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Titles, certificates conferred on winners of 72nd Tipitakadhara Tipitaka Kovida Selection Exam



Congratulatory ceremony for title-winners of the 72nd Tipitakadhara Tipitaka Kovida Selection Exam is held at the Mahapasana Cave of Thiri Mingala Kaba Aye Hill in Yangon on 20 July.
PHOTO: MNA

SENIOR Buddhist monks who won the highly advanced levels of religious exams received certificates and titles in Yangon yesterday.

The Venerable Kyaukpadaung Sayadaw won the highest title in the 72nd Tipitakadhara Tipitaka Kovida Selection Examination this year, which was organized by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture, and the advanced level certificates were presented to a total of 106 Buddhist monks at the Mahapasana Cave of Thiri Mingala Kaba Aye Hill.

State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee Sayadaws led by Chairman Abhidhaja Maharathaguru Abhidhaja Aggamaha Saddhammajotika Bhamo Sayad-

aw Bhaddanta Kumara Bhivamsa, Sayadaws of Tipitakadhara Tipitaka Kovida Selection Board, senior Tipitaka Dhamabanttagarika monks, senior Tipitakadhara Tipitaka Kovida monks, in-charge monks of the exam, invited monks, and the title winning monks for the 72nd edition of Tipitakadhara Tipitaka Kovida attended the ceremony.

Those present at the event were State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, Union Minister for Religious Affairs and Culture Thura U Aung Ko, Union Minister for Office of the Union Government U Min Thu, Union Minister for Information Dr Pe Myint and wife, Union Minister for Health and Sports Dr Myint Htwe, Yangon Region Chief Minister U Phyo

Min Thein and wife, ministers from the Yangon region government and departmental officials.

The Chairman Sayadaw of the Tipitakadhara Tipitaka Kovida Selection Board gave the Five Precepts to the congregation led by the State Counsellor.

Bhamo Sayadaw Bhaddanta Kumara Bhivamsa read out the words of the advice presented by the State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee.

(The text of this document is covered on page 2)

After this, the State Counsellor presented her supplication with respect to religious matters.

(The text of this document is covered on page 3)

Ashin Panna Vamsa Bhivamsa was presented the title of

Tipitakadhara Tipitaka Kovida by the State Counsellor.

The only winner of the 72nd Tipitakadhara Tipitaka Kovida Selection Examination for this year is from Tipitaka Maha Gandawin Nikaya Monastery in Dagon Myothit (East) Township, Yangon. Titles and certificates were also offered to the winners of different levels for Tipitaka Exam by the Union Ministers, Chief Minister of the regional government, Speaker of the regional Hluttaw and senior government officials.

The leading monk of Thanlyin Minkyaung Monastery in Thanlyin Township, who is also the Executive Member of State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee, delivered a sermon to the

congregation before sharing merits. The annual Tipitakadhara Tipitaka Kovida Selection Examination began in 1948 when the country regained independence, and the exam was aimed for the emergence of learned monks who can recite Buddhist scriptures of discipline, discourse and profound Dhamma which are termed as the three Tipitakas during the Sixth Buddhist Council that marked the 2,500th anniversary of the Buddha's enlightenment.

The late Venerable Mingun Sayadaw Ashin Vicittasara Bhivamsa is the first title-winner of the Tipitakadhara exam in the country, and a total of 15 monks have received the Tipitakadhara Tipitaka Kovida to date.—MNA

(Translated by Aung Khin)

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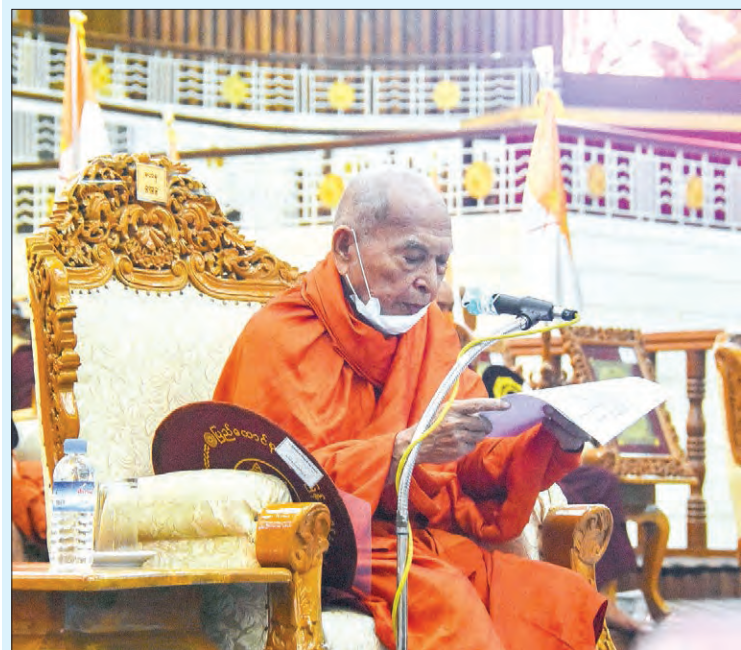
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Advice of Bhamo Sayadaw Bhaddanta Kumara Bhivamsa at ceremony to congratulate winners of 72nd Tipitakadhara Tipitaka Kovida Selection Exam



Abhidhaja Maharatthaguru Abhidhaja Aggamaha Saddhammajotika Bhamo Sayadaw Bhaddanta Kumara delivers Ovadakahta(words of advice). **PHOTO: MNA**

I would like to offer some pieces of advice on behalf of State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee to 106 monks who won the various levels of 72nd Tipitakadhara Tipitaka Kovi-

da Selection Exam and laypersons, including the government members, at the congratulatory ceremony.

The evil celestial king, Mara, urged the newly Buddha for demise while the latter was residing at the foot of Ajapala bayan tree in Uruvela forest in the 8th week after His Enlightenment.

However, Buddha turned down the Mara's demand, saying He will not pass away before His disciples learn His teachings and understand the treatises; before they could take practices of purification; before they could teach the Dhamma to others; before they could promote the Dhamma; before they could use the Dhamma to encounter other ideologies.

Buddha Sasana will per-

petuate only when qualified monks who can teach treatises of Buddha teachings and prevent other ideologies from coming into the Buddha Sasana.

The winners in 72nd Tipitakadhara Tipitaka Kovida Selection Exam have already studied the treatises from the foundation to the advanced levels; the State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee, monks and people have appreciated the success of winning monks who passed all the three categories of Pitaka treaties, two and half categories, two categories and so on.

These monks also need to realize that you have fulfilled the expectation of Buddha to a certain extent and you must enjoy it. Referring to the response of Buddha to the Mara, it can be concluded that the

former hoped his disciples to turn the teachings into insight knowledge.

Therefore, all the Buddhist monks are advised to develop practical knowledge from theoretical knowledge, only then the monks could enjoy the ultimate benefits of Pariyatti, in terms of Magga and Nibbana.

The laypersons including government members are found to be supporting Buddha Sasana to the highest degree.

The laypersons who are providing material supports and the monks who are the sources of meritorious deeds need to establish interdependent relationships for the perpetuation of Buddha Sasana and to lay stronger foundation for Nibbana that is free from all sufferings.

(Translated by Aung Khin)

Union Minister U Thein Swe attends coordination meeting on making accurate voters list in Yangon Region

A coordination meeting to make the voters list in Yangon Region more accurate was organized at the Mingalar Hall of Yangon Region government office yesterday morning.

The Union Minister for Labour, Immigration and Population U Thein Swe, Chairperson of the work committee on population and statistical data of Yangon Region and regional Minister for Immigration and Human Resources Daw Moe Moe Su Kyi, Chairperson of the Yangon Region Election Sub-Commission U Kyi Myint and members of the Sub-Commission, the Staff Officer of the regional Immigration and Population Department, District-level Staff Officers and Township-level Staff Officers attended the meeting.

First, Union Minister U Thein Swe said that the government is exerting great efforts to safeguard the right to vote of every eligible voter. The regional Election Sub-Commissions, the General Administration Departments and the Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population are collaborating to compile accurate voters list, added the Union Minister.

He stressed that Myanmar nationals staying in foreign nations must not lose their rights to vote, so the ministry is collaborating with relevant Myanmar embassies. He also said that the departments concerned are working together to guarantee the right to vote of Myanmar migrant workers who recently came back to Myanmar.

In Yangon Region, the list of eligible voters has been compiled from July to September 2019. The voters list is set to be announced on 25 July for the first time, and the updated list will be announced in October, said the Union Minister.

He also highlighted the need to guarantee the right to vote of those who moved to another state or region.

Then, the Union Minister



Union Minister U Thein Swe delivers speech at coordination meeting on making the voters list in Yangon Region. **PHOTO: MNA**

made detailed discussions on how the ministry is cooperating with relevant officials from states or regions to make the voters list more accurate and reliable.

Yangon Region uses a separate server and database system in compiling the list of eligible voters, so the relevant data collecting process is powerful, said the Union Minister. The data collection activities can also help the processes for e-ID and e-Passport, he added.

He also reminded that the relevant officials and staff need to work in line with the COVID-19 related guidelines set by the Ministry of Health

and Sports.

The Union Minister concluded that all stakeholders should take the task as a national duty and urged them to cooperatively work together.

Afterwards, the regional Minister Daw Moe Moe Su Kyi talked about the activities of the work committee on population and statistical data of Yangon Region, the matters related to issuing Citizenship Scrutiny Cards, and preparations for compiling the voters list.

Next, Chairperson of the Yangon Region Election Sub-Commission U Kyi Myint explained compiling of the list of eligible voters in Yangon Re-

gion, their efforts to guarantee the right to vote, and checking the data reliable.

Then, the Head of the regional Immigration and Population Department U Saw Naing explained about the Thitsa project for effectively issuing Citizenship Scrutiny Cards.

Then, The attendees gave explanation of their relevant works in making the list accurate.

Then, Union Minister U Thein Swe reviewed and coordinated the discussions of the attendees—MNA

(Translated by Maung Maung Swe)

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.

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



State Counsellor's congratulatory remarks at the Tipitakadhara Tipitaka Kovida ceremony to confer religious titles

Most respected venerable monks,
May I first express my delight, in accordance with the 29th stanza Samana Dassana that says it is auspiciousness to see the holy monks in the 38 Highest Blessings (Mingala Sutta), to pay homage to the State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee Sayadaws led by Chairman of this committee, Sayadaws of Tipitakadhara Tipitaka Kovida Selection Board, senior Tipitakadhara Tipitaka Kovida Tipitakadhara Dhamma Banttagarika monks, the exam assistance Sayadaws and the title-winning monks in this Maha Passana Cave where the Sixth Buddhist Council was held.

Most respected Sayadaws,
Although the Buddha attained parinibbana over 2,500 years ago, the teachings of ultimate truths to human beings remain unchanged thanks to the venerable Buddhist monks.
Among the monks who learned the treatises of Buddha by heart and the meanings, the efforts of Buddhist monks in Myanmar on the perpetuation of Pariyatti and Patipatti are still gaining momentum. The good-wishes and generosity of the Myanmar people who have supported the Sangha with the four requisites are still strong and for this, I am very much encouraged.
The treatises of Pitaka were recorded on palm-leaves at the 4th Buddhist Council during the reign of King Wattagamani in Sri Lanka in Sasana Era 450 (BC 93), on the stone inscription at the Fifth Buddhist



The State Counsellor presents her supplication with respect to religious matters on 20 July. PHOTO: MNA

Council under the patronage of King Mindon in Sasana Era 2415 (1871) and put to print at the Sixth Sangha Council in concurrence with Sasana Era 2500 just after the country gained its independence.
The Tipitakadhara Tipitaka Kovida Selection Exam has emerged along with the independence of the country in 1948 to generate the learned monks who can recite the three canons of Pittaka by heart, and the exam has been held 72 times.
In addition, the exam is also a legacy of the Six Buddhist Council, and it is very

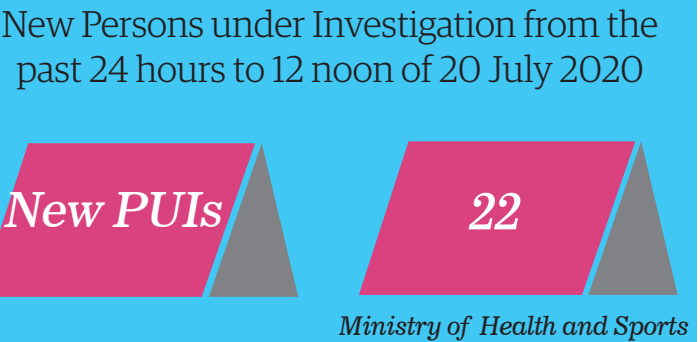
padaung Sayadaw) from Tipitaka Maha Gandawin Nikaya Monastery in Dagon Myothit (East) Township, Yangon. He passed the two versions of exam—the references and the logics of treatises—this year and has become the 15th winner monk of the exam. I am very honoured and pleased to have this opportunity to pay respects to the learned Sayadaw.

Most venerable monks,
Buddha had two chief disciples, namely Ashin Moggallana and Ashin Śāriputra, in his lifetime. They were regarded as the left-hand and right-hand disciples of the Buddha respectively. The first one had very high supernatural power and the second one had the depth of knowledge wisdom. Recognizing Ashin Śāriputra as the right-hand disciple, Buddha had more regard for wisdom than for power.
The Tipitakadhara Tipitaka Kovida Selection Exam and its congratulatory ceremony have been organized for 72 times since 1948, and the efforts of venerable monk on the propagation of Buddha Sasana are well appreciated.

In conclusion, may I express my good wishes for the three branches of Sasana in the following verse: -
'In comparing lotus, water and embankment, if Pariyatti is strong like an embankment, Patipatti will exist in it like water; and then Pativedha, as a golden lotus, will flourish, in terms of three branches of Sasana that will perpetuate for 5,000 years'.
(Translated by Aung Khin)

COVID-19 figure in Myanmar remains at 341 after no new case reported on 20 July

Updated at 8 pm, 20 July 2020



“People are the key”

Titles, certificates conferred on winners of 72nd Tipitakadhara ...

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Ashin Panna Vamsa Bhivamsa from Tipitaka Maha Gandawin Nikaya Monastery receives Tipitakadhara Tipitaka Kovida title and certificate presented by the State Counsellor. **PHOTO: MNA**



Ashin Canda Siri from Tipitaka Nikaya monastery in Mingon, Sagaing, receives Digabhanaka title and certificate presented by Union Minister U Min Thu. **PHOTO: MNA**



Ashin Canda Joti from Shwe Taung Oo Tipitaka Dhammapala Monastery receives Visihta Digabhanaka title and certificate presented by Union Minister Dr Pe Myint. **PHOTO: MNA**



Ashin Janinda from Tipitaka Nikaya Monastery from Mingon, Sagaing, receives Diganikaya Kovida title and certificate presented by Union Minister Thura U Aung Ko. **PHOTO: MNA**



Ashin Nay Meinda Lankara from Tipitaka Maha Gandawin Nikaya Monastery in Dagon Myothit (East) Township receives Vinaya Kovida title and certificate presented by Union Minister Dr Myint Htwe. **PHOTO: MNA**



Ashin Canda Sara Lankara from Myitkwet Monastery of Hinthada Township receives Vinaya Kovida title and certificate presented by Chief Minister U Phyo Min Thein. **PHOTO: MNA**

VP U Henry Van Thio inspects damages to embankments in Amarapura

VICE President U Henry Van Thio, in his capacity as the Chairman of National Disaster Management Committee, inspected damages to embankments near Shwe Gae wastewater treatment facility, the Strand Road and rescue camps in Amarapura Township, Mandalay Region, yesterday.

Union Ministers and Deputy Chairmen of the management committee Lt-Gen Soe Htut and Dr Win Myat Aye, members of the committee U Thant Sin Maung, Deputy Ministers U Hla Kyaw and U Soe Aung and officials heard reports on the situations of damages, the flood of Ayeyawady river water and urgent renovation works.

Vice President U Henry Van



Vice President U Henry Van Thio views the photo of damaged areas of embankments near Amarapura Township on 20 July. PHOTO: MNA

Thio gave necessary instructions on providing assistance for renovation works.

The Vice President and party also witnessed the damages of Shwe Gae wastewater treatment facility, the Strand Road and rescue camps where the flood victims are temporarily accommodated. During his meeting with the people, the Vice President remarked that environmental degradation cannot be avoided, and more challenges are expected in the following years.

The Vice President encouraged people not to feel upset about it, but to take care of health at the rescue camps and offered to keep providing assistance to the flood victims. The Vice President, the Union Ministers and the Deputy Ministers then provided relief assistance to the evacuated families.

In the afternoon, they inspected renovation works on the damages which forced the residents in Yin Taw village-tract, Hmantan Ward, Kyantan Ward, Zegyo Ward and Ngaltai Ward to leave their homes.—MNA

(Translated by Aung Khin)



Vice President U Henry Van Thio and party inspect the damaged embankments near Amarapura Township on 20 July. PHOTO: MNA



Vice President U Henry Van Thio and government officials comfort flood victims in Amarapura Township on 20 July. PHOTO: MNA



Vice President U Henry Van Thio gives relief aid to a flood victim in Amarapura on 20 July. PHOTO: MNA



Vice President U Henry Van Thio inspects renovation of breakwater near Amarapura on 20 July. PHOTO: MNA

MoE, MoHS hold coordination meeting for reopening of schools

UNION MINISTER for Education Dr Myo Thein Gyi and Union Minister for Health and Sports Dr Myint Htwe presided over the coordination meeting of the two ministries yesterday for reopening schemes of high schools which were suspended due to the outbreak of COVID-19.

The meeting discussed the ranking of schools in order of three levels based on the findings in checklists for readiness of reopening, recommendations of region/state health officers, formation of inspection teams at the schools and the works of supervising teams at the levels of township, region and states.

The meeting which was attended by 40 senior officials

also decided to reopen 3,772 high schools under Level-A as scheduled on 21 July, followed by 1,220 schools under the Level-B and 838 schools under Level-C.

The two ministries also agreed to conduct inspections of teams comprised of officials with General Administration Department, Public Health Department, officials of Nay Pyi Taw Council and State/Region governments and representatives of teachers and parents.

These teams categorized the levels of schools after they scrutinized the preventive measures against COVID-19 at the schools from 17 to 20 July.—MNA

(Translated by Aung Khin)



Union Minister Dr Myo Thein Gyi (left top) speaks during the meeting for reopening schemes of high schools. **PHOTO: MNA**

MoHS minister visits COVID-19 treatment centre in Phaunggyi

UNION MINISTER for Health and Sports Dr Myint Htwe visited the COVID-19 treatment centre (Phaunggyi) at the Central Institute of Civil Service (Lower Myanmar) in Hlegu Township, Yangon, yesterday.

At the meeting with officials, the Union Minister expressed thanks to the officials of Yangon Region Government, the Central Institute of Civil Service (Lower Myanmar), the Ministry of Construction, the relevant ministries, civil society organizations and private hospitals for their coordination in fighting against COVID-19 by providing assistance in treatments, medicines and medical equipment, causing encouragement to the health workers in facing against this disease.

The Union Minister also remarked that Myanmar has controlled the pandemic to a certain extent under the leadership of State Counsellor in cooperation with relevant ministries, respective organizations and people.

Myanmar has also no pa-



Union Minister Dr Myint Htwe visits the COVID-19 treatment centre (Phaunggyi) in Hlegu Township, Yangon Region on 20 July 2020. **PHOTO: MNA**

tient at intensive care units until now, and the high skills of medical workers can also be realized, however, the country needs to monitor adhering to rules and disciplines at the border crossings and quarantined centres in prevention of second wave of this pandemic.

The Union Minister added

that the record books in treatment of COVID-19 would be very helpful for prevention of similar pandemic, and the recent experiences will be useful in preparing for the natural disasters.

Rector of Central Institute of Civil Service (Lower Myanmar) U Kyaw Win Han explained that the facility was

operated with 180 healthcare providers and 200 persons for related assistance in early stage, and the number of persons have been reduced to 100 and 180 respective.

Dr Ko Ko Naing who worked as medical the superintendent of COVID-19 treatment centre (Phaunggyi) briefed on the ex-

pansion of facilities for patients, installations of oxygen pipelines, ICUs, equipment, CCTV, internet network, storage of medical supplies, laboratory, CT scanning, security affairs and transports for patients.

The centre provided medical treatments to 149 patients, and 132 persons have been discharged from it, while 17 persons are still receiving medical treatments.

Professor Dr Zaw Wai Soe, the Vice Chairman (2) of Management Committee at the centre, presented the management and medical treatment sectors.

Professor Dr Zaw Lin Aung from University of Medicine (1) talked about preparations for 500 patients at the centre which can be expanded to accommodate 2,000 persons.

The Union Minister, together with Permanent Secretary Professor Dr Thet Khaing Win, inspected the ICUs at the centre.—MNA

(Translated by Aung Khin)

57 Myanmar nationals enter Chinshwehaw border town in returning home

LOCAL authorities in Chinshwehaw border town of northern Shan State received 57 Myanmar returnees from China on 19 and 20 July.

Among those returnees, 44 were males and 13 females.

A total of 7,467 males and 6,014 females have returned Myanmar from China through Chinshwehaw border crossing

from 30 April to now.—Zin Zin (IPRD-Chinshwehaw)

(Translated by Aung Khin)

Myanmar nationals returned from China queue to have their temperature checked at the Chinshwehaw border checkpoint on 20 July 2020. **PHOTO: ZIN ZIN (IPRD-CHINSHWEHAW)**





Post COVID world

The term “Post COVID world” has come to mean quite a wide range of things. Does it mean we cannot return to the world as we know it before the end of 2019; even if we find an effective cure, can we not return to the status quo? What are the things we won’t be able to change?

Because of very harsh and violent experiences, people, countries, the whole world have seen tremendous and irreversible changes. We can see this even if we look at our own history. If we look at the whole world, during 20 decades we saw World War I, World War II, the Cold War, the post-Cold War, and the communications technology revolution.

(Excerpt from State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi’s Facebook post on 22 June 2020)

Union Minister provides relief aid to flood victims in Amarapura township

HOUSEHOLDS from four wards in Amarapura Township were evacuated to a safe place on 19 July night after the water from Ayeyawady River likely to inundate the wards following a sluice gate broke at the Shwe Gae wastewater treatment plant on Mandalay-Sagaing Road in Yin Taw village-tract, Amarapura Township, Mandalay region.

The Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Dr Win Myat Aye visited the flood relief camps yesterday morning. He donated cash to buy rice and food for the flood victims, as well as provided COVID-19 preventive supplies.

Following the inundation of the river, Mandalay-Sagaing Road was damaged and the water from Ayeyawady River flew into Nankak Lake. The Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Dr Win Myat Aye also supervised and coordinated activities to stop the river water flowing into the lake.

The Deputy Minister U Soe Aung, the Security and Border Af-



Union Minister Dr Win Myat Aye presents cash assistance for flood victims to a local representative in Amarapura Township, Mandalay Region on 20 July 2020. **PHOTO: MNA**

fairs Minister of Mandalay Region government, the regional Social Affairs Minister, regional MPs, the Director General of the Disaster Management Department, the Deputy Director General of the General Administration De-

partment of Mandalay Region, Tatmadaw, Myanmar Police Force, Myanmar Fire Services Department and social organizations also visited the location and provided assistance for flood victims.

Firstly, the Union Minister Dr Win Myat Aye visited the temporary relief camps located at Shin Pin Set Thwar pagoda, Moe Kauing Myat Swar Phayar Religious Hall and Kyan Tann Religious Hall. The Union Minister made

remarks related to prevention of COVID-19, offered the flood victims encouragement, gave K8,471,400 to buy rice for 4,034 victims of 1,448 households, and provided masks as well as soaps.

Afterwards, the Union Minister visited and inspected the situations of the embankment of the Nankak Lake and the damaged section of Mandalay-Sagaing Road. Then, he discussed with the Security and Border Affairs Minister of Mandalay regional government, the regional Social Affairs Minister and the Deputy Director-General of the General Administration Department of Mandalay Region about activities on stopping river water flowing into the area.

Currently, with the help of the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement, social organizations are laying sand bags near low embankments of Nankak Lake to prevent overflow of water into nearby homes.—MNA

(Translated by Maung Maung Swe)

Chin State Minister inspects construction works at Lower Laivar Dam

THE Chin State Minister for Agriculture, Livestock Breeding, Forestry and Mines U Mang Hen inspected construction works at Lower Laivar Dam, the third dam in the Chin State, on 19 July afternoon.

Firstly, U Toe Myint, the dam construction group official of Thiha Min Swe company, which has been carrying out the construction project, explained the stages of the construction of the dam, and the benefits that can bring to the residents.

Afterwards, the Chin State Minister and other officials inspected the dam.

By using the budget of

K3,038 million, the construction work for Lower Laivar Dam commenced on 1 June 2019. The construction was 100 per cent completed on 30 June 2020.

The Lower Laivar Dam is located in Falam Township. The location of the Lower Laivar Dam is about a mile away from the existing Laivar Dam.

The area of the earth-fill dam is 2.5 square miles. The height of the dam is 65 feet and the length is 330 feet. The total storage capacity of the dam is 800 acre-feet and the usable capacity is 655 acre-feet (177 million gallons)

The first dam of Chin State



Chin State Minister for Agriculture, Livestock Breeding, Forestry and Mines U Mang Hen and party inspect the construction works at Lower Laivar Dam in Chin State on 19 July 2020. **PHOTO: MNA**

is the Upper Laivar Dam, the second one is Thiki Dam and the third one is the Lower Laivar Dam. The main objective of the Lower Laivar Dam is to store

the water that flows from the catchment areas of the Upper Laivar Dam.

The Lower Laivar Dam will be able to supply 300,000

to 800,000 gallons of water per day to about 50,000 residents in Falam Township. —MNA

(Translated by Maung Maung Swe)

Ensuring safe environment for school children is a must

ASTHOUSANDS of children prepare to return to school across the country, it is essential that health protocols required to protect the children from COVID-19 are in place.

We welcome the decision of the authorities to reopen schools, but the opening of schools must ensure all healthy safety measures are in place to keep children and educational staff and their families safe.

We all should remember the importance of social distancing and hygiene measures – including access to clean water - are of paramount importance to ensuring schools reopen safely.

After schools re-open, teams composed of representatives from authorities, the health department, education department and parent-teacher associations will conduct routine monitoring at the schools, as well as surprise checks, in an effort to enforce coronavirus safety rules.

After schools re-open, teams composed of representatives from authorities, the health department, education department and parent-teacher associations will conduct routine monitoring at the schools, as well as surprise checks, in an effort to enforce coronavirus safety rules.

over 3,770 schools have been granted with A-grade and allowed to reopen today while over 1,220 with B-grade and over 830 schools with C-grade are advised to fulfil their health measures to meet A-grade.

Once schools begin to reopen, the priority becomes reintegrating students into school settings safely and in ways that allow learning to pick up again, especially for those who suffered the biggest learning losses.

This is a critical moment as it is the launching pad for a new normal that should be more effective and equitable.

To manage re-openings, schools will need to be logistically prepared with the teaching workforce ready. And they will need to have plans specifically for supporting learning recovery of the schoolchildren.

We must do everything we can to protect this generation of children and ensure that they can continue to learn in a safe environment.

■ ■ ■

Desperately seeking a COVID-19 vaccine – the race is on

SEVEN months after the emergence of the worst global health crisis in a century the race is on to find the medical equivalent of the Holy Grail -- a COVID-19 vaccine.

To date the novel coronavirus has killed about 590,000 people worldwide and infected close to 14 million in 196 countries since the outbreak first emerged in China late last year.

How to stop in its tracks a pandemic which has wreaked havoc on the world economy is now the pressing multi-billion-dollar issue for vaccine developers aware that every suggestion the goal may be in sight will be pored over in microscopic detail.

How many vaccines?

In its most recent assessment this month, the World Health Organization identified 21 “vaccine candidates” -- almost half involving Chinese companies or institutes -- following a series of global clinical trials.

Many are still in what is termed the first phase, which seeks to establish a product’s security and dosage,

Some however have graduated to phase two, which examines how effective a medicine may be.

Two candidate vaccines have reached stage three, whereby developers monitor issues such as degree of potential toxicity on a much larger scale and test it in a wider range of conditions prior to eventual submission for approval.

The duo concerned are a European project being developed at Oxford University in tandem with AstraZeneca and a Chinese variant from biopharmaceutical company Sinovac in collaboration with Brazilian research institute Butantan. Sinovac’s project is among the most advanced -- it will start the testing for its vaccine on volunteers in Brazil this month.

A Canadian clinical trial to involve CanSino Biologics was also earlier given the green light, and the company said last month that China’s military had approved for use within its ranks the vaccine it helped to develop.

Sinopharm, which is working with the United Arab Emirates for trials, finished construction of a new production facility with a capacity of 100 million doses on July 1, Chinese authorities said on social media.

Beyond the tests already underway the WHO is monitoring



Lab technicians dedicated to the vaccines formulation, wearing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), prepare stainless steel tanks for manufacturing vaccines preparations before the syringe filling phase, at a French pharmaceutical company Sanofi’s world distribution centre in Val-de-Reuil on 10 July 2020. PHOTO: AFP

a further 139 potential vaccines which are still at the pre-clinical evaluation stage, involving testing on animals.

Britain, Canada and the United States this week accused Moscow-linked hackers of targeting labs in their countries conducting coronavirus vaccine research.

Which techniques? -

There’s a variety of approaches and techniques across proven or experimental vaccines.

Some teams work on inactivated “classic” vaccines which use a virus germ that has been “killed” while others, known as attenuated or weakened varieties, involve using a live virus rendered less virulent.

Other types still include “sub-unit” vaccines, which contain a fragment of the pathogen that it is derived from to produce an appropriate immune response.

Then there are more innovative “viral vector” varieties which use live viruses to deliver DNA into human cells to trigger an immune response.

An example is to take a virus such as measles and, as the Pasteur Institute is doing, modify it with a coronavirus protein and deploy it against COVID-19.

Then there are new experi-

mental developments involving gene-based DNA or RNA vaccines using fragments of modified genetic material.

“The more candidate vaccines there are, and above all the more types of candidate vaccines, the greater the chance of getting somewhere” in terms of beating the virus, says Daniel Floret, vice-president of France’s Technical Vaccination Committee.

Results so far

For now, only partial results have been made public, some dubbed promising by the firms behind them.

Jean-François Delfraissy, chairman of France’s scientific council which has been guiding the French authorities on the issue throughout the pandemic so far, said claims have to be closely probed as the commercial effect of a potential, but unconfirmed, breakthrough can be huge.

“There are considerable effects on the pharmaceutical industry from an announcement which one has to view with the utmost caution,” the immunologist told AFP.

“A vaccine injection (tested on) 30 people which gets announced as a result -- well, that’s not a result,” Delfraissy noted.

Floret agreed that many announcements are directed at least as much at the stock market as at the general public.

“It’s never neutral. It is important they show us that they are speeding things up but shall all the same have to see the results and for the moment that’s not happening.”

Going fast?

All the while, with the pressure on to find a means of dealing with the pandemic, procedures have been ramped up worldwide like never before.

“Things are advancing at a rate of knots... and projects are going along perhaps a bit quicker than forecast,” Christophe d’Enfert, from the Pasteur Institute, told AFP.

States and large foundations alike have been falling over themselves to push fundraising efforts. And while the United States has been looking to go it alone, Europe and most other countries are looking at cooperation.

The Trump administration has set up “Operation Warp Speed” in a bid to deliver 300 million doses, essentially for US citizens, of a safe, effective vaccine for COVID-19 by January.

Firms “are trying to develop

a vaccine and at the same time put in place an industrial process to produce it whereas normally you wait to see the results” of the first of those operations, notes Delfraissy.

“That’s why they are calling on states for financing, saying: ‘We are taking a risk starting off on (developing) a vaccine which maybe won’t work and if we put in place the industrial (production) process we shall have to be partially covered by international financing.”

Security problems

“To authorise any COVID-19 vaccine, EMA will need to have strong evidence from clinical trials on the safety, efficacy and the quality of this vaccine,” warns the European Medicines Agency, an EU body.

Forcing the pace in clinical trials “can cause problems” regarding security, says Floret, who says it is “key to have proof that the vaccine is not liable to exacerbate the illness”.

That, he recalls, did happen in some tests on monkeys “during vaccine development tests for MERS-CoV and SARS,” other strains of coronavirus.

A similar problem arose in terms of some measles tests on

humans in the 1960s which were withdrawn as well as some for bronchiolitis that were likewise abandoned, says Floret.

How long?

EMA warns that “vaccine development timelines are difficult to predict”.

Based on previous development timelines, it said it may take until next year before a COVID-19 vaccine is ready for widespread use.

Even so, some firms are optimistic they can turn up trumps before the end of this year.

In Floret’s view, “I am not that sure it is very realistic (to say) a vaccine will be there by the autumn -- we have to temper such enthusiasm.”

He believes the first quarter of next year is likelier and “if we get there by then we shall already have done extremely well,” given the usual development timeline is several years.

How about never?

The world is now awaiting a vaccine as it were a kind of messiah as the only infallible means of defeating the pandemic.

But what if one never arrives?

Delfraissy said: “We have never perfected a vaccine against a coronavirus, even if we have never completely given ourselves the means to do so.

“There is a degree of uncertainty over our capacity to perfect a vaccine against coronavirus, -- but all the elements to get there are in place,” he stressed.

“Everything is possible, the maximum means and different techniques envisaged are out there and it would be astonishing if we didn’t get there,” Floret said.

Yet even if the researchers arrive at the finish line a large question will still remain -- will people accept being vaccinated in a world where there is growing mistrust of vaccination?

Perhaps not.

“As repeated measles outbreaks demonstrate, we haven’t done a great job addressing people’s concerns about vaccines. And if we don’t learn from our failed response to them, a coronavirus vaccine programme will be doomed,” Phoebe Danziger, a paediatrician at the University of Michigan, told the New York Times. —AFP

■ ■ ■



Myanmar Daily Weather Report (Issued at 7:00 pm Monday 20th July, 2020)

BAY INFERENCE: Monsoon is weak over the Andaman Sea and Bay of Bengal.

FORECAST VALID UNTIL AFTERNOON OF THE 21st July, 2020: Rain or thundershowers will be scattered in Nay Pyi Taw, Lower Sagaing, Mandalay, Magway, Yangon and Ayeyawady Regions, Southern Shan and Kayah States, fairly widespread in Bago and Taninthayi Regions, Chin, Kayin and Mon States and widespread in the remaining Regions and States with likelihood of isolated heavyfalls in Upper Sagaing Region and Kachin 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: Weak monsoon.

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 21st July, 2020: Isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (100%).

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 21st July, 2020: Isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (100%).

FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 21st July, 2020: Isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (80%).

Flood Warning

(Issued at 14.00 hrs M.S.T on 20-7-2020)

According to the (13.30)hrs M.S.T observation today, the water level of Ayeyawady River at Shwegu is observed as about (1/2) food below its danger level. It may reach its danger level during the next 2 days.

It is especially advised to the people who settle near the river banks and low lying area at Shwegu Township, to take precaution measure.

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

185 Myanmar nationals fly back home by special flights

A relief flight by Myanmar Airways International (MAI) bringing back 134 Myanmar nationals (121 are from Australia and New Zealand, and 13 are from Indonesia) landed at the Yangon International Airport at 8:30 pm yesterday as well as a charter flight by Myanmar National Airline (MNA) bringing back 51 Myanmar seamen from Singapore Changi Airport also landed at 8:30 pm yesterday.

After cooperation with Myanmar embassies in Canberra and Jakarta, Myanmar authorities could arrange the MAI relief flight (Sydney-Bali-Yangon) to bring back the 134 Myanmar nationals.

Similarly, after cooperation between Myanmar authorities, the Myanmar Seafarers Em-



Myanmar nationals returned from Australia and Indonesia queue for immigration process at the Yangon International Airport on 20 July 2020. **PHOTO: MNA**

ployment Services Federation, the relevant shipping companies, and the Myanmar embassy in Sin-

gapore, a total of 51 Myanmar seamen who needed crew-change after their contracts had expired could be brought back by the MNA charter flight.

As they arrived in the Yangon International Airport, the Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population, the Ministry of Health and Sports and the Yangon Region government helped the re-

turnees for health inspections and arranged for 21-day quarantine.

To bring back Myanmar nationals stranded in foreign nations by relief flights and charter flights in accordance with the instructions from National-Level Central Committee for Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs cooperated with the relevant ministries and Myanmar embassies from respective nations, and brought back a total of 8,422 Myanmar citizens.—MNA

(Translated by Maung Maung Swe)



Myanmar nationals returned from Singapore queue for immigration process at the Yangon International Airport on 20 July 2020. **PHOTO: MNA**

626 Myanmar nationals come back home via Myawady border bridge on 20 July

A total of 626 Myanmar nationals returned home from Thailand through No. 2 border bridge in Myawady Town, Kayin State, on 20 July.

Kayin State Hluttaw MP U Thant Zin Aung, Myawady District Administrative Office U Tay Zar Aung and local officials helped the returnees with medical tests and other supplies.

The number of migrant workers who returned home from abroad through this border has been 50,307 until now.

The latest group of returnees included 357 males and 269 females from different regions and states. —Htein Lin Aung (IPRD)

(Translated by Aung Khin)



Myanmar returnees are seen at immigration counters of Myawady bridge 2 on 20 July 2020. **PHOTO: HTEIN LINAUNG (IPRD)**

Over 4,000 people displaced due to Ayeyawady riverbank erosion in Amarapura Township

MORE THAN 4,000 people from over 1,470 households were affected by Ayeyawady riverbank erosion at Shwe Gal retaining wall and temporarily moved to the monasteries and religious buildings in Amarapu-

ra Township.

Following the riverbank erosion near Shwe Gal retaining wall, about 10 feet of Sagaing-Mandalay Strand Road were collapsed.

The displacement of local

people from Mhantan, Zaycho and Kyantan wards were displaced after the notice of possible flood, with the assistance of township Fire Police Force.

Mandalay Mayor and regional government officials

rushed to the place. Repair works for riverbank erosion is being undertaken. The sand and gravel are filled at the site. —Hein Htet

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

Myanmar meets reserve rice target, halting purchase

By Nyein Nyein

MYANMAR has purchased an adequate amount of rice for the national reserve and the purchase has temporarily halted, according to the Department of Consumer Affairs, under the Ministry of Commerce.

At present, the State has purchased an adequate amount of 50,000 tonnes of rice (Aemah-ta variety) under the national reserve scheme.

Further purchase plan for the national reserve has been reported to the supervision committee. The mills stopped receiving rice, as the rice volume for the national reserve has met its target, the Consumer Affairs Department sent a notification on 16 July to the Myanmar Rice Federation.

The rice will be sold through retail shops. The state's emergency rice reserve is to ensure the food security, keep the price

stable in the domestic market, continue to export them regularly, lessen the worries of the consumers during the coronavirus pandemic, and not to harm the rice production of farmers due to the price fall when the new paddy is harvested.

Therefore, the rice has been purchased from exporters since April-end.

Those reserved rice are planned to be sold at K22,800 per 108-pound bag to the registered retail shops, with the maximum 200 bags per batch. The shops must resell the rice to the consumers not exceeding K1,000-1,100 per pyi (2.3 kg) depending on the regions.

Moreover, there is a separate plan to sell the rice at the labour-intensive factories for the workers. MRF stated that the respective Consumer Affairs Department of the regions and states will monitor the sales to ensure systematic management.



Workers bagging rice at a warehouse in Ayeyawady Region on 3 February 2020. PHOTO: THIN ZAR HLAING

To ensure the self-sufficiency during the coronavirus pandemic, the government will

spend K38 billion to purchase foodstuffs (50,000 tonnes of rice and 12,000 tonnes of palm oil),

said Dr Than Myint, Union Minister for the Commerce. (Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

Domestic investments top K1,400 bln in 10 months

By Nyein Nyein

INVESTMENTS by Myanmar citizens in the country exceeded K1,400 billion in the past ten months of the current financial year 2019-2020, an increase of over K200 billion compared to the corresponding period of the previous FY, according to the data released by the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration (DICA).

Between 1 October and 10 July in the current fiscal, 104 local enterprises were allowed to invest in the country by the Myanmar Investment Commission and the state and region investment committees. Domestic investments have reached K1,454 billion so far, including the expansion of capital by existing enterprises, as per the DICA's data.

Domestic investors pumped K1,260

billion into 138 projects in the corresponding period of the 2018-2019 financial year.

This fiscal year, the number of enterprises permitted was 34 less than the previous year. However, the quantum of investment was larger compared with the year-ago period as the business with large capital flowed into the country, the DICA stated.

During the ten months, the manufacturing sector pulled the largest domestic investments, followed by real estate development and other service sectors. The domestic investments also flow into hotels and tourism, agriculture, oil and gas, transportation and communication, construction, livestock and fisheries, industrial estate, mining and power sectors.

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)



Myanmar citizens' investments in the country has surpassed K1,400 billion in the first ten months of current financial year. PHOTO: PHOE KHWAIR

Sino-Myanmar border trade falls by \$168.7 mln as of 10 July

SINO-MYANMAR border trade has registered a decrease of US\$168.7 million between 1 October and 10 July in the current fiscal year 2019-2020, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

Data from the Ministry of Commerce shows the value of Sino-Myanmar border trade at all five borders touched over \$4.6 billion in the current fiscal, which significantly plunged from over \$4.78 billion recorded in the year-ago period.

This FY, border trade values totalled \$3.8 billion at Muse, \$122.6 million at Lweje, \$417.8 million at Chinshwehaw, \$260.5 million at Kampaiti, and over \$4.3 million at Kengtung. The Commerce Ministry's data showed a drop in trade value at all those borders.

The decline in trade is attributed to the trade suspension and trade delay amid the tight security measures of coronavirus.

At present, China has been stepping up border control measures to contain the spread of the coronavirus. Therefore, Chinese buyers do not come to Myanmar borders in light of coronavirus fears, forcing Myanmar truck drivers to leave for Wanding area to sell the goods.

As a result of this, the traffic congestions occur both in two sides; Muse and Kyalgaung borders, causing a long queue on road, said Police Deputy Superintendent Chit Sein of No 123 Traffic Police Force (Muse).

The transport delays caused damage to the quality and doubled the truck fares. The growers and traders are suffering losses during the pandemic, said an official

of Muse border depot.

Next, the export of agricultural products is often halted, on account of China clamping down on illegal goods. Myanmar merchants are facing difficulties in exporting goods to China through the legitimate channel as they find the tax levied by China is too high.

In a bid to lower trade barriers and offer relief to Myanmar traders through the border trade channel, the Ministry of Commerce, the related departments and Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry have been negotiating with China counterparts.

The two countries are making efforts to set up more border economic cooperation zones and promote border trade. Myanmar's MOC is trying to boost exports of rice, broken rice, agro-products, fruits and fisheries to China through diplomatic negotiations.

After a series of negotiation between Myanmar and China, the General Administration of Customs of the People's Republic of China (GACC) granted licences to 43 Myanmar companies on 10 July 2020 to export the rice to China through a legitimate trade channel.

Myanmar exports rice, sugar, pulses, sesame seeds, corn, dried tea leaves, fishery products, minerals, and animal products to China, while it imports agricultural machinery, electrical appliances, iron and steel-related materials, raw industrial goods, and consumer goods from the neighbouring country. — Htet Myat

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

Russia says hoping to produce 200 mn vaccine doses this year



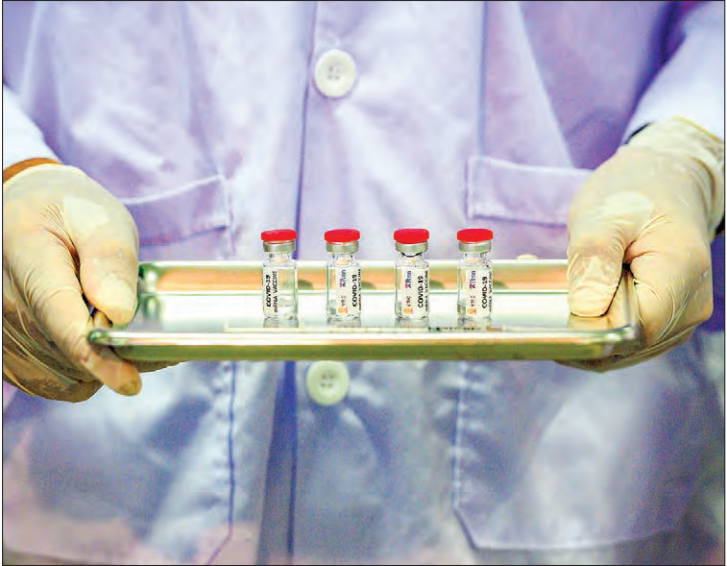
An employee wearing protective equipment works at the production line of Russia's biotech company BIOCAD, which is developing its own vaccine against the new coronavirus and working on another one in cooperation with the country's virus research centre in Siberia, Vektor, in Strelina on 20 May 2020.
PHOTO: AFP

MOSCOW (Russia) — Russia hopes to complete trials of a coronavirus vaccine in August and produce 200 million doses with foreign partners by the end of the year, the head of its sovereign wealth fund said Monday. The Russian Direct Investment Fund (RDIF), which man-

ages some \$10 billion, is working with a government research institute on one of several vaccine projects in the country. RDIF chief executive Kirill Dmitriev said he hoped the project would receive permission next month to begin production, after the first phase of a vaccine trial was completed last week. "Immediately after that we are planning to begin mass production," Dmitriev said in a statement on Russia's state anti-coronavirus portal. "Mass production of this vaccine can stop the pandemic's potential 'second wave'," he said. He said Russia would be in a position to produce 30 million doses of the vaccine by year's end, with "international partners across the world" joining in to bring the total to 200 million. The Gamaleya Research Institute of Epidemiology and Microbiology's vaccine is undergoing trials on military and civilian volunteers. It is based on human adenovirus, a cold virus. Dmitriev said the second phase of the trial will be over by August 3. "After that, a third phase of trials will begin in Russia and several countries," he said, adding that Turkey, the United Arab Emirates and others would be involved. He said that adenoviral vector-based vaccines had been developed since the 1980s and are generally safe. Dmitriev, 45, said he himself had been vaccinated and had developed "stable immunity" 20 days after the first shot. Last week Britain, the United States and Canada said a hacking group "almost certainly" linked to Russian intelligence had carried out attacks aimed at stealing vaccine research, a claim denied by Moscow.—AFP ■

UK secures 90 million doses of potential coronavirus vaccines

LONDON (United Kingdom) — Britain has secured access to 90million doses of potential coronavirus vaccines in deals with biotech firms BioNTech, Pfizer and Valneva, the government said Monday. Business Secretary Alok Sharma said Britain would now have access to three different types of vaccines being developed domestically and around the world, and it had also launched a website for volunteers to sign up for vaccine studies. "The hunt to find a vaccine is a truly global endeavour and we are doing everything we can to ensure the British public get access to a safe and effective coronavirus vaccine as soon as possible," said Sharma. The deals involve 30 milliondoses of a vaccine being developed by BioNTech and German firm Pfizer, and 60



This picture taken on 23 May 2020 shows a laboratory technician holding a tray with doses of a COVID-19 novel coronavirus vaccine candidate ready for trial on monkeys at the National Primate Research Centre of Thailand at Chulalongkorn University in Saraburi.
PHOTO: AFP

million doses of another created by France's Valneva. The government has already said it would purchase 100 milliondoses of a vaccine currently being trialed by Oxford University in partnership with AstraZeneca. Prime Minister Boris Johnson said he was "hopeful" of a vaccine, "but to say that I'm 100 per cent confident that we will get a vaccine this year or indeed next year is, alas, just an exaggeration." "It may be that the vaccine is going to come riding over the hill like the cavalry, but we just can't count on it right now," he said in a televised interview. Britain has been one of the worst affected countries in the world since the outbreak began, suffering more than 45,000 deaths. Health Secretary Matt Hancock said an effective vaccine was "our best hope of defeating coronavirus and returning to life as normal. "I urge everyone who can to back the national effort and sign up to the NHS COVID-19 vaccine research registry to help find a vaccine as soon as possible."—AFP ■

Two coronavirus vaccines 'produce immune response': trials

PARIS (France) — Two coronavirus vaccine candidates have proven safe for humans and produced strong immune reactions among patients involved in separate clinical trials, doctors said Monday. The first trial among more than 1,000 adults in Britain found that the vaccine induced "strong antibody and T cell immune responses" against the novel coronavirus. A separate trial in China involving more than 500 people showed most had developed widespread antibody immune response. The studies, published in The Lancet medical journal, constitute a major step on the road towards a COVID-19 vaccine that is effective and safe for widespread use. The authors of the studies said that they encountered few adverse side effects from the vaccine candidates. However, they cautioned that more research was needed, particularly among older adults, who are disproportionately at risk of dying of COVID-19. Co-author Sarah Gilbert from the University of Oxford said the results "hold promise". "If our vaccine is effective, it is a promising option as these types of vaccine can be manufactured at large scale."—AFP ■



A lab technician in Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) looks at a reagent bottle before performing vaccine tests at a French pharmaceutical company Sanofi's laboratory in Val de Reuil on 10 July 2020. **PHOTO: AFP**

Japan convenience store sales improve in June but down 5.2% on year

TOKYO — Japan’s convenience store sales in June fell 5.2 per cent from a year earlier but improved from the previous month on solid sales of hygiene and other items after the lifting of a state of emergency declared over the novel coronavirus, an industry body said Monday.

Sales fell in June for the fourth consecutive month, following declines of 10.0 percent in May and a record 10.6 per cent in April. The number of shoppers in June was down 11.6 per cent from a year earlier at 1.25 billion, compared with a record fall of 19.9 per cent

in the previous month, after stay-at-home requests were removed as the state of emergency was lifted for all 47 prefectures by late May, the Japan Franchise Association said.

Demand for frozen food and alcoholic beverages was firm as some consumers refrained from eating out, while sales of hygiene products including face masks as well as summer items such as ice cream also grew, the association said. In June, the same-store sales of seven major convenience store operators totaled 837.96 billion yen (\$7.83 billion),

down from 884.08 billion a year earlier, while average spending per person rose 7.3 per cent to 669.6 yen, the industry body said.

Sales in the service category, such as for concert and sporting event tickets, slumped 32.0 per cent from the same month last year as a wide range of events were not held despite the end of the state of emergency, a spokesman of the body said. The overall number of convenience stores in Japan was up 0.4 per cent from a year earlier at 55,782, rising for the third consecutive month.

—Kyodo News ■



File photo of a Seven-Eleven convenience store in Tokyo. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

World facing bankruptcy time bomb: study

PARIS (France) — Governments around the world are scrambling to save companies battered by coronavirus lockdowns but the world is nevertheless facing a massive surge in bankruptcies by a third, a study conducted by a trade insurance firm said Monday.

“COVID-19 is creating an insolvency timebomb,” said the report by Euler Hermes, predicting a 35 per cent cumulative jump in the number of compa-

nies that go bust between 2019 and 2021.

The firm, which provides insurance for trade deals, said this would be a record for its global insolvency index -- and that about half of the countries worldwide would be setting new highs since the 2009 financial crisis.

The biggest increase among the world’s economic powerhouses will be in the United States, with a 57 per cent jump in insolvencies in 2021 compared

to 2019, before the coronavirus struck. Bankruptcies are expected to soar by 45 per cent in Brazil, 43 per cent in Britain, and 41 per cent in Spain.

China is forecast to see a 20 per cent surge in bankruptcies.

In the United States, “the rapid spread of the virus is amplifying the trough in activity and generating a liquidity crisis for a larger set of companies”, said the report.

“We do not expect the

U-shaped recovery in the US to be sufficient to offset all the legacies of the crisis on financial metrics, nor to prevent the rise in insolvencies from continuing into 2021,” it added.

The insolvencies are disruptive as other firms are left unpaid or forced to scramble to find new, often more expensive suppliers.

“The larger the company filing for bankruptcy, the higher the risk of a domino effect,” said the report.—AFP ■

European stocks start week in red

LONDON (United Kingdom) — Europe’s stock markets opened lower Monday as EU leaders struggled to unite over the terms of a vast 750-billion-euro (\$860-billion) post-coronavirus economic rescue plan.

Investor sentiment was also dented as a spike in new COVID-19 infections forced some governments to impose fresh containment meas-

ures, notably in Australia, Hong Kong and the United States.

In initial trade, London’s benchmark FTSE 100 index shed 0.8 per cent to 6,240.52 points, compared with the closing level from Friday.

In the eurozone, the Paris CAC 40 index dipped 0.4 per cent to 5,047.03 points and Frankfurt’s DAX 30 shed 0.3 per cent to 12,881.69.—AFP ■

Central bank digital currencies to be raised at next G-7 summit

TOKYO — The Group of Seven industrialized nations will discuss central bank digital currencies at their next summit with an eye to possible future issuance, sources close to the matter said Monday.

The G-7 leaders will take up the matter at their meeting in the United States scheduled in late August or early September, sharing potential problems and their knowledge related to virtual currencies issued by central banks.

The move comes as China is set to take the lead in issuing such a currency after its central bank said in January it is progressing “smoothly” with the development of a government-backed digital cur-

rency. The digital currency to be issued by the People’s Bank of China could lead to wider global use of the yuan, a move possibly perceived as a challenge against the U.S. dollar regime.

Central bank digital currencies could provide settlements at any place

at a lower cost than digital settlements offered by private companies, which charge commissions from retailers and are not necessarily available at any shops. One of the sources said Japan proposed the idea to discuss the matter at the summit and the United States, the chair of

the G-7 this year, is willing to do so. A range of questions have been raised as to digital currencies. They could be used for money laundering, while some are concerned about the issuer exclusively obtaining an enormous amount of information on individuals including purchase history.

Last year, the G-7 nations involving Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United States plus the European Union, called for ensuring “the highest standards of financial regulation” over Facebook Inc.’s proposed digital currency Libra to prevent potential money laundering, terrorist financing and other unlawful activity.—Kyodo News ■



A man walks past the Bank of Japan’s head office in Tokyo on 2 July 2018. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

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Saudi king, 84, admitted to hospital: royal court

RIYADH (Saudi Arabia) — Saudi Arabia's 84-year-old ruler King Salman was admitted to hospital in Riyadh Monday for gall bladder inflammation, the royal court said, prompting the postponement of the Iraqi prime minister's high-profile visit.

It is rare for Saudi Arabia to report on the health of the ageing monarch, who has ruled the top oil exporter and the Arab world's biggest economy since 2015.

King Salman is the second reigning monarch in the Gulf to be hospitalised after Kuwait's 91-year-old emir Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmad Al-Sabah was admitted to hospital last week, at a time when the region is gripped by the twin crises of the coronavirus pandemic and a plunge in crude prices. A Saudi royal court statement said King Salman was "admitted today to King Faisal specialist hospital in Riyadh for some medical tests due to cholecystitis," inflammation of the gall bladder.

The statement released by the official Saudi Press Agency around 4:30 am (0130 GMT) did



This file handout photo provided by the Saudi Royal Palace on 19 March 2020 shows King Salman bin Abdulaziz addressing the nation in a televised speech regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, in the capital Riyadh. **PHOTO: AFP**

not disclose any further details.

Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhemi's scheduled visit to Saudi Arabia, which was due to start on Monday, has been postponed after the king's hospitalisation, according to the Saudi foreign minister.

"In recognition of the extremely important visit and a desire to make it a success, our wise leadership in coordination with our brothers in Iraq have decided to postpone the visit" until the king leaves hospital, Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan

wrote on Twitter.

Hours before Kadhemi was to set off on his first trip abroad as premier, his office said they heard King Salman was suffering from "a sudden health issue".

"It was decided to postpone the visit to the earliest possible

date agreed upon by the two sides," his office said in a statement. Iraq's oil, finance, electricity and planning ministers arrived in Saudi Arabia on Sunday to begin meetings ahead of Kadhemi's visit, Iraqi officials told AFP.

The delegation was set to return to Baghdad after the meetings wrap up on Monday afternoon.

Reform and crackdown

Kadhemi's trip to Tehran — Riyadh's arch-rival — which had been planned to take place immediately after his Saudi visit, was still on, the officials added.

Kadhemi is expected to meet Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei in Tehran on Tuesday.

In a delicate balancing act, Baghdad, often trapped in the tug-of-war between Riyadh, Tehran and Washington, has sought to maintain relations with regional rivals as it also reels from a slump in energy prices. "I wish King Salman a speedy recovery & look forward to seeing him at the earliest possible time, as we'll reschedule my visit soon," Kadhemi wrote on Twitter. —AFP ■

'Bandits' kill 23 Nigerian troops in northwest: security sources

KANO (Nigeria) — At least 23 Nigerian troops were killed when they were ambushed by a gang of so-called "bandits" in a remote village in the northwest of the country, security sources said Sunday.

The gang opened fire Saturday on the soldiers who were on foot in a forested part of the Jibia district in Katsina state, the sources said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

"The bodies of 23 soldiers have been accounted for while some are still missing," a military source said. In the past, the armed gangs, known locally as "bandits", have been involved in cattle rustling and kidnappings, but a number of experts have recently warned that they could be forging ties with jihadist groups in the region.

One militia member said the toll could be "higher than 23", as the search for missing soldiers was underway. Also on Saturday in the same area, five children were killed and six others injured when a bomb accidentally exploded, a spokesman for Katsina State police said. It was not clear whether the explosive had been left by the bandits, the statement said. Katsina State, where President Muhammadu Buhari originates from and where the vast majority of the population lives in extreme poverty, has become increasingly volatile in recent years. The Nigerian army regularly raids the forests where the armed groups hide, but the number of soldiers is insufficient and villagers organize themselves into civilian militia. —AFP ■

Guman kills son of US judge in attack at her home

NEWYORK (United States) — A gunman disguised as a FedEx delivery driver shot and killed the son of a US federal judge and wounded her husband in an attack Sunday at their New Jersey home, reports said.

Judge Esther Salas was not hurt, ABC News said.

Salas's son Daniel Anderl, 20, was shot dead when he answered the door, ABC and CNN said, citing sources.

"He was shot through the heart," North Brunswick mayor Francis Womack, a friend of the judge, told ABC.

The judge's husband Mark Anderl, a criminal defence attorney and former prosecutor, was in critical but stable condition after undergoing surgery, the New

Jersey Globe reported.

The FBI's Newark office tweeted that they were "investigating a shooting that occurred at the home of Judge Ester Salas" and were looking for one suspect.

The gunman appeared to be dressed as a FedEx driver, according to reports citing law enforcement sources.

The motive was not immediately clear.

"As a judge, she had threats from time to time, but everyone is saying that recently there had not been any," Womack told ABC.

Judge Salas, 51, was the first Hispanic woman to serve as a federal district judge in New Jersey and was nominated to her current position by President Barack Obama in 2010.

"I know Judge Salas and her husband well, and was proud to recommend her to President Obama for nomination to New Jersey's federal bench," New Jersey Senator Bob Menendez said in a statement quoted by media.

"My prayers are with Judge Salas and her family, and that those responsible for this horrendous act are swiftly apprehended and brought to justice."

The judge is currently assigned to a class-action lawsuit filed by a group of Deutsche Bank investors who say the bank failed to properly monitor customers it had deemed to be high-risk — including convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein, who killed himself last year while in prison awaiting trial. —AFP ■

Two dead as Dutch army helicopter crashes in Caribbean

THE HAGUE (Netherlands) — Two people died when a Dutch army helicopter crashed into the sea soon after take-off from the Caribbean island of Aruba, the Netherlands defence ministry

said Monday.

The chopper was on its way to neighbouring island Curacao on Sunday afternoon when it came down 12 kilometres (seven miles) off the coast of Aruba,

a Netherlands overseas territory, the ministry said.

"Two of the four team members (on board) were killed," said Rob Bauer, head of the Dutch armed forces, at an early-hours

press conference in The Hague.

"The two other team members are not seriously injured," he added, calling the incident "terrible news" and "a shock for everyone".

The cause of the crash was not immediately clear but a coast guard helicopter and Dutch military divers would try to find the aircraft's black box, he said. —AFP ■

UAE launches first Mars mission from Japan

TOKYO (Japan) — The first Arab space mission to Mars, an unmanned probe dubbed “Hope”, blasted off from Japan on Monday, in a bid to reveal more about the atmosphere of the Red Planet.

The Japanese rocket carrying the probe developed by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) lifted off from the Tanegashima Space Centre in southern Japan right on schedule at 6:58 am local time (2158 GMT Sunday).

The launch of the probe, known as “Al-Amal” in Arabic, had twice been delayed because of bad weather, but the Monday liftoff appeared smooth and successful.

Almost exactly one hour later, a live feed showed people applauding in the Japanese control room as the probe successfully detached.

“The launch vehicle trajectory was executed as planned and separation of the Hope spacecraft was confirmed,” rocket manufacturer Mitsubishi Heavy Industries said.

In Dubai, the launch was met with rapturous excitement, with the Burj Khalifa -- the world’s tallest skyscraper

-- lit up hours before liftoff with a symbolic 10-second countdown in anticipation.

“This mission is an important milestone for the UAE and the region,” said Yousuf Hamad AlShaibani, director of the UAE’s Mohammed bin Rashid Space Centre, at a post-launch press conference in Japan.

“It has already inspired millions of youth regionally to dream big and work hard to achieve what seems to be impossible,” he said.

- Human Mars settlement? -

The Emirati project is one of three racing to Mars, including Tianwen-1 from China and Mars 2020 from the United States, taking advantage of a period when the Earth and Mars are nearest.

In October, Mars will be a comparatively close 38.6 million miles (62.07 million kilometres) from Earth, according to NASA.

“Hope” is expected to enter Mars orbit by February 2021, marking the 50th anniversary of the unification of the UAE, an alliance of seven emirates.

Unlike the two other Mars ventures scheduled for this year, it will not land on the Red Planet, but instead orbit it for a whole

Martian year, or 687 days.

While the objective of the UAE’s mission is to provide a comprehensive image of the weather dynamics, the probe is a foundation for a much bigger goal -- building a human settlement on Mars within the next 100 years.

Dubai has hired architects to imagine what a Martian city might look like and build it in its desert as “Science City”, at a cost of around \$135 million dollars.

The UAE also wants the project to serve as a source of inspiration for Arab youth, in a region too often wracked by sectarian conflicts and economic crises.

‘Pride, hope, peace’

On Twitter, the UAE’s government declared the probe launch a “message of pride, hope and peace to the Arab region, in which we renew the golden age of Arab and Islamic discoveries.”

Several dozen probes -- most of them American -- have set off for the Red Planet since the 1960s. Many never made it that far, or failed to land.

The drive to explore Mars flagged until the confirmation



In this handout photograph taken and released on July 20, 2020 by Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, an H-2A rocket carrying the Hope Probe known as “Al-Amal” in Arabic, developed by the Mohammed Bin Rashid Space Centre (MBRSC) in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to explore Mars, blasts off from Tanegashima Space Centre in southwestern Japan. **PHOTO: AFP**

less than 10 years ago that water once flowed on its surface.

Omran Sharaf, the mission’s project manager, has said the Hope probe will offer a special perspective on the planet.

“What is unique about this

mission is that for the first time the scientific community around the world will have an holistic view of the Martian atmosphere at different times of the day at different seasons,” Sharaf told a pre-launch briefing.—AFP ■

Pakistan resumes polio campaign after coronavirus pause

ISLAMABAD (Pakistan) — Pakistan resumed its polio vaccination campaign Monday after a four-month pause due to the coronavirus outbreak, which health authorities feared would cause a surge in cases of the crippling disease.

The country is one of only

two in the world where polio is still a serious problem.

Vaccination teams in the southern port city of Karachi went door to door, flanked by armed police, administering polio drops into children’s mouths without touching them, in line with new coronavirus safety

guidelines.

“Right now we can’t say what impact the four-month suspension will have on our fight against polio, but one thing is sure -- that the current year is going to be worse than the previous years in regard to the number of new cases,” Zulfiqar Babakhel, a spokesman for the country’s vaccination authority, told AFP.

As well as the pause to the campaign, a further 2.8 million newborns also missed out on polio vaccinations, he said.

Muhammad Nadeem, a 63-year-old shopkeeper from Karachi, said his family had been waiting anxiously for their two-year-old son to be vaccinated against the highly infectious disease.

“It is a matter of our son’s future, and today we are finally feeling relieved after four months of fear and impatience,” he said.—AFP ■



A health worker administers polio vaccine drops to a child during a polio vaccination door-to-door campaign in the Pakistan’s port city of Karachi on 20 July 2020. **PHOTO: AFP**

Iran executes man convicted of spying for CIA, Mossad

TEHRAN (Iran) — Iran on Monday executed a former translator convicted of spying for the US and Israel, including helping to locate a top Iranian general killed later by the Americans, the judiciary said.

The killing of Major General Qasem Soleimani in a US drone strike near Baghdad airport in January brought decades-old arch enemies Iran and the United States to the brink of conflict.

The judiciary’s Mizan Online website said Mahmoud Mousavi Majd’s death “sentence was carried out on Monday morning over the charge of espionage so that the case of his betrayal to his country will be closed forever”.

Its spokesman said earlier this month that Majd had been sentenced to death for spying on “various security fields, es-

pecially the armed forces and the Quds Force and the whereabouts and movements of martyr General Qasem Soleimani”.

Majd had been found guilty of receiving large sums of money from both the US Central Intelligence Agency and Israel’s Mossad, said the spokesman Gholamhossein Esmaili.

Soleimani headed the Quds Force, the foreign operations arm of Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps.

Iran retaliated against the United States for his death by firing a volley of ballistic missiles at US troops stationed in Iraq, but US President Donald Trump opted against responding militarily. While the attack on the western Iraqi base of Ain Al-Asad left no US soldiers dead, dozens suffered brain trauma.—AFP ■

Aung La Ngsang comes back negative for COVID-19

AUNG LA NGSANG, Myanmar's famous mixed martial arts (MMA) dual-weight champion, announced on his Facebook on Saturday that he came back negative for COVID-19.

Aung La posted: "Good news guys, Saturday coronavirus test result came back negative! We are back in business. We are going to get over this nightmare soon." He announced he has tested positive for COVID-19 on 2 July. After about three weeks, his new test result showed that he tested negative for COVID-19.

The 35-year-old nicknamed "Burmese Python" is a Burmese-born American mixed martial artist of ethnic Kachin descent currently signed to ONE Championship, competing in both the Middleweight and Light heavyweight divisions.

He is the current ONE Middleweight World Champion and ONE Light Heavyweight World Champion. He made his professional debut in 2005, and soon built a reputation for his outstanding submission skills, earning himself the nickname of

"The Burmese Python".

Early in his career, he fought for King of the Cage and Ring of Combat as well as other, smaller promotions. However, his career got off to a slow start losing his first fight. At the age of 27, he became a social media sensation when footage of his knocking out Jason Louck at CFFC 17 went viral. — Kyaw Khin ■

Aung La Ngsang is seen with his daughter. **PHOTO: AUNG LA NGSANG'S FACEBOOK**



Only one quarter of Japanese want Olympics next year: poll



A woman wearing a facemask rides her bike in front of the Tokyo 2020 Olympic games logo outside the Tokyo Metropolitan Government Building on 23 April 2020. **PHOTO: AFP**

TOKYO (Japan)— Just one in four people in Japan want to see the coronavirus-delayed Tokyo Games held next year, with most backing either further delay or a cancellation, a new poll shows.

Only 23.9 percent of respondents in the three-day nationwide poll published Sunday said they wanted to see the 2020 Games held next year.

The survey carried out by

Kyodo news agency found 36.4 per cent of respondents back a further delay of the Games, while 33.7 think the flagship event should be cancelled altogether.

Most of those backing a delay or cancellation said they simply didn't believe the pandemic could be contained in time for the Games, now scheduled to open on July 23, 2021.

A separate survey carried out over the weekend by the Asahi Shimbun newspaper found 33 per cent of respondents backed holding the Games next year, with 61 per cent supporting another postponement or cancellation. Tokyo 2020 was postponed in March as the coronavirus spread across the globe, marking the worst disruption to the Olympics since two editions were cancelled during World War II.— AFP ■

President of Bolivian Football Federation dies after catching COVID-19

LA PAZ (Bolivia) — The president of the Bolivian Football Federation (FBF), Cesar Salinas, died Sunday after being hospitalized with COVID-19 earlier this month, officials said.

The federation confirmed his death in a statement that highlighted his "dedication and commitment to national and international football."

Salinas, 58, had chaired the

FBF since 2018.

He was a director of The Strongest in La Paz, a century-old Bolivian soccer institution. His wife, head of the same club, also tested positive for COVID-19.

"My condolences to the family and friends of Cesar Salinas, president of the Bolivian Football Federation. They have all my support in these hard times," wrote the interim president of Bolivia,

Jeanine Anez, on Twitter.

The South American Football Confederation (CONMEBOL) said: "Conmebol and the South American soccer family deeply regret the death."

Salinas had recently met with authorities to plan restarting football in Bolivia after the virus shutdown. With 11 million inhabitants, Bolivia has registered 58,136 cases and 2,106 deaths.—AFP ■

Golf great Nicklaus reveals he had coronavirus

LOS ANGELES (United States) — US golf legend Jack Nicklaus said Sunday that he and his wife Barbara tested positive for the coronavirus back in March and both recovered.

The 80-year-old Nicklaus, winner of a record 18 major titles, revealed the experience on the television broadcast of the US PGA Tour's Memorial tournament, which Nicklaus hosts at Muirfield Village in Dublin, Ohio.

He said his wife had no virus symptoms, while he dealt with a sore throat and cough from March 13 "until we were done with it" more than a month later.

"It didn't last very long, and we were very, very fortunate, very lucky," said Nicklaus, who noted that he and his wife, both 80, are at an "at-risk age" for more serious COVID-19 symptoms.

"Our hearts go out to the people who did lose their lives and their families. We were just a couple of the lucky ones."

The US PGA Tour shut down for three months amid the coronavirus pandemic. The Memorial, the sixth event since the tour resumed, is being played without spectators as coronavirus case numbers surge in many areas of the United States.

Tiger Woods, a five-time winner of the Memorial, said he had known that the Nicklauses had tested positive.

— AFP ■



(FILES) In this file photo taken on 15 July 2020 Jack Nicklaus and his wife Barbara watch the action during the Nationwide Challenge nine-hole skins match Benefiting Nationwide Childrens Hospital prior to The Memorial Tournament at Muirfield Village Golf Club in Dublin, Ohio. **PHOTO: AFP**