47-member leading committee of 8th State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee holds fifth meeting

The fifth meeting of the 47-member leading committee of the 8th State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee kicked off at the Maha Pathana Cave in Thiri Mingalar Kaba Aye Hill in Yangon yesterday.

The meeting was attended by the members of the State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee led by Chairman Sayadaw of the State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee Abhidhaja Agga Maha Saddhamma Jotika Bhano Sayadaw Dr Bhaddanta Kumarahbhivamsa. Also present at the meeting were Union Minister for Religious Affairs and Culture Thura U Aung Ko, and officials of the ministry.

Bhamo Sayadaw Dr Bhaddanta Kumarahbhivamsa presided over the meeting and Joint Secretary Sayadaw of the State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee Agga Maha Pandittta Agga Maha Sadhamma Jotikadhaja Bhaddanta Silacara Bhivumsa acted as the master of the ceremonies. In his opening address, Bhamo Sayadaw stressed the importance of judging the religious issues without bias to ensure the decisions made by the committee would be accepted by over 500,000 Members of the Sangha in Myanmar.

COVID-19 figure in Myanmar reaches 350 after two new cases reported on 26 July

MYANMAR’S COVID-19 positive cases reached 350 after 2 new cases were reported on 26 July according to Ministry of Health and Sports. Case No 349 returned from Thailand and Case No 350 from USA.
Out of the 350 confirmed cases, six died, 290 have recovered, 272 have been discharged from hospitals and 12 were held under investigation.—MNA

More than 100 returnees come back home by train from Lashio

Case No 349 returned from Thailand and Case No 350 from USA.
Out of the 350 confirmed cases, six died, 290 have recovered, 272 have been discharged from hospitals and 12 were held under investigation.—MNA
More than 100 returnees come back home by train from Lashio

SHAN State (North)’s COVID-19 Containment Working Committee handed over a total of 111 returnees by train to their natives yesterday.

The Myanmar nationals returned from China arrived in Lashio through Muse, Laukkai and Chinshwehaw townships.

The returnees included 75 males and 36 females. Of them, four are from Kachin State, three from Chin State, 24 from Sagaing Region, 11 from Bago Region, two from Mon State, 25 from Magway Region, eight from Mandalay Region, one from Nay Pyi Taw, 11 from Rakhine State, 11 from Yangon Region, and 11 from Ayeyawady Region.

The Chinshwehaw’s COVID-19 Containment Working Committee handed over a total of 13,583 returnees, 8,341 males and 5,242 females, to the townships concerned since 30 April.—Nan Thanda Oo (IPRD)

A Myanmar woman returned from China has temperature checked at the Chinshwehaw border on 26 July 2020. PHOTO: ZIN ZIN (IPRD)

Chinshwehaw sends back 22 returnees home on 26 July

CHINSHWEHAW’S COVID-19 Containment Working Committee handed over a total of 22 Myanmar nationals who returned from China to their natives yesterday.

The returnees included 11 males and 11 females. Of them, three are from Kanbalu Township and one from Taze in Sagaing Region, two from Moenyo in Bago Region, three from Yessagyi in Magway Region, and 11 from the townships in Shan State.

The Chinshwehaw’s COVID-19 Containment Working Committee handed over a total of 13,717 returnees, 7,594 males and 6,123 females, to the townships concerned since 30 April.—Zin Zin (IPRD)

Covid-19 figure in Myanmar reaches 350 after two new cases reported on 26 July

FROM PAGE-1
Updated at 8 pm, 26 July 2020

**Total Cases**: 350

**New Cases**: 2

**Total recoveries**: 290

**New Recoveries**: 2

**Total Deaths**: 6

**Discharged with Regrowth**: 272

**New PUls**: 12

Two new cases of COVID-19 on 26 July 2020: updated at 8 pm

**Case No** | **Age** | **Gender** | **Address** | **Contact with positive patient** | **Oversea travel history** | **Hospital for medical treatment** | **Lab result** | **Remark**
--- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | ---
349 | 24 | Female | Kawtwareik Township, Kayin State | No | Yes, (Thailand) | People’s Hospital, Hpa-an Township | Positive | Keep under Investigation (Hpa-an Township)
350 | 50 | Male | Pyapon Township, Ayeyawady Region | No | Yes, (American) | Waibargi Specialist Hospital, Yangon | Positive | Keep under Investigation (Mingaladon Township)
### 47-member leading committee of 8th State Sangha Maha Nayaka ...

Speaking at the meeting, Union Minister Thura U Aung Ko called on the Members of the Sangha for timely preventing ideology, teachings and distribution of books which are in contradiction to the teachings of the Buddha and posing a danger to the Theravada Buddhism.

Besides, the Union Minister also urged the country's highest Buddhist regulatory committee to give advices to the Buddhist devotees on making Buddha statues in conformity with the guidelines of the Theravada Buddhism to ensure that the statues are graceful for the Buddhist devotees.

He said the government removed 109 Buddhist statues housed at the Seintarmuni Minn Win Mountain Pagoda in Nay Pyi Taw Pyinmana on 6th July as they went against the Theravada Buddhism.

The Union Minister also called on the members of the body, joining hands with local authorities and Sangha bodies, to enforce religious rules on monks, novices and nuns as part of efforts for purification of Buddhism.

Afterwards, the meeting was followed and members of the 8th committee discussed the measures taken during the first period of the duty taken by the third branch of the 8th State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee and made resolutions.

During the meeting, members of the Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee discussed religious issues including arbitration of disputes in accordance with the rules, learning and teaching of Buddha's teachings, and the meeting came to an end in the afternoon.

Nearly 90 per cent of Myanmar’s population practices Theravada Buddhism, the more conservative of the two major branches of the religion.

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### Myanmar migrant workers, seamen return home by relief flight

A relief flight by Myanmar Airways International (MAI) bringing back 171 Myanmar nationals landed at the Yangon International Airport at 4:45 am on 26 July. With the help of Myanmar Embassy in Tel Aviv, the 171 Myanmar nationals working at several companies including Rich Pine, Century Miracle, Camel and Vega in Jordan could be brought back home. This is the second relief flight arranged for Myanmar nationals who stranded in Jordan.

Similarly, with the help of the Consulate General Office in Hong Kong, 58 Myanmar nationals who stranded in Taiwan (Chinese-Taipei) were brought back to the Yangon International Airport by China Airlines flight at 9:25 am on 26 July. Furthermore, after cooperation between the relevant shipping companies, and the Myanmar Embassy in Singapore, 45 Myanmar seamen who needed crew-change after their contracts had expired could be brought back by an MAI charter flight. The flight came from the Singapore Changi Airport and landed at the Yangon International Airport at 1pm on 26 July.

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 arranged proper medical checkups and 21-day quarantine for the returnees.

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 8,831 Myanmar citizens.

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*(Translated by Maung Maung Swe)*
Irrigation officials inspect dams in Nay Pyi Taw

PHOTO: HTET HLYAN

NAY PYI TAW Council Member U Aye Maung Sein and officials from Irrigation and Water Utilization Management Department inspected the strength of Paunglaung Dam, Chaung Ma Nge Dam and Paung Laung Dam in Nay Pyi Taw Council Area on Saturday.

Director of Construction No.5 U Ko Ko Naing reported on the conditions of the dams, storage of water in the dam and distribution of water for monsoon paddy cultivation to the officials during the inspection.

The department is monitoring dams for safety and for irrigating for both monsoon paddy and summer paddy cultivations.—Htet Hlyan

(Translated by Kyaw Zin Tun)

Nature lovers expect to have petrified Wood Park in Magway Region

PHOTO: ZAYYATU/KHINE SET WAI

MAGWAY Region primarily produces raw materials of petrified wood, and nature lovers are keen on petrified Wood Park in the region, said petrified wood collectors.

If the petrified wood park exists in the region, it will become a new tourist destination, said Deputy Director U Myint Sein of regional Directorate of Hotels and Tourism.

It will create job opportunities for residents, have a fair market for exports, and raise the value of the natural resource.

The petrified wood is found in 16 out of 25 townships of Magway Region. “It is around 20 years that they have been commercially produced. It is also an export item for China border market. We can earn revenue if we create the park in the region,” said a petrified wood collector.

It is better if we can create a park or make value-added products. This way, it can earn more revenues, said the collectors.

If we can create the petrified wood park, the students and researchers can discover more analyses or reports please email aungthuya@gnlm.com.mm

A traveller walks viewing the pieces of petrified wood in Magway on 26 July 2020. PHOTO: ZAYYATU

PHOTO: HTET HLYAN

Notification on overcoming anxiety during COVID-19

PHOTO: ZAYYATU

People can face anxiety during COVID-19 and remember not to resolve things with anger, not act out of impulse, avoid alcohol and drug abuse, search for solutions together with family members and close friends, perform physical activities according to weather and health situation, eat nutritional foods, get enough sleep to resolve mental pressure.

Everyone can use these suggestions into practice to prevent their mental health from become fatigued and boost willpower.

Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement & Myanmar Medical Association (Mental Health Unit)
MoLIP to speed up issuing citizenship scrutiny cards ahead of Nov-8 elections

The Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population (MoLIP) U Thein Swe held a coordination meeting in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

Speaking at the meeting, Union Minister for Labour, Immigration and Population U Thein Swe urged the officials concerned to speed up the works to ensure every citizen gets the national registration card which is required for voting in 2020 General Election.

He also said it is important for eligible citizens to gain voting rights and not to lose voting rights. The ministry is now focusing on issuing the citizenship scrutiny cards to both eligible voters at home and abroad.

They are also cooperating with foreign embassies so that Myanmar citizens abroad can vote in the Nov-8 elections, he added.

He also called for discussions on issuing cards that can be used in upcoming elections at the meeting.

The ministry’s department heads in regions and states reported on their works to the meeting. The Union Minister urged the attendees to ensure their works to meet the ministry’s objectives.

The meeting was also attended by Deputy Minister U Myint Kyaw, Permanent Secretary U Aye Lwin, directors-general, deputy directors-general and directors from the relevant departments, and heads and officials from the ministry’s states and regions departments. — MNA

(Translated by Kyaw Zin Tun)

520 Myanmar migrant workers return via Myawady border on 26 July

A total of 520 Myanmar migrant workers from Thailand — 297 males and 223 females — returned home through the Myawady Friendship Bridge (2) in Myawady, Kayin State yesterday.

Kayin State Hluttaw Representative U Than Zin Aung, Myawady District Administrator U Aung Chan Nyein and officials from district and township departments helped them with medical tests and other supplies at the border checkpoints, and sent them to the quarantine centres concerned.

A total of 53,796 returnees including 11,680 in May, 25,338 in June and 16,778 in July so far have come back home through this border crossing since 1 May. — Htein Lin Aung (IPRD)

NATIONAL 5

The most important lesson we have learnt from COVID

Because of COVID, we are encountering many things to think about and to learn on a daily basis. The most important lesson we have learnt from COVID is that we were forced to train ourselves to have boundless vigilance.

(Excerpt from State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi’s Facebook post on 10 June 2020)

THE value of Myanmar’s iron and steel imports for the construction sector is valued over US$803.8 million in eight months of the current fiscal year 2019-2020, according to the statistics of the Ministry of Commerce.

Additionally, $386 million worth iron and steel products are also imported during October-May period.

At present, Myanmar’s steel demand is estimated about 2.5 million tonnes per year, and 92 per cent of which are imported.

The government needs to support the steel sector by granting tax relief and land rights, controlling illegal imports, making anti-dumping law come into the effort and formulating steel policy, according to the MSA.

“Steel industry is pivotal in the country’s infrastructure building. This project needs to be implemented for prospects of the country’s economy”, he said.

The MSA will move forward to the development of industry standards which are compatible with the country and the emergence of steel library and steel laboratory. The association will cooperate with the international organizations to grow the steel sector, he added.

China is the main supplier for Myanmar’s steel market. Iron and steel are also imported from India and the Republic of Korea. — GNLM

(Translated by El Myat Mon)

Two Myanmar women returned from Thailand stand in a row to have temperature checked at the Myawady border on 26 July. PHOTO: HTEIN LIN AUNG (IPRD)

Myanmar imports over $890 mln worth iron/steel materials in Oct-May

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(Translated by El Myat Mon)
**US dollar likely to remain low in local forex market**

The US dollar has been sliding against the Kyat in the local currency market, with the exchange rate touching a low of K1,379 per dollar on 26 July, which slumped from K1,403 registered on 21 July, said money exchangers.

At present, the global forex market sees the weak sentiment amid the coronavirus outbreak, with the US dollar index of around 94.35. At present, exports of rice, corns and pulses are increasing, whereas the local forex market is facing low demand. The exporters are unhappy with the strengthening Kyat as the weakening dollar might harm export income and the stability of internal forex market.

**Q: How many workers are there in your factory and how is your factory managing in Thanlyin, Hlinethaya, and Shwepyitha townships.**

A: The plant was accredited for Energy efficiency since 2016, improved its electric efficiency since 2016, improving by nearly 23% in 2019 by implementing several energy efficiency projects. The plant was accredited for its significant operational and social sustainability improvements.

**Q: Is there any achievement regarding bat-**

A: As the Ministry of Health’s team ethos is to support each other, always ensured full support and impact toward Ball’s sustainability goals, both inside the plant and within their communities.

**Q: How many workers are there and how is your factory managing to prevent the spread of COVID-19 there? Please let us know your challenges and achievements regarding bat-**

A: Ball Corporation supplies innovative, sustainable aluminum packaging solutions for beverage, personal care, and household products all over the world, as well as aerospace, other technologies and services. Ball Corporation and its subsidiaries employ more than 18,300 people worldwide with a team of 135 in Yangon.

Our operation in Myanmar began in late November 2016 at Thilawa Special Economic Zone in Thanyañ, with the majority of employees from the local community. To prevent COVID-19 outbreak at our factory, to our employees, and to our community we implemented Ball’s global standard preventative measures as early as March. This included strict social distancing, the wearing of masks and new innovative approaches to the way we operate. As the Ministry of Health’s Guidelines were implemented for Factories, Workshops, Work Sites and Construction regarding the Prevention Of COVID-19 all proceed were already in place.

**Hong Kong SAR investments exceed $1.34 bln in Q3**

HONG KONG SAR has emerged as the largest investor in Myanmar with 41 Hong Kong-based firms pumping in US$1.34 billion in real estate development, electricity, and garment businesses at the end of the third quarter of current financial year, according to the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration (DICA). HONG KONG SAR topped the list of investors in the past nine months, followed by Singapore, which invested an estimated $1 billion in 13 projects.

Investments also flowed into the country from China, France, Germany, Indonesia, India, Japan, Malaysia, Macau, the Republic of Korea, Thailand, the UK, Sri Lanka, the Netherlands, Viet Nam, Samoa, Seychelles, and Estonia.

Foreign direct investment (FDI) of $4.336 billion flowed into Myanmar during the October-June period, including an expansion of capital by existing enterprises, according to DICA. DICA intends to reach its FDI target of $5.8 billion in the 2019-2020 financial year. “This year, infrastructure projects such as industrial parks and urban development projects are bringing large investments into the country,” said DICA Director-General U Thant Sin Lwin.

“The economic interaction between Myanmar and Hong Kong has been increasing rapidly. Hong Kong emerged as the fourth largest investor in Myanmar after Singapore, China, and Thailand. ‘Between 1988 and June 2020, 261 enterprises from Hong Kong brought in foreign direct investment of $9.6 billion into Myanmar, according to official data on permitted enterprises provided by the DICA.”

**Q: Is there any achievement amid the coronavirus pandemic has to our business and giving priority to food commodity due to the adversity of the coronavirus pandemic. The dollar exchange rate is expected to remain low due to the weak demand in the local forex market, said traders. The Central Bank of Myanmar (CBM) is reported to purchase over 160 million dollars from private banks in the past six months to govern the market.**

The domestic forex market witnessed the maximum rate of K1,410 in June. Despite the CBM’s dollar purchase, the dollar is currently pegged at around K1,365-1,379 in the domestic market.

In October last year, the dollar exchange rate had hit a high of K1,600. Thereafter, the dollar has been falling in the local currency market.

— Ko Htet

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

**To prevent COVID-19 outbreak at our factory, to our employees, and to our community we implemented Ball’s global standard preventative measures as early as March : Mr Asa Robinson, General Manager (Myanmar Team)**

**Q: How many workers are there and how is your factory managing to prevent the spread of COVID-19 there? Please let us know your challenges and achievements regarding bat-**

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**Q: How is your factory managing for the livelihood of the workers amidst the COVID-19?**

A: Safety is our top priority and our main focus is on creating a safety culture change within our whole team. This is something that we have been recognized as part of the Global Award for Hoover Sustainability. Our whole team ethos is to support each other and therefore risk the global pandemic has to our business and the wider community. We have always ensured full support and delivered training to our team, working with the very highest global standards.

We are donating $5 million to combat the impacts of COVID-19 in our communities around the world. Our focus is to provide critical support for medical supplies, food security, small businesses and at-risk communities. Each region has the flexibility to decide how best to use the funds to address COVID-19 related challenges in the most impactful ways possible.

Ball Myanmar donated $32,000 to local communities for COVID-19 relief. We chose two organizations – Clean Yangon and Medical Action Myanmar, and donated 60,000 each for COVID-19 relief in June 2020. Those organizations have donated to households which had hardship amid the wider community. We have always ensured full support and delivered training to our team, working with the very highest global standards.

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**Award for making a substantial impact toward Ball’s sustainability goals, both inside the plant and within their communities.**

This includes progress across the areas with the most significant sustainability impact across Ball’s operations (safety, energy, water, and waste), as well as the promotion of aluminum packaging’s sustainability credentials and engagement in their local communities.

The plant was accredited for its significant operational and social sustainability improvements. Our Yangon plant has consistently improved its electricity efficiency since 2016, improving by nearly 23% in 2019 by implementing several energy efficiency projects.

Mr Asa Robinson is General Manager of Ball Beverage Packaging Yangon (Ball Corporation - Myanmar)
Indian firms struggle to lure migrant workers back

SPURNING free air tickets, accommodation and higher pay, millions of migrant workers who fled India’s cities when coronavirus hit are too scared to return, with grim implications for the already crumbling economy.

Migrant labourers form the backbone of Asia’s third-biggest economy toiling in every sector from making consumer goods and stitching garments to driving cabs.

But when India went into lockdown in late March, vast numbers lost their jobs, prompting a huge heart-rending exodus back to their home villages, sometimes on foot, their children in their arms.

Some died on the way. Mumbai’s swanky high-rises, for example, were built and largely staffed by people from poorer states such as Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Odisha, who worked as security guards, cooks and cleaners.

But as the city became a virus hotspot, around 80 percent of construction workers left the financial hub after work came to a standstill, according to the Maharashtra Chamber of Housing Industry.

Four months on, with lockdown measures eased, some workers have trickled back but more than 10,000 building sites are lying virtually abandoned due to severe labour shortages across the city.

“We are trying our best to bring back migrant workers, even going to the extent of giving them air tickets, COVID-19 health insurance ... (and) weekly checkups by doctors,” real estate developer Rajesh Pratap Singh said.

“But it has not reaped any positive signs yet,” he told AFP.

Property giant Hiranandani Group which — unusually — continued to pay its workers during lockdown, has had more success, but has still only managed to convince around 30 percent of its 4,500 workers to stay on site.

“We looked after them, took care of their food, safety and sanitisation and even had mobile creches for kids,” the group’s billionaire co-founder Niranjan Hiranandani told AFP.

Migrant labourers form the backbone of India’s economy. PHOTO: AFP

Pandemic getting Japan’s automated delivery services on the road

JAPAN is paving the way for autonomous delivery robots to become part of everyday life, with social distancing efforts required during the coronavirus pandemic making the push all the more vital.

The coronavirus crisis has increased the appeal of services that allow for reduced human contact and Japanese firms are counting on the potential of robots that can, in the not so distant future, deliver a range of products from nearby warehouses or shops to consumers.

In August, an autonomous delivery robot developed by ZMP Inc., dubbed the DeliRo, will deliver Japanese soba noodle dishes to customers in a trial in Tokyo.

Customers can place orders via tablet device during the event from Aug. 12 to 16 near JR Takanawa Gateway Station, make a cashless payment and have their food delivered by the robot within a designated area.

“We want to explore what kinds of autonomous delivery services are possible and what the DeliRo can offer at a time when new lifestyles are called for amid the coronavirus outbreak,” a ZMP official said.

The DeliRo, measuring about 1 meter in height with a load capacity of 50 kilograms, is capable of detecting and avoiding obstacles blocking its way using advanced autonomous driving tech. It travels at a maximum speed of 6 kilometers per hour.

The Japanese government is stepping up its push for autonomous delivery services in the hope they will alleviate the acute shortage of labor in the rapidly aging country.

One outstanding issue, however, is to decide how to treat low-speed, self-driving vehicles that travel below 6 km per hour because the existing legal framework in Japan does not cover them, an impediment to conducting test runs on public roads.

An expert panel under the National Police Agency has begun discussions on how traffic rules should apply to the delivery robots and the government aims to allow trials on public roads this year, as long as they can be monitored remotely.

E-commerce giant Rakuten Inc. has said it plans to carry out a demonstration of a delivery service using an autonomous vehicle on a public road by the end of 2020.

FOR the first time ever, hot air balloons took off from Israel’s Ben Gurion International Airport on Saturday, the Israel Airports Authority (IAA) said.

The four balloons, flown by Israeli companies Rize Up and Skytrek, received the IAA permission due to the lower number of flights amid the coronavirus pandemic.

Dozens of aviation enthusiasts came to the airport to watch the event and photograph it, as the balloons took off on a runway near the airport’s main terminal, Terminal 3, reaching an altitude of about 2 km.

Recently, the IAA allowed aviation enthusiasts from all sectors, such as flying ATVs and ultra-light aircraft, to conduct special flights from the airport, which previously could not be possible due to heavy air traffic.

The Hebrew news website “Ynet” reported that one of the participants in the balloons flight was a 72-year-old recovered coronavirus patient, after being hospitalized in critical condition.

In mid-June, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu estimated that the opening of Israeli skies to flights would be on Aug. 1.

SOURCE: Xinhua

SOURCE: Xinhua

A hot air balloon is seen above Ben Gurion International Airport near central Israeli city of Tel Aviv on July 25, 2020. (XINHUA PHOTO)
Lessening impacts of coronavirus: We’re in it together

**M**yanmar is entering its second phase of COVID-19 restrictions, from coronavirus: a season of low tourism and severe financial impacts. The second phase of the COVID-19 outbreak is expected to be less severe, and the government is taking measures to mitigate its impact on the economy.

The lifting of restrictions is expected to be gradual, with the government focusing on maintaining social distancing and other health protocols. The government has also announced plans to provide financial support to those affected by the pandemic, including subsidies for businesses and wages for workers.

Tourism, which is a major industry in Myanmar, is expected to see a slow recovery as travel restrictions are gradually lifted. However, the government is preparing to welcome tourists back to the country, with plans to implement a “travel bubble” system to allow for safe travel.

Despite the challenges, there are reasons for optimism. With the global vaccination drive gaining momentum, it is hoped that the pandemic will eventually be brought under control. In the meantime, the government and private sector are working together to adapt to the new normal and find ways to thrive in the face of the challenges presented by COVID-19.
Suspected case of new coronavirus detected in N. Korea: KCNA

A first suspected case of the new coronavirus in North Korea has been detected, prompting leader Kim Jong Un to convene an emergency meeting of the ruling party, the state-run Korean Central News Agency said Sunday.

North Korea has previously claimed it was free of the virus, having cut off traffic to and from China since earlier this year. The coronavirus was first detected late last year in the central Chinese city of Wuhan and later spread across the globe.

A person who defected to South Korea three years ago is “suspected to have been infected with the vicious virus” after “illegally” returning to the North’s border city of Kaesong, KCNA said.

Kaesong has been “totally” blocked since Friday, while people who came into contact with the person and those who have traveled from the city in past five days have been put under quarantine, the news agency said.

At the enlarged emergency gathering of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Workers’ Party of Korea, held on Saturday, Kim pledged to implement anti-epidemic measures at the “maximum” level. “Despite the intense preventive anti-epidemic measures taken in all fields throughout the country and tight closure of all the channels for the last six months, there happened a critical situation,” Kim was quoted as saying by KCNA.

SOURCE: Kyodo

Reusable mask “capable of inactivating coronavirus” launched in Portugal

A consortium of companies and research institutes announced on Saturday that they have created a type of reusable mask capable of inactivating the SARS-CoV-2 virus, which causes COVID-19 disease.

Named MOxAd-Tech, the textile mask “successfully passed the tests carried out by the Joao Lobo Antunes Institute of Molecular Medicine,” the consortium said in a statement sent to journalists.

The creators claimed that the mask has an “innovative coating that neutralizes the SARS-CoV-2 virus when it comes into contact with the fabric, an effect that remains even after 50 washes.” Pedro Simas, a virologist, explained that the tests on the MOxAd-Tech mask revealed a “99 percent viral reduction after one hour of contact with the virus, according to the test parameters indicated in the international standard.”

“In a simplified way, these tests consist of analyzing the tissue after contact with a solution that contains a certain amount of virus, whose viability is measured over time,” said Simas.

The masks, being produced in Portugal, will be sold for 10 euros (11.6 U.S. dollars) in the country and throughout the European Union.

Portugal recorded four more COVID-19 deaths and 263 new infections in the last 24 hours, bringing the totals to 1,716 and 49,955 since the beginning of the pandemic.

SOURCE: Xinhua

FROM PAGE-9

International commercial flights to Myanmar have been suspended since late March and are banned until 31 July. Nevertheless, Myanmar vice-president, Henry Van Thio recently said that it was unlikely for the country to allow international passenger flights until the end of the third quarter of this year.

This has caused great concern to those in the travel industry in Myanmar.

Although the country has reopened domestic tourism, local tour companies are still struggling and many may have to cease operations if international passenger flights were not allowed until October, said Union of Myanmar Travel Association chairman U Naung Naung Han.

“It appears that we can no longer wait for COVID-19 to be eliminated. By the time COVID-19 is eliminated, tour operators will no longer have a business,” he warned.

It was reported on 22 July that the country’s Ministry of Hotels and Tourism had rolled out plans to boost domestic tourism such as providing tax rebates and relief to tourism operators, and gradually opening tourism destinations with physical distancing guidelines in place.

Exports

Daw Nav Mutakapaw, Director-General of the MTPO said that the export sector in Myanmar has been affected as a result of the pandemic, also citing declining demand as one of the main factors.

Based on local media reports, Myanmar produces around 200,000 tons of rubber each year. While the country only uses eight percent of its rubber, it exports 90 percent of it to other countries such as China, Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia, among others.

According to the MTPO report, the rubber export sector has been significantly affected and small-scale rubber companies have been hit hard as well.

The Assistant Permanent Secretary of Myanmar’s Commerce Ministry, U Khin Maung Lwin, explained that rubber exports earnings declined by US$23 million in around seven months as the rubber export volume decreased by over 10,000 tons compared to the same period last year.

Other than that, the country’s seafood industry has also felt the pandemic pinch.

Prior to the outbreak, the Myanmar Fisheries Federation projected record exports of US$1 billion for 2020, up by 40 percent from 2019. However, the forecast has since been slashed to just US$350 million.

“It is a time of zero exports without any new orders from buyer countries,” said Hnin Oo, Senior Vice-President of the Myanmar Fisheries Federation.

The country’s fishery exports mainly depend on China, the United States (US), Japan and European countries, he added.

Unfortunately, with almost all exports ceasing since February to contain the spread of the new coronavirus, major buyers have halted their orders. It was reported that an estimated one million people in Myanmar may lose their jobs in the fisheries industry.

SOURCE: THE ASEAN POST
UK to unveil obesity plan after PM’s near-death experience

LONDON — British Prime Minister Boris Johnson is set to roll out a £10 million anti-obesity campaign, including junk food advert bans, following his own brush with death that he partly blamed on his weight.

Johnson will announce his “Better Health” campaign on Monday, which is expected to include encouraging doctors to issue “cycling prescriptions” for overweight patients, more segregated cycling lanes and a ban on junk food television ads before 9.00pm, according to British media reports.

“COVID-19 has given us all a wake-up call of the immediate and long-term risks of being overweight, and the Prime Minister is clear we must use this moment to get healthier, more active and eat better,” said a government spokesman on Sunday.

“We will be urging the public to use this moment to take stock of how they live their lives, and to take simple steps to lose weight, live healthier lives, and reduce pressure on the NHS.”

Restaurants will also have to publish the number of calories in the meals they serve, according to a report in the Daily Mail. Johnson, who has fought his own battles to control his weight, required intensive care treatment in April after catching the virus. The plan, which the Guardian estimated would cost £10 million ($12.8 million, 11 million euros), marks a U-turn by the prime minister, who has long rallied against the interventionist “nanny state.” A Public Health England (PHE) study published on Saturday found that obesity increased the risk of death from coronavirus by 40 per cent.—AFP

Growing Israel protest movement calls for Netanyah to go

JERUSALEM — “We won’t leave until Bibi leaves.” Israel’s struggle to contain the coronavirus has stirred deep-seated resentment towards Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyah and protests demanding his resignation are growing by the week.

As the Shabbat rest-day was ending on Saturday evening, thousands of demonstrators headed towards Netanyah’s Jerusalem residence, a main site for protests that have taken place in multiple cities.

Some demonstrators brand-ed Netanyah – who has been indicted with bribery, fraud and breach of trust – as corrupt, while others condemned a lack of coherence in the government’s response to the pandemic.

For Tamir Gay-Tsabary, who travels each day to the Jerusalem protests with his wife Tami from southern Israel, coronavirus was “a trigger” that brought renewed focus to Netanyah’s leadership faults.

The pandemic made people “understand that he doesn’t care (about Israel), he just cares for himself,” the 56-year-old sales manager told AFP.

Netanyahu won praise for his initial response to the virus.

His government’s quick decisions in March to curb travel and impose a lockdown brought the daily case-count to a trickle by early May. But an econom-ic re-opening that began in late April has led to an explosion in transmission in the country of about 9 million people, with daily COVID-19 tallies ranging between 1,000 and 2,000 cases in recent weeks.—AFP

Volunteer confesses to setting French cathedral on fire

PARIS — A volunteer church assistant has confessed to setting the fire that severely dam-aged a Gothic cathedral in the western French city of Nantes, his lawyer said Sunday, though his motives remain a mystery.

The 39-year-old, an asylum-seeker from Rwanda who has lived in France for several years, was arrested Saturday after laboratory analysis deter-mined that arson was the likely cause of the blaze, the local pros-ecutor’s office said.

“My client is cooperating,” lawyer Quentin Chabert said at a press conference in Nantes, without venturing on what prompted the attempt to burn down the Cathedral of Saint Pe-ter and Saint Paul.

“Oh obviously it was a relief for him to show, as he would say, his repentance. As a believer, it’s important for him to show this effort,” he said.—AFP

Putin says Russia keeps modernizing naval hardware

MOSCOW — The Russian na-vy’s level of military hardware is constantly growing, President Vladimir Putin said Sunday as the country celebrated its Navy Day.

This year, 40 warships of various classes will join the Russian navy, Putin said in a speech at a naval parade held in the country’s second largest city of St. Petersburg.

The modern navy includes ships armed with high-preci-sion weapons, strategic and multi-purpose submarines, the newest aircraft, “unique weapons and special equipment,” he noted.

The navy will strengthen its unique advantages and in-crease its combat capabilities by deploying advanced digital technologies, hypersonic strike systems, unmanned underwa-ter vehicles, and the most ef-fective means of defense, Putin said.

The naval parade in St. Petersburg involved 46 ships and submarines, more than 40 planes and helicopters, and over 4,000 servicemen. Smaller celebrations were held in the country’s other fleet bases.

Russia marks its Navy Day annually on the last Sunday of July.—Xinhua

Putin says Russia

LOVETSKY/POOL/AP/FILE

PHOTO: AFP

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Warships pass the Dvortsovyy (Palace) drawbridge rising above the Neva River during the Navy Day parade in St.Petersburg. (DMITRI

PHOTO: AFP
India's Commercial vehicles face grim near-term outlook

MUMBAI — Domestic commercial vehicle sales are expected to decline by 30 to 35 per cent in the current financial year as the industry is staring at further de-growth while the COVID-led economic downturn adds to negative sentiment, according to Care Ratings.

The dip in sales is going to be more severe in medium and heavy commercial vehicle (M&HCV) segment than the light commercial vehicle (LCV) segment. In FY20, the domestic commercial vehicle industry clocked sales of 7.17 lakh units.

“The contraction in LCV segment is expected to be limited as demand from rural and semi-urban markets is expected to recover faster on account of higher agriculture output on the back of good monsoons during the current year,” said Care. Truck utilisation levels remained under pressure during Q1 FY21 (April to June) due to Covid-19 year, “said Care. Truck utilisation levels remained under pressure during Q1 FY21 (April to June) due to Covid-19 year, “ said Care. Truck utilisation levels remained under pressure during Q1 FY21 (April to June) due to Covid-19 year, “ said Care. Truck utilisation levels remained under pressure during Q1 FY21 (April to June) due to Covid-19 year, “ said Care. Truck utilisation levels remained under pressure during Q1 FY21 (April to June) due to Covid-19 year, “ said Care. Truck utilisation levels remained under pressure during Q1 FY21 (April to June) due to Covid-19 year, “ said Care. 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BANGKOK — The Thai government was urged on Saturday to reopen northern border checkpoints to allow cross-border trading between Thailand and Myanmar to resume from next month.

Fakaimas Vierra, vice president of the Chiang Rai Provincial Chamber of Commerce, called on the authorities to promptly consider reopening the border checkpoints in Mae Sai district of Chiang Rai province as soon as next month.

Cross-border trading between Mae Sai district and Tachileik township in Shan state of Myanmar has virtually grounded to a halt since the border checkpoints were temporarily closed in March under Thailand’s anti-pandemic and lockdown measures, according to the vice president of the provincial chamber of commerce.

The economy of the northern province has been largely affected by the temporary closure of the Mae Sai border checkpoints through which some 800 million baht (about 25.29 million U.S. dollars) in combined value of goods has been traded monthly, the official said.— Xinhua

INVITATION TO BID

Bid No. MM-09184-NCR-001, Updated design and construction works for the proposed renovation of the Information Counter Building in Mawlamyine, Mon State, Myanmar.

The Ministry of Hotels and Tourism of Myanmar (MOHT) through its procurement committee, invites all prospective/potential bidders to apply for bid with the above-referenced subject for:

Name of Project : Grant 9184-MYA Economic Empowerment of the Poor and Women in the East-West Economic Corridor Project

Procurement package : Bid No. MM-09184-NCR-001, Updated design and construction works for the proposed renovation of the Information Counter building in Mawlamyine

Contract Location : Lower Main Road 118 (MOHT Information Counter Building), Mawlamyine, Mon State, Myanmar.

The significant times and deadlines of procurement activities are shown below:

1. Issuance of Bidding Documents — 27-7-2020, 09:30 AM
2. Pre-Bid Meeting — 5-8-2020, 11:00 AM (To contact 09-420704808 with SKYPE)
3. Deadline of Submission of Bids — 24-8-2020, 15:45 PM
4. Opening of Bids — 24-8-2020, 16:00 PM, PMU Office, Nay Pyi Taw (in the presence of bidders’ representatives)

Submission of Bids

Project Management Unit Office-Grant 9184-MYA, Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, Building 33, Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar, email: planandstat@tourism.gov.mm

To obtain further information and any clarification, please communicate with the contact person:
U Tin Tun Aung, Project Director, Project Management Unit – (PMU), Economic Empowerment of the Poor and Women in the East-West Economic Corridor Project, Ministry of Hotels and Tourism of Myanmar, Telephone: +95 67 406102 Fax:+95 - 67 406098, E-mail: planandstat@tourism.gov.mm

Procurement will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedure in accordance with ADB procurement rules and regulations.

Only eligible Bidders with the following key qualifications should participate

A. Financial qualification. The Bidder shall have a minimum average annual construction turnover of $ 690,000, calculated as total certified payments received for contracts in progress or completed, within the last five (05) years. (refer to Section 4, form FIN-2 “average annual construction turnover”). The Bidder must demonstrate that its financial resources less its financial obligations for its current contract commitments meet or exceed the total requirement for the Subject Contract of $ 115,000.

B. Construction experience requirement. The Bidder shall have experience that at least one contract that has been successfully or substantially completed within the last five (05) years and that is similar to the proposed works, where the value of the Bidder’s participation exceeds $ 140,000, or at least two contracts each of that have been successfully or substantially completed within the last five (05) years and that is similar to the proposed works, where the value of the Bidder’s participation exceeds $ 86,000 of each contract.

Federal Reserve convenes as virus puts US recovery on edge

WASHINGTON — The Federal Reserve meets next week amid mixed signals on the health of the US economy, with some sectors bouncing back from the coronavirus-caused downturn and others struggling.

Retail and new home sales were among those showing growth over the last two months but the Labor Department said last week new claims for unemployment benefits had increased week-on-week after months of declines.

Analysts say the mixed indicators won’t be enough to get the rate-setting Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) to change course, particularly not after it cut the benchmark lending rate to 0-0.25 percent in March as the pandemic hit.

“We don’t expect much to come out of this particular meeting,” said Jonathan Millar, deputy chief US economist at Barclays Investment Bank.

The two-day meeting beginning Tuesday comes as cases of coronavirus surge again, particularly in the southern and western United States, raising fears that the world’s largest economy is set for a prolonged downturn. — AFP

Indonesia’s economy forecast to decelerate slightly in 2020 over COVID-19

JAKARTA — The Indonesian government forecast the country’s economy would decelerate slightly this year, head of the Fiscal Policy Office of the Finance Ministry Febri Kacaribu said on Friday.

With that condition, Kacaribu stressed that Indonesia might not go into a deep recession as the tax revenue has started improving along with other signals of recovery.

Banks have commenced distributing loans for capitals as business activities pick up along with the reopened economy and relaxation of restrictions, he said.

According to the Indonesian Financial Services Authority, loans have begun creeping up in July after registering a downturn in the previous three months.

Kacaribu was upbeat that business activities including those in the sector of small and medium businesses, would recover soon. The official said the authority has been striving to avoid two straight quarters of economic growth deceleration in the second and the third quarters. — Xinhua

Trucks pass through a checkpoint near the Myanmar-Thailand border in the town of Myawaddy in Kayin State. PHOTO: AFP/FINE PHOTO

People queue for a free rapid test for the COVID-19 coronaviruses sponsored by the Indonesian National Police in Jakarta on 21 June, 2020. (AFP PHOOTO)
Towards the town Kalay which means market town (2)

First Yayhsankyun Pagoda

The teak log going upstream in the river was carved into Buddha images.

Second Yayhsankyun Pagoda

The teak log was carved into Buddha image as masterpieces which are better than the First Yayhsankyun Pagoda. The second one takes a position on a wide terrace near Myittha River at the exit of Kalay. Soft drinks and snacks are available at the foot of the pagoda hill in addition to a wide car park.

Bawdi Yadana Pagoda (Kyaukgutaw Monastery)

People know it as Kyaukgutaw Monastery, rather than Bawdi Yadana. Located behind Kalay industrial zone, Bawdi Yadana Pagoda can be seen with elephant statues, Buddha image chamber and stupas. Public-rest houses and monastery buildings are catching interest of visitors. As it is similar to just a recreation centre rather than the religious edifice, youths visit there to take photos.

9th-Mile Kyauktalone Creek

A laterite road, leading to Kyauktalone Creek, beyond Kalay University passes Chin villages. Visitors can buy intoxicating brew in these villages at
K3,000 per pot. Then they may go to Kyauktalone farm being upgraded to the restaurant and recreation park. The park collects K200 per person for entrance fee. Visitors can taste intoxicating brew and foodstuffs while enjoying scenic beauties of Kyauktalone Creek.

**Three pagodas**

Travellers can pay visits to three ancient pagodas along the road from Shwebontha Pagoda. An ancient city wall can be seen not far from these pagodas.

**Venue crossed by North Latitude**

Travellers can see a large signboard near mile post 55-56 near Kyansetkon Village where the north latitude crosses the venue.

**Yazagyo Dam**

It needs to take one and a half drive from Kalay to Yazagyo Dam. Hotness covers the road along the dam. So, it is necessary to grow trees and flowery plants in the area for being travel site and recreation centre. In fact, it is a good area to take photos.

**Tarhan market**

I think Tarhan market is bigger than Kalay Myoma market where various kinds of meat and fish are sold in addition to textile imported from China at cheap prices.

**Kalay Myoma market**

It is a large market in urban area of Kalay. Varieties of textile imported from India and China are being traded as a centre.

**View Point**

The area beyond Kalay University is located in Chin State. So, the view point takes a position in Chin State. Despite no significant facilities, travellers visit there. Some travellers watch the sunrise scene from St. Mary Roman Catholic Cathedral on Bogyoke Street, Methodist Church in Tarhan, Vengpui Methodist Church and Salem Baptist Church.

**Other visiting sites**

I cannot pay visits to all significant places in Kalay where I visit every year. I saw Taungphila Hill in far distance on my way back. I enlisted the significant travel sites but some of them are located in far distance. These sites are Taungtalone, Myitsone, Taungghila, Thang Pagoda, hand washing lake, Myatheintan Pagoda, the waterfall in Hsedaw Village and Sakarhla Pagoda.

**Churches**

A large number of people in Christianity reside in Kalay. Mizo Chin ethnics are the majority among various Chin ethnics. So many churches can be seen in Kalay. Boards are posted in all wards to show announcements of dead persons and its work procedures in Chin language.

I visited churches such as St. Mary Roman Catholic Cathedral on Bogyoke Street, Methodist Church in Tarhan, Vengpui Methodist Church and Salem Baptist Church. I preferred to Flow restaurant where delicious Thai foods and BBQ are available. Another shop is titled JD23 which gives services of rice in tray. Hsa-buthee is available in Tarhan market. Goshen restaurant is always crowded with consumers to give delicious food services to the visitors.

Majesty Hotel, Moe Hotel and Taungzalat Hotel are ready to give accommodation to guests in Kalay. In addition, those who cannot spend a large sum of money on their trips may stay at lodges and small hotels.

Travellers may buy Chin traditional costumes and utensils, Chin sarongs, blankets, men’s wears, necklaces and bags in Tarhanthu shop is full of various products. Many shops can be seen around Kalay Airport as well as in Tarhan market.

Despite lesser travel sites, Kalay is a lovely town where people from four corners meet to seek jobs. So, it is endless obser...

**Gifts from trips**

Travellers may buy textile from Tamu in addition to paying visits to Reed Lake, Tiddim and Haka.

May all be always safe and secure, healthy and happy on their trips.

(Translated by Than Tun Aung)
ONE Championship comes back with ‘No Surrender’ event on 31 July

AFTER a long pause of the ONE Championship special fights and events amidst of the global pandemic, the thrilling fights will return to action with an event ‘No Surrender’ to be held in Bangkok, Thailand on 31 July, according to an official statement with the ONE Championship.

The fighting event will be held as an audience-free live event.

Live event for the matches will available via the ONE Super Application and its YouTube Channel, said ONE Champion-