State Counsellor holds videoconference to discuss impact of COVID on construction sector with stakeholders

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TATE Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi in her capacity as Chairperson of the National-Level Central Committee for Prevention, Control and Treatment of COVID-19 held a videoconference from the Presidential Palace in Nay Pyi Taw this morning at 10:00 am regarding the impact of COVID on the construction sector with stakeholders.

Those who participated in the discussions were Dr Kyaw Lin, Deputy Minister for Construction U Htay Lwin, team leader of the carpentry unit, and U Shein Win, Chairman of the Myanmar Construction Entrepreneurs Federation.

The State Counsellor said yesterday when we are about to discuss the construction sector, all of you must have already heard about the sad news about the Phakant incident. With respect to this incident, she wished to say that this was also something sad for the country. Another thing was the fact that this was related to the difficult livelihood problems being confronted by the people at the basic level of society. For the majority of the Myanmar people, digging for precious stones in the Phakant area is for the purpose of earning a livelihood. Among those who lost their lives in the current incident, the majority are illegal workers.

The fact that these people were digging for precious stones illegally brings out the fact that there is still a difficulty, to a certain extent, to find legal jobs in Myanmar. She added that as far as she was concerned, she placed a high priority to ensure that Myanmar citizens are able to find jobs legally. As the availability of jobs legally was a priority, the construction sector plays a very critical role. The reason why she had to say this was because, among the kinds of jobs related to COVID, the construction sector has special relevance. Construction works cannot be stopped. They were related to the infrastructures of the country.

In addition, in this construction side, there were opportunities to ensure that health rules and regulations were being followed. In some types of jobs, it was not too easy to work with proper spacing among workers. In some enterprises, it was not easy to follow the rules and regulations issued by the Ministry of Health and Sports in a strict manner. However, in the construction sector, it was possible to handle this problem in the most effective manner and that was the reason why restrictions were lifted at a very early stage.

Construction works will always be needed. There were many types of construction works such as roads and bridges at the basic level were very important for the people. The construction of buildings could create jobs for the people; at the same time, she wanted this sector to provide opportunities for further advancement. Among those who have come to participate in the discussions were U Kyaw Lin, deputy minister from the Construction Ministry; U Htay Lwin who is very much involved in construction works; and U Shein Win, an entrepreneur from the construction industry. All need to cooperate. The Union Government has to manage the process so that workers and entrepreneurs cooperate.
Formation of investigation body into mining landslide in Lone Khin, Phakant

1. A landslide triggered in Lone Khin, Phakant Township, Kachin State, caused death and injuries to workers on the 2-7-2020 morning. An investigation body into this incident is formed with the following personnel:

   (a) U Ohn Win                                      Chairman
       Union Minister for Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation
   (b) Lt-Gen Soe Htut                                Member
       Union Minister for Home Affairs
   (c) Dr Win Myat Aye                                Member
       Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement
   (d) Dr Khat Aung                                  Member
       Chief Minister of Kachin State
   (e) U Min Thu                                     Secretary
       Managing Director of Myanmar Gems Enterprise, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment Conservation
   (f) U Tun Zaw                                     Joint-Secretary
       Secretary, Kachin State Cabinet

2. The investigation body is tasked with the following duties:
   (a) To investigate the cause of the landslide.
   (b) To uncover the different levels of management related to the incident.
   (c) To arrange necessary compensation and support for families of the deceased and injured.
   (d) To recommend action plans regarding security that will prevent similar events in the future.

3. The investigation body will submit their report at the earliest to the President's Office.

   Sd/Win Myint
   President
   Republic of the Union of Myanmar

Statement of Myanmar National Human Rights Commission on Landslide in Hpakant, Kachin State

Statement No. 8/2020

1. The Commission is greatly saddened and shocked by the news of the loss of lives in a landslide at a mining site in Hpakant Township, Kachin State, on the morning of 2 July 2020. Loss of lives is also the loss of the right to life.

2. Reportedly, over 160 unfortunate people were feared dead in the tragic event. Although it was the worst that has ever happened, this landslide is not the first one and there were some similar tragedies in the past as well, involving loss of many lives.

3. One can easily understand how a landslide in the Pastoral Ecosystem has driven those feared dead to risk their lives at those mining sites. Mining operations have been going on in those areas over a decade and it defies understanding why the concerned mining companies have not bothered to carry out human rights due diligence and the necessary risk assessment in their operations at the dangerous sites, though their earnings amounted to billions of dollar a year.

4. The United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights call for due diligence to be practised by the State and Businesses.

5. The MNHRC is of the view that it is high time the businesses enjoying unfettered freedom to operate unscrupulously should be regulated, asked to conduct human rights due diligence in the conduct of their businesses and to give sympathetic consideration to the issue of remedies as necessary.

6. The MNHRC would like to extend its heart-felt condolences to the bereaved families of those feared dead in the landslide.

   Myanmar National Human Rights Commission
   Date - 3 July 2020

Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Ministry of Planning, Finance & Industry
Announcement No. 2/2020
14th Waxing of First Wason 1382 ME
3 July 2020

1. The Committee for Remedy Economic Effects of COVID-19 made a decision at meeting (6/2020) on 17 June 2020 to put in an additional K100 billion into the COVID-19 Fund. This decision was made in order to continue providing financial assistance to businesses negatively affected by COVID-19.

2. The Ministry of Planning, Finance and Industry will conduct the following procedures with the permission of the Union Government:

   a) K150 billion from the Union general reserve fund of 2019-2020 financial year will be allocated as follows:
      i. K100 billion will be added to the COVID-19 Fund.
      ii. K50 billion inserted during the conception of the COVID-19 Fund by the Social Security Board will be transferred back to the Social Security Board’s fund.

   b) The addition of K100 billion will be separated into three deposits. The first deposit will be made of K35 billion, the second of K35 billion, and the third of K30 billion.

3. The committee will announce the types of businesses eligible for loans from the COVID-19 Fund, interest rates, loan periods, and other rules and regulations at a later date.
State Counsellor holds videoconference to discuss ...

FROM PAGE 1

The Union Government has to take extra care during the COVID period to make sure that construction works do not grind to a halt; so that construction works continue to run smoothly and also to ensure that the health of workers is not affected. The Government also had to look ahead to the post-COVID period. This is something the government had to be constantly monitoring. The Government machinery was not going to grind to a halt because of the COVID period. It has to keep on running. She added that she wished the government machinery to move towards the positive side as it continued functioning.

Deputy Minister for Construction Dr Kyaw Lin explained that the statistics in 2018 showed that there were 1.37 million people who are relying on construction works. He also requested instalment loans from the back to promote housing demands, to implement public rental housing projects in Nay Pyi Taw, Yangon and Mandalay, and to construct 10,000 units of the double-room apartment with 650 square feet if the government allocates K50 billion from state budget each year.

U Hlay Lwin discussed their difficulties in livelihoods during COVID-19 period, adhering to social distancing.

... as time went by, being humans, human behaviour was such that people come to be careless in washing hands, wearing masks and social distancing.

COVID-19 guidelines in work places when the projects were resumed; and requirements of land plots for the construction workers as they have to hire huts for living in the areas of squatters.

U Shein Win talked about cooperation of MCEF with the government in the guidelines of CERF; directives of the federation to follow COVID-19 measures at the construction sites, the contribution of K1,000 million through Yangon Region Government. The federation has been working with the Myanmar Licensed Contractors Association since April in construction of 180 units of apartment for retired civil service personnel, offer of employment opportunity to the Myanmar construction workers who returned from foreign countries during the COVID-19 period, a plan to issue new tender rules. He also requested loans up to 20 to 30 per cent of project value from foreign loans through private banks.

Yangon City has 15,000 units of condom rooms, selling of condo apartments to foreigner contributed 40 per cent, numbering 6,000 rooms, of total sale.

He also expressed thanks to the State Counsellor; the MPs of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, and the Ministry of Planning, Finance and Industry for reduction of income tax in the construction sector for the trial period in 2019-2020 financial year.

U Shein Win added Myanmar national entrepreneurs faced against the pandemic together with the people; and proposed income tax exemption on the investment of local entrepreneurs who could help in creating employment opportunities. * And then, the State Counsellor said that there hasn’t been yet a case so far in the construction sector; thus it may be said that the compliance level is high with respect to the obedience of COVID rules and regulations. This needs to be continued. She said that as time went by, being humans, human behaviour was such that people come to be careless in washing hands, wearing masks and social distancing. Especially in the construction sites, workers are in the habit of eating in groups and talking in groups; that was why they had to be constantly reminded not to eat in groups and talk in groups. In other work-sites and departments, workers behaved in the same way; at the present time, they should be vigilant about such kinds of behaviours. Although farmers spaced themselves while working on the farm, at lunchtime they tended to eat in groups; this was a good custom but it was important not to behave like this during this time. In places where there are many workers, it could create a big problem if one worker got infected. The infection could spread to a lot of people. That was why everyone should take this very seriously. Regarding job opportunities, as the deputy minister had presented, job creation is very important and she accepted the fact that the construction sector could provide many jobs in Myanmar; that was why the Union Government has been helping the three types of the construction business in the construction sector in many ways; by doing so it would benefit the construction workers as well as people and government employees who wished to live in their own homes; she said that many employees replied that they wanted to live in a house of their own by the time they retired when she asked them what was the most important need for them. She said she did not want them to be in a situation when you don’t know how you were going to live after working hard for your whole life. The Union Government has been building on a priority basis housing for government employees so that they could live in dignity and comfort when they grow old. By implementing such construction projects, it also provides job opportunities for construction workers.

She said she learnt that the reason why some construction works could not be completed as scheduled during the COVID period was that foreign experts could not come. At present, permits were being given little by little in some places where they are needed; it occurred to her that Myanmar needs many skilled workers; it is easy to create jobs in the construction sector; in doing this, she wanted their skills to be upgraded and their skills should be upgraded during the training period. The whole process should be to upgrade the skills and qualifications of Myanmar citizens. To do this, the Union Government should take responsibility for the one part and the entrepreneurs should take responsibility for the other part. She said she wanted the workers to have such kind of mindset.

Construction workers go all over the country to work. When she travelled, she found many relatives from upper Myanmar working in the construction sector everywhere she went. As they were working on roads, buildings and bridges, they greeted her on the way; most of them were from Magway, Natmauk and Yaunyan Gyaung; she also found workers from Magway when she was in the Chin state. 

(*Excerpt from the address made by Bogyoke Aung San at the meeting with journalists on 30 May 1947)

Special care cannot be given to every single crop

We work everyday to govern an entire nation. So, we don’t have leisure time. In governing an entire nation, it is impossible to focus at the same time on every issue affecting the people. But, in reality, our government is working with many difficulties, we saw success in some issues and not in others.
State Counsellor holds videoconference to discuss ...
MYANMAR Women’s Day was held online yesterday morning at the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Settlement under the healthcare guidelines of the Ministry of Health and Sports for COVID-19. Participants in the discussion were the representatives of 11 groups from Myanmar National Committee for Women’s Affairs, the online members of the Myanmar National Committee for Women’s Affairs, the chairs of the women committees from states and regions and the secretaries, the invited guests from respective departments, the invited initiatives from the UN agencies and women associations.

The ceremony was launched by broadcasting video clip with the song honoured to Myanmar Women’s Day, followed by the video speech of the State Counsellor.

The State Counsellor said that the year 2020 was a challenging year because of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the works and the events were held in the new way; the restrictions had to be done unavoidably across the world in order to prioritize to protect, control and treat the disease which caused the social and economical impacts; more or less in every country, that the women were more vulnerable to the disease than men, the gender based violence and more domestic violence had occurred; Myanmar has lower number of domestic violence had occurred; Myanmar has lower number of such violence.

She said that women usually took the responsibilities to take care of their home and family members; the family was the primary source of human society and it was important that the family members cooperate; the family spirit and the sympathy were the fundamental norms of Myanmar people; she believed that it is necessary to overcome the difficulties of the consequences of COVID-19 through family spirit and the sympathy. Moreover; she said that it was the ability to be adaptable with the change while facing the situations; doing businesses, performing tasks and socializing needed to be connected by changing with new normal.

She continued to say that there were also opportunities during COVID-19 period; people self-employed and sold online such as offering online courses; it can be found that the garment industries made the protection things for health; the situations in country side and city were different; to make it fair although it’s different while leading with new form, to make sure no one had left; the government was implementing COVID-19 Economic Relief Plan (CERP) to assist to everyone with necessary protection, social welfare, granting loan with less interest, and the plan to support pregnant women and children. She urged that the private sector should also cooperate with the government and not to leave behind the women sector as this was a significant year for gender equality.

She also suggested women to fulfill the needs of the country equally with the men and the government, private and social organization needed to think how to help them. She urged the society to cooperate by presenting the needs and difficulties of the women, teaching necessary skills, helping them to be able to do professional works.

In conclusion, she said that the role of women was very important to build societies which had to be built with family spirit and empathy. She called for everyone to try to perform in fulfilling the needs of the country and the women, and to hand over the spirit and strength of unity to future generations.

Then, the performance of physical fitness from the Myanmar National Women sport association along with the music was showed by a video clip. And the ceremony was continued with the round table discussion for Myanmar Women’s Day by the title “Role and Challenges of Women in COVID-19 Response” led by Dr Win Myat Aye, the Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Settlement and the president of the Myanmar National Women Committee. U Win Maw Tun, the deputy minister for Education, Doctor Mya Lay Sein, the deputy minister for Health and Sports and Daw Khine Khine Nwe, the joint-general secretary from UMFCCL. They discussed the role of the participation of the women in COVID-19 response in the sectors of economy, education and health and the difficulties they faced and to find the ways to overcome those and etc. Then, attended guests asked the questions and the people who participated in the discussion answered.

Afterwards, certificates of honour from the Myanmar National Women Committee were given to women healthcare givers and employees who served the country by working in protecting, controlling and curing the Coronavirus disease 2019, by Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Settlement Dr Win Myat Aye, chair of the Myanmar National Women Committee. Deputy Minister Dr Mya Lay Sein received them on behalf of them.

The round table discussion for Myanmar Women Day was held one week in advance by the respective scholars from the sectors of Health, education and economy and the discussion yesterday was to find ways and to make policies for women to overcome the challenges in COVID-19. —MNA

State Counsellor holds videoconference to discuss impact of COVID ...  

FROM PAGE-4

The State Counsellor called on workers to voice their opinions confidently and said expanding more vocational training centres falls in line with the nation’s ambitions and policy, which they are aiming to implement swiftly.

The State Counsellor then moved on to the end of her speech. She said the construction industry is important for the nation in many forms and so is communication. She said a nation’s economy can only develop if it possesses a good communication system. She said there needs to be a sense of closeness between people so that there is unity among all citizens. She said some villages are not very familiar with each other as they are too far apart and lack communication.

The State Counsellor said better communication will lead to increased cooperation among people. She said the development of basic infrastructure will also aid national development. She said it is important for people to be able to have regular meals, clothed themselves with dignity, and possess their own safe housing that compli- mates their self-confidence.

She thanked everyone for contributing to the success of the construction industry and then wished them all good health. —MNA (Translated by Kyaw Myaing)

Two members of Defence Services confirmed positive for COVID-19

Two members of Defence Services who recently returned from India have tested positive for COVID-19, according to the statement of Tatmadaw True News Information Team.

The statement released on 27 and 28 June said that the military personnel returned from India via military flight after completing course on 26 June and five soldiers out of 46 soldiers who were quarantined at Yangon Region Command area tested positive.

While the remaining 41 soldiers who took the same flight were under quarantine, the two soldiers showed symptoms, said the statement. Their specimens were tested by Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) at the 1000-Bed Defence Services Hospital (2) in Mingaladon and the results showed positive.

These two confirmed cases are now taking medical treatment at Defence Services Liver Specialist Hospital (Mingaladon) and are in good health conditions.—MNA (Translated by Khin Thazin Han)
MR to invite tender this year for upgrading YGN-MD railway project phase-II

The tender will be invited this year for Yangon-Mandalay railway upgrading project phase-II – Toungoo-Mandalay railway project, it is learnt.

For the Toungoo-Mandalay railway upgrading project, the detailed design has already been developed. According to the project, ten tenders will be invited, said Myanmar Railway MR.

The Yangon-Mandalay railway upgrading project is being implemented in two phases with JICA ODA loans and the national fund being spent. The first part of the project is Yangon-Toungoo which is about 166 miles long while the second part of the project is Toungoo-Mandalay which is about 219 miles long. For the Toungoo-Mandalay railway upgrading project, the detailed design has been developed since 2018-2019 with the assistance of JICA’s Grant Aid.

MR has signed a contract with Construction for Consultancy Services (CMC) for Yangon-Mandalay railway upgrading project phase-II. The engineering team started their job in 2019 for Yangon-Mandalay railway upgrading project phase-II, according to MR.

MR is operating six express trains, two mail trains, four up and down Yangon-Nay Pyi Taw trains on Yangon-Mandalay railway. Upon completion of the whole upgrading project, the trains can run at a speed of 100 kilometres per hour (60 mph) on the Yangon-Mandalay railway road. Additionally, there will be air-con coaches on the train — Aye Cho

(Translated by Hay Mar)
A total of 125 Myanmar nationals from the Philippines arrived back home by Myanmar Airways International (MAI)’s relief flight that landed at the Yangon International Airport yesterday.

Of them, 15 were those who stranded in the Philippines and 110 were from the ships of Conquest Dream and Holland America of the Carnival Cruise Line in the Philippines.

On arrival at the airport at 7:00 pm, officials from the Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population, the Ministry of Health and Sports and the Yangon Region government provided them with proper medical checks and arranged 21-day quarantine for them.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been working with Myanmar embassies in foreign countries and local ministries concerned to bring back citizens stranded abroad due to the suspension of international commercial flights, in accordance with the guidance of the National-Level Central Committee on Prevention, Control and Treatment of COVID-19.

A total of 6,648 Myanmar citizens abroad have been repatriated to date.—MNA

(Translated by Kyaw Zin Tun)

Ayeyawady Foundation contributes over K3 bln in fight against COVID-19

THE Ayeyawady Foundation is rendering assistance to measures against COVID-19, with the total donation of K3 bln to date. The foundation donated K10 million to Waibargi Hospital and North Okkalapa General Hospital which are giving medical treatments to COVID-19 positive patients, one-month bonus K6.3 million for 30 health workers of swab team of Yangon health department, and K3 million for Pathein hospital to be used in sending laboratory samples of COVID-19 suspected patients. It also arranged three meals a day for 500 persons at quarantine centre set up by the foundation at Thuwanna Football Stadium for the returnees from Malaysia, Philippines and Singapore.

—Ye Yint Shine (Translated by Khine Thazin Han)

COVID-19 figure in Myanmar reaches 306 after one new case reported on 3 July

MYANMAR’S COVID-19 positive cases reached 306 after two new cases returned from India, was reported on 3 July, according to Ministry of Health and Sports. Out of the 306 confirmed cases, six died, 237 have been recovered and 219 have discharged from hospital.—MNA

Updated at 8 pm, 3 July 2020

New Persons under Investigation from the past 24 hours to 12 noon of 2 July 2020

New PUI 26

New recovery cases after two consecutive tests

Recovery Update on 2 July 2020 after two consecutive tests

Two more case of COVID-19 on 1 July 2020: updated at 8 pm

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Ministry of Health and Sports
In these challenging times, we must look after our mental, as well as our physical health, and we all should display more sympathy, understanding, and concern, as the pandemic does not seem to be going away any time soon.

MENTAL health issues are likely to emerge as significant side effects of the new disease, resulting from the existing health policies of the government.

“Hitting lives and livelihoods, the pandemic is causing fear, depression and stress among people. Social distancing, isolation and coping with possibly evolving and changing information about the virus have both triggered and aggravated existing and pre-existing mental health conditions among the population,” said Dr Poonam Khetrapal Singh, Regional Director WHO South-East Asia Region.

Early identification of mental health conditions, recognition of suicidal behaviours and appropriate management through a multi-sectoral approach is important, even as we continue to focus on arresting further spread of the pandemic, Dr Khetrapal Singh said.

Suicide claims almost double every year globally and is the leading cause of death among young people aged 15-29 years of age. Evidence shows that for each adult who dies of suicide there are more than 20 attempting suicide.

In Myanmar, the South-East Asia Region accounts for 39% of global suicide mortality.

In Myanmar, suicide mortality for men and boys stood at about 5.9 deaths per 100,000 people in 2016 – well below the global average of 7.7. It was the results of the survey that was carried out before the COVID-19 pandemic.

Depression and anxiety generally go hand in hand with feelings of hopelessness and dread of what might lie ahead.

But, when challenging times, we must look after our mental, as well as our physical health, and we all should display more sympathy, understanding, and concern, as the pandemic does not seem to be going away any time soon.

Mental health, suicide prevention needs greater attention from authorities and public during pandemic.

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The last months have taught us that almost everything we do can be handled online if we’re motivated to make it work. New habits post COVID-19, connectivity and quality content sets Myanmar up for a learning revolution.

Governments around the world have temporarily closed educational institutions to contain the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, a decision that has impacted more than 91% of the world’s student population. While countries around the world are working towards flattening the curve of the still-growing pandemic, headlines mostly focus on relief efforts and agitation rates. However, no society can afford to overlook the education sector.

The sudden and unprecedented disruption to education places new challenges on governments to ensure continuity of learning. The issue affects students, parents, teachers, and caregivers. While the pandemic continues to unfold, it is increasingly clear that education itself and the next generation of learning will be defined by how well the policies and practices before COVID-19 and those that come in response to the pandemic work together to fill the gap to enable continuity. According to UNESCO, this will be the defining chapter from education disruption to recovery.

The World Bank has identified the impact of the coronavirus outbreak on education “a learning crisis with high evidence in learning poverty”. At least 1.5 billion children and youth from more than 160 countries have been affected by school closures done to limit the spread of COVID-19. In many countries, including Myanmar, school buildings have been turned into makeshift quarantine facilities.

Current educational content shared throughout the world revolves around the importance of precautionary measures, social distancing and staying at home, while formal education has been overshadowed. The situation emphasizes the importance of efficient distribution of information and knowledge to all parts of society.

Regional chapters of UN agencies such as UNESCO in Asia-Pacific are taking action to ensure that LearningNeverStops, making tailored educational material available on its portal. Similar efforts are undertaken by both organizations and governments, as well as some businesses. All of this has to happen as authorities debate when and how to reopen schools, as well as looking at longer-term impact of the COVID-19 situation.

Telenor has embraced online learning as a tool to upskill and reskill its own global workforce, challenging employees to spend at least 40 hours per year on learning something new. Now in its third year running, the learning challenge has produced new critical expertise for the company and helped instill a learning culture. Telenor Myanmar employees on average spend more than 60 hours on e-learning, suggesting that our staff see clear benefits with this form of learning.

These experiences have compelled us to also bring online education to our customers through our own digital platforms, recently launching the first telco-education program in Myanmar together with Strategy First University. The programme includes business management courses targeting small and medium enterprise owners, as well as young learners with basic educational content from the school curriculum.

In the meantime, all schools in Myanmar are still closed for safety reasons. While the Government is planning to re-open some in the coming months, there is still the need to provide continuous education in the country. Due to the exceptional nature of the current situation, the use of distance and virtual learning through digital platforms have developed greatly.

However, most students and teachers lack access to the necessary resources, such as appropriate infrastructure or technical skills to effectively take part in this e-learning revolution. Safe, reliable and efficient connectivity remains the foundation for any virtual learning experience. Ensuring this access is available to as many as possible is vital. In response to the current situation, industry players like Telenor are providing free access to the Ministry of Education’s online platform for six months while DBE Boxes, remote learning tools, have been donated to teachers and students in schools across Myanmar.

For this reason alone, it is urgent that all mobile industry players step up and contribute to the acceleration of digital learning. While the education sector is tasked to respond with digitally inclusive methods and implement plans outside of the traditional classroom, industry players must step up with innovative solutions and robust communication. E-learning technology may indeed become one of the most compelling sectors for businesses to explore, also in Myanmar.

By Jon Omund Revhaug, CEO of Telenor Myanmar

Mr Jon Omund Revhaug.

MoSWRR provides foods to street children in Yangon

The Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement, is helping street children and their families with food, protection and assistance. The ministry is cooperating with Yangon City Development Committee, UNICEF, TDHL, World Vision and Kinnected (Myanmar) in conducting an educational programme on COVID-19 and taking survey on the community of street children for their needs.

From 6 to 23 June, the ministry provided basic foods to a total of 100 street families.

Supplies to 126 families of street children in Dawbon, North Okkalapa and Hlaingthaya townships were given on 3 July, and provisions for 39 families in Dagon Seikkan Township will be distributed on 7 July. —MNA

(Translated by Khine Thazin Han)

1,134 Myanmar nationals come back home via Myawady border bridge on 3 July

Myanmar nationals arrive at Myawady border crossing after they returned from Thailand on 3 July. PHOTO: HTEIN LIN AUNG (IPRD)

A total of 1,134 Myanmar nationals returned home from Thailand through No.2 border bridge in Myawady Town, Kayin State, on 3 July.
India’s Modi makes surprise border visit after clash

NEW DELHI — Prime Minister Narendra Modi made a surprise visit to India’s northern frontier region with China on Friday in his first trip to the area since a deadly border clash last month.

The incident in the Galwan Valley saw 20 Indian troops killed and was the first time in 45 years that soldiers had died in combat on the Asian giants’ long-disputed Himalayan border.

Modi toured a military base at Nimoo in Ladakh, about 100 kilometres (60 miles) as the crow flies from the site of the June 15 battle.

He was due to go to a military hospital in nearby Leh to meet soldiers injured in the hand-to-hand skirmish, a security source told AFP.

The head of India’s military and the army chief also joined the visit to the sensitive area, which has been used as a staging post to build up troop numbers in the region.—AFP

Kim hails NKorea’s ‘shining success’ against COVID-19: KCNA

SEOUL — North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un has praised what he described as his country’s “shining success” in holding off the new coronavirus, according to state-run KCNA news agency Friday.

The head of the hermetic totalitarian state spoke at a Workers’ Party politburo meeting on Thursday discussing the impact of the virus, six months after North Korea closed borders and put thousands in to isolation.

KCNA reported that after reviewing efforts, Kim “said we have thoroughly prevented the inroad of the malignant virus and “maintained stable anti-epidemic situation despite the worldwide health crisis”.

The reclusive leader praised the “shining success achieved by the far-sighted leadership of the Party Central Committee and a high sense of voluntary spirit displayed by all people who move on social media, said Nguyen Huu Duong, chairman of Hoa Binh group that owns the hotel.

The hotel cost $200 million to build up troop numbers in the region.—AFP

Gilty pleasure: Vietnam opens world’s ‘first’ gold-plated hotel

HANOI — For guests at the “Dolce Hanoi Golden Lake” coffee comes in a gold cup and bath time is taken in gilded splendour.

The world’s first self-proclaimed gold-plated hotel is open for business – and the Vietnamese owners insist they have the Midas touch despite the cramping of global travel during the coronavirus pandemic.

The hotel cost $300 million to construct with a 24-carat plating across lobbies, an infinity pool and rooms with even cutlery, cups, shower heads and toilet seats receiving the golden treatment.

While expensive for Vietnamese, at $250 a night it is not prohibitive for wealthy locals craving a few nights living like Donald Trump, the US President renowned for his love of all things that glitter.

The hotel wants “ordinary people to the super rich... to check-in” both physically and on social media, said Nguyen Huy Duong, chairman of Hoa Binh group that owns the hotel.

A gold-plated infinity pool overlooks the city, while meals at the 25-storey hotel in downtown Hanoi may be mixed with a mysterious “gold substance”, according to the owners. So far, the smattering of customers appear to be delighted with Hanoi’s flashiest new digs.—AFP

NEWS IN BRIEF

Philippine coast guard searches for bodies of missing fishermen

MANILA — The search for 14 people missing after their fishing boat and a cargo ship collided off the Philippines has turned into a retrieval operation with little hope of finding them alive, the coast guard said Friday.

The vessels crashed last Saturday night in waters southwest of Manila, capsizing the Philippine fishing boat Liberty 5 of the coast of Occidental Mindoro province.

The crew of the Hong Kong-registered cargo ship MV Vienna Wood has been detained as investigators prepare to lay criminal charges over the incident.

“There is a very slim chance that we may still find them alive,” Philippine coast guard chief George Ursabia told a local radio station, as the search shifts to retrieving the bodies of the missing men in the next two days.

“Eventually we will terminate our efforts on this,” Philippine authorities have deployed aircraft and ships in the hunt for the 12 missing Filipino crew members and their two passengers.—AFP

S. Korea names spy chief Suh Hoon as new national security director

SEOUL — South Korean President Moon Jae In on Friday named intelligence agency chief Suh Hoon as new National Security Office director, his office said, in a major reshuffle of his diplomatic and security teams amid renewed tensions between the two Koreas.

Moon also plans to appoint ruling party lawmaker Lee In Young as new unification minister, following his predecessor Kim Yeon Chul’s resignation over the strained inter-Korean ties. The president tapped former culture and tourism minister Park Jae Won as Suh’s successor at the National Intelligence Service.—Kyodo
India opens vast railway network to private players

MUMBAI — India has opened up its vast railway sector to private companies, allowing firms to operate trains on certain routes, in a bid to boost its stuttering, virus-hit economy.

The 167-year-old train network carries 20 million passengers daily but is plagued by deadly accidents, rickety infrastructure, lack of modern amenities and poor investment.

In an announcement late Wednesday, the railway ministry said it would now permit businesses to run trains along 109 routes, inviting bids from firms weeks after New Delhi opened up coal mining to the private sector.

“India’s 167-year-old train network carries 20 million passengers. PHOTO: (AFP)"

A help wanted sign hangs on a window of a restaurant in Lower Manhattan, May 4, 2018 in New York City. PHOTO: AFP

“Help wanted” signs are a common sight in towns across the U.S. labour market won’t recover to pre-pandemic level by 2030: CBO

WASHINGTON — The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) said Thursday that U.S. unemployment rate in the fourth quarter of 2020 could be 4.4 per cent, still above the historically low of 3.5 per cent the country experienced before the COVID-19 outbreak.

In a 10-year economic outlook report, the CBO projected unemployment rate to fall to 10.5 per cent in the fourth quarter this year, and then to 7.6 per cent in the fourth quarter of 2021.

Despite continuous decline, U.S. unemployment rate could still be 4.4 per cent in the fourth quarter of 2020, indicating the COVID-19 pandemic’s scarring effect on U.S. labour market over the next decade.

U.S. employers added 4.8 million jobs in June, pushing the nation’s unemployment rate down to 11.1 per cent, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) reported Thursday.

According to CBO’s projection, gross domestic product (GDP) will grow by 4.8 per cent.

Several U.S. states, mostly in the South and West, have recently seen an uptick in COVID-19 cases, prompting some of them to roll back or pause reopening plans. Texas, for example, announced last week that it would close bars and reduce restaurant occupancy.

India’s third-largest economy has been clobbered by the pandemic and a months-long lockdown, growing at its slowest pace in at least two decades last quarter. The shutdown, which put millions out of work overnight, is widely expected to plague the country into recession.

U.S. economy will be in at least two decades last quarter. PHOTO: (AFP)

The objective of this initiative is to introduce modern technology rolling stock with reduced maintenance, reduced transit time, boost job creation, provide enhanced safety, provide world class travel experience to passengers,” it added.

The project will require an investment of $39.8 million and private players will have to pay the government fixed haul charges and a percentage of profits determined during the bidding process. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has sought to privatize a range of industries that have been under state control for decades, sparking criticism from the opposition Congress party.

“Now the government is in a desperate mood to sell a great chunk of one of our largest national asset of Indian Railways,” Congress politician Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury tweeted.

“Privatization cannot be construed as a panacea of railways malady,” he added.

The tottering network is notorious for accidents, with 15,000 passengers killed every year according to a 2012 government report that described the deaths as a “massacre.”

India’s 167-year-old train network carries 20 million passengers.

India’s 167-year-old train network carries 20 million passengers. PHOTO: (AFP)

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India’s 167-year-old train network carries 20 million passengers. PHOTO: (AFP)
**Boeing communications chief resigns after article from 30 years ago**

NEW YORK — Boeing’s communications chief resigned Thursday following a complaint over an article he wrote more than 30 years ago contending that women should not serve in combat.

His resignation comes as a number of US companies examine their corporate culture following weeks of protests in the country over racism and police brutality, following the killing of African-American George Floyd by a white police officer. Niel Golightly leaves his post at Boeing after just months on the job. In a press statement, he said that the article was “a 29-year-old Cold War navy pilot’s misguided contribution to a debate that was live at the time.”

“My argument was embarrassingly wrong and offensive,” Golightly said, adding that dialogue that followed afterwards “quickly opened my eyes, including changed my mind, and shaped the principles of fairness, inclusion, respect and diversity that have guided my professional life since.” His exit comes amid a trend as the aviation industry navigates the coronavirus pandemic that has resulted in travel restrictions and lockdown measures.—AFP

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**Eight major Canadian banks join Facebook ad boycott**

MONTREAL — Eight major Canadian banks said Thursday they would heed a call by other major global advertisers to boycott Facebook over its approach to racism and hate speech.

 Scotiabank, RBC, CIBC, TD, BMO, National Bank of Canada, Desjardins and Laurentian Bank confirmed to AFP that they support the StopHateForProfit movement launched by social justice activists.

That means they will pull their ads from Facebook and its sister photo-sharing platform Instagram.

“We have temporarily paused paid advertising on Facebook and Instagram,” a TD spokesperson said.

“TD is committed to the fight against racism and hate speech and to the work needed to help create a safer and more inclusive society.”

An RBC spokesman said the bank wanted to work towards “eliminating systemic racism and unconscious bias, and enhance diversity, equity and inclusion.”

“One way we can do that is by standing against misinformation and hate speech, which only make systemic racism more pervasive,” he added.

More than 400 companies including Adidas, Coca-Cola, Puma and Starbucks have suspended their ad buys on Facebook, which has more than 1.7 billion daily users.

The StopHateForProfit campaign was launched by pressure groups including the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in the United States.

The movement gained momentum in the wake of the May death in police custody of George Floyd, an unarmed African American.

Last week, Facebook said it would ban a “wider category of hateful content” in response to the growing protests. —AFP

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**Israeli mining magnate dodged US sanctions in DRC deals: report**

KINSHASA, Democratic Republic of the Congo — Israeli mining magnate Dan Gertler used a global money laundering network to get around US sanctions and extract further mineral wealth from DR Congo, an investigation by two rights organizations found Thursday.

The United States in 2017 froze all the assets and accounts of Gertler, a close ally of former DRC president Joseph Kabila, accusing the billionaire of profiting from massive resource corruption in Africa.

But an investigation released Thursday by Global Witness and the Platform to Protect Whistleblowers in Africa (PPLAAF) alleged that Gertler dodged the sanctions to rake in millions over the last several years.

“Gertler appears to have used a money laundering network stretching from Democratic Republic of Congo to Europe and Israel to evade US sanctions against him, funnel millions of dollars abroad, and acquire new mining assets in DRC,” their report said.

It said its findings were “based on documents provided by whistleblowers despite great risks to their personal safety.”

The investigation found that Gertler and a network of proxies set up accounts with branches of the Cameroon-based Afriland First Bank, and at least $100 million flowed through associated accounts between June 2018 and May last year.

Just one day before the report was released, Afriland First Bank lodged a complaint against it with the public prosecutor’s office in Paris.

The complaint was over the “theft of documents, violation of banking secrets and defamation,” lawyer Eric Moutet told AFP. It was filed in France because the office of PPLAAF chief William Bourdon is in Paris, Moutet added.

Transparency campaigners have long accused Gertler of having used his friendship with Kabila to obtain lucrative mineral rights at bargain prices before selling them onward at huge margins. —AFP

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**Claims Day Notice**

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**BIZ / AD**
Towards native land of King Alaung Mintaya’s First Queen Mei Yun San

By Maung Tha (Archaeology)

KhinU Township, the native land of eminent Buddhist monk Webu Sayadaw, was also a birthplace of Mei Yun San, First Queen of King Alaung Mintaya, who established the Third Myanmar Empire.

KhinU Township in Shwebo District of Sagaing Region is 751 kilometres north from Yangon and 33.5 kilometres northwest of Shwebo. It is necessary to take four hours for RBE drive from Mandalay to KhinU. Anya Thihataw Pagoda and ancient Sipoktara city take positions in KhinU Township.

KhinU in the records

According to the records of the Ministry of Home Affairs, an area of outpost called KinU in Myanmar language was set to defend enemies from area of Wuntho Saopha in the northern part and that of Moomeik Saopha in the eastern part in Shan State as well as those from Kathei from the north. Later, the name of area was changed to KhinU from KinU.

Myanmar encyclopaedia mentioned that Chaukywa, Kantha and Nyaungzin stations were combined as Chaukywa Township in around 1891 AD, and government offices were set up in the area of KhinU. It was governed by Nga Chit Nyo who did not be loyalty to King Alaung Mintaya in Konbaung era.

The majority of the people in the township believe in Buddhism and some people in Christianity and Islam.

The township is combined with five wards and 147 villages in 59 village-tracts. It gains 44.32 inches of rainfall in 2017 set as the largest record.

Ancient evidences in KhinU

By Maung Tha (Archaeology)

Ingyinpin Tawya Township

Local people assumed that an earthen lake in Pintin Village, among five self-reliant dams and five earthen lakes irrigating farm-lands in KhinU Township, had been dredged since Pyu era. Such lake is called Mawragiwa Lake (Daunglezalok Lake) with storage capacity of 10,240 cubic feet of water benefiting 1,800 acres of lands.

Ingyinpin Tawya

Local people say Phaung-daw-U Pagoda in Pintin Village was built by King Narapatisithu of Bagan in 555 Myanmar era together with Shweokkaw Pagoda in Nyaunggan Village of KhinU.
Township and Shwelinpin Pagoda in Sipoktara Village. The dam-aged PhaungdawU Pagoda was renovated in 1993. Now, the 37 feet high pagoda can be seen.

According to the data of the township, Ainya Thihatat Pagoda, Sipoktara Shwelinpin Pagoda and Ingnyinpin Tawya are eminent religious edifices among 1,617 pagodas, 538 stupas and 297 monasteries in the township.

Some people assumed Htantabin Village as an ancient city near Zigon Village, north of KhinU but it may be an ordinary village due to lack of brick walls. However, a brick monastery in Nyaungyan era takes a position in Htantabin Village.

Shwekar Village, two miles northwest of ancient Sipoktara city was the native village of Mei Yun San, First Queen of King Alauk Mintaya. Her residence is 200 feet long and 168 feet wide. The compound is still used to feed water into Maha Nanda Lake in Shwebo.

Sipoktara

Ancient Sipoktara city in KhinU Township is located at north latitude 22°49’ and east longitude 95°35’. Currently, Sipoktara is a village, formed with 669 houses of 3,145 people.

Travellers must turn right at the entrance from KhinU and go straight along the five miles long earthen road. They can see one-side collapsed ancient walls of any buildings. The compound is 200 feet long and 168 feet wide.

The Buddha image is kept in ancient, wooden Sipoktara Monastery, and it is fenced by iron rods.

Ten Buddha images of King Narapatisithu are located in Sipoktara in KhinU Township, Kaunghmutaw Pagoda in Sagaing, Samon Village in Sagaing Township, Hlahtwe Village in Wetlet Township, Shwetaza Pagoda in Shwebo, and one each in Mingin, Singu, Kalay, Kyahnyet and ChaungU townships.

The west hall of the monastery stores ancient objects, Buddha images and human statues. Moreover, Thitadaw red treatise used in cursing is displayed at the monastery but the original treatise was buried.

The wooden monastery was built with gift posts. Each post is labelled in numbers in addition to names of donors in golden colour. Eastern posts were re-gilt and the western ones wore in original works.

Ingnyinpin Tawya

While in KhinU Township, Ma Khin Zu Zu Hlaing and family took me to Ingnyinpin Tawya where eminent Webu Sayadaw resided.

Ingnyinpin Tawya is five miles north of earthen road from the right of entrance to KhinU. Then, the road leads to Ingnyinpin Village.

The pagoda built by Webu Sayadaw and other religious edifices can be seen at one mile square brick walls at Ingnyinpin Tawya. These buildings store utensils used by the Sayadaw, coffin and many documentary photos. The vehicle used by the Sayadaw is displayed in the precinct of the Tawya.

Despite not so many visitors, KhinU Township preserving interesting sites together with an ancient city is historical area.

(Translated by Than Tun Aung)
Yangon United vaccinated against seasonal flu

A vaccination programme for Yangon United was organized at the Yangon United Sports Complex in Yangon yesterday.

The programme was conducted to prevent the football club’s players and officials from getting influenza, according to the social media.

The club’s officials and players were tested for diseases and provided vaccinations to keep them healthy and get ready for the upcoming matches. On 16 July, the team will play against Magwe FC at their home ground Yangon United Sports Complex in Yangon. — Kyaw Khin

Chinland FC assists IDPs from Paletwa

CHINLAND FC donated foods, hand sanitizers, books, and clothing to the IDPs from Paletwa, who currently arrived in Hmawbi, yesterday.

A total of K2 million worth of donation including 70 rice bags, oil, salt and onion, 35 bottles of hand sanitizers, 56 dozens of exercise books, 70 pieces of neither garment (35 for men and 35 for women), and stationeries were distributed to the IDPs from Paletwa, who currently arrived in Hmawbi under the Chinland for Paletwa Programme.

Under the programme, the football club will continue donating. The football club also expressed thanks to the well-wishers and donors who contributed to their programme from their social media page. — Kyaw Khin

Leroy Sane targets Champions League glory after signing for Bayern Munich

BERLIN — Leroy Sane has targeted Champions League glory with Bayern Munich after joining the Bundesliga giants from Manchester City for a fee of around 50 million euros ($56 million) on Friday.

The Germany winger has returned to his home country on a five-year contract after receiving the blessing of City coach Pep Guardiola.

“Bayern is a very big club and has big goals — these goals suit me as well,” said the 24-year-old Sane.

“I want to win as many titles as possible with Bayern, and the Champions League is at the top.”

The Bundesliga champions did not give the transfer fee, but Sky Sports and the BBC have reported that Bayern and City agreed a fee of £54.8 million (60.8m euros, $68.2m). German daily Bild claim the fee is around 50 million euros.

Sane said he is looking forward to linking up again with Bayern head coach Hansi Flick, who has just steered the club to a eighth straight league title in his first season in charge.

“I know Hansi Flick from the under-21 national team. We had a very good relationship there,” added Sane. His transfer became an open secret this week that Sane was likely to leave after rejecting a new contract offer with a year left on his existing deal at City.

The 24-year-old spent four years at City, winning two Premier League titles, an FA Cup, two League Cups and two Community Shields, but European success eluded him.

“We wish Leroy all the best at his new club in this new chapter of his career,” said Guardiola in a statement on Friday.

“Leroy has been part of one of the most special periods in this club’s history and he leaves with the best wishes of everyone here at Manchester City.” —AFP

‘Next season started today’: Sterling has Liverpool in his sights

LONDON — Raheem Sterling said Manchester City proved a point in a 4-0 thrashing of newly-crowned Premier League champions Liverpool on Thursday (Jul 2) as they look to take the title back next season.

Sterling scored in a competitive match against his old club for the first time and also had a major part in two other goals as City inflicted just Liverpool’s third league defeat in two seasons in emphatic fashion.

Kevin De Bruyne opened the scoring from the penalty spot after Sterling was wrestled to the ground by Joe Gomez. Sterling and Phil Foden then made it 3-0 before half-time and Alex Oxledge-Chamberlain could only turn Sterling’s shot into his own net to round off the scoring in the second half.

“We had a test against the current champions to make a point and we did brilliant,” said Sterling, “Next season started today and we did well.”

City boss Pep Guardiola is hoping the manner of the victory can spur his side on to finish the season on a high by succeeding Liverpool as Champions League winners for the first time in the club’s history.

“It is important,” said Guardiola on the confidence boost for his side. “Especially because they were incredibly focused.”

City had given Liverpool a guard of honour before kick-off in their first game since becoming champions. — AFP

Manchester City’s Raheem Sterling (left) celebrates scoring against his former club Liverpool. (AFP PHOTO/DAVE THOMPSON)

The Germany winger has returned to his home country on a five-year contract after receiving the blessing of City coach Pep Guardiola. PHOTO: AFP