he has tested negative for the virus — insisted that the group was “actively cooperating with the government”.

“At churches, the leader of the church is like a parent and its members are the children,” he said, pausing occasionally to wipe tears from his eyes as protesters shouted abuse. —AFP ■

Nepal postpones inaugural ‘Everest Dialogue’ event amid virus scare

KATHMANDU — Nepal has indefinitely postponed the inaugural Sagarmatha Sambaad, or Everest Dialogue, which was scheduled for early April, Nepal’s Foreign Minister said Monday.

“The decisions have been taken in view of the coronavirus scare,” Pradeep Gyawali told Kyodo News. “The timing turned out to be inconvenient for everyone concerned,” he said.

The Everest Dialogue, aimed at steering global discourse on climate change toward the Himalayas, was expecting 250 participants, including high-level political delegations, from around 40 countries, from 2 April through April 4 in Kathmandu.

Political delegations from 20 nations, including high-level delegations from 10 of them, had already confirmed participation, the minister’s aide Sudan Gyawali said.

The minister said Nepal will continue with preparations and will aim to host the dialogue at a later date, but sometime before the 2020 United Nations Climate Change Conference, also known as Cop26, to be held in Glasgow, Scotland, in November.

In addition, starting 10 March, the government will suspend the issuance of on-arrival visas for citizens from five countries — Japan, South Korea, China, Iran and Italy — as it tries to contain the spread of the new coronavirus. Nationals of those countries wishing to travel to Nepal will need to secure their visa from the Nepal embassy in their respective countries.

Before this, Nepal granted on-arrival visas to citizens of all countries except Nigeria, Ghana, Zimbabwe, Swaziland, Cameroon, Somalia, Liberia, Ethiopia, Iraq, Palestine, Afghanistan and Syria.—Kyodo News

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Fixtures released for Week-8 of MPT MNL (U-19) 2020

THE match fixtures for Week-8 of the MPT Myanmar National League (U-19) 2020 were released yesterday, according to the Myanmar National League's Facebook page.

The Week-8 matches of the MPT Myanmar National League (U-19) 2020 will be held from 3 to 5 March.

On 3 March, Silvers Stars will meet Yaw Myay at the South Dagon Stadium; Kachin United F.C. will play against MFF Youth at the Padonmar Stadium;

Yadanarbon FC will compete against Southern Myanmar FC at the Sa Lin Stadium; and, Yangon United FC will meet Ayeyawady United at the YUSC Stadium.

On 4 March, Myawady FC will be pitted against Magwe FC at the Sa Lin Stadium; Shan United FC will take on Mawyawadi FC at the South Dagon Stadium; University FC will face Hantharwady United at the University Stadium; and, ISPE and Rakhine

United will clash at the M-3 Stadium.

On 5 March, Chinland FC will go up against Zwegapin United at the South Dagon Stadium, while Chin United will play against Sagaing United at the M-3 Stadium.

All the matches will be held at 4 pm on the respective dates.

The first round of the MPT MNL (U-19) 2020, which will last 19 weeks, began on 14 January. The tourney ends on 31 May.

— Kyaw Khin ■

MPT MNL 2020: Hantharwady United leads standing table after Week-8

AFTER Week-8 of the MPT Myanmar National League 2020, Hantharwady United is leading the standing table with 21 points from seven wins and one loss, according to the league's website.

The team is followed by Yangon United FC and Ayeyawady United F.C. with 20 points from six wins and two draws each.

Shan United FC is in the fourth place with 16 points from five wins, one draw, and two losses; Sagaing United FC is in the

fifth place with 13 points from four wins, one draw, and three losses; and, Rakhine United is sixth with 12 points from three wins, three draws, and two losses.

They are followed by Yadanarbon F.C. and ISPE with seven points each, Magwe FC with six points, and Southern Myanmar and Chinland FC with four points each, and Zwegapin United with three points.

— Kyaw Khin ■



Chelsea's Spanish goalkeeper Kepa Arrizabalaga rolls the ball out during the English Premier League football match between Tottenham Hotspur and Chelsea at Tottenham Hotspur Stadium in London, on 22 December 2019. **PHOTO: AFP**

Lampard to look at goalkeeper options at end of season

LONDON(United Kingdom)—Chelsea manager Frank Lampard said on Monday he would reassess his goalkeeping options at the end of the season after dropping the world's most expensive goalkeeper, Kepa Arrizabalaga, in recent weeks.

The Spanish international has fallen behind 38-year-old Willy Caballero after a series of poor performances in his second season after a £72 million (\$92 million) move from Athletic Bilbao.

"Of course in the summer then we look at the group as a whole and think how can we improve but there are no decisions or thoughts beyond the game tomorrow night as far as I'm concerned," Lampard said ahead of Tuesday's FA Cup tie against Liverpool.

Kepa could return to face the runaway Premier League leaders at Stamford Bridge and

Lampard praised his response to being dropped for the past five games. "He's been professional as expected and has trained well, kept his head down, supported the team, and the group," added Lampard. "Every player is in control of their destiny in terms of how they train and how they play."

"This is Chelsea and we're trying to close the gap to the top, so there can be no one that can be relaxed or loose, we have to push every day."

Lampard will again be without the injured Tammy Abraham and Christian Pulisic for the visit of Liverpool but hopes to have both back in the near future to aid Chelsea's challenge for a top-four finish in the Premier League.

"It's certainly frustrating for them, particularly Christian, who has had a big phase out now and is desperate to get back," said Lampard.— AFP ■

Football grinds to a halt as Bundesliga banner insults escalate

BERLIN (Germany) — Games across Germany were interrupted and delayed over the weekend due to offensive banners, highlighting a growing rift between the game's governing body and the sport's passionate ultras.

Stadium announcers in Dortmund and Berlin threatened calling the games off unless the banners were removed, while Bayern Munich's match at Hoffenheim finished in farcical scenes as the players from both sides kicked the ball to each other to wind the final 10 minutes off the clock.

The interruptions are broadly symbolic of a fierce debate in German football between fans

of traditional clubs and those of newer teams who have been bankrolled by investors and private owners.

The protests have targeted the German Football Association (DFB) and its decision to hand down a two-year ban to Dortmund fans from travelling to the club's games against Hoffenheim, after the Dortmund fans held up offensive banners.

The move has however only served to call fans into action over what they see as "collective punishment". The fans won support from Cologne captain Jonas Hector after Saturday's victory over Schalke, as he asked why should "20,000 people who

have supported us for the entire 90 minutes be punished for the actions of a few?"

Much of the rancour has been directed at Hoffenheim benefactor Dietmar Hopp, who has been widely criticised by fans after circumventing the league's fan-ownership laws in order to invest more than 350 million euros (\$387 million) into the village club, bringing it into the first division in the process.

Offensive banners critical of Hopp have found their way into the stands in several fan blocks in recent weeks, including depictions of Hopp's face in crosshairs while also calling him a "son of a bitch".— AFP ■



Dortmund's supporter hold on a banner of DFB with a crosshair during the German first division Bundesliga football match Borussia Dortmund v SC Freiburg on 29 February 2020 in Dortmund. **PHOTO: AFP**