

PARLIAMENT

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw focuses financial sectors in 6th-day meeting

PAGE-2

PARLIAMENT

Pyithu Hluttaw raises asterisked questions to ministries

PAGE-3

THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

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Friday, 29 May 2020

Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Announcement of National-Level Central Committee
for Prevention, Control and Treatment of COVID-19
7th Waxing of Nayon, 1382 ME
28 May 2020

IT is announced that the statements to public , orders, notifications, and directives (excluding eased restrictions)of Union-level organizations and Union ministries effective until 31 May 2020 for prevention, control and treatment of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) will be extended to 15 June 2020 as it is required to continue containment of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) .

The current relaxation of restrictions resulted from support given to COVID prevention efforts; to gain victory over COVID, please continue giving help by maintaining discipline: State Counsellor

STATE Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi wrote on her Facebook page yesterday that the current relaxation of restrictions resulted from the support given to COVID prevention efforts; to gain victory over COVID, she requested the people to continue giving help by maintaining discipline.

This is what she wrote:

She said, “Time and tide waits for no man”. No one, nothing remains stationary without changing. It has been over two months now since I started using Facebook to communicate with the people regarding COVID.

COVID did not stay still either, changing day by day into

many forms, never boring us. We will relax some restrictions that had been imposed up to 31 May to prevent the spread of the disease beginning from 1 June. Our aim is to slowly and surely bring back the government machinery into full capacity.

Not only in this matter but in all other matters also – the

people’s concerns, aspirations, hopes, what needs to happen, what can actually happen, these things are always in my mind. I have always sought the best solution. I want to say again that to get the best solution, we need the help and cooperation of the people. This is something that needs to be repeated 200 times

so that this sinks into the hearts and minds. She concluded by saying that the current relaxation of restrictions resulted from the support given to COVID prevention efforts. To gain victory over COVID she requested the people to continue giving help by maintaining discipline.

(Translated by Kyaw Myaing)

Republic of the Union of Myanmar
National Reconciliation and Peace Centre Chairperson and
State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi’s message of congratulations
to KNU/KNLA Peace Council Chairman General Saw Htot Lay and
the KNU/KNLA Peace Council
27 May 2020

I extend my heartfelt congratulations to General Saw Htot Lay for being elected as the Chairman of the KNU/KNLA Peace Council, a signatory of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement, during its central committee meeting attended by its commanders and officers at its headquarters in Htotkawcoe (Wainawtayar) on 25 and 26 May 2020.

Despite recent changes in leadership roles, the KNU/KNLA Peace Council did not deviate from its peace policies; it released an announcement stating that it would keep on moving on the NCA path with genuine goodwill by joining hands together with relevant organizations and national brethren for Union peace-making process and peace and development of the region. I am pleased to note that the KNU/KNLA Peace Council’s position reflects its genuine high regard, desire and goodwill for peace.

SEE PAGE-2

INSIDE TODAY

PARLIAMENT

Amyotha Hluttaw MPs raise queries to MoHA, MoE

PAGE-3

LOCAL NEWS

Drumstick growers happy with demand from foreign markets

PAGE-6



BUSINESS

GAP sesame growers get help for fertilizer input in monsoon season: RFDA

PAGE-7



PYIDAUNGSI HLUTTAW

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw focuses financial sectors in 6th-day meeting

PYIDAUNGSI HLUTTAW held its 6th-day meeting of the 16th regular session yesterday, with the topics on getting international loans and signing a memorandum of understanding to initiate the 8th round of relaxing ASEAN financial services.

The Hluttaw first discussed the proposal for getting yen 30 billion, put forward by the President, from the Japan International Co-operation Agency to remedy the impacts of COVID-19 in socioeconomic sector and reform plans in economic development of the country.

Deputy Minister for Planning, Finance and Industry U Maung Maung Win replied the JICA loan will be used for policy matrix in the action plan of COVID-19 Economic Relief Plan (CERP).

The Pyidaungsu Hluttaw approved for getting the loan of JICA.

The MPs also discussed



Deputy Minister for Planning, Finance and Industry U Maung Maung Win.

another proposal sent by the President to get the maximum K1,311.064 billion loan from the Central Bank of Myanmar to reduce the deficit of Union government's deposit for the 2019-2020 FY. Deputy Minister U Maung Maung Win explained drawing budgets based on foreign loans and expenditures.

Deputy Governor of Central



Deputy Governor of Central Bank of Myanmar U Bo Bo Nge.

Bank of Myanmar U Bo Bo Nge discussed the decline of CBM's loan from the government in previous financial year and its plan to give out the K1,311.064 billion loan to the Union government.

The Hluttaw also agreed the loan from CBM to the Union government. Pyidaungsu Hluttaw also approved signing of Myanmar in a memorandum



MP Dr Than Aung Soe.

of understanding to initiate the eight round of relaxing ASEAN financial services.

A loan proposal of \$200 million from the International Development Association of the World Bank, put forward by the President, for the Myanmar National Food and Agriculture Systems project was discussed by MP Dr Than Aung Soe from Minhla



MP Daw Htu May.

constituency, MP Daw Htu May from Rakhine State constituency 11, and MP Daw Cho Cho from Ottwin constituency.

The other 13 MPs also discussed the proposal, and the 7th day meeting of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw will be held on 29 May.— Min Min Zaw, Han Lin Naing/Photo: Kyaw Zin Htike

(Translated by Aung Khin)

Republic of the Union of Myanmar

Ministry of Health and Sports

Order No. 56/2020

7th Waxing of Nayon, 1382 ME
(28th May 2020)

The Ministry of Health and Sports issues this order in line with the provisions granted to it by Article 21-(b) of the Prevention and Control of Communicable Diseases Law:

- The Ministry of Health and Sports has issued necessary orders and directives to curb the spread of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) and to implement preventive measures.
- It has been observed that transnational transmission of COVID-19 has lessened, positive cases only arise from people returning from foreign nations, regional authorities are systematically quarantining and monitoring people who have returned from overseas, active health awareness campaigns conducted among the public, and active participation in disease prevention processes by township administration bodies, medical officials, relevant departments, volunteers and members of the public.
- In that regard, the following prerequisites and locations have been added to the Ministry of Health and Sports' Order No. 37/2020, issued on 16-4-2020, allowing gatherings of 5 or more persons:
 - Working in government departments, organizations, companies, factories, and workplaces.
 - Government schools, private schools, monastic education schools.
 - Holding seminars, meetings and training courses in government departments, organizations, companies, factories, and workplaces in line with recommendations issued by the Ministry of Health and Sports.
 - Eating at restaurants permitted to operate by the local governments in line with recommendations issued by the Ministry of Health and Sports.
 - Working in essential businesses, public services, and essential public businesses outlined in the notification issued by the Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population on 3-5-2020.

(Dr Myint Htwe)

Union Minister

(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)

Republic of the Union of Myanmar

National Reconciliation and Peace Centre Chairperson and State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's message of congratulations to KNU/KNLA Peace Council Chairman General Saw Htot Lay and the KNU/KNLA Peace Council

27 May 2020

FROM PAGE-1

I send this message of congratulations expressing the hope that the Chairman and the KNU/KNLA Peace Council would continue participating in peace efforts to establish a Democratic Federal Union which is the aspiration of all the people, and to carry out activities for the prevention, control and treatment of COVID-19, which is currently happening, together with the Union Government.

Sd/

Aung San Suu Kyi

State Counsellor

(Translated by Aung Khin)

Republic of the Union of Myanmar

Ministry of Health and Sports

Order No. 57/2020

7th Waxing of Nayon, 1382 ME
(28th May 2020)

- The Ministry of Health and Sports is implementing action plans to prevent Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) in a timely manner and announced for 10 townships in Yangon Region and 1 township in Sagaing Region, a total of 11 townships, to have its residents stay at home.
- Five of the townships in that list showed noticeable signs of improvement regarding preventive and containment measures of COVID-19 and were removed from the stay-at-home list on 14-5-2020 with Order No. 50/2020 by the Ministry of Health and Sports.
- The following townships have also been observed at improving their COVID-19 measures and are removed from the stay-at-home list effective at 4:00 am on 29-5-2020:
 - Bahan Township
 - South Okkalapa Township
 - Pabedan Township
 - Tamway Township

(Dr Myint Htwe)

Union Minister

(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)

Pyithu Hluttaw

Pyithu Hluttaw raises asterisked questions to ministries

PYITHU HLUTTAW posed questions to the relevant ministries and tabled a proposal on the 5th-day of 16th regular meeting yesterday.

MP U Tun Tun Naing from Kani constituency asked about the local government's plan to form the board of trustees at the Alaungdaw Kassapa pagoda in line with the advice of local Sangha executive body.

Deputy Minister for Religious Affairs and Culture U Kyi Min replied that it will be carried out in accordance with the decision of State Sangha Supreme Council due to unsolved disputes among the members of Sangha in four townships.

MP U Tin Aye from Met-mung constituency asked about employment of staff members for township forest department and construction of its office in his constituency.

Deputy Minister for Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation Dr Ye Myint Swe said that more staff will be appointed at the department, and an office and staff apartments will be constructed after the township has been upgraded.

MP U Win Win from Min-



Deputy Minister Dr Ye Myint Swe. PHOTO: MNA

bu(Saku) constituency asked about cancellation of agricultural land from the forest area as the locals worked cultivation there about 65 years.

Deputy Minister Dr Ye Myint Swe replied that the ministry will inspect this area and coordinate with the local government in accordance with the Forest Law 2018.

MP U Lwin Ko Katt from Thanlyin constituency asked about review of ministries on the respective laws which have been applied for more than two years and preparing a report on practicing the laws to the Hluttaw



MP Nan Htwe Thu. PHOTO: MNA

laws and respective committees.

Deputy Attorney-General U Win Myint from the Union Attorney-General's Office replied it.

MP Dr Thet Thet Khaing from Dagon constituency asked about allocation of supplementary budget in addition to the early fund of K100 billion for COVID-19 measures by the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw in this financial year. Deputy Minister for Planning, Finance and Industry U Maung Maung Win answered it.

U Nyein Thit (a) U Thaug Tun from Mahaaungmye constituency asked about the upgrade of a monastic school from primary

level to middle school level. Deputy Minister U Kyi Min replied it.

MP U Myint Lwin from Twantay constituency asked about the management of Directorate of Water Resources and Improvement of River Systems and adopting clear policies on the land areas of Twantay Canal; MP U Than Aung from Ngapudaw constituency asked for construction of a jetty at the docking place for vessels near the market. Union Minister for Transport and Communications U Thant Sin Maung answered the questions.

MP Mi Kun Chan from Paung constituency asked about conservation of Kalama Mountain by prohibiting extraction of rocks, mine exploration and selling land plots and doing business illegally there.

MP Nan Htwe Thu from Pas-wang constituency asked about the funds of Kayah State Mining Product Company (KMPC) for environmental conservation, closure of mine and rehabilitation fund, and legal actions against breaching existing law. Deputy Minister Dr Ye Myint Swe replied it.

Pyithu Hluttaw Deputy

Speaker U Tun Tun Hein announced approval of Hluttaw on the recommendations of Bill Committee on the Medical Health Assistant Council Bill with the amendments of Amyotha Hluttaw.

Secretary of Bill Committee U Kyaw Soe Lin presented 73 recommendations of his committee on the Prevention and Control of Communicable Disease Bill put forward by the Ministry of Health and Sports.

The Hluttaw approved the recommendations on each paragraphs and sub-paragraphs without any objections.

MP U Sai Tun Sein from Mongpyin constituency tabled a motion to recall from duty of the Speaker of Pyithu Hluttaw in accordance with Section 21 of the Pyithu Hluttaw Law 2012 and Section 115 of Pyithu Hluttaw Bylaw 2013.

The proposal was submitted by 110 MP of Pyithu Hluttaw to recall Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker and Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker U T Khun Myat from his duty.

The 6th-day meeting of Pyithu Hluttaw will be organized on 1 June.—Aye Aye Thant

(Translated by Aung Khin)

Amyotha Hluttaw

Amyotha Hluttaw MPs raise queries to MoHA, MoE

THE second Amyotha Hluttaw convened the 5th-day meeting of its 16th regular session yesterday, with queries of MP to the ministries of Home Affairs and Education.

MP Daw Than Than Aye from Magway region constituency (7) asked about constructions of staff quarters at the local police stations in Yen-an and Letpan of Minhla Township in his constituency.

Deputy Minister for Home Affairs Maj-Gen Soe Tint Naing replied that a budget will be submitted in 2021-2022 financial year to implement the proposed plan.

MP U Lah Min Htan from Chin state constituency (10) asked for reestablishing a police camp in Sabaungtal village of Matupi Township. The Deputy Minister answered that it will set up with an approval of Chin state government when the border market opens in



Deputy Minister Maj-Gen Soe Tint Naing. PHOTO: MNA

this area.

MP U Ko Ko Naing from Sagaing State constituency (8) asked about the requirement of new 4WD-Double Cu cars for Myanmar Police Force in taking security measures in respective townships. The Deputy Minister said that the old cars of MPF will be substituted with new ones in the next financial



MP U Ko Ko Naing. PHOTO: MNA

year.

U Bwe Khane from Chin State constituency (3) asked about construction of a RCC two-storey building for the basic middle school in Zephine (b) village of Thantlang Township in his constituency in 2020-2021 FY.

MP Dr Zaw Lin Htut from Mon State constituency (9)



MP U Lah Min Htan. PHOTO: MNA

asked about banning unhygienic snacks at the food stalls of schools.

MP U Zaw Hein from Taninthayi constituency (7) asked about construction of a 130x 30 ft RC building at the state high school of Thazin village in Kyunsu Township of his constituency in next financial year.

MP U Win Kyaing from Bago Region constituency (10) asked about construction a 120x30 ft two-storey building in Hmawinn village of Letpadan Township of his constituency.

MP U Myint Naing from Rakhine State constituency (5) asked for upgrade of post-primary school to an affiliated middle school and the affiliated primary school to a middle school in Kyauktaw Township of his constituency.

Union Minister for Education Dr Myo Thein Gyi answered these school-related questions.

The bill to amend Protecting Citizens' Personal Freedom and Security was discussed by MP U Hla Oo from Sagaing State constituency (4) and MP U Soe Thein (a) U Maung Soe from Taninthayi constituency (10).—Aung Ye Thwin

(Translated by Aung Khin)

Rotary club donates medical equipment for COVID-19



Union Minister Dr Myint Htwe receives the fund donated by Rotary Club of Central Yangon for COVID-19 measures. **PHOTO: MNA**

UNION Minister for Health and Sports Dr Myint Htwe, in his capacity as Secretary-2 of the National-Level Central Committee on Prevention, Control and Treatment of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), accepted donations for the cause against COVID-19 at his ministry in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

The Chairman of the Rotary Club of Central Yangon, U Htet

Nyi, first explained that the Rotary Club is working to benefit the health, education and economic sectors and are donating medical equipment to hospitals to use in treating and preventing COVID-19.

The Union Minister then said this donation of medical equipment is useful for not only COVID-19 patients, but other types of patients as well and thus serve a long-term benefit. He said the participation and collaboration of humanitarian groups, philanthropic organizations, and the general public play an important role in preventing and controlling the spread of COVID-19.

Next, the Union Minister accepted the donations on behalf of the central committee and gave certificates of honour in return.

The donations made yesterday

included 59 patient monitors worth US\$50,000 from the Rotary Club of Central Yangon (District 3350), 115 syringe pumps worth \$61,500 from the Rotary Club of Central Yangon (District 3350, District 2570), Rotary Club of Kawagoe and Rotary Club of Honjo Minami, and 74 patient monitors worth \$60,000 from the Rotary Club of Central Yangon (District 3350, District 3630).

Afterwards, the Union Minister accepted donations from the Deputy Minister for Ethnic Affairs U Hla Maw Oo and gave certificate of honour in return.

The Deputy Minister, his wife Daw Toe Toe Thu, and their family along with Daw Aye Myint Oo, Daw Aye Chit Oo, Dr Ti Ti Oo, and Daw Si Si Oo donated K1.5 million.—MNA

(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)

SWRR ministry provides aid to schools for the blind

THE Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement is implementing action plans for the inclusiveness of people living with disabilities in awareness campaigns and support provided during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In that regard, the ministry has been supplying 13 private schools for the blind with a total of 658 students at a rate of K30,000 per person in addition to basic foodstuffs and hygiene products.

On 25 May, the ministry provided K1,500,000 for 50 students at a school for the blind in Myitkyina, Kachin State, and K7,500,000 for 250 students from four schools in Yangon Region on 26 May.

The ministry provided K2,970,000 for 99 students from three schools for the blind in



An official from Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement providing fund to schools for the blind. **PHOTO: MNA**

Yamethin and Meiktila, Mandalay Region, yesterday and will continue donations for two schools in Sagaing Region, a school in Magway Region, four schools in Mandalay Region, and a school in Shan State (South) in the near future.—MNA

(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)

COVID-19 aid reach IDP camps

THE Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement is providing medical supplies and aid to the IDP camps across the nation to mitigate the spread of COVID-19.

The Ministry is also conducting awareness raising campaigns and providing motivational support in Nay Pyi Taw Council and the states and regions.—MNA (Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)

The table shows items supplied by the SWRR ministry to respective IDP camps on 28 May 2020.

Items	Rakhine State		
	Pauktaw Township	Yathedaung Township	Buthidaung Township
	2 camps	5 camps	6 camps
	28 May	28 May	
Soap bars	1,626	-	
Surgical masks	3,252	628	
Hand speakers	1	13	
Thermometers	2	11	
Memory stick (Campaign audio file)	1	13	
Cloth masks	18,590	4,966	
Campaign vinyl sheets	2	13	
Hand sanitizer bottles	-	312	
Lime powder bags	-	19	
Wash basins	-	5	



Officials from Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement providing the medical aids for IDP camps. **PHOTO: MNA**

Social Security Board approves financial compensation for insured workers

THE Social Security Board has been operating in line with the Ministry of Health and Sports' notifications and directives to protect and treat COVID-19 in factories, workshops, and workplaces. The SSB has instructed insured workers under quarantine to have the period marked as sick leave, for insured pregnant mothers to have 8 weeks to 26 weeks off as sick leave at a time, and can withdraw 60 per cent of monthly fees put into the employment injury benefit fund.

According to the latest statistics on 27 May 2020, there are 885 insured workers and 5,710 insured pregnant mothers under quarantine with 212 under quarantine provided K9,901,631 in financial compensation and 56 pregnant mothers provided K6,364,950.

Insured workers and pregnant mothers can withdraw their financial compensation by bringing a letter guaranteeing completion of their quarantine period and a medical report from the social security clinic to their respective township SSB office.—MNA

(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)

Anti-grave violations committee holds 6th meeting online



Chairman U Soe Han holds a meeting of working Committee for Preventing Grave Violations against Children in Armed Conflicts yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

THE Working Committee for Preventing Grave Violations against Children in Armed Conflicts held their sixth meeting online yesterday.

Present at the meeting were the committee’s chairman U Soe Han, who is also Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and other committee members from various ministries.

U Soe Han first said that after publishing the national action plan for protecting children in armed conflicts from injury, death and sexual violence in Burmese and English, they will discuss meeting schedules between the working committee and CTFMR for the implementation phase and beginning awareness raising programmes.

The working committee was formed to prevent the six grave violations against children during armed conflict outlined by the UN Security Council in 2005. The violations include killing and maiming of children, recruitment or use of children as soldiers, attacks against schools and hospitals, sexual violence against children, abduction of children, and denial of humanitarian access for children.—MNA

(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)

Notification on overcoming anxiety during COVID-19

EACH of us has the responsibility to prevent, contain and respond to COVID-19 and to adhere to directives and regulations issued.

As COVID-19 draws on, there are worries about health, employment, financial issues, separated from family, discrimination, and other mental pressures. As the public works hard to overcome these mental hurdles, adhering to directives and regulations should not be viewed as additional mental pressure but the adherence to them should serve to make the public more resilient. They will aid in solving socioeconomic issues as well. —Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement & Myanmar Medical Association (Mental Health Unit)

Notification on overcoming anxiety during COVID-19

YOU are not the only one under pressure from COVID-19, but all of society is and that fact can help to build compassion among the public.

Compassion can reduce hatred between individuals and accept issues for resolving together.

Anxiety can be reduced by this method and everyone should try hard to face and overcome COVID-19 issues.—Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement & Myanmar Medical Association (Mental Health Unit)

1,168 Myanmar returnees arrive back home through Myawady border on 28 May



Myanmar citizens return home through Myawady border crossing yesterday. **PHOTO: HTEIN LIN AUNG (IPRD)**

A total of 1,168 Myanmar citizens returned home from Thailand through Myanmar-Thai Friendship Bridge (2) of Myawady border town in Kayin State yesterday.

Among them, the 503 persons entered Myanmar by 24 buses under the arrangements of Thai government and Myanmar embassy, and the remaining 665 persons returned from different areas of the Kingdom on their own plans.

Myanmar local officials helped them with medical tests and other supplies.

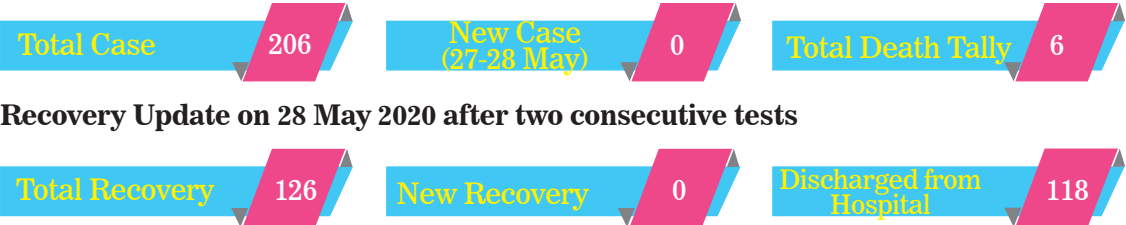
Myanmar migrant workers have been repatriated from Thailand since 1 May, and a total of 7,779 persons have arrived back home until now.

The latest group of returnees included 51 from Kachin, 8 from Kayah, 127 from Kayin, 182 from Mon, 81 from Sagaing, 263 from Bago, 133 from Magway, 46 from Yangon, 75 from Mandalay, 25 from Nay Pyi Taw, 92 from Shan, 13 from Thaninthayi, 9 from Rakhine and 63 from Ayeyawady respectively.—Htein Lin Aung (IPRD)

(Translated by Aung Khin)

COVID-19 in Myanmar: No new case on 28 May, total figure remains at 206

Updated at 8 pm, 28 May 2020



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Myitkyina reopens 13 highway bus lines

WITH the getting of the permission to resume the highway bus lines, the buses suspended because of coronavirus outbreak, 13 highway bus lines out of 22 have resumed their services.
On the first day of permission, only two bus lines were operated. The bus lines are being inspected by

the Kachin state health department and private bus lines supervision committee whether they followed the rules and regulations adopted by the Ministry of Health and Sports or not. The fares of the bus lines remain unchanged, said secretary U Myo Myint of bus lines supervision committee.
The bus lines operating

between Yangon and Mohnyin from Kachin limit the passengers and measure the temperature of the drivers, bus conductors and passengers. The drivers and bus conductors are also provided with the training for coronavirus emergency response, said U Myo Naing, the person in charge of Tat Nay Lin bus line.

The buslines from Kachin to Yangon and Mohnyin are High Class, Ngwe Hnin Mandalala, Tat Nay Lin, Myo Sat Thit, Shwe Myit Sone, Swam, Ma Naw Ta Gon, Shwe Kachin, Moe Kaung Kin, Myat Mandalar Tun, High Boss and Jame Phaw Shwe Myay. —Nwe Sein (IPRD)
(Translated by Hay Mar)

Drumstick growers happy with demand from foreign markets

“UNDER the arrangement of the Ministry of Commerce, we have visited Viet Nam and China. The moringa is used to treat a host of ailments such as anaemia, arthritis and other joint pains, diabetes; cancer; diarrhoea; stomach pain and epilepsy. At present, the drumsticks are growing with traditional methods. If we can get technical assistance from abroad, it will be more successful for drumstick plantation,” said U Myint Ko, a drumstick grower from Nyaung Pin village.
With the drumstick also known as moringa oleifera gaining markets abroad, the drumstick growers from Pakokku Township are happy.
The drumstick plantations were started to raise in 2018 with 400 plants per acre. Currently, about 11 acres of drumstick have already been planted. Also, over 20 acres of drumstick has been planned to grow. The drumsticks are growing with the



Photo shows drumstick plantings as high-quality products will be exported to Japan and China. PHOTO:SALAI KO KEE (M.A)

drop water system. The drumsticks will be sent to Yangon Thiri Mingalar Market, Mandalay and Nay Pyi Taw.
The dried drumsticks and the drumstick leaves will be exported to Japan and China. Although Japan has also offered to import 500 tonnes of drumstick leaf powder every year, Myanmar still has to send the sample of drumstick powder to export only 50 tonnes because of low

acreage of drumstick plantation in Myanmar.
The drumstick seed oil and leaves are manufactured as a product. Then, the farmers exhibited the products in the international expo, Myanmar-China friendship expo and Viet Nam products expo. We also got contact with traders from foreign countries in the expos.
India controlled 80 per cent of drumstick market in foreign

countries while the remaining 20 per cent are operating with other countries. So, Myanmar is difficult to penetrate foreign markets. Myanmar needs to plant the quality drumstick to compete with other countries. So, Myanmar formed Myanmar Drumstick and Moringa Producers and Exporters Association.
According to the market condition, if we can produce high-quality products, the demand for our product will be high. Then the market will be stable. In order to plant the crops on a commercial scale, the officials and staff from Consumer Affairs Department in Pakokku district under the Ministry of Commerce is giving awareness talks to the local farmers in order to grow the high-quality crops,” said Deputy Director-General U Aung Mgg, deputy director-general of the Consumer Affairs Department. —Salai Ko Kee (M.A)
(Translated by Hay Mar)

Over 170 traps found in Shwesettaw Wildlife Sanctuary area

A total of 172 traps, which can hunt deer and wild pigs, were found in April and May in Shwesettaw Wildlife Sanctuary areas, according to wildlife sanctuary administration office.
The Shwesettaw Wildlife Sanctuary located in Minbu district is over 100,000 square miles wide. The golden deer inhabit the land of over 400 acres.
“The deer traps are being made with the truck tires by taking out the chain. These traps are made by the local residents. It has been a long time that it has become a traditional business. We also heard that the golden deer are shot by the hunters.
But we could not produce any evidence. We have collected the traps in the wildlife sanctuary together with our staff and also conducted the awareness education talks in the villages,” said U Aung Soe Tint, the ad-

ministrator of the wildlife sanctuary.
The golden deers inhabit mostly over 400 acres plot of land near Tatmadaw cotton plantations in Pwint Phyu township.
According to the latest survey, there are 1,106 deers in the wildlife sanctuary, according to the Shwesettaw Wildlife Sanctuary Administrator.
“I have retired for one month. Before retirement, I heard the news that the golden deers are shot with the use of the gun. The shooters come in the evening to the wildlife sanctuary by car and hunt the golden deers. So, we had waited for two nights together with the forest staff,” said U Thein Lwin, the retired head of the wildlife sanctuary.
The forest department planted around 20 acres of crops in the areas inhabited by the golden deers.

They have also planned to upgrade some areas and are digging nine water ponds for the animals in the wildlife area.
At present, the department is filling the water of golden deer water ponds and patrolling around the area to protect the gold animal against being killed. —Zayyatu (Magway)
(Translated by Hay Mar)



Shwesettaw Wildlife Sanctuary is the habitat of golden deers. PHOTO: ZAYYATU (MAGWAY)

100,000 rice bags stuck in Kyalgaung retured to Muse for Phytosanitary inspection

By Nyein Nyein

ABOUT 100,000 rice bags stuck in Kyalgaung town have brought back to Muse and they are being inspected Sanitary and Phytosanitary measures (SPS), Vice President U Min Thein of the Muse Rice Deport told the Global New Light of Myanmar yesterday.

“As the Agriculture Department cannot make Phytosanitary inspection and issue certificate in Kyalgaung town, they were brought back to Muse,” he continued.

Starting from 3 April, China allowed the rice bags with the Phytosanitary certificate issued only by the Agriculture Department to enter the country. As a result of this, about 100,000 rice bags were stuck in Kyalgaung area.

Earlier, China accepted the pest-free certificate issued at the Muse border. Now, they allow the rice bags with the certificates issued only by the Agriculture Department. The traders are facing difficulties with seeking the certificates, according to the Muse

rice depot. At present, the rice traders are losing additional costs such as storage fees and labour wages to undergo SPS inspection.

“It approximately costs about K1,000 per bag, for transportation, storage and labour”, he said.

China must follow 10 facts embodied in Protocol on Plant Inspection and Quarantine Requirements for Exporting Rice from Myanmar to China, as per MoU.

The rice bags which are currently exported to China is a portion of the export quota for May (50,000 tonnes of rice through border trade).

Currently, about 15-20 trucks carrying 700 bags enter China every day, presenting new certificates issued by the Agriculture Department. A 50-kilo rice bag is priced 135-140 Yuan, he added.

During the coronavirus pandemic, the Ministry of Commerce set to export 100,000 tonnes of rice through sea trade and 50,000 tonnes through border trade to external markets in May.

The exporters must sell 10 per cent of total export

volume (well-milled and sorted rice), stated in the export declaration as country’s reserved rice.

The reserved rice must be sent to the state’s warehouse. Myanmar Inspection and Testing Service (MITS), the authorized organization of the State, will inspect and verify the quality and quantity.

The Yangon Region government will receive the reserved rice proportioned by sea trade, while some per cent of the border export will be stored at the Consumer Affairs Department in Mandalay Region.

Additionally, in order to ensure the self-sufficiency during the coronavirus pandemic, the government will spend K38 billion to purchase foodstuff (50,000 tonnes of rice and 12,000 tonnes of palm oil), said Union Minister Dr Than Myint of the Ministry of Commerce.

Between 1 October and 8 May in the current fiscal year 2019-2020, Myanmar exported 1.8 million metric tonnes of rice and broken rice, worth \$527.86 million to foreign markets, whereas the country shipped over 2.3 million tonnes of rice in the previous fiscal year.

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

GAP sesame growers get help for fertilizer input in monsoon season: RFDA



Pre-monsoon sesame plantations are being harvested in Yedashe Township, Bago Region. FILE PHOTO

UNDER the support of Network Activities Group (NAG), Magway Region Farmer Development Association (Magway RFDA) linked the companies with over 2,000 sesame growers cultivated under good agricultural practices (GAP) for necessary fertilizer input utilizing loan from the banks, according to NAG.

Between April and early May 2020, RFDA helped connect 2,263 GAP sesame growers from 56 villages of six townships; Magway, Minbu, Minhla, Yenangyaung, Natmauk and Myothit, with six companies, to purchase fertilizer for the coming monsoon season. They took out loans at 10 per cent of annual interest from Myanma Economic Bank and bought 11,276 fertilizer bags. Moreover, 759 growers lent from Myanmar Citizens Bank at annual interest

rate of 11.5 per cent, through Good Brothers Company and purchased 2,589 fertilizer bags. NAG stated.

Next, GAP sesame growers from Chauk Township, Magway Region have planned to cultivate over 2,500 sesame acres this year, the township Agriculture Department stated.

The respective agriculture departments have been conducting agricultural awareness activities to benefit the growers. The growers in Magway Region have been growing interest in GAP system as it is offered high price. They are trying to seek GAP certificate.

The sesame seeds are now priced K115,000-215,000 per bag for various sesame seeds depending on the quality.

China is the main buyer of

Myanmar’s sesame, which is also shipped to markets in Japan, South Korea, China (Taipei), UK, Germany, the Netherlands, Greece, and Poland among the EU countries.

The EU markets prefer organic-farming sesame seeds from Myanmar; said an official from the Trade Promotion Department.

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 and Japan. Meanwhile, China purchases various coloured sesame seeds from the country.

The number of sesame acreages has increased in the country. Sesame is cultivated in the country 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 grown in Mandalay and Sagaing regions.

Of the cooking 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 tonnes, worth \$130 million, in the 2015-2016 fiscal year; \$100,000 tonnes, worth \$145 million, in the 2016-2017FY; and, 120,000 tonnes, worth \$147 million, in the 2017-2018FY. —Ko Htet

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

Domestic investments touch K1,295 bln, \$266.9 mln in current fiscal

DOMESTIC investments by Myanmar citizens, including an expansion of capital by existing enterprises, have reached K1,295 billion and US\$266.97 million over the half of the 2019-2020 financial year, according to a press statement issued by the Myanmar Investment Commission (MIC).

Between 1 October and 22 May in the current fiscal, 78 local enterprises were allowed to invest in various sectors, with estimated capitals of over K1,030 billion and \$173.57 million.

Domestic investments have flowed into the real estate, manufacturing, hotels and tourism, construction, industrial estate, energy, mining, livestock and fisheries, agriculture, and other services sectors, according to the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration (DICA).

To simplify the verification of investment projects, the My-

anmar Investment Law allows the region and state Investment Committees to endorse local and foreign proposals, where the initial investment does not exceed K6 billion, or \$5 million.

While some projects no longer need MIC approval, businesses that are strategic to the government require the permit from the commission. Besides, those businesses that have large capital investments exceeding \$5 million and that may have a possible impact on the environment and the local community need to be approved by the DICA’s proposal assessment team.

With a fast-track way to set up a business in Myanmar having been introduced, investors can apply to the MIC or the state and regional Investment Committees to get their investment proposals endorsed, depending on the business type. —GNLM

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

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Easing restrictions means “time for preparation, not for celebration”

WITH relaxation on stay-at-home order imposed on four townships: Bahan, South Okkalapa, Pabedan and Tamwe townships in Yangon Region starting on 29th May, we have found a light at the end of the tunnel.

Besides, some restrictions imposed in the hope of controlling the COVID-19 outbreak would be eased starting on 1st June. The moves have reflected that the Union Government is taking careful steps towards operating the country's machinery in full swing.

The Ministry of Health and Sports decided to ease some restrictions and to lift the order which was imposed one and half months ago on the four townships after improvement in containing and prevention of the coronavirus spread there.

The easing of restrictions comes due to our people's obedience to the rules, said State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi yesterday on her Facebook Account, calling upon the people to help the country defeat COVID-19 by maintaining their discipline.

The relaxation does not mean that the coronavirus is gone for good. Social distancing, hand washing and banning on gathering of five and above would remain the weapon against the highly contagious respiratory virus with no vaccine.

The situation is demanding our people to remain in a mind frame of prudence and caution. Because, now is the “time for preparation, not celebration.” At the time of writing, our country has registered 206 infections and six COVID-19 fatalities.

Despite easing stay-at-home restriction, the four townships still need to follow the physical distancing measures and protective measures like wearing masks and hand washing requested by the

health authorities because lack of proper protective measures can lead to secondary outbreak of the disease.

Besides, proper physical distancing protocols are still required for all activities in offices, factories and essential public services allowed by the Ministry of Health and Sports, schools including monastic education schools and training activities. Social distancing of six feet or more is required and of course no gatherings.

We would like to warn the people that re-opening of restaurants and markets will provide more opportunities for the COVID-19 virus to spread, but, the government has acknowledged the need to strike a balance between the economy and health.

However, during this transition back to ‘normal’ social interactions must be well-managed strategically.

The easing of restrictions comes due to our people's obedience to the rules, said State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi yesterday on her Facebook Account, calling upon the people to help the country defeat COVID-19 by maintaining their discipline.

It is crucial for us to heed the words of the State Counsellor.

We would like to encourage the general public not to let down their guard at this sensitive moment.

GLOBAL HEALTH INVESTMENT

WHO announces launch of WHO Foundation to support critical health needs

THE World Health Organization (WHO) on Wednesday announced the creation of the WHO Foundation, an independent grant-making entity that will support the organization's efforts to address the most pressing global health challenges.

Headquartered in Geneva, the Foundation will support global public health needs by providing funds to WHO and trusted implementing partners to deliver on the Organization's “triple billion” goals. Featured in WHO's five-year strategic plan, these goals aim to: protect 1 billion people from health emergencies; extend universal health coverage to 1 billion people; and assure healthy lives and wellbeing to 1 billion people by 2023.

The Foundation which is legally separate from WHO, will facilitate contributions from the general public, individual major donors and corporate partners to WHO and trusted partners to deliver on high-impact programmes. Its goal is to help broaden WHO's donor base and work towards more sustainable and predictable funding. The WHO Foundation will simplify the processing of philanthropic contributions in support of WHO and make

such contributions possible on all aspects of health and WHO's mission.

“An important part of WHO's future success is broadening its donor base and increasing both the quantity and quality of funds at its disposal,” said Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General. “The creation of the WHO Foundation, as part of WHO's transformation, is an important step towards this goal, and towards achieving our mission to promote health, keep the world safe and serve the vulnerable.”

“Today's announcement is the culmination of more than two years of preparation and hard work by countless individuals and partner organizations. I would like to thank Professor Thomas Zeltner for spearheading this incredible adventure and founding the organization.”

“The work of the WHO is vital for both safeguarding and promoting global health – a role that has become all the more crucial in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. WHO's achievements and contributions to global health and the wellbeing of humanity are tremendous, but we cannot take those accomplishments for granted. The WHO deserves a



This handout image provided by the World Health Organization (WHO) on May 27, 2020 in Geneva shows WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus (left) and WHO Foundation founder Swiss Thomas Zeltner during the launch of the new WHO Foundation. **PHOTO: AFP**

strong, independent, external advocate who can support and strengthen its impact. I am proud to lead these efforts and to create this missing piece in global health by establishing the WHO Foundation,” said Professor Thomas Zeltner, Founder of the WHO Foundation and former Secretary of Health of Switzerland and Director-General of the Swiss National Health Authority.

Established under the laws of Switzerland, the Foundation has benefitted from the guidance of an Advisory Group that has

included experts in global health, philanthropy, ethics, and finance. The Foundation's Board will now assume all governance responsibilities and will review all strategic decisions and serve as the highest decision-making body of the Foundation. Founding Board Members are: Mr. Bob Carter, Ms. Clare Akamanzi and Professor Thomas Zeltner.

In view of the COVID-19 pandemic, the WHO Foundation will initially focus on emergencies and pandemic response, and it will also raise and disburse funds

for all WHO global public health priorities in full alignment with the WHO Member State adopted General Programme of Work.

A Call to Action: Get Involved with the WHO Foundation

Global health matters for everyone, everywhere. The WHO Foundation is an exceptional opportunity to shape the future of global health together. Be part of this journey, donate now or engage in a long-term strategic partnership and contact the team at partnerships@whofoundation-project.org.

project.org. Online giving is active at www.whofoundationproject.org, and tailored donations can be received by contacting donations@whofoundationproject.org. All donations made to the WHO Foundation are tax-deductible to the extent feasible by relevant national laws.

About WHO Foundation

The WHO Foundation is an independent grant-making foundation focused on addressing the most pressing global health challenges of today and tomorrow. By funding high-impact initiatives and advancing strategies of innovation, effectiveness, and rapid response, it will support the global health ecosystem. Headquartered in Geneva and legally independent from the WHO, the Foundation will work responsibly with individual donors, the general public and corporate partners to strengthen health systems globally. Specifically, the WHO Foundation will support global public health needs, from prevention, mental health, and non-communicable diseases to emergency preparedness, outbreak response and health system strengthening.

SOURCE: WHO News release on 27 May, 2020

IMMUNE SYSTEM

Even mild coronavirus illness may confer some immunity: study



A study found some 98 per cent of volunteers had antibodies between 28 and 41 days after the first signs of coronavirus infection. **PHOTO: AFP**

EVEN people with minor illness from the coronavirus can develop antibodies that could leave them immunized for several weeks or more, according to an early French study that tested hospital staff with mild infections.

Researchers said the results, which have not yet been peer reviewed, were “encouraging” since little is known about the mechanisms of immunity against the novel coronavirus, especially in people with minor forms of the disease.

“We knew that people with severe forms of the disease developed antibodies within 15 days of the onset of symptoms,” said Arnaud Fontanet, head of the global health department

at the Institut Pasteur, which conducted the research with the University Hospital in Strasbourg.

“We now know that this is also true for those who develop minor forms, even if the rates of antibodies are probably weaker.”

The study was carried out on 160 members of staff at two hospital sites in Strasbourg who had all tested positive for COVID-19 and suffered mild forms of the disease.

Two types of serological tests, which aim to look for a previous infection, indicated that almost all health workers —153 out of 160 in one case, 159 out of 160 in the other—had developed antibodies within 15 days after the onset of infection.

Using a separate test to determine if the antibody could neutralize the virus, the study found some 98 per cent of the volunteers had these antibodies between 28 and 41 days after the first signs of infection.

The researchers said in a statement on Tuesday that the neutralizing activity of the antibodies appeared to increase over time.

Olivier Schwartz, head of Pasteur's virus and immunity unit, said the objective would now be to monitor the “persistence of the antibody response and their capacity to neutralize” the virus over the longer term.

SOURCE: AFP

Republic of the Union of Myanmar Office of the President Order 16/2020

7th Waxing of Nayon, 1382 ME
(28 May 2020)

Appointment of Mandalay Region High Court Judge

In accordance with the provisions stated in article 308 (b), sub-section (4) of the Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar; Section 82 (d) of Union Government Law, Section 45 of Union Judiciary Law and Section 18 (d) of Region or State Government Law, U Myint San has been appointed as Mandalay Region High Court Judge.

Sd/ Win Myint
President
Republic of the Union of Myanmar

Myanmar Daily Weather Report (Issued at 4:00 pm Thursday 28th May, 2020)

BAY INFERENCE: Monsoon is weak over the Andaman Sea and Southeast Bay of Bengal. Weather is a few cloud over the Westcentral Bay and partly cloudy elsewhere over the Bay of Bengal.

FORECAST VALID UNTIL MORNING OF THE 28th May, 2020: Rain or thundershowers will be fairly widespread in Lower Sagaing, Mandalay, Magway, Bago and Yangon Regions, Eastern Shan and Kayin States and widespread in the remaining Regions and States with isolated heavyfalls in Bago, Yangon and Ayeyawady Regions and Chin State. Degree of certainty is (80%).

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

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Likelihood of advancement of Southwest monsoon in the Deltaic areas.

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 28th May, 2020: One or two rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (100%).

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 28th May, 2020: Some rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (100%).

FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 28th May, 2020: Isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (100%).

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China's two key sessions and future prospects

By Nay Soe Oo

CHINA already convened its two key annual sessions recently which are normally held in March, but this year they were delayed because of COVID-19. Now with a notion that China can bring the virus under control, these two sessions could be successfully held following more than two months of delays as a result of the coronavirus issue.

These two sessions refer to the annual meetings of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) – an advisory body of over 2,000 members – and the National People's Congress, China's top legislative body. They are China's most important annual political meetings. During the recently-held meeting in Beijing, Chinese Premier Li Keqiang laid out the government's agenda and policy priorities for the coming year.

Despite the fact that noble coronavirus COVID-19 could be brought under control, the representatives attending the sessions were found all donning surgical masks placing on full health alert. These two sessions are focus of attention to foreign investors during which the government usually announces the country's key economic policies just like the annual GDP growth target.

China had to face an economic crisis due to the impact of COVID-19 and this year these two sessions added to importance in political and economic aspects globally. Therefore, it would be true that the interest of foreign investors is what the government would announce to revitalize China's economy out of a coronavirus-induced crisis.

Nevertheless, the report Mr. Li submitted to the meeting indicated that China failed to set a GDP growth target for 2020, marking the first time the government did not set a target since records began in 1990. Mr. Li added in the report that the government opted not to set a growth target because of the high level of uncertainty caused by COVID-19 and its effects on the global economy.

Before COVID-19 struck, most analysts believed that the government would set its growth target at "around six per cent". Last year, China set a growth target of 6-6.5 per cent, which it ultimately achieved by growing 6.1 per cent. In the first quarter of this year, however, China's economy contracted by 6.8 per cent, per official statistics, and some analysts expected another contraction in the second quarter.

Despite the attention paid to the announcement, many economists have long argued that China's leaders should abandon the tradition of setting a target. The GDP growth target in China is not just a predictor of growth output but also an input signal of forthcoming government credit and spending.

Accordingly, while Mr Li stated that the government would take strong measures to support employment, there remains uncertainty over how far they will go to stimulate the economy. It may also be a signal that the government is prepared to accept a low level of growth in 2020.

Mr Li announced a fiscal stimulus package of almost RMB 3.6 trillion (US\$506 billion) to lead China's economy recovery following the COVID-19 disruption. Beyond stimulating growth, government planners are hoping the stimulus will help employment and, as a result, social stability. Mr Li said that the government is seeking to create nine million new urban jobs in 2020.

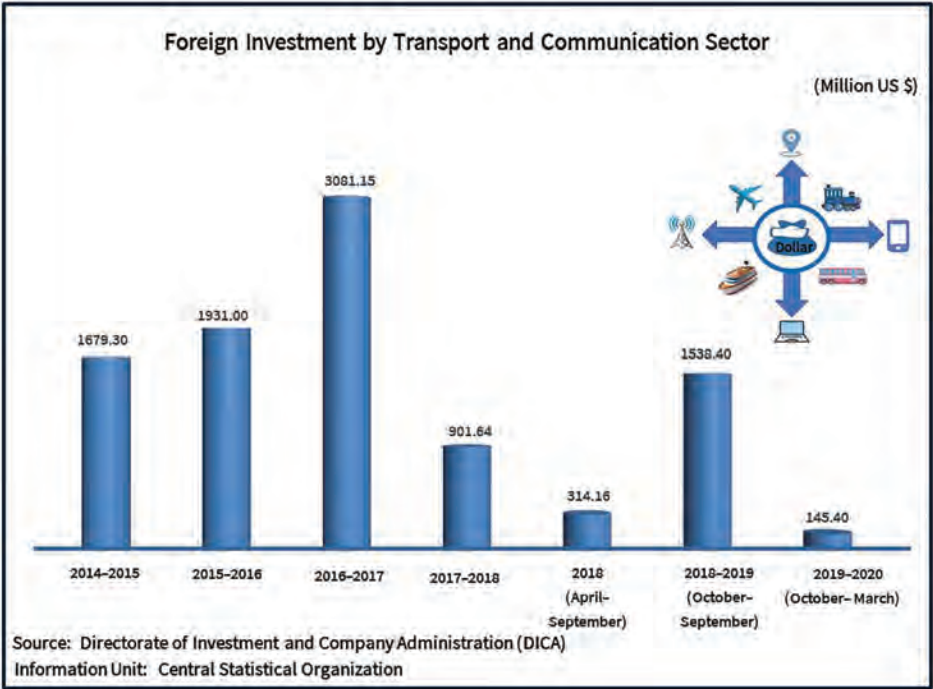
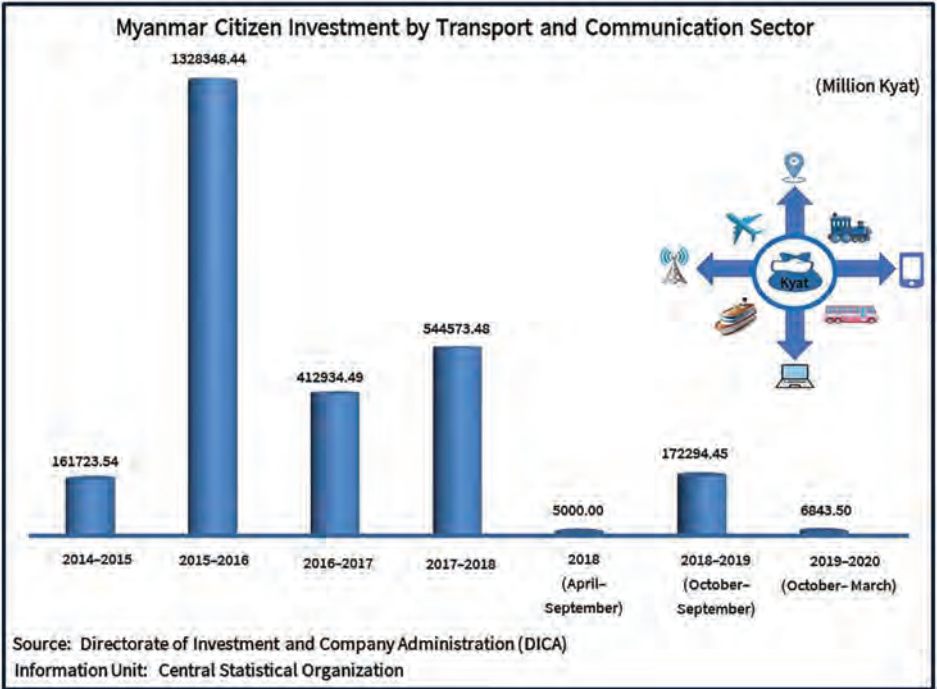
Besides the announcements of the growth target and stimulus, government officials have announced a number of other policies during the two sessions. One major development was the government's surprise announcement of a national security law for Hong Kong, to be passed in Beijing. Party leaders hope that the law will lead to more stability in Hong Kong, which was beset by protests for much of 2019.

Further, despite the economic disruption of COVID-19, Mr Li said in the work report reiterating the goal of eliminating rural poverty in 2020. A decade ago, the Party announced that it would double 2010 income per capita levels by 2020, while President Xi Jinping has made it a priority to end rural poverty by this year.

Accordingly, foreign investors can expect reforms of China's health system and greater investments in the sector this year. The next notable point the annual session showed that China's top political advisor Mr Wang Yang urged the use of modern technology, including big data and the internet, to better fulfill officials' duties, while reiterating the importance of the "Chinese-style democracy" in the advising systems.

Anyhow, the third session of the 13th CPPCC had to be held in Beijing in a later time than as scheduled regularly on account of the impacts of the COVID-19 crisis. China, the crucial neighbouring country, will be seeking a solution to the platform for new political landscape besides the ways how to recover its economy going to a downtrend by using the key points coming from the key annual sessions.

(Translated by Htut Htut (Twantay))



COVID-19 Call Centre opens daily

IN efforts to speed up the prevention, containment and treatment of the COVID-19 disease, the call centre is established by four communications operators and the Blue Ocean Company with the coordination of the Medical Research Department of the Health and Sports Ministry and Post and Telecommunications Department from 8 am to 8 pm daily at the Medical Research Department in Yangon.

Over 43 staff from the Medical Research Department and 17 volunteers from the Myanmar Medical Association totally 60 workers have been working at the centre since 8th April.—MNA

US ends waivers for nations in Iran nuclear deal

WASHINGTON — The United States said Wednesday it was ending waivers in its sanctions for nations that remain in the Iran nuclear accord, bringing the deal further to the verge of collapse.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said he was responding to Iran’s “brinkmanship” -- its series of small but defiant nuclear steps, aimed at pressuring the United States to remove sanctions as called for by the 2015 accord.

“These escalatory actions are unacceptable and I cannot justify renewing the waiver,” Pompeo said in a statement.

President Donald Trump bolted from the agreement negotiated under his predecessor Barack Obama, under which Iran had drastically curbed its nuclear activities.

But the Trump administration until now had issued waivers to allow companies, primarily from Russia, to keep carrying out the work of the agreement without risking legal ramifi-



The head of Iran’s Atomic Energy Organization, Ali Akbar Salehi, visits the Arak nuclear water reactor in December 2019 -- ending US sanction waivers means work to modify the reactor will end.
PHOTO : ATOMIC ENERGY ORGANIZATION OF IRAN/AFP/FILE

cations in the world’s largest economy.

The United States will notably do away with the waivers that allowed the modification of

the heavy water reactor in Arak, which prevented it from using plutonium for military use, as well as the export of spent and scrap research reactor fuel.

Pompeo said that the United States was issuing a final 60-day waiver to allow companies involved in the projects to wrap up operations.—AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

APEC senior officials hold virtual discussions over economic cooperation, open markets against COVID-19

KUALA LUMPUR — Senior officials from the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) economies held a virtual meeting Wednesday to discuss economic cooperation, open markets to counter the COVID-19 outbreak.

Hairil Yahri Yaacob, a senior official from Malaysia’s International Trade and Industry Ministry who chaired the meeting, urged participating economies to prioritize the undisputed flow of essential goods and services across the region. The official said this was key to ensuring participating economies were able to rebound following the wide-ranging economic disruptions caused by the COVID-19 outbreak. “Necessary lockdowns and social distancing have been or are still in place region-wide to keep the pandemic from spreading, but the resulting economic slowdown has the potential to cause long-term harm to the lives and livelihoods of millions more,” he said.—Xinhua ■

Germany reports 353 new COVID-19 cases, total 179,717

BERLIN — New infections with COVID-19 in Germany remained under last week’s average as the number of confirmed cases increased by 353 within one day to 179,717, the Robert Koch Institute (RKI) announced on Thursday. The number of deaths from COVID-19 in Germany increased by 62 to 8,411 on Thursday, resulting in a fatality rate of 4.7 per cent, according to the RKI. The number of patients currently infected with COVID-19 in Germany remained around 16,500 as the estimated number of recoveries increased by around 400 within one day to 163,200, said the RKI.

The four-day average reproduction rate of COVID-19 in Germany was at 6.8, according to the daily situation report by the RKI Wednesday.—Xinhua ■

News Corp to stop printing more than 100 Australian papers

SYDNEY — Rupert Murdoch’s Australian flagship media group News Corp announced Thursday it will stop printing more than 100 regional and local newspapers,

blaming a collapse in advertising made worse by the coronavirus pandemic. The decision comes after News Corp announced on 1 April it was temporarily halting

printing of around 60 community newspapers and is expected to cost hundreds of jobs.

The company said the bulk of its regional and local papers would shift to digital-only publishing by 29 June, with 76 papers moving online and 35 other titles closing permanently.

The move echoes a global trend in the troubled media industry, as falling readerships and the continued rise of Google and Facebook eats into media advertising revenues.

News Corp Australia executive chairman Michael Miller said the permanent changes had been brought on by the coronavirus pandemic, which had impacted the sustainability of local publishing.

“Print advertising spending which contributes the majority of our revenues, has accelerated its decline,” he said in a statement.

“Consequently, to meet these changing trends, we are reshaping News Corp Australia to focus on where consumers and businesses are moving.”

The company said the changes would “regretfully lead to job losses” but more than 375 journalists would continue covering community and regional news.

The Sydney Morning Herald reported that there were previously about 1,200 people employed in News Corp’s Australian regional and community division. Papers in nearly every state and territory will be impacted by the decision, including dozens in Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria.

The announcement follows a series of media closures, including national wire AAP, which is due to shut down within weeks unless a last-ditch buyout bid can save it.—AFP ■



Newspaper headlines are pasted to the side of a newspaper stand in Melbourne on March 23, 2020. Rupert Murdoch’s Australian flagship media group News Corp announced Thursday it will stop printing more than 100 regional and local newspapers, blaming a collapse in advertising made worse by the coronavirus pandemic.

PHOTO : AFP/WILLIAM WEST)

Las Vegas casinos to reopen next week

LAS VEGAS — Several major Las Vegas casinos said Wednesday they will reopen next week after being closed for more than two months because of the coronavirus pandemic -- welcome news for Nevada, which heavily

relies on the massive gaming industry for its economic wellbeing.

The Bellagio, New York-New York, Caesars Palace and the Flamingo are some of the resorts that will open their doors on June 4, with strict social dis-

tancing practices in effect. “We welcome the visitors from across the country to come here, to have a good time, no different than they did previously, but we’re going to be cautious,” Governor Steve Sisolak told reporters during a

late night press call on Tuesday.

Sisolak said he made the decision to reopen the multi-billion-dollar gaming industry -- the bedrock of Nevada’s economy -- following consultations with health experts.—AFP ■

U.S. off-price retailer Tuesday Morning files for bankruptcy

HOUSTON— U.S. off-price retailer Tuesday Morning has filed for bankruptcy protection amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the company said Wednesday.

In a news release, the company said the immense impact of COVID-19 forced prolonged closure of its entire store portfolio, creating an insurmountable financial hurdle.

The company also said it will close around 230 of its 687 stores, with a phased approach, to focus on high-performing locations.

“The prolonged and unexpected closures of our stores in response to COVID-19 has had severe consequences on our business,” said the company’s CEO Steve Becker.

Based in Dallas, Texas, Tuesday Morning Corporation is one of the original off-price retailers specializing in name-brand, high-quality products for the home at prices generally below those found in boutique, specialty and department stores, catalogs and online retailers. The company opened its first store in 1974 and currently operates 687 stores in 39 states.—Xinhua



Photo taken on May 27, 2020 shows a Tuesday Morning store in Plano of Texas, the United States. U.S. off-price retailer Tuesday Morning has filed for bankruptcy protection amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the company said Wednesday. PHOTO: XINHUA

NEWS IN BRIEF

Ethiopia unlocks one of the world’s last closed telecoms markets

ADDIS ABABA -- For delivery man Sisay Alebachew, the difference between a good and bad day depends on Ethio Telecom, Ethiopia’s monopoly telecoms provider.

When the internet is down or too slow to use, customers struggle to place orders on the website of Deliver Addis, Sisay’s e-commerce employer, meaning he has little to do.

Other times, when the phone network is jammed, Sisay can’t reach customers to complete deliveries -- he wastes precious time standing outside their homes, dialling in vain.

Sisay is thrilled, then, that after years of build-up, change finally seems to be coming to Ethiopia’s stunted telecoms sector, one of the last closed markets in the world.

Last week the government regulator invited firms to submit “expressions of interest” for two new telecoms licences that would break up Ethio Telecom’s monopoly.

Officials also plan to sell a 40-percent stake in Ethio Telecom, a move they hope will make the firm more efficient.

“For a business like ours, telecoms is crucial, and it’s the most difficult challenge we face,” Sisay told AFP during a break from his rounds one recent afternoon.

“I’ve heard that many countries have a better connection compared to us. I’m hoping ours will improve when other companies join the market.”—AFP

Japanese automakers’ global output in April plunges 61% on year

TOKYO -- The global production of eight major Japanese automakers plunged 60.9 per cent to 916,255 vehicles in April from a year earlier, as plants were closed due to the novel coronavirus pandemic, data released by the companies showed Thursday.

Their output is likely to decline further as the prolonged global spread of the virus, which causes the respiratory illness COVID-19, is expected to weigh on auto demand in the coming months.

Toyota Motor Corp. said its global production tumbled 50.8 per cent to 379,093 vehicles, while Honda Motor Co. saw a 48.0 per cent decline in worldwide output to 212,747 units.

Nissan Motor Co.’s global production also fell 62.4 per cent to 150,388 vehicles.—Xinhua

Virus forces ‘paper napkin’ makeover at swanky German hotel

FRANKFURT — From wipe-down place-mats to paper napkins and a drive-through ice-cream stand by the grand entrance, guests returning to the swanky Kempinski just outside Frankfurt will find a very different hotel when it reopens its doors after a two-month lockdown.

Hard hit by the coronavirus pandemic, the hotel has seen its revenues dry up as events from business seminars to weddings were scrapped and guests cancelled.

After two painful months, the hotel has been authorized to reopen, but only on condition of drastic changes to ensure social distancing and hygiene rules.



The Kempinski hotel in Gravenbruch has enough space to allow for social distancing. PHOTO: AFP

So the starched tablecloths are gone, replaced by washable place-mats on tables that would have to be placed 1.5 metres (five feet) apart.

Sumptuous breakfast buffets are also a thing of the past, replaced by set menus printed on easily-disinfected laminated sheets.—AFP

As Iraq lockdown chokes off imports, local businesses thrive

BAGHDAD — In Iraq, a national lockdown to halt the coronavirus pandemic has found some unexpected fans: local businesses who no longer have to compete with Turkish, Iranian or Chinese imports.

Those countries, as well as Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Kuwait, typically flood Iraqi markets with inexpensive products at prices local producers can’t compete with.



Iraqis local businesses have long struggled to compete with cheap Turkish, Iranian or Chinese imports. HOTO: AFP

That includes everything from cars and computers to frozen chicken and even Iraq’s national fruit, dates, which in recent years were more often imported from the Gulf than plucked from local palm trees.

Local producers were left in the dust, struggling to compete given their expensive raw materials and low outputs compared to the enormous quantities being imported.

Not anymore, said Amin Qassem, who has operated an ice cream factory in the oil-rich province of Basra since 2006.—AFP

Spain says Nissan closing Barcelona factory

BARCELONA — Japanese carmaker Nissan has decided to shut its factory in Barcelona where 3,000 people are employed, the Spanish government said on Thursday.

The decision came despite government efforts to keep the plant open, Foreign Minister Arancha Gonzalez Laya told the national radio station.

“We regret this decision by Nissan to leave not just Spain but Europe... to concentrate its business in Asia, despite the enormous efforts by the government to keep the business going,” she said.

Spain’s car industry is the European Union’s second-biggest after that of Germany, accounting for 10 per cent of the country’s GDP.



Nissan employees cut off one of the main entrances to Barcelona, as they protest against the closure of the Japanese cars manufacturer’s plant in Barcelona on May 28, 2020.
PHOTO: AFP / LLUIS GENE

The industry ministry confirmed to AFP that Nissan’s chief executive had informed it of plans to stop operations at the Barcelona site, which groups sev-

eral production facilities. Production there had already ground to a halt at the start of the month when some staff went on strike demanding an investment

strategy for the site after plans were announced to cut 20 per cent of the workforce. Foreign Minister Gonzalez Laya said “all kinds of

help” had been proposed to Nissan in the run-up to Thursday’s decision and that the government would “not throw in the towel”.

Instead it would “explore all solutions, because our concern is to safeguard employment”. She did not rule out the possibility of finding a buyer for the plant.

Economy Minister Nadia Calvino meanwhile said the government had invited Nissan to start talks “to see how this process could be managed”, to no avail.

The Madrid government has argued that the cost of closing Nissan’s Barcelona operation, which it put at more than one billion euros (\$1.1 billion), was higher than the investment needed to keep it going.— AFP ■

S. Korea’s central bank slashes 2020 economic growth outlook to 0.2-pct contraction

SEOUL — South Korea’s central bank slashed its 2020 growth outlook for the economy to 0.2 per cent contraction on Thursday amid rising worries about an economic fallout from the COVID-19 outbreak.

The Bank of Korea (BOK) said in a statement after the rate-setting meeting that the economy is forecast to contract 0.2 per cent this year. It was sharply down from the BOK’s previous forecast of 2.1 per cent growth unveiled three months earlier.—Xinhua ■

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M.V KUO TAI VOY. NO. (211N/S)

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V KUO TAI VOY. NO. (211N/S) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 29-5-2020 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 CONTINENTAL SHIPPING LINE

Phone No: 2301185

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V ALS SUZURAN VOY. NO. (029W)

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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.

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AGENT FOR: M/S NEW GOLDEN SEA LINES
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Email address: myanmar@tilleke.com

Dated: 29th May, 2020.



This photo taken April 8, 2020 and received from the Presidential Photo Division on April 9, Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte, wearing a face mask, presides over a meeting with members of the inter-Agency Task Force on the Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF-EID) in Malacanang Palace in Manila. **PHOTO: (PRESIDENTIAL PHOTO DIVISION/AFP/TOTO LOZANO)**

Philippines' primary, secondary schools to resume in Aug.

MANILA — Primary and secondary schools in the Philippines will resume in August but without in-person classes in view of the coronavirus pandemic, the Education Department said Thursday. The department clarified the plan after President Rodrigo Duterte suggested earlier this week that he would not allow pupils and students to return to classrooms until a vaccine for the new coronavirus becomes available. It said the president's stance does not contradict its intention to do away with in-person classes when the delayed new school year starts in August.

"The president doesn't want it (in-person classes). We don't

want it too. We don't want to put our children in danger," Education Secretary Leonor Briones said during a virtual press briefing. "There is no conflict, no disagreement, no debate."

Briones said the department would pursue alternative modes of education, such as distance learning, if face-to-face learning is not possible. Those may include the use of online, television, radio and printed materials, she explained. A school year traditionally starts in June in the Philippines. But as the government struggles to stem the spread of the virus, education authorities have moved its start to August. —Kyodo ■

South Korea re-imposes some social restrictions to combat new virus cases

SEOUL — South Korea on Thursday re-imposed a series of coronavirus social distancing measures it had eased early this month, as a series of clusters threatened to challenge its success in containing the epidemic.

The country has been held up as a global model in how to curb the virus, but reported its biggest spike in new infections in nearly two months as life appeared returning to normal.

The new cases -- mostly centred in the Seoul metropolitan area where half the

South Korean population lives -- prompted officials to strengthen social distancing rules that were eased on May 6.

Museums, parks and art galleries will all be closed again from Friday for two weeks, said health minister Park Neung-hoo, while companies were urged to re-introduce flexible working, among other measures.

"We have decided to strengthen all quarantine measures in the metropolitan area for two weeks from tomorrow

to June 14," he said.

Citizens were also advised to refrain from social gatherings or going to crowded places -- including restaurants and bars -- while religious facilities were asked to be extra vigilant with quarantine measures.

There were no new delays, however, to the phased re-opening of schools that is currently underway. "The next two weeks are crucial to prevent the spread of the infection in the metropolitan area," Park said, adding: "We will have to return



An outbreak at a warehouse of e-commerce firm Coupang in Bucheon, west of Seoul, has seen 69 cases. **PHOTO: AFP**

to social distancing if we fail."

The health minister said the government will be forced to re-impose an all-out social

distancing campaign if the country sees more than 50 new cases for at least seven consecutive days.—AFP ■

US troop pullout from Afghanistan ahead of schedule

KABUL — The US military withdrawal from Afghanistan is considerably ahead of schedule, an official told AFP on Wednesday, as President Donald Trump reiterated calls for the Pentagon to bring troops home.

The developments came as questions loomed over the next phase of Afghanistan's long war following a historic, three-day ceasefire that led to a major drop in civilian casualties.

The truce, which the Taliban called to mark the Muslim celebration of Eid al-Fitr, ended Tuesday night, leaving Afghans anxious about whether it would

be extended, or when the war might come raging back.

Violence levels remained low even after the end of the ceasefire, but Afghan security forces conducted air strikes in the south that killed 18 "militants", police said.

Under a deal the US signed with the Taliban in February, the Pentagon was to bring troop levels down from about 12,000 to 8,600 by mid-July, before withdrawing all forces by May 2021.

But a senior US defence official said the troop number was already at approximately 8,500, as commanders accelerate

the withdrawal over fears of the coronavirus.

"The drawdown was accelerated due to COVID-19 precautions," the official told AFP, noting that the departure of anyone with health concerns or over a certain age was being prioritized.

Trump told reporters Tuesday the US force level was "down to 7,000-some-odd soldiers right now".

The next day he returned to a frequent complaint that America should not be acting as a "police force" in Afghanistan.—AFP ■

China passes resolution on national security law for Hong Kong

BEIJING — China on Thursday passed a resolution regarding the introduction of a national security law to crack down on what it views as subversive activity in Hong Kong, in a move that will further antagonize pro-democracy protesters and the international community.

The adoption on the last day of the annual parliamentary session came amid growing fears that the law banning separation, subversion, foreign interference and terrorism in

Hong Kong would provide Beijing with more opportunities to erode freedoms and human rights there.

One legislator voted against the resolution, with 2,878 in favour and six abstaining.

Under the "one country, two systems" framework, Hong Kong was promised it would enjoy the rights and freedoms of a semi-autonomous region for 50 years following the former British colony's return to Chinese rule in 1997.—Kyodo ■

Conservative ex-Tehran mayor Ghalibaf elected Iran speaker

TEHRAN — Iran's new parliament on Thursday elected former Tehran mayor Mohammad-Bagher Ghalibaf as its speaker, consolidating the power of conservatives ahead of next year's presidential election.

The vote further shifts the political balance toward ultra-conservative opponents of the relatively moderate President Hassan Rouhani at a time Iran is engaged in a bitter standoff with arch foe the United States.

State television said the 58-year-old Ghalibaf — also a former national police chief and ex-commander of the Revolutionary Guards' air force — won 230 of the 267 votes cast to secure one of the most influential positions in the Islamic republic.

Bespectacled, balding and wearing a dark suit, Ghalibaf accepted congratulations from MPs, then moved towards the speaker's seat with a smile and told the chamber: "I thank God for being given a chance to serve the people."

Ghalibaf is a three-time presidential candidate who served as Tehran mayor from 2005 to 2017.

In the vote for the speaker post, he roundly defeated conservative lawmakers Fereydoon Abbasi and Mostafa Mirsalim who garnered 17 and 12 votes respectively.

Ghalibaf also received the most votes from the capital in Iran's February 21 parliamentary election, which saw the lowest turnout in decades.—AFP ■



Iranian Mohammad-Bagher Ghalibaf (bottom centre) stands among members of the parliament after being elected as parliament speaker. **PHOTO: AFP**

Bill Gates conspiracy theories echo through Africa



Bill Gates's vaccine programmes on the continent have long provided ample fodder for speculation. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

JOHANNESBURG — As the novel coronavirus wreaks global havoc, Bill Gates is the new bete noire for conspiracy theorists worldwide including in Africa where a Kenyan politician's false online post has added major fuel to the spread of misinformation.

While Gates's vaccine programmes on the continent have long provided ample fodder for

speculation, the bogus claims have gained new traction amid the pandemic.

On March 15, Nairobi governor Mike Sonko published an old video of Gates warning about the consequences of a future pandemic, with the caption "Bill Gates told us about the corona virus 2015 (sic)".

While the clip shows the philanthropist telling an audience that the world was unprepared for global outbreaks in his TED talk five years ago, he made no mention of the coronavirus.

Sonko's post generated so many interactions among his two-million plus Facebook followers that it remains the most prolific global post about Gates in the COVID-19 era, according to social media analysis tool

CrowdTangle.

So far, it has been shared more than one million times and has garnered 38 million views on social media.

The post highlights the role played by local public figures in spreading false or misleading claims in different parts of the world, according to the Washington-based Atlantic Council's Digital Forensic Research Lab (DFRLab), which studies disinformation globally.

"They typically travel beyond... niche communities when an influencer, such as a prominent celebrity, or even mainstream media source, amplifies them," DFRLab's Zarine Kharazian told AFP.

"Once they've achieved this level of spread, they migrate across languages."—AFP ■

US virus toll crosses 100,000 as pandemic rages in Latin America

GLOBAL cases have surged to nearly 5.7 million, with more than 354,000 deaths, and the worrying acceleration of the disease in South America has marked the continent as the new hotspot.

The US coronavirus death toll passed 100,000 as the pandemic tightened its grip on South America, which is outpacing Europe and the United States in daily infections. Global cases have surged to nearly 5.7 million, with more than 354,000 deaths, and in a grim signal to other countries hoping to exit lockdown, South Korea re-imposed social distancing rules after a spike in new cases.—AFP ■



Police members check two passers-by at Plaza de Armas square, in Santiago, on May 13, 2020, after the government ordered a mandatory total quarantine due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Chile registered a new high for coronavirus cases on Monday, with nearly 5,000 infections in 24 hours, including two ministers in President Sebastian Pinera's government. **PHOTO: AFP/MARTIN BERNETTI**

Chile sees 82,289 cases of COVID-19, 841 deaths

SANTIAGO — Chile on Wednesday said a total of 82,289 people around the country have tested positive for the novel coronavirus and 841 people have died from the disease.

In the past 24 hours ending 9 pm Tuesday, 4,328 new cases of infection were detected and 35 more patients died, while 33,540 people have recovered from the disease since the outbreak began.

With cases still on the rise, Health Minister Jaime Manalich announced lockdown measures

in the capital Santiago and the metropolitan area, home to 7 million residents, will be extended beyond the May 29 deadline.

"The reality (of the outbreak) is much more powerful than any simulation," Manalich said at a press conference, dismissing early predictions on how the virus would spread.

Since early this year, the government has been preparing for "the worst case scenario," which would be 100,000 cases of infection and potential carriers of the

virus at the same time, he added.

Manalich also chided Chileans for failing to practice social distancing.

"We are maintaining a level of mobility and of contact with others, and failing to wash our hands and to use face masks, which is evident. Many television channels have documented it and it puts us in a high-risk situation of an increase in cases and the extension of lockdown measures," said the health minister.—Xinhua ■

Lethwei stars exchange online challenging words amid pandemic

IN the period of coronavirus pandemic, former light-middleweight World Lethwei Champion Artur Saladiak and newcomer of Lethwei Toby Bindon, wrote challenging words each other on their official social media page, according to the statement with the World Lethwei Championship.

Artur Saladiak stated with a mention to Toby

Bindon, "We were the same weight. You must be ready to fight big guys like me," to which Bindon replied that he is always ready to fight but he also said, "Being big has a lot of disadvantages like being stiff as a board and rigid".

Again Saladiak replied that "Toby you have never been in the ring with the likes of me, I'm sure you are

a decent fighter. Saladiak concluded his words by mentioning to WLC that he will gladly accept Toby's challenge because he wants his title back and that means beating Toby and won the belt again, he added. Their crosswords seem there will be a good Lethwei match by two of World Lethwei Championship's fighter in post-pandemic. —Lynn Thit (Tgi)

Olympic chief Bach consults with IOC members over virus fallout

LAUSANNE (Switzerland) — Olympic chief Thomas Bach on Wednesday held a series of talks with International Olympic Committee members on the potential consequences of the coronavirus pandemic that has seen the Tokyo Games pushed back a year to 2021, sources said. Bach was to address the 100 IOC members in three different sessions decided by language and local time zone.

"The IOC held today a series of internal consultations with IOC members to hear from them in preparation of the IOC Session which will be prepared by the IOC executive board in its meeting on June 10, 2020," said an IOC statement later Wednesday.

Bach's aim was to canvas the members for their view on "how to handle the consequences of the coronavirus pandemic", a

source told AFP. The IOC president wants to hear "thoughts, ideas and experiences of all members across the globe", it added.

While Bach addressed all Olympic actors on March 24 when announcing the postponement of the Tokyo Games, it is the first time since the COVID-19 outbreak that he has specifically consulted IOC members.

Bach was backed up by Olympic Games executive director Christophe Dubi, IOC sports director Kit McConnell, IOC director general Christophe De Kepper and chief operating officer Lana Haddad.

The IOC's medical and scientific director, Richard Budgett, also took to the floor to discuss "the issue of a vaccine", according to a second source.

Bach warned last week 2021



International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach.
PHOTO: POOL/AFP

was the "last option" for holding the delayed Tokyo Games, stressing postponement cannot go on forever. He said he backed Japan's stance that the Games will have to be cancelled if the coronavirus pandemic isn't under

control by next year.

The German wouldn't say, however, whether a vaccine was a prerequisite for going ahead with the Olympics, but was lukewarm on the idea of holding them without fans. —AFP ■

Scottish club's fans 'to decide' goalkeeper's fate on Twitter

LONDON — Scottish football club Livingston have taken an unusual approach to working out whether to keep goalkeeper Gary Maley ... asking supporters on Twitter to decide his fate.

The part-time goalkeeper's contract expires in June and the Scottish Premiership side, whose season has now finished, reached out with a tongue-in-cheek post. "Quite possibly a football first but we're giving you the chance to decide on the future of goalkeeper @Maley1Gary," Livingston tweeted.

"With his contract expiring next month, we're leaving it in the hands of the fans as to whether or not we offer 'Stretch' an extension. Stay or go - you decide!"

But the goalkeeper was in on a stunt that has benefited a children's charity. Assistant manager David Martindale, who was Maley's best man at his wedding, pledged a pound (US\$1.2) to charity for every vote but the poll has attracted almost 200,000 votes as well as stinging criticism from people who were unaware of the background. Maley said: "He mentioned my contract and I said 'look, give it to one of the kids, I am 37, I am nearly done'. He said 'we will have a bit of fun with it, have a laugh, we will put up a vote on Twitter'."

"Davie said he would put a pound in per vote for charity, thinking we would get 500 votes. Obviously it escalated something ridiculous and Davie soon withdrew that offer."

He added: "It looks as though I'm going to win the vote and extend my deal but I said I will donate the next two months' wages to charity and Davie will match that." —AFP ■

Messi looking forward eagerly to 'weird' La Liga restart

MADRID — Barcelona and Argentina captain Lionel Messi said he was eager to start playing again but thought La Liga games behind closed doors would feel "weird".

Messi, who after a few weeks confined like the rest of Spain by the coronavirus pandemic, is training with Barca again ahead of a planned resumption of La Liga behind closed doors on the

weekend on Jun 12. "We cannot think about what we are leaving behind this year. It is better to think about the future," said Messi on the website of sports brand Adidas.



Ready for action: Lionel Messi and his Barcelona teammates are back in training.
PHOTO: (AFP/MIGUEL RUIZ)

"Like going back to day-to-day training, seeing your teammates, playing your first few games. No doubt it will be strange at first, but I am looking forward to competing again!"

He said playing without fans "implies a series of challenges. The preparation at squad level is the same as for any other match, but it is true that individually you have to train and get mentally prepared to play without people because it is very weird."

"It will be like starting over," he said. "Technically it will be the same season, but I think all teams and players will experience it differently." Messi was due to lead Argentina this summer in the Copa America, where his country are joint hosts with Colombia, but in March, the competition was postponed to June and July next year. "Postponing the Copa America was a huge disappointment, but of course it was reasonable and most logical," Messi said. —AFP ■