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Tuesday, 21 April 2020

All ministries, their agencies, departments and offices shall further encourage all personnel to participate in and support anti-hate speech activities

Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Office of the President

Directive No. 3/2020

13th Waning of Tagu, 1382 ME
(20 April 2020)

Prevention of incitement to hatred and violence
(or) Prevention of proliferation of hate speech

1. The Republic of the Union of Myanmar is a multicultural society. We believe that every human being has a right to a dignified life, to be treated with respect, and to live without fear of violence, intimidation, or discrimination based on group identity or personal characteristics. Therefore, we must strive to bring together diverse commu-

nities on the basis of common values of mutual understanding and mutual respect for each other.
2. Proliferation of hate speech may lead to discrimination and violence within our communities. This undermines our aspirations to live with dignity and to build a peaceful and harmonious society.

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State Counsellor discusses ground situation with COVID-19 fighters from Ayeyawady Region



State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi holds the video conference with personnel working to prevent, control and treat Coronavirus disease in Ayeyawady Region. PHOTO: MNA

STATE Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, in her capacity as Chairperson of the National Central Committee for COVID-19 Prevention, Control and Treatment, emphasized the importance of protec-

tive materials in the containment of the pandemic, in her videoconference call from the Presidential Palace in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday with front line workers in Ayeyawady Region.

The following persons participated in the video conference with the State Counsellor: Midwife Daw Phyu Phyu Latt from the duty station at Bantbwegone rural clinic in Myanaung Township, Pettan

village-tract administrator U Saw Win Tun Naing in Zalun Township, and Red Cross deputy company leader Daw Sandi Htike from Mawlamyinegyun Township.

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Total number of COVID-19 cases reaches 117 on Monday

Update on COVID-19 surveillance released at 8:00 pm on 20-4-2020

1. The National Health Laboratory (Yangon) released the test results of the first batch of 181 lab speci-

mens on 20-4-020 where 6 tested positive for COVID-19 and 175 tested negative.

2. The 6 new COVID-19 positive patients will be transferred to appropriate hospitals.

3. There have been 117 people who tested positive for COVID-19 as of 8:00 pm on 20-4-2020.

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All ministries, their agencies, departments and offices shall further encourage all personnel to participate in and support anti-hate speech activities

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Moreover proliferation of hate speech hampers our well-being, diminishes our dignity and undermines our virtue.

3. Therefore, all Ministries and all Regions and States Governments are to ensure that its personnel, officers, staff — whether military or other security forces, or civil services — and local people under its control or direction shall take all possible measures to denounce and prevent all forms of hate speech. All ministries, their agencies, departments and offices shall further encourage all personnel to participate in and support anti-hate speech activities.

4. Hate speech refers to communications of any kind that denigrate or express animosity towards a person or a group on the basis of religion, ethnicity, nationality, race, gender or other identity factor.

Incitement to violence may constitute hate speech.

5. Each ministry as well as region and state government shall report to the Office of the President on the measures it has taken and the progress made with respect to the above-mentioned.

By order,
Khin Latt
Permanent Secretary

Disaster management committee to expand measures against COVID-19



Union Minister Dr Win Myat Aye holds the video conference on COVID-19 pandemic while carrying out disaster management plans in upcoming monsoon season. PHOTO: MNA

THE National Disaster Management Work Committee discussed prevention, containment and response plans for COVID-19 in their preparations for original activities in the upcoming monsoon season.

During the meeting on video conferencing yesterday, Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Dr Win Myat Aye, in his capacity as the chairman of work committee, held a meeting with his deputy minister and the directors-general, the Director-General of Meteorology and Hydrological Department, the Chairman of Natural Disaster Management Advisory Board, its secretary and members.

In his discussion, the Union Minister highlighted the need to prepare for actions on COVID-19 pandemic while carrying out disaster management plans in upcoming monsoon.

The meteorological and hydrological experts also held talks on possible weather conditions in the monsoon period, shortage of drinking water, floods from

rains, landslides, deficiency of irrigation water and strong winds.

They also discussed the COVID-19 measures concerning the disaster management in the areas included in quarantine and stay at home schemes to exercise rules and guidelines for the pandemic.

Deputy Minister U Soe Aung and Director-General Dr Ko Ko Naing from the Natural Disaster Management Department held talks on implementation and coordination in the works. —MNA

(Translated by Aung Khin)

Myanmar Competition Commission issues restrictions on increasing sales

MYANMAR Competition Commission issued Order (2/2020) on 25 March, exercising its power conferred under Article 56-(b) of the Competition Law.

The order is directed at businesses (excluding the service industry) and aims to foster free and fair competition, develop fair competition in the market unilaterally, receive equitable benefits and protect the public interest by issuing the following compulsory restrictions on increasing sales.

(a) Advertising or the use of other methods to increase sales need are required to use language, symbols, images and data that assures correct responsibility or certain guarantee.

(b) The use of language, symbols, images and data that may mislead, misinform, coerce, deceive or confuse the public is prohibited.

(c) The use of language, symbols, images and data that may either damage the reputation of another business, negatively affect their benefit or hinder their work processes is prohibited.

(d) The use of language, symbols, images and data that imitates or can be confused with other businesses is prohibited.

(e) Businesses that wish to advertise the support or accreditation of a certain organization need to possess genuine data of support or be able to submit upon request.

All businesses are required to adhere to the compulsory rules mentioned above. Failure to comply will result in either managerial action or penalization from the Myanmar Competition Commission. —MNA

(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)

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SWRR ministry provides soap, masks to IDP camps

THE Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement is co-operating with relevant departments and organizations to prevent, contain and respond to the spread of COVID-19 in IDP camps. On 19 April, the ministry provided 498 bars of soap and 498 face masks for 249 households combined in 4 IDP camps situated in Waingmaw, Kachin State and 20 bars of soap and 40 face masks for 20 households in 2 IDP camps in Namkham Township, Shan State.

Similarly, the ministry provided 135 bars of soap and 270 face masks for 135 households in 2 IDP camps in Kutkai Township, Shan State. They also provided 228 bars of soap to people recently pardoned from prison sentences currently residing in facility quarantines in Sittway Township, Rakhine State. —MNA

(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)



Officials from Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement offering boxes of face masks and soaps at the Internally Displaced Persons camp in Kachin State yesterday. PHOTO: MNA

“People are the key”

State Counsellor discusses ground situation with COVID-19 ...

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They held discussions on quarantine activities, public health awareness activities, requirements for medicines, the need for temperature monitoring equipment which are of good quality, the use of loud speakers to inform the people about instructions released by the Ministry of Health and Sports, collaboration efforts with the township Social Welfare department to disseminate health education pamphlets and also to provide comfort and moral support, accommodation for health workers, difficulties in awareness programmes, timely availability of guidelines, deployment of adequate security personnel at the toll gates, sufficient designated quarantine centres, the fact that some people were more interested in rumours than health bulletins, and also about the situation in which people find it difficult to stay at home because they need to work for their daily survival.

The State Counsellor spoke about the



State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi holds the video conference with personnel working to prevent, control and treat Coronavirus disease in Ayeyawady Region. **PHOTO: MNA**

... the government would help as much as possible to alleviate the worries of the people with regard to food and livelihood issues.

need for the public to follow the guidelines and advice of health workers and increasing health awareness campaigns. In this regards, she also spoke about the plans being undertaken by the Union Government to see to the needs of the people as soon as possible and as much as possible.

In her concluding remarks, she pledged the government would help as much as possible to alleviate the worries of the people with regard to food and livelihood issues; she added that it would not

be possible to overcome the current problem immediately; and that was why it was important to reduce anxiety and stress.

She also spoke about the necessity of sufficient protective gears for the personnel of administrative, health and humanitarian organizations who were participating in the fight against COVID-19, and the fact that you can help others only if you protect yourself.

She added that suitable accommodations would be arranged for health workers

and other staff as soon as possible; that medicines and materials as well as manpower needs would be fulfilled as much as possible; and also that ways and means would be found to ensure that the people would accept with great interest the health awareness messages regarding the fight against COVID-19.

The State Counsellor expressed her thanks to the front-liners in the containment of COVID-19; she told them that if they were able to do the things that needed to be done in the best possible way, it would become a moral strength for them and give them satisfaction; she wanted them to understand that doing what needed to be done for the welfare of others should be regarded as a strength.

She added that she had already noted down everything; by having discussions in

this manner things that needed to be done for the whole country have emerged; good ideas were gained; the reason I connect with the people in this manner is to get ideas. In meeting the challenge of COVID-19 in whatever possible way, we need to think of new ways to overcome this problem. She continued that the people also need to cooperate with the government; she appreciated and recognized the efforts being put in to contain the COVID-19 virus. She said she regarded all of them as very valuable resources for the country and that she wanted them all to continue the good work. She ended the discussions by saying that she wanted to wish them all good health and well-being and that all their good wishes would be fulfilled in the New Year. —MNA (Translated by Aung Khin and Kyaw Myaing)

Total number of COVID-19 cases reaches 117 on Monday

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4. Nine of the positive patients are now free of the virus and four of them were discharged from hospitals on

20-4-2020, making the total number of hospital discharges 6 (Case-003, Case-004, Case-007, Case-009, Case-021 and Case-015). They are quarantined for a definite period

currently. Two patients are under intensive care in Waibargi Specialist Hospital and the other patients are all in stable health conditions.

Case no.	Age	Gender	Address	Contact with COVID-19 positive cases	History of travel abroad	Name of hospital transferred	COVID-19 lab test result	Remark
112	29	Female	Tachilek Township, Shan State (East)	Yes	No	General Hospital, Kengtung	Positive	All persons are quarantined in designated locations.
113	65	Female	Tiddim Township, Chin State	Yes	No	General Hospital, Tiddim	Positive	
114	52	Male	Kalay Township, Sagaing Region	Yes	No	General Hospital, Kalay	Positive	
115	19	Male	Kalay Township, Sagaing Region	Yes	No	General Hospital, Kalay	Positive	
116	17	Male	Kalay Township, Sagaing Region	Yes	No	General Hospital, Kalay	Positive	
117	10	Female	Kalay Township, Sagaing Region	Yes	No	General Hospital, Kalay	Positive	

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

Ministry of Health and Sports speeds up COVID-19 processes

UNION Minister for Health and Sports Dr Myint Htwe held a video conference with state/regional authorities concerning COVID-19 on 18 April.

In his address to the meeting, the Union Minister said this meeting will analyze and review processes related to the protection, containment and treatment of COVID-19 to uncover what is effective and what needs to be strengthened.

He said the health ministry had prepared for protection and containment of COVID-19 since 4-1-2020 and have constantly revised their strategies in line with the changes in the virus' infection pattern.

The Union Minister said his ministry has designed and implemented guidelines, rules, regulations and virus containment action plans during the earlier part of the year. He said the ministry has closely monitored and reviewed the epidemiological situation and will revise strategies if necessary and will prioritize by state/region as seen fit.

He said this will reduce expenditure and ensure effec-



Union Minister Dr Myint Htwe addresses the video conference with state, regional authorities concerning COVID-19 on 18 April. **PHOTO: MNA**

tiveness. He said the treatment of COVID-19 positive patients and contact tracing with positive cases is the first priority. He said cooperation from the public and civil society organizations is paramount in contact tracing.

The Union Minister urged meeting attendees to openly

discuss completed, ongoing and future processes and the challenges and difficulties faced in implementation. He said they scientifically calculate the usage rate of available medical supplies and equipment, personal protective equipment and order additional supplies when nec-

essary.

The Union Minister said the cooperation of many organizations in practical containment of the virus is good but it is important to systematically coordinate with them and to share relevant information between all key players.

The Union Minister said it is important to prepare for managing monitoring and quarantining of Myanmar nationals returning from abroad and the number of lab specimens acquired from quarantine locations have increased. He said research is increased to strengthen and improve public health and treatment.

The Union Minister his ministry does not leave out any information related to COVID-19 and disseminates it to the public in a timely and transparent manner. He said the public must be armed with genuine information to prevent the spread of the virus or infection from it and to place greater emphasis on protection processes.

The meeting then commenced with the Deputy Minister, medical personnel and COVID-19 related committees discussing their areas of implementation, difficulties faced and future processes related to their respective state or region. —MNA

(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)

World Bank to lend \$50 mln in Fast-Track Financing for Fighting COVID-19 in Myanmar

THE World Bank said it has approved a US\$50 million credit for the Myanmar COVID-19 Emergency Response Project, as part of global emergency support operations through a dedicated fast-track COVID-19 facility.

"This fast-track financing will help Myanmar fill a critical gap in its contingency plan to urgently increase hospital preparedness and surge capacity in order to reduce the spread of COVID-19, protect health workers, and minimize the severity of illness and associated deaths", said Mariam Sherman, World Bank Country Director for Myanmar, Cambodia and Lao PDR, in a statement released yesterday by the World Bank's

Yangon office.

The project primarily focuses on upscaling of Intensive Care Units (ICU) at selected hospitals, along with capacity building of health staff and officials, and community engagement activities throughout the country. Eight central level hospitals and 43 Region and State level hospitals, across all Regions and States, will be covered, with implementation rolled out in a phased manner, starting with the most at-risk areas, such as densely populated areas and areas with frequent travel and migration.

This emergency response project complements the World Bank-financed Myanmar Essential Health Services Access Project

(EHSAP), which since 2015 has been supporting over 12,000 primary health care facilities across the country.

In the fight against COVID-19, funds under EHSAP are also being mobilized to assist capacity building and operational costs to intensify surveillance and testing activities in all states and regions, establish a functioning information and reporting system for all suspected cases, facilitate engagement with basic health staff - including Ethnic Health Organizations - for community surveillance, disseminate guidelines to health staff and community volunteers, and, develop public Information, Education and Communication materials for risk communication.—GNLM

UN vehicle carrying swabs from COVID-19 suspects attacked by ULA/AA group in Rakhine, two injured

A WHO vehicle carrying swabs from the patients receiving for COVID-19 quarantine in townships in Rakhine State for test in Yangon's national laboratory came under attack on Monday in Minbya Township, Rakhine State, leaving two staff injured.

The two staff - a driver and a health worker - were in the WHO vehicle with number plate UN-5/34 when they were attacked by ULA/AA group near Yarmaung Bridge in Minbya around 5 pm while they are on the way to Yangon as the airlines were sus-

pended. They were taken to the Minbya People's Hospital.

The World Health Organization's vehicle was left in the scene and plans are underway to bring it back on 21 April. While the world is combatting the COVID-19 global pandemic by preventing, containment and treatment of the coronavirus disease, the attack on the WHO vehicle with UN emblem and staff on their global pandemic mission by the ULA/AA group occurred, and the attack reflects the ULA/AA group's inhuman acts. —MNA



The two staff of WHO injured in the attack by ULA/AA group. **PHOTO: MNA**

Covid-19 delays trade flow to India despite adequate supplies of mung bean

By Nyein Nyein

MYANMAR assures adequate supplies of mung bean for India's market, yet the Covid-19 consequences slow the trade flow, Secretary U Min Ko Oo of Myanmar Pulses, Beans and Sesame Seeds Merchant Association (MPBSSMA) told the Global New Light of Myanmar (GNLM) on 20 April.

"The supplies of mung beans in the domestic market is enough for export. Now, the port started to reopen on 20 April. Nevertheless, the agents are still not active for trading, coupled with other problems. The goods are not delivered as the time it was supposed to arrive at the port, owing to the disruption and delay in trade flow, Corona-virus-preventative restrictions in India and in Yangon," said U Min Ko Oo.

India has earlier extended the period for import quota of 250,000 tonnes of mung beans by April-end and made a further extension to 15 May, due to Covid-19 impacts.

As India has market requirement on beans, especially mung bean. India imposed a nationwide restriction as of mid-April and extended it to slow the spread of Covid-19. As a result of this, supply chain disruption affects trade. Upon the licenced traders seeking request to extend the period, India notified extension of import quota by 15 May.

For the current fiscal, India has increased the quota limit from 150,000 to 400,000 tonnes to reach the market's demand, according to a trade notice released by the Directorate General of Foreign Trade under India's Ministry of Commerce and Industry on 12 December 2019.

India has earlier stated that the further increased quota of 250,000 tonnes has to arrive at India's port by 31 March 2020. Due to the Covid-19 impacts, they made the extension two times.

At present, more than 150,000 tonnes of mung beans have been shipped, according to the association.



Merchants evaluate quality of pulses at the Mandalay wholesale market last year. PHOTO: MIN HTET AUNG

India experienced a low yield of mung beans due to erratic weather last year. Under the provincial government's approval, more mung beans are purchased beyond the previous quota limit, driving up the mung bean price up to above K1.3 million per tonne.

Mung bean is priced around

K960,000-970,000 per tonne during the post-Thingyan period.

Moreover, India's Commerce Department has issued an announcement on 17 March to import 400,000 tonnes of mung beans for the 2020-2021FY as per the amended 2015-2020 Foreign Trade Policy of the Central Government.

Myanmar is the main supplier of mung beans to India. Concerning other types of beans, Myanmar has to compete against Australian and African markets, according to Myanmar Pulses, Beans and Sesame Seeds Merchants Association.

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

MEODA initiates online service for cooking oil export, import licence during Covid-19 crisis

MYANMAR Edible Oil Dealers' Association (MEODA) will provide online service while seeking the association's approval to apply for export and import licence during the Covid-19 crisis.

This move aims to prevent person-to-person contact and slow the spread of the virus. Regarding the online service, the documents must be sent to meoda.2011@gmail.com and office Viber (959 444437295) in pdf or jpeg format. The fund can be paid

to the association's fund account (KBZ- 005-304-00501821101, AGD- 3040202000034019).

The association has urged the public not to make panic buying to maintain the stability of the cooking oil market.

There is self-sufficiency in the market with local production and imports from foreign countries. The association is trying to ensure the supply and maintain fair price, it stated on 19 March.

To ensure the adequate

supply in the local market, the import of quality palm oil is being processed. Palm oil producers -- Malaysia and Indonesia -- are regularly operating their oil mills and conducting export process.

MEODA strictly adheres to the health guidelines by the Ministry of Health and Sports. It will release real-time information of edible oil milling, import and distribution. — GNLM

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)



A woman shopper choosing an oil bottle in a supermarket in Yangon. PHOTO: PHOE KHWAH

Mandalay depot to allow only members for entry amidst Covid-19

MANDALAY depot will allow only its members for entry in order to contain the spread of Covid-19 when it is reopened on 22 April. The members also need to comply with the health guidelines, said depot vice president U Chun.

"At first, all those people need to wash hands outside the depot. They will be taken temperature measurement. Third, they will be registered. The traders will be advised to take at least 3 feet distance between them. To reduce the unnecessary risks, only the members are allowed to enter the de-

pot. If a certain person wants to enter the depot, they need to carry the member card or other specified persons. This way can reduce the number of entries by two-third at the depot," he added.

The depot was temporarily closed starting from 11 April and will be reopened on 22 April. The officials of the depot went around the city and sold the chickpeas in order to reduce anxiety and panic-buying due to the Covid-19 negative impacts. Hteik Htar Naing (IPRD) (Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

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THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR
www.globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

ACTING CHIEF EDITOR
Aye Min Soe
dce@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

SENIOR EDITORIAL CONSULTANT
Kyaw Myaing

SENIOR EDITOR
Aungthu Ya

SENIOR TRANSLATORS
Zaw Htet Oo
Aung Khin

INTERNATIONAL NEWS EDITOR
Ye Htut Tin,
Aung Htein,
editor1@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

LOCAL NEWS EDITORS
Tun Tun Naing (Editor),
intlnews@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

TRANSLATORS
Hay Mar Tin Win,
Ei Myat Mon,
Kyaw Zin Lin,
Kyaw Zin Tun

REPORTER
Nyein Nyein Ei,
reporter1@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

PHOTOGRAPHER
Kyaw Zeya Win @ Phoe Khwar
Kyaw Zeya

COMPUTER TEAM
Thein Ngwe, Zaw Zaw Aung,
Hnin Pwint, Kay Khaing Win,
Sanda Hnin, Thein Htwe,
Nyi Lin Thu

EDITORIAL SECTION
(+95) (01)8604529,
Fax – (+95) (01) 8604305

CIRCULATION & DISTRIBUTION
San Lwin, (+95) (01) 8604532,
Hotline - 09 974424114

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

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Statement of the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission (MNHRC) on the Presidential Pardon
Statement No. (3/ 2020)

1. The President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar pardoned prisoners serving jail terms in various correctional facilities across the country on 17 April 2020 under Order 11/2020, Order 12/2020 and Order 13/2020 of the Office of the President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar to mark the Myanmar New Year; to ensure the peace of mind of the people and considering the humanitarian concerns.

2. In view of the threat of Coronavirus (Covid-19) confronting humankind, including Myanmar; this is an extremely significant action from humanitarian and human rights perspectives, which the Commission hopes will bring many benefits to the prisoners themselves, the people and the State. The released prisoners can now reunite with long-separated families and loved ones and have the opportunity to uplift their morale in these difficult times. Less-crowded prisons may contribute to effective social-distancing in prisons, and consequently may help to some extent the overall efforts of the National Central Committee for COVID-19 Prevention, Control and Treatment.

3. Under the Presidential Pardon, death sentences and longer prison terms were commuted; a total of 24,896 prisoners serving various terms have been given unconditional pardon respectively. In addition, 87 foreign prisoners have been given the same unconditional pardon and deported in view of

maintaining friendship and goodwill with their countries and humanitarian concerns as well. The Commission regards the conduct of medical check-up and COVID-19 prevention awareness raising before their release is a far-sighted preventive action that will allay the concerns of the public over the potential spread of COVID-19. Moreover, dry ration as humanitarian support is provided on the day they are released.

4. As a national level institution, vested under section 43 of the MNHRC Law, with the mandate to inspect prisons, jails, detention centres, and places of confinement in order to ensure that persons imprisoned, detained or confined are treated humanely and in accordance with international and national human rights laws, the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission whole-heartedly welcomes the reduction of prison terms and the unconditional release of prisoners as the situation in the prisons across the country will become much improved as a result of release of a large number of prisoners. The Commission will continue to fulfill this mandate in close cooperation with the relevant ministry.

Dated: 20 April 2020

Myanmar National Human Rights Commission

Workers can file complaints unless employers comply with health guidelines



Textile workers sewing on production line at a garment factory in Hlinethaya Industrial Zone in Yangon. PHOTO: PHOE KHWAR

WORKERS can make a complaint if they are forced to work during the mandatory inspection period of factories and workplaces, said an official of the Confederation of Trade Unions in Myanmar (CTUM).
The factories and workplaces in the respective industrial zones across the country will undergo mandatory inspection between 20 and 30 April to re-

sume their operations, in line with the regulations and guidelines on Covid-19 issued by the Ministry of Health and Sports, stated the Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population in its announcement.
“The statement is a move to reduce the spread of Covid-19. We asked the labour officials about the statement. I’d like to thank the ministry on behalf of

the labour unions and the workers. A committee comprising the experts and officials concerned will go on inspection to the factories. If the factories and workplaces are found to be compliant with health guidelines, they can be reopened. Having said that, they are not allowed to open at the present time. If the employers force the employees to come into work during the inspection

period, the workers can make a complaint to the respective departments”, said CTUM assistant general secretary Daw Phyo Sandar Soe. The CTUM urged the workers engaged in factories and workplaces to file complaints to the Factories and General Labour Laws and Inspection Department when they were forced to work.
The combined team consisting of officials from the Ministry of Health and Sports, the Ministry of Labour Immigration and Population (MoLIP) and the experts will conduct the inspections in order of priority; pharmaceutical factories, food production factories, factories, workplaces and departments that are ready for re-operating in line with health instructions, factories and workplaces with more than 1,000 workers, and other factories, workplaces and departments, in Hlinethaya, Shwelinpan, Shwepyitha, Thadukan, North Dagon, South Dagon, North Okkalapa, Shwepaukkan and other townships. The factories and workplaces located in other regions and states are also included in this statement, the MoLIP said.—Myint Soe
(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

STRAIGHTFORWARD

‘Nothing Hidden from USA’: WHO Says Has Been Warning about Dangers of Coronavirus from Day 1

TEDROS Adhanom Ghebreyesus, head of the World Health Organization (WHO), emphasized during his news conference on Monday that no information has been “hidden” from any member state in regards to the coronavirus pandemic.

World Health Organization chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus on Monday insisted the UN agency had not hidden from the United States any information it had about the coronavirus pandemic.

He said the presence of embedded US government secondees working at the WHO headquarters in Geneva “means there is nothing hidden from the US, from day one”, adding: “There is no secret in WHO.”

The agency further said it had been warning from the very start about the dangers of the novel coronavirus, which has killed more than 1,64,000 people globally.

“We have been warning from day one that this is a devil that everyone should fight,”



US President Donald Trump (C) holds a picture of the coronavirus with US Health and Human Service Secretary Alex Azar (2nd L), CDC Director Robert Redfield (2nd R), and CDC Associate Director for Laboratory Science and Safety (ADLSS) Dr. Steve Monroe (R) during a tour of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta, Georgia, on March 6, 2020. (PHOTO BY JIM WATSON / AFP)

Ghebreyesus told a virtual briefing in Geneva, after facing scathing criticism from Washington which has accused the agency of initially downplaying the pandemic.

The virus, which emerged late last year in the Chinese city of Wuhan, has so far infected more than 2.4 million people globally and killed more than 165,000, with nearly two thirds of

the victims in Europe, according to an AFP tally.

The WHO said that since January 1 there were 15 staff from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC),

the US national health protection agency, detailed specifically to work with the organisation on its COVID-19 response.

“Having CDC staff means there is nothing hidden from the US, from day one. Because these are Americans working with us. It just comes naturally and they tell what they are doing,” said Tedros.

“WHO is open. We don’t hide anything. Not only for CDC, them sending messages, or others -- we want all countries to get the same message immediately because that helps countries to prepare well and to prepare quickly.

Tedros also urged leaders not to exploit the pandemic for their own political capital.

“Don’t use this virus as an opportunity to fight against each other or score political points,” he said.

“It’s like playing with fire. It’s the political problem that may fuel further this pandemic.”

SOURCE: AFP

WAR “HEROES” HEALTHCARE WORKERS

COVID-19 vaccine may be given to health workers for emergency use first



A staff member displays samples of a potential COVID-19 vaccine at Sinovac Biotech Ltd., in Beijing, capital of China, Mar. 16, 2020. PHOTO: XINHUA

BASED on the analysis of current coronavirus situation globally, the first vaccines may be inoculated to the healthcare workers by the end of the year for emergency use, Gao Fu, director of the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention re-

vealed on Monday at a welcome ceremony held for the returned medical staff who have been sent to Hubei Province, the epicenter of the COVID-19 in China.

Under a normal timetable, the period for a vaccine to be available is at least 12 to 18

months, according to the World Health Organization, meaning the vaccine will not be developed until the end of the year or early next year.

But given the trends worldwide, the first vaccines may be given to healthcare workers by the end of the year for emergency use, once they proved effective on clinical trials, Gao said, noting that it is not intended for general public use.

Vaccines are one of the ways for people to develop herd community, which occurs when a sufficient portion of a population is immune to a specific disease so that it can make the spread from person to person unlikely.

“But both drugs and vaccines take time to develop, it’s not just lip service,” Gao told.

China has decided on five COVID-19 vaccine development options, two of which

have entered into the second stage of clinical trials, which are developed by Wuhan Institute of Biological Products of China National Pharmaceutical Group and a Beijing-based unit of Sinovac Biotech.

Many have turned to the prospect of a vaccine as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to sweep the world, with hundreds of thousands of new infections being reported every day.

According to the latest data by Johns Hopkins University, confirmed cases have exceeded 2.4 million globally, with the death toll surpassing 160,000.

Compared to the normal standard, which usually takes eight to 20 years to develop a new vaccine, 18 months is already considered a breakneck speed for launching a new one.

SOURCE: CGTN

Italy says current virus cases fall for the first time

ITALY on Monday reported its first symbolic drop in the number of people currently suffering from the novel coronavirus since it recorded its first infection in February.

The civil protection service said 108,237 people were either being treated in hospital or were recovering at home after testing positive—down 20 from the total reported on Sunday.

“For the first time, we have seen a new positive development: the number of currently positive has declined,” civil protection service chief Angelo Borrelli told reporters. The Mediterranean country’s death toll still rose by 454 to 24,114—second only to the United States.

But most Italian doctors believe the country’s deaths and infections are far higher than those officially reported.

SOURCE: AFP

"Any kind of hate speech, incitement to violence has no place in a civilized society"

WHILE we are experiencing the rapid spread of the coronavirus throughout our country, the infectious disease should not be used as an excuse for racial discrimination and animosity towards a person or any group on the basis of religion, ethnicity, nationality, race, gender or other identity factors.

No doubt, we need strong, well informed public responses, in the face of the global pandemic. Equally, we have to ensure these responses respect everyone's human rights and do not disproportionately affect certain groups in society.

Hate speech is "usually thought to include communications of animosity or disparagement of an individual or a group on account of a group characteristic such as race, color, national origin, sex, disability, religion, or sexual orientation".

Incitement to violence may constitute hate speech.

Our country is a union with a multicultural society. We believe that every human being has a right to a dignified life, to be treated with respect, and to live without fear of violence, intimidation, or discrimination based upon group identity or personal characteristics.

Therefore, we must strive to bring together diverse communities on the basis of common values of mutual understanding and mutual respect for each other.

Whenever our country is facing difficult situations, including this COVID-19 crisis, intolerance and discrimination are not only unacceptable, but also counter-productive.

Article 364 of Myanmar's 2008 constitution prohibits the "abuse of religion for political purposes" and "any act which is intended or is likely to promote feelings of hatred, enmity or discord between racial or religious communities or sects". It allows for the "promulgation of laws to punish such activity".

Authorities and citizens need to speak out against hate speech that is triggered by today's pandemic.

In these difficult times, we need to join forces to build robust defences against hate speech and to curb its impact through strong legislation, effective equality bodies, ambitious action plans and inclusive education.

Not only governmental bodies, but civil society and community organizations also have an important role to play in combating prejudice.

We would like to urge all Myanmar people to avoid hate speech and to "live united within diversity", especially in this difficult time.

All Myanmar people are advised to avoid hate speech and to "live in unity within diversity". Strong actions must be taken against those who "make" hate speech.

We would like to urge every citizen to uphold the rule of law and also make clear that any kind of hate speech and incitement to violence has no place in a civilized society.



Fourth-year performance of Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation

Ten fiscal year plan on Myanmar Reforestation and Rehabilitation Programme (2017-2026) (MRRP) has been laid down beginning 2017 with 19 diverse agendas, and that the implementation is ongoing: Union Minister U Ohn Win

By Nandar Win
Photo: Tar Yar



Union Minister U Ohn Win.

INQUEST of sustainable development of the vast sector in the areas of forestry and mining in the country along with the environmental conservation of the nation, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation is shouldering the onerous tasks in top gear.

Through the interviews to Union Minister U Ohn Win and the departmental heads, all aspects of the achievements, performances and developments during the fourth year are presented to the esteemed readers.

**U Ohn Win,
Union Minister, MONREC**

Q: Kindly share us the most satisfactory achievements in the forestry sector during the fourth year period.

A: Successfully performed its protection and

production functions in harmony, based upon a policy of sustainable utilization of valuable forest resources, the protected forest areas, the reserve forest areas, and the "Biodiversity and Conservation of Protected Area" have been earmarked and planned in the country.

A total of (30) per cent is targeted for protected forest land and the reserve forest land, and that (10) per cent is intended to set up for the "Protected Areas and Biodiversity Conservation".

In the fourth year performances, (26) reserve forest land with (304,593) acres have been consolidated, covering (25 point 49) per cent of the nation.

During the period, two vast land with (43,605) acres have been organized as the "Protected Areas and Biodiversity Conservation". So far, a total of (45) vast land in (9 point 8) million acres covering (5 point 85) per cent of the country has been consolidated.

Ten fiscal year plan on Myanmar Reforestation and Rehabilitation Programme (2017-2026) (MRRP) has been laid down beginning 2017 with (19) diverse agendas, and that the implementation is ongoing.

In the fourth year implementation, many areas have been established such as that of the commercial forest areas; that of convergence forest areas; that of tidal forest areas; that of village fuel forest wood areas; that of private teak forest areas; and that of private hardwood forest areas. At the dire needs of the local population, private bamboo forest plantations have allocated to (106) entrepreneurs.

With a view to facilitate the requirements of the local population, necessary directives with regard to the forestry sector have been supplemented in May 2019, and the forest strategy (2018 – 2020) for the local population has been accorded.

A total of (648) Forest Users Association have been formed with (14,744) memberships covering (87,302) acres.

A wildlife sanctuary is a place of refuge where abused, injured and abandoned captive wildlife may



Officials collecting data on forest conservation in Mindone Township, Hayet District.



Union Minister U Ohn Win observing the pearls at the Myanmar Pearl Exhibition.

live in peace and dignity for the remainder of their lives.

During (2019 – 2020) to (2028 – 2029) period, the projects are being laid down for the establishment of wildlife sanctuaries, and that (25 point 97) per cent has been completed so far.

With a view to reduce the extraction of wood in the rural areas, (38,182) energy sufficient stoves have been distributed in collaboration with the international organizations.

For recreational purpose, and as there are many retired and old elephants available in Myanmar, many elephant camps have been established across the country.

Q: Please explain us on the mine industry sector.

A: Mining was suspended in 2016 due to concerns over the environmental damage caused by the industry and legal confusion. Myanmar's Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation (MoNREC) has announced that local and foreign investment in mining operations in the country will be permitted, following an assessment of the industry's environmental impacts, with the new mining law and bylaw.

At the moment, with the recommendations of the regional and state governments, total of (158) applications for new exploration and extraction sites would be approved soon.

In the fourth year implementation, the approvals were accorded such as that of the mining survey and exploration including foreign investment and local investment; that of the extension of foreign investment permits and local investment permits; that of large, medium and small exploration and extraction new permits and extension of permits.

Myanmar Jade and Gems Emporium and Auctions were held during the fourth year period and fetched Euro (506 point 914) million; MMK (12) billion; while pearl fetched Euro (2,680,892).

Q: Please share us on the natural environmental conservation in balanced approach.

A: President U Win Myint announced the two new policies - - - the National Environmental Policy and the Myanmar Climate Change Policy - - - at an event marking World Environment Day in the capital Nay Pyi Taw.

With regard to climate change and to reduce carbon emission, the relevant policies, strategies and main work programs were being released.

Waste management and recycling discarded items are being taken into consideration and that Myanmar National Level Main Working Programme for 2018 – 2020 have been rolled out.

Q: Kindly explain us the most salient points with regard to biodiversity conservation.

A: Our ministry would step ahead in line with policies, strategies, directives laid down by the state and with the directives of the state leaders in the management of forestry, mining and natural conservation matters. We are working in cooperation and collaboration with relevant ministries. At this juncture, I would like to request the people to participate in the endeavor for the environmental conservation for the greater good of the nation.

**U Khin Latt Gyi
(Director-General, Department of Mining)**

Q: Tell us on the development with regards to laws and bylaws.

A: Following the passing of the amendments to the Myanmar Mines Law of 1994 through the enactment of Law No. 72/2015 on 24 December 2015 the "Mines Law Amendments", the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation passed the much anticipated Myanmar Mines Rules under Notification No. 13/2018 dated 13 February 2018 the "Mines Rules", repealing the previous mines rules passed in 1996.

SEE PAGE-10

President's Office continues announcement of illegal drug arrests, seizures action on tip-offs

THE Office of the President has issued Press Release No 14/2020 yesterday, publicly announcing the Ministry of Home Affairs' arrests and seizures in the fight against illicit drug trafficking up till 18 April.

The ministry made the arrests, acting on information, sent to the Drug Activity Special Complaint Department of the Office of the President as of 18 April.

The full text of the press release will be reported in the 22 April issue of The Global New Light of Myanmar — GNLM

Announcement to recheck systematic registration of SIM cards

1. The Department of Post and Telecommunications, under the Ministry of Transport and Communications, announced through state-owned newspaper and social media on 23-2-2020 that mobile operators are helping users to re-register their SIM cards and urged the public to check if their registration is correct, and to use their mobile operator's online services or vendor services to correct their registration within the designated period.
2. Legally issued identification (NRC/guest national/proof of national verification), passport registration for expatriates for more than 2 SIM cards and SIM cards registered with false information will be blocked for all outgoing calls after 30-4-2020 except to contact call center and will be permanently shut off after 30-6-2020.
3. The public is urged to swiftly check whether their current SIM card is registered with correct information and to resolve the issue if not.

Department of Posts and Telecommunications

Deadline for electricity payment for March extended

1. Electricity and Energy Ministry's offices in townships are collecting monthly fee for electricity usage from the people.
2. On the bills, people were urged to pay the electricity fee for March to their respective township office not later than 20, 22, 24, 26 and 28 April.
3. Those who gathered outside of the offices have to follow health guidelines including washing hands and receiving screening to prevent the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) declared by the World Health Organization-WHO as a global pandemic, caused crowds outside the offices.
4. To reduce the crowds, the ministry has extended the deadline for paying the fee for the March consumption to 20 May.
5. No actions would be taken against the people for the delays.
6. The staff of the offices will do their duties without off days, and the deadline for the paying for the fee for April would be announced later.

Ministry of Electricity and Energy

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Fourth-year performance of Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation

FROM PAGE-9

Q: Kindly explain the implementation of mining industry in the context of national planning objectives.

A: National Planning Objectives involve the implementation of the mining sector; the jade sector; the gems sector; and the pearl sector. In this regards, the targeted income was set at MMK (592,885 point 534) million and that the MONREC realized MMK (821,314 point 559) million, accounting to (138 point 53) per cent of the estimated total proceeds.

Dr. Nyi Nyi Kyaw,
(Director-General, Department of Forest)

Q: Please share us with the most salient performances of your department.

A: So far, we have successfully consolidated (25 point 49) per cent of the country as permanent forest land. The consolidation of forest land is aimed at sustainable natural resources conservation of the country, including its utilization.

Q: Kindly explain the participation of the local population in the forest conservation tasks.

A: There are many steps in the forest conservation, and that the local population is residing in the same areas. Therefore, we need to consider that there is no harm to the daily livelihood of the local people in connection with the forest conservation.

Q: Please share us over the sustainable biodiversity in the context of forestry sector.

A: When we talk about the forest resource, it covers the topic of biodiversity. One of the tasks in the fourth year implementation include the project to re-establish the wildlife sanctuaries as much as possible in their original habitats.

The plans include such as that of the conservation of the original habitats; that of making the safe passages in the forest areas; that of the cooperation and coordination with other ministries in avoiding harm and damage to the wildlife sanctuaries due to construction of new infrastructures.



Surveyors measuring the GPS of MraukU archaeological area by Real Time Kinematic System. (FILE PHOTO)

We are also working for the conservation of migratory birds. In 2020, the famous Inlay Lake has been designated as resting place for the birds.

Q: Please tell us about the current implementation of the Department of Forest.

A: Due to the high deforestation in Myanmar, the country is implementing a 10-year plan of reforestation and rehabilitation of its forest across the country. The project covers 32,400 to 40,500 hectares a year to establish forest, nurseries and to replant trees in forest reserve land. This rainy season would witness the planting of (68) million trees by the private sector, the civil society organizations and the local population. The Department of Forest has formed the community based “Community Monitoring and Reporting System – CMRS” to reduce the illegal logging. As a result, (49,782 point 35) tons of illegal logs have been arrested along with (4,531) offenders, including (28) foreigners. A total of (2711) transport vehicles have been seized. In this regards, the participation of the local population is very much vital.

Another vital task is the Inle Lake Conservation and Rehabilitation Project, which is rolling ahead in speed.

U Hla Maung Thein,
(Director-General, Department of Environmental Conservation)

Q: Please share us about the significant development of the Department of Environmental Conservation.

A: According to the Myanmar Sustainable Development Plan - - MSDP, it has been expressed that the natural environment conservation is the basic and core foundation.

The Myanmar Climate Change Strategy (MCCS) 2018-2030 has been formulated and adopted to provide a roadmap for Myanmar to strategically address climate-related risks, and also seize opportunities, over the next 13 years and beyond.

Q: Please explain on the monitoring and evaluation in the context of environmental degradation.

A: During 2019, a total of (113) study reports on environmental degradation on socio-economic and investment development projects in the domains of the infrastructure, the hotels, the transportation, the industry, the energy, the agriculture, the livestock breeding, the forestry, and the mining have been approved, and that (623) reports have been initially checked and duly replied.

A total of (1,237) ground inspection trips on the projects to check water, air and soil pollution have been successfully conducted.

Q: Kindly explain on the future tasks over environmental conservation.

A: All the environmental conservation tasks in the context of climate change would be implemented with the cooperation and participation of the governments, the organizations and the entire people.

U Minn Thu,
(Managing Director, Myanmar Gems Enterprise)

Q: Please tell us on the arrangements in passing the relevant informa-

tion on the gems and jewellery to the public.

A: Myanmar is proud to have motley assortments over (75) varieties of gems and over (100) diverse and varied precious stones, including the famous ruby, sapphire and jade. They are being proudly displayed in Myanma Gems Museums in Nay Pyi Taw and Yangon.

Q: Please share us on the sustainable development plans.

A: With a view to sustainable development in the management over the Myanmar gems for the posterity, an appropriate gem policy is in the process for pragmatic application in the country.

Q: Kindly explain us on the gem and jewelry market status.

A: The work programme includes such as that of the upgrading of finished products using modern technology; that of the creation of (100) per cent development of jewellery market in the country.

Q: Kindly apprise us on the emporiums and auctions.

A: Since 1964, a total of (95) Myanmar gems, jade and jewellery emporiums and auctions were successfully held, which fetched and yielded foreign cash for the government coffer.

Q: Please share us with gems and jade production in the fourth year.

A: During the fourth year period, the extraction of raw jade was (29,445 point 446) kilos in thousands; the extraction of gems and stones was (220 point 128) carets, which brought in MMK (10,934 point 329) million.

Q: In conclusion, kindly share us on the activities with regards to Myanmar Gems Law.

A: In accordance with the 2019 Myanmar Gems Law, the regional and state governments have the authority in the management and supervision over the works of small scale businesses and employees, individuals and groups.

Translated by UMT (Ahlon)



Elephants seen at the Moe Makha Elephant Conservation Camp. (FILE PHOTO)

TRACKING COVID-19 CASES

COVID-19 in the USA: a question of time

WITH more than 753 000 confirmed cases and close to 27 000 deaths, the USA has become the current centre of the global coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. Fewer than 3 months have elapsed since the first severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 infection in Washington State was confirmed by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Initially appearing slow moving and constrained in contrast to the scale of outbreaks in China and Italy, COVID-19 has given way to a nationwide public health catastrophe. For the first time in US history, a disaster declaration has been put in place for all 50 states and most US territories, and 95% of Americans are at least temporarily under some form of stay at home order. The increasing gravity of the situation in the USA has drawn public health and infectious disease experts, policy makers, and partisans across state and federal government into a fitful clash for control and direction of the COVID-19 response. Putting the USA at odds with the international community and global pandemic strategy efforts, President Trump announced his intention to withdraw funding from WHO (about 22% of its budget). Caught amid the chaos are the American people grappling with the fear of a deadly and poorly understood virus, conflicting messaging around their protection and safety, fear of financial fallout, absence of a cohesive national strategy, and volatile, incompetent leadership.

Precious time

As Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, has suggested, sluggish decision making by the federal government at the outset of the COVID-19 crisis lost precious time: had “you started mitigation earlier, you could have saved lives”. It was not until late February, 2020, after local transmission of COVID-19 was established in additional clusters in Oregon and New York states, that the CDC updated guidance to authorise testing for individuals who had not travelled recently, substantially widening the scope of cases that could be detected. During the brief window when containment of the virus might have been a possibility, the CDC retained control of all testing, preventing external academic and commercial test development, and processing only about 100 samples per day. The US Food and Drug Administration has also created barriers through its requisite approval scheme for all diagnostics. Even with the slow scale-up of testing, private facilities and laboratories tasked with processing samples have been severely overwhelmed with thousands of backlogged cases. Point-of-care and clinic testing for active infections is still pressing, especially in regions where outbreaks are predicted to occur, but there must now be a shift in urgency to develop and expand testing capacity for previous COVID-19 infections.

Effective prophylaxis

Testing might rely on the ability to innovate, but simple



The US Navy's USNS Comfort is a mammoth floating hospital that was last dispatched to aid New York City after 9/11. **PHOTO: AFP**

and effective prophylaxis against COVID-19 has been hampered and delayed by Trump's prevarication. Dynamic models predicting the rates of mortality and hospital admission, such as the IHME COVID-19 projections as well as previous pandemic preparedness plans, have been available to help states get ready for surge responses, through increasing the number of hospital beds and ventilators available. Yet shortages and inadequate personal protective equipment have and continue to put front-line health-care workers at great risk. After sparring with governors over access to the Strategic National Stockpile, Trump has not invoked the Defense Production Act, ordering private businesses to manufacture needed goods, leaving states, philanthro-

pists, and health-care advocacy groups to source equipment, often directly competing with the federal government for goods. Anticipating a protracted fight against COVID-19 that could involve multiple waves of outbreak, reinforcing that availability and equitable distribution of essential medical supplies should be the priority of existing federal agencies.

Economic havoc

In hard-hit states such as New York, although hundreds of COVID-19 deaths are still occurring daily, hospital admissions appear to have plateaued. Credit might be due to effective physical distancing measures that limit community mobility. But progress in preventing the spread of COVID-19 has come with eco-

nomical havoc—at least 17 million Americans are unemployed, a number that could ultimately surpass the Great Depression, and take years to correct. A new impasse is forming around the Trump administration's eagerness to boost the economy by lifting restrictions, just as mitigation efforts by the states are yielding results. The degree to which the USA stalled in taking aggressive action to curtail the spread of COVID-19 is directly the product of an administration marked by consistently poor timing, intent on making decisions in favour of economic interests instead of those that are guided by science and to protect health. The rush to reopen the country puts dollars over deaths.

SOURC: The Lancet Journal

REDEFINING VULNERABILITY

Coronavirus exposes ‘weaknesses’ in health systems: G20



A medical staff prepares an isolation ward at a government hospital in Kerala, India. **PHOTO: AFP**

THE coronavirus pandemic has exposed “systemic weaknesses” in global health systems, the G20 said Monday, but there was no mention of Washington's contentious decision to halt World Health Organization funding.

The statement came after health ministers from the 20 most advanced economies held a virtual meeting on Sunday hosted by the group's current president Saudi Arabia following criticism the institution was slow

to address the pandemic.

“Health Ministers recognised that the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted systemic weaknesses in health systems,” they said in a joint statement.

“It also has shown vulnerabilities in the global community's ability to prevent and respond to pandemic threats.

“Ministers addressed the need to improve the effectiveness of global health systems by sharing knowledge and closing the gap in response capabilities and readiness.”

The worldwide death toll from the novel coronavirus pandemic rose to 164,016 on Sunday, according to a tally from official sources compiled by AFP.

More than 2,363,210 declared cases have been registered in 193 countries and territories since the epidemic first emerged in China in December.

The novel coronavirus has upended the lives of billions of people as nations imposed lockdown measures to curb its spread, sending the global economy into a tailspin.— AFP ■

Australia to force Google, Facebook to pay for news content

CANBERRA — Australia will force Google and Facebook to pay media outlets for their content, the government announced Monday, vowing to lead the world in making the tech giants share lucrative advertising revenues with traditional media.

Treasurer Josh Frydenberg said a mandatory code of conduct – to be fully unveiled by July and made law soon after – will require the US-based firms to reimburse Australian media companies for using their news and other content.

“It is about holding these tech titans to account, about ensuring genuine competition,

(and) it is about delivering a level playing field,” Frydenberg said.

“It is about keeping jobs in journalism and it is about ensuring a fair outcome for all.”

Google and Facebook have had a huge impact on Australia’s news industry, capturing two-thirds of online advertising spending.

In response to falling revenues, Australian news outlets have slashed 20 per cent of jobs in the last six years.

If Australia is successful in its efforts to ensure more advertising revenue flows to publishers, it would be the first country to do so.—AFP ■



Australia has said it will begin forcing Google and Facebook to pay news companies for content. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**



Japanese carrier ANA has sharply downgraded its profit forecasts over the coronavirus pandemic.

PHOTO: AFP/FILE

ANA slashes profit forecast by 71% because of pandemic

TOKYO — Japanese airline ANA Holdings on Monday slashed its annual net profit forecast by 71 per cent over massive falls in demand and major cancellations caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

For the past fiscal year to March 2020, the firm said it now expects a net profit of 27 billion yen (\$194 million), down from an earlier projection of 94 billion yen.

Operating profit is now seen

at 60 billion yen, compared with an earlier expectation of 140 billion yen. Sales are now projected to fall to 1,970 billion yen, compared with 2,090 billion yen.

The company is scheduled to officially release its full-year earnings later this month.

The downgrade was forced by “entry restrictions in various countries and reduced domestic travel in Japan due to the spread of the coronavirus during the fourth quarter”, the company

said, with travel demand declining especially sharply in March.

The company was expecting strong sales but also higher costs as it prepared to expand services in the greater Tokyo region ahead of the 2020 Olympics.

But the pandemic has forced the Games to be delayed by a year and severely damaged Japan’s tourism sector, while many countries have cancelled or limited international and domestic travel.—AFP ■

Uber expands delivery options for retail, personal items

WASHINGTON — Uber unveiled plans to expand delivery of groceries and other goods from retailers as part of its response to the global coronavirus lockdowns.

The ridesharing giant said a new service called Uber Direct would focus on grocery and convenience store deliveries – where social distancing and other obstacles have made shopping

more difficult.

“We’ve heard from retailers and manufacturers around the world looking to introduce delivery through Uber, as an operationally efficient way to reach their customers or manage internal delivery needs,” San Francisco-based Uber said in a statement late Sunday.

“Shoppers can now place orders from select retailers and

get their items delivered right to their doorstep – without contact.”

The new Uber service is working with the retail startup Cabinet to deliver over-the-counter medicines and other items in New York.

It also will partner with Portugal’s postal service to deliver parcels, and in Australia with pet supply retailers.—AFP ■



Uber will put some of its delivery operators to work for groceries, medicines and other items in response to the coronavirus lockdowns. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

Virgin Atlantic may fold without state help: Branson

LONDON — British tycoon Richard Branson has warned that his part-owned airline Virgin Atlantic will collapse unless it receives financial aid from the UK government to weather the coronavirus crisis.

“We will do everything we

can to keep the airline going but we will need government support to achieve that in the face of the severe uncertainty surrounding travel today and not knowing how long the planes will be grounded for,” Branson said in a letter to employees seen by media.

Airlines around the world are on the financial ropes as government lockdown orders and border closures have forced them to ground most of their planes.

“This would be in the form of a commercial loan – it wouldn’t be free money and the airline would

pay it back,” he added after the billionaire faced criticism following the airline demanding that staff take unpaid leave during the COVID-19 outbreak.

“The reality of this unprecedented crisis is that many airlines around the world need govern-

ment support and many have already received it,” Branson added. “Without it there won’t be any competition left and hundreds of thousands more jobs will be lost, along with critical connectivity and huge economic value,” the letter went on.—AFP ■

Hong Kong jobless rate soars amid coronavirus pandemic

HONG KONG — Hong Kong’s jobless rate soared to a nine-year high as consumption and the tourism and construction sectors were strongly hit by the coronavirus pandemic, according to government figures released Monday, although with no new infection cases were reported.

The unemployment rate rose from 3.7 per cent in the December to February period to 4.2 per cent in the January to March period, while total employment dropped by around 48,800 to 3.72 million.

“The labor market showed further sharp deterioration as the COVID-19 pandemic severely disrupted a wide range of economic activities,” Secretary for Labor and Welfare Law Chi-kwong said. “(It) will continue to face significant pressure from the economic fallout.”

The food and beverage service sector and the construction sector were the hardest hit with jobless rate at 8.6 per cent and 8.5 per cent, respectively.

The government has announced two rounds of financial relief measures

to boost the economy, totaling HK\$287.5 billion (US\$37 billion), but most of the measures were criticized for focusing more on employers than employees.

The Fitch Ratings agency said Monday it downgraded Hong Kong’s long-term foreign-currency issuer default rating by one level to “AA-” with a “stable” outlook, taking into consideration the financial strain brought by the coronavirus pandemic and the uncertain business environment due to anti-government protests.—Kyodo ■



Hong Kong has been weathering months-long protests that have driven the economy into a recession, before the coronavirus crisis hit. **PHOTO: AFP**

Oil collapses to under \$11 as world awash with crude

LONDON — US oil prices dived to 22-year lows under \$11 Monday after crashing 40 per cent in a market flooded with crude as demand evaporates in the face of the coronavirus pandemic. Ahead of Wall Street opening the US benchmark

West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude for May delivery sank to \$10.77 — the lowest level since 1998.

Trade, however, was also technically driven as investors closed out their positions ahead of the May contract expiry Monday.

The June contract was down 9.7 per cent at \$22.60.

“The real problem of the global supply-demand imbalance has started to really manifest itself in prices,” said Rystad Energy analyst Bjornar Tonhaugen. “As production continues relatively unscathed, storage is filling up by the day. The world is using less and less oil and producers now feel how this translates in prices.”

The European benchmark contract, London Brent North Sea oil for June delivery, was down 6.5 per cent at \$26.27 per barrel. Signs that the coronavirus may have peaked in Europe and the United States failed to lift Asian and European financial markets generally.—AFP ■

Virus brings Japan convenience store sales to over 9-year low in March

TOKYO — Sales at convenience stores in Japan fell 5.8 per cent in March from a year earlier, the largest decline in over nine years, as people refrained from going outside amid the coronavirus outbreak, an industry group said Monday.

Same-store sales of seven major convenience store operators totaled 833.90 billion yen (\$7.7 billion), marking the first decline in three months, the Japan Franchise Association said.

The 5.8 per cent decrease in the same-store sales was the deepest since October 2010 when they fell 5.9 per cent following a tobacco tax hike, it said.

The number of cus-

tomers dropped 8.2 per cent from a year before to 1.28 billion in March, the sharpest fall since comparable data became available in 2005, although most convenience stores across the country remained open despite the spread of the pneumonia-causing

virus.

Average spending per customer rose 2.5 per cent to 649.0 yen in the reporting month, reflecting strong demand for cooked and frozen food items while people stayed home longer, the business body said.—Kyodo ■



US crude benchmark West Texas Intermediate is plunging as the contract expires — demonstrating investors don’t want to accept delivery of the oil. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**



File photo taken May 29, 2019, shows the logo of FamilyMart convenience store on one of its storefronts in Tokyo. **PHOTO: KYODO**

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V MCC HALONG VOY. NO. (016W)

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V MCC HALONG VOY. NO. (016W) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 21-4-2020 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of MITT/TMT where it will lie at the consignee’s risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

**SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S SEALAND MAERSK ASIA
PTE LTD.**

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V YANTRA BHUM VOY. NO. (1040 W/E)

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V YANTRA BHUM VOY. NO. (1040 W/E) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 20-4-2020 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of MIP where it will lie at the consignee’s risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

**SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S REGIONAL CONTAINER
LINES**

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V SERENE OCEAN

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V SERENE OCEAN VOY. NO. (-) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 20-4-2020 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of WILMAR where it will lie at the consignee’s risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

**SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S WILHELMSSEN SHIPS
SERVICES PTE LTD .**

Phone No: 2301928

India partially eases lockdown, but effort falters



A sweeper cleans the floor of the General Post Office in Kolkata after some lockdown restrictions were relaxed. **PHOTO AFP**

NEW DELHI — Absent staff and broken supply chains scuppered efforts by some Indian industries to restart Monday, weeks after the government ordered a na-

tionwide shutdown to stop the spread of coronavirus.

Although the national lockdown has been extended until May 3, officials said certain key

sectors could resume operations under strict conditions in a bid to stop the economy from hemorrhaging further.

They include agriculture,

some manufacturing and construction — industries where shifts can be run and workers isolated, and which employed millions of hard-hit poorer Indians.

The relaxation came as India reported its highest daily increase of infections — 1,553 new cases for a total of 17,265, and 543 deaths.

A senior railway official in Kolkata told AFP that although a third of staff were told to return Monday, attendance was poor as most employees simply couldn't get to work.

Several factory operators, meanwhile, said they had difficulty resuming operations because so few staff showed up, and supply chains had also been disrupted. "With no raw material, a ban on transportation, and the non-availability of manpower, I have not been able to operate," said Ritesh Srivastava, who makes homoeopathic medicines in Lucknow.

Some smaller factories said

they couldn't comply with stringent workplace requirements for returning workers and feared being blamed if staff fell ill.

Others said the lack of demand for their goods made it pointless to restart operations.

Many out of work, meanwhile, said they were struggling to feed themselves and their families.

"We were told that on some sectors will open up, but the reality is different," said cable TV repairman Rohit Sharma in Noida city, near Delhi.

"Now, what can we do? We can earn money only if we are allowed to work."

State and territory borders remain closed across the country, preventing migrant labourers from travelling.

Hundreds of thousands of labourers headed to their home villages when the lockdown was ordered, some walking hundreds of miles and with little money or food.—AFP ■

Viet Nam sees 214 COVID-19 cases cured, no new confirmed cases in 4 consecutive days

HANOI — Viet Nam has seen 214 out of its 268 confirmed COVID-19 cases cured as of Monday evening and reported no new cases in four days after it confirmed the latest one on last Thursday, VietNam News Agency reported.

There are 568 suspected cases and nearly 63,000 being monitored and quarantined in the country, with no deaths from the disease reported as of Monday evening, according to its health ministry.—Xinhua ■

Malaysia reports lowest daily increase in new coronavirus cases

KUALA LUMPUR — Malaysia on Monday reported 36 new coronavirus infections, its lowest daily increase since March 12.

Since last Wednesday, the nation has seen its daily tally of cases drop from triple digits to double digits. The total number of positive cases stood at 5,425 as of Monday, the Health Director General Noor Hisham Abdullah told a media briefing, making it the Southeast Asian country with the fourth-highest number of infections after Singapore, Indonesia and the Philippines.

There were no fatalities reported on Monday, the first time in a month. The total number of deaths from COVID-19, the illness caused by the novel coronavirus, remained at 89.

But Hisham reiterated that "the war is not over yet" and

urged the public not to be complacent even if the 6-week partial lockdown is lifted on April 28.

The number of cases may rise again over the next two weeks, he warned, since authorities are still actively tracking down cases, especially among Malaysians who have returned from abroad, and in localities under a total lockdown due to a spike in the number of cases.

The latest area placed under complete lockdown announced on Monday surrounds a Kuala Lumpur wholesale market in the Selayang district, where many migrant workers and refugees, like the Rohingyas, live and work.

Hisham said, so far, 2,064 people have been tested in that area, with 28 found to be positive, including a 36-year-old man from

Myanmar who died on Friday, the same day he was admitted to the hospital.

Hisham added, authorities decided to act fast and target the migrant workers in that area

to avoid a situation like the one happening in Singapore, where a huge spike in the number of cases has been seen among foreign workers living in dormitories.—Kyodo ■



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

Japan's e-commerce giant Rakuten starts selling COVID-19 testing kits

TOKYO — Japanese e-commerce giant Rakuten Inc. said on Monday it has started selling COVID-19 testing kits to businesses in Tokyo and four surrounding prefectures.

Rakuten said the testing kits are being sold as a "risk assessment option to those who show no specific symptoms but are concerned about the spread of the virus." The self-assessment

kits have been developed by Genesis Healthcare Co., a leading genetic testing and research company in Tokyo in which Rakuten owns an undisclosed stake.

Rakuten said the kits will be available to companies and organizations in Tokyo, Saitama, Chiba, Kanagawa and Ibaraki prefectures.

The testing kits, Rakuten said, are supposed to be used to

determine whether an employee, for example, should self-isolate so as not to potentially spread the pneumonia-carrying virus.

The online retail behemoth said the testing kits are not designed for official medical diagnosis, but by taking a nasal swab, the sample can be assessed at a laboratory in about three days to see if the sample contains the genetic sequences specific to the

respiratory disease, COVID-19, caused by the coronavirus.

The kits will cost 14,900 yen (138 U.S. dollars) per person and the minimum order has been set at 100 kits. Rakuten plans to offer them in other parts of Japan from May with the move coming amid concerns that the Japanese government has not been conducting as many coronavirus tests as other countries, focus-

ing instead on tracking group infections.

Healthcare officials here have voiced concern that this could mean that asymptomatic patients or those displaying only very mild symptoms of the virus could be unknowingly passing on the deadly virus, while not being included in the health ministry's official figures for those infected with the virus.—Xinhua ■

Europe takes cautious steps to ease virus lockdowns

BERLIN — Germany and other parts of Europe took tentative steps to ease lockdown measures on Monday but officials warned the battle against the coronavirus pandemic was far from over.

Some shops reopened in Germany and parents dropped their children off at nurseries in Norway as tight restrictions in place for weeks were lifted in parts of the continent.

After being hit hard by the virus that first emerged in China late last year, Europe has seen encouraging signs in recent days,

with death rates dropping in Italy, Spain, France and Britain.

The hope is tempered by fears of new waves of infections, warnings that life will not be back to normal for many months and deep concern over the devastating impact the virus is having on the global economy.

But even the smallest return to normality was welcome.

In the German city of Leipzig, fashion store owner Manuela Fischer said she was “incredibly happy” to be welcoming shoppers again.

In Norway, Silje Skifjell dropped off her boys Isaak and Kasper at a nursery in the north of the capital Oslo.

“He was so excited we had to leave the house early to come here and see the other children,” she said of four-year-old Isaak, her eldest.

“I almost cried, he was so happy to see his friends.”

Governments around the world are mulling how and when to ease lockdowns that have kept more than half of humanity confined to their homes.—AFP



Germany, which has been hailed for keeping fatalities low despite a significant number of cases, allowed smaller shops to reopen in some regions. **PHOTO: AFP**

Germany to cover costs of foreign virus patients



The German state of Saxony responds to a request for help and admits Corona patients from Italy. **PHOTO: DPA/AFP**

BERLIN — Germany will cover the cost for treating novel coronavirus patients taken in from European Union neighbour countries as a gesture of goodwill, Health Minister Jens Spahn said Monday. Germany has been spared the worst of the coronavirus crisis seen in some of its hard-hit European neighbours, and has

taken in patients — mainly from France — to relieve pressure on their overburdened healthcare systems.

A total of 229 foreign patients have been treated in Germany, a spokesman for the foreign ministry said Monday — 130 from France, 44 from Italy and 55 from the Netherlands.

Their treatment has so far cost about 20 million euros (\$21.7 million), according to Spahn.

“Germany will cover the treatment costs of these patients, that is what we understand by European solidarity,” Spahn said ahead of a meeting of ministers tackling the virus crisis on Monday.—AFP ■

Vijay Mallya’s Appeal against Extradition to India Dismissed by UK High Court

NEW DELHI — Embattled liquor tycoon Vijay Mallya on Monday lost his High Court appeal against his extradition order to India in relation to charges of fraud and money laundering amounting to an alleged Rs 9,000 crore.

The 64-year-old former Kingfisher Airlines boss, wanted in India on alleged fraud and money laundering charges, had

challenged in the UK High Court his extradition from the country.

The dismissal of the High Court appeal effectively clears the decks for Mallya’s extradition to India to face the charges in the Indian courts, with 14 days for him to apply for permission to appeal to the UK Supreme Court.

If he does apply, the UK Home Office would wait for the outcome of that appeal. But if

he does not, under the India-UK Extradition Treaty, it would then be expected to formally certify the court order for Mallya to be extradited within 28 days.

“We have held there is a prima facie case both of misrepresentation and of conspiracy, and thus there is also a prima facie case of money laundering,” the High Court concluded.—ANI ■

Laughter fills Norway’s nurseries as they reopen

OSLO — Most were itching to meet their friends, others a little wary about leaving their parents: the youngest Norwegians started returning to pre-schools on Monday, a month after being sent home over the new coronavirus.

Breaking the silence of the past five weeks, laughter once again filled the playground of Espira Grefsen Stasjon, a nursery school in the north of Norway’s capital Oslo.

Bundled up in jackets and warm caps, the toddlers arrived under a deceptive spring sun on Monday morning.

Some were reluctant to let go of their parents’ hands, but most were impatient to run and join their friends in the sandpit.

“He was so excited we had to leave the house early to come here and see the other kids,” Silje Skifjell said of her eldest child Isaak, after she

dropped off him and his younger brother Kasper.

“I almost was crying, he was so happy to see his friends,” she said.

Staff wearing reflective vests were on site to receive the children at the gate, as entry to the building is banned to the public to limit the risk of contamination.

But neither parents nor employees were wearing masks.

Along with Austria, Denmark and Germany, Norway is among the first countries to start easing restrictions, which were announced on March 12.

The Nordic country, with a population of around 5.4 million, has registered 7,068 confirmed cases of the new coronavirus and 154 deaths, and has reported a significant drop in new hospital admissions.—AFP ■



Norwegian children started to return to pre-schools, a month after a coronavirus shutdown sent them home. **PHOTO: AFP**

Shan United's midfielder signs for Yangon United



Midfielder Yan Naing Oo (left) holds the insignia of Yangon United as part of his arrival to the Yangon United. **PHOTO: YUFC**

MIDFIELDER Yan Naing Oo from Shan United has signed for Yangon United on a two-year contract, according to the yesterday's statement released by the Yangon United.

Upon his arrival, midfielder Yan Naing Oo expressed his

feeling that "I'm very happy to join Yangon United. I will do my best for the football club."

He added: "There are many co-players in Yangon United and they're well known for their playing style. I am also believing that we can play with best of

understanding. And I admit that I will grab the sweet success of the team."

Yan Naing Oo started his career in Zeyya Shwe Myay FC starting from 2015. Then, he moved to Shan United and player for the club from 2016 to 2020 half-season of Myanmar National League.

Not only Yan Naing Oo showed his great form in MNL but he was a star player of Myanmar national football teams.

The young Myanmar midfielder played for the U-19 Myanmar National Team to win the King's Cup of Brunei. In 2015, Yan Naing Oo participated in U-20 World Cup in New Zealand and he scored the very first goal for Myanmar team and showed his best form in the World Cup. He was afterwards selected as Myanmar National Football Team. — Lynn Thit (Tgi)

MFF president gives aids to hospitals in Yangon to fight pandemic

CHAIRPERSON U Zaw Zaw of the Myanmar Football Federation, who is also chairman of the Ayeyarwady Foundation is giving aids through the foundation to Waibargi Hospital and South Okkala Hospital in Yangon to combat the Covid-19 global pandemic, according to the yesterday's statement with the foundation.

Ayeyarwady Foundation has already donated K30 million to South Okkalapa Hospital for the daily expense of hospital and already arranged to send food boxes from Novotel Yangon and Max Hotel to the hospital.

The foundation has re-

cently decided to aid further contributions to South Okkalapa Hospital and Waibargi Hospital after meeting with officials from the hospitals on 17 April.

Further K20 million was donated to Waibargi Hospital after its first cash donation of K50 million to the same place last month, stated the foundation.

Chaired by MFF president U Zaw Zaw, the Ayeyarwady Foundation is making contributions to quarantined sites in Yangon since the previous month to fight the global pandemic Covid-19.

—Lynn Thit (Tgi)

Premier League's transfer market bubble set to burst

LONDON — The financial squeeze put on Premier League clubs by the coronavirus crisis could be felt across the continent in the coming months as the well to fund massive transfer fees runs dry.

For each of the past four summers, Premier League clubs have flexed their financial muscle to splurge over £1 billion (\$1.3 billion) on transfers.

That has helped spread the wealth of television contracts worth billions across Europe and crucially down the divisions to cash-strapped clubs in England.

Now even the world's rich-

est league is facing economic meltdown.

Premier League matches have been suspended indefinitely with no return expected before mid-June at the earliest.

Broadcasters could be due a rebate worth a reported £762 million if the season is not completed and, even when the games do recommence, they are likely to be behind closed doors, quashing income from gate receipts.

Moreover, a number of major sponsors such as airlines and gambling companies have been just as badly hit by the COVID-19 shutdown, which is expected to

lead to a curb on commercial revenue.

Rather than the usual arms race for talent, Premier League clubs are fretting about just meeting their wage bills for the next few months. "Many clubs could be threatened by insolvency and transfer plans came to a standstill for most clubs because of the many uncertainties," said Matthias Seidel, founder of Transfermarkt, a website specialising in transfer values.

According to Transfermarkt, 1.8 billion euros (\$2 billion) has already been wiped off the value of Premier League squads.—AFP



Harry Maguire's £80 million move to Manchester United was the biggest transfer as Premier League clubs spent £1.4 billion last summer. **PHOTO: AFP**

Djokovic against compulsory coronavirus vaccination



Djokovic not in favour of compulsory vaccinations. **PHOTO: AFP**

BELGRADE — Novak Djokovic has said he would be against a compulsory coronavirus vaccination if it became a requirement for tennis players to travel to tournaments.

"Personally I'm against vaccination. I wouldn't like that someone forces me to get a vaccine in order to be able to travel," the world number one said late Sunday.

The Serbian star was speaking from Spain, where he is in lockdown with his family, in a video conference held on his Facebook for Orthodox Easter.

"We (players) will have to travel. I think it will be the number one challenge," the 32-

year said. "If it (vaccination) will become compulsory what will happen? I will have to take a decision," on whether to get a vaccine or not, he said.

"This is my opinion at the moment. Whether it will change I don't know." There is currently no vaccine for the virus that has claimed some 165,000 lives around the globe, though labs around the world are racing to develop a treatment. Like the rest of the sporting world, tennis has been on pause since early March, with the ATP and WTA Tours suspended until mid-July at the earliest and Wimbledon cancelled for the first time since World War II.—AFP