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THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

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Pyithu Hluttaw raises queries to ministries, approves bill, tables motion

PYITHU Hluttaw organized its 7th-day meeting of 17th regular session yesterday.

MP U Khin Maung Thein from Sagaing region constituency asked for new paints on the 90-year-old Sagaing bridge (Inwa).

Deputy Minister for Transport and Communications U Kyaw Myo replied some parts of 3,948-foot-long bridge are being painted, and its remaining areas could be painted on the availability of budget allocation in 2021-2022 financial year.

MP U Myo Zaw Oo from Lewe constituency asked about organizational structure, responsibility and accountability of third party organizations, and policies and directives for their operations.

Deputy Minister for Construction Dr Kyaw Linn replied that the staff members from Quality Control Division of Village Development Department are representing the government in quality control inspection; although they do not earn additional charges for inspection works, they have to manage all the QC processes; the ministry has also drafted the Construction Development Bill; if contractor companies, quality control inspection teams and third parties failed to adhere to provisions in tender agreement, then fines will be imposed in line with the Myanmar Engineering Council Law.



Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker U T Khun Myat presides over 7th-day meeting on 30 July. **PHOTO: MNA**

MP U Thar Aung from Myothit constituency asked for inspection of quality control at the inter-village roads and allocation of budget for the damaged roads.

Deputy Minister Dr Kyaw Linn replied that inspections of quality control are being carried out by the third parties of local governments, while the periodic maintenance, the routine maintenance and the special maintenance are being performed by using the funds of Union government and the local governments since 2017-2018 financial year.

MP U Yan Kyin Kan from Kunlong constituency asked for maintenance of bank erosion at 9 places of Neint Taint creek, MP U Sai Ngaung Sai Hein from Maukmai constituency about the implementation of digital payment system for cash fines on the vehicles which breach traffic rules. The two questions were answered by Deputy Minister for Transport and Communications U Kyaw Myo.

MP U Khun Than Htoo from Hsihseng constituency asked for construction of the remaining 2-mile section on the Union Highway in his constituency, MP U Khin Maung Myint from Yaksawk constituency about upgrade of an inter-village road in his constituency, MP U Thein Tun from Kyaunggon constituency about upgrade of inter-village earth road in his constituency, MP Daw Tin Tin Yi from Kyungsu constituency about construction of the 1,700-ft inter-village bridge in her constituency. The questions were answered by Deputy Minister Dr Kyaw Linn.

The Pyithu Hluttaw approved the Direct Sale Bill submitted by the Ministry of Commerce.

MP U Min Thein from Taungdwingyi constituency tabled a motion that urged the Union Government to increase traffic awareness campaign and its law enforcement measures to reduce road accidents and related death tolls mainly caused by motorcycle accidents.

The Hluttaw agreed to discuss the motion, and the Speaker invited the list of MPs who want to discuss it.

The 8th-day meeting of 17th regular session of Pyithu Hluttaw is scheduled on 4 August.—Aye Aye Thant

(Translated by Aung Khin)

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Amyotha Hluttaw raises questions to ministries, Nay Pyi Taw Council, approves bill amending 1959 Defence Services Act

AMYOTHA Hluttaw yesterday held its 7th-day meeting of 17th regular session, with questions of MPs to the Ministry of International Cooperation, the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation, and the Ministry of Electricity and Energy, and the Nay Pyi Taw Council. The 7th-day meeting also approved the bill amending the 1959 Defence Services Act.

MP Daw Htu May from Rakhine State constituency 11 said that Myanmar has faced international pressure regarding the Rakhine issue. She raised a question about how the government is making efforts by diplomatic means to make the international community understand the situations that Myanmar has encountered, to reduce international pressure on the country, and to promote the images of the citizens and the country.

Union Minister for International Cooperation U Kyaw Tin replied that the international pressure is mainly related to conflicts in the Rakhine State. In trying to improve the situations in the Rakhine State, to safeguard the human rights, and to promote the image of the country, the effort by diplomats alone is not enough; so, MPs, security personnel and all citizens need to exert united efforts.

He warned that international organizations which are putting pressures on Myanmar actually know the real situation of Myanmar, but they targeted Myanmar for their political agenda. Regarding protection of human rights, trying to improve the situations in Myanmar will make the country to overcome the challenges. The majority of human right violations and the cases that led to allegations occurred at the conflict-torn areas. If the armed conflicts come to an end, the external allegations will be reduced and stopped.



MP Daw Htu May.
PHOTO : MNA



Union Minister U Kyaw Tin.
PHOTO : MNA

Union Minister U Kyaw Tin also urged all stakeholders to cooperatively work in unison to stop armed conflicts and to make the peace process successful.

He continued that the government is facing the challenges practically and fairly in order to safeguard the benefits and stability of the country. He also urged MPs and the citizens to properly control their speech and behaviour not to fall into the traps of sabotage acts. He added that all citizens need to say and have proper manner that can support the relevant efforts of the diplomats at the forefront of the process.

MP U Ye Myint Soe from Yangon Region constituency 7 raised a question whether the government has a plan to help farmers in growing Kenaf, which is marketable in the international markets. The Deputy Minister for Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation U Hla Kyaw replied that the Department of Agriculture has provided good seeds and technical assistants to Kenaf growers.

In collaboration with relevant departments, the Ministry of Commerce is working to identify new marketable items for international markets, and the commercial attachés are trying to hunt overseas markets for crops. As an encouragement for growing Kenaf, it has been removed from the list of items that need export licence, said the Deputy Minister for Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation. The government has cooperated with private business persons for overseas market penetration, said the Deputy Minister U Hla Kyaw.

MP U Ko Ko Naing from Sagaing Region constituency 8 raised a question regarding installation of electricity meter boxes in villages. The Deputy Minister for Electricity and Energy U Khin Maung Win replied that the electricity meter boxes purchased by the Ministry has been delivered, and after inspections, the meter boxes will be handed over to regions and states in August and September 2020. The Ministry will also purchase more meter boxes, said the Deputy Minister.

In response to a question raised by MP U Tun Tun Oo from Mandalay Region constituency 2, the Deputy Minister U Khin Maung Win replied that smart electricity meters will be used and the AMI (Advanced Metering Infrastructure) system will be implemented step-by-step after making discussions with international consultants.

MP U Bwe Khane from Chin State constituency 3 raised a question whether there is a plan to build a two-storey (108 x 72 square feet) RC building to replace the old damaged Township Hall building owned by the Htantlang Township Municipal in Chin State. Nay Pyi Taw Council member U Nyi Tun replied that it was not included in the budget allocation for the 2020-2021 financial year (FY). He added that if the relevant MP, relevant committees and the residents submit a proposal for the construction, a budget will be allocated in an appropriate budget year.

MP U Hla Myint (a) U Hla Myint Than from Mon State constituency 11 raised a question regarding vacant, fallow and virgin lands in Mon State, and MP U Thet Naing Soe from Taninthayi Region constituency 2 asked a question regarding harmful bad smell from a fishmeal plant in Kyauk Ni Maw Village in Launglon Township in Taninthayi Region. The questions were replied by the Deputy Minister for Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation U Hla Kyaw.

MP U Kyaw Than from Rakhine State constituency 10 made a question regarding a land dispute in Manaung Township in the Rakhine State. The question was replied by Nay Pyi Taw Council member U Nyi Tun.

Afterwards, Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker Mahn Win Khaing Than sought the assembly's opinion on each paragraph of the bill amending the 1959 Defence Services Act, and then Amyotha Hluttaw unanimously approved it.

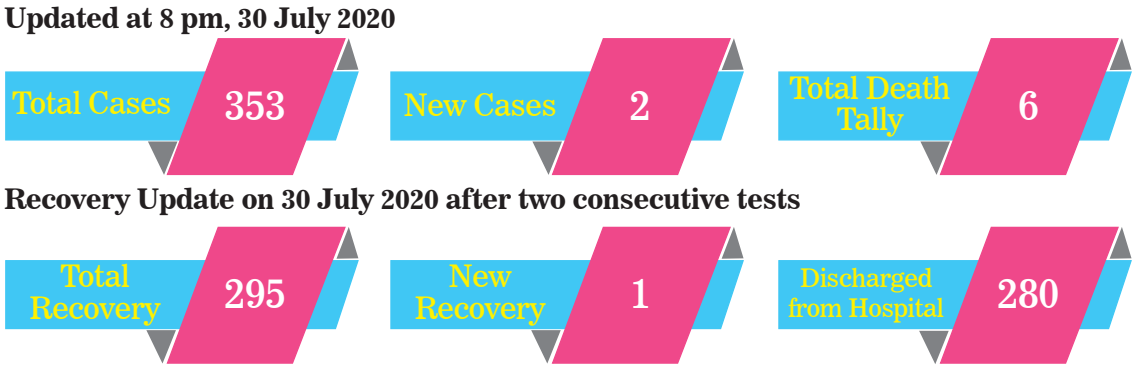
The 8th-day meeting of 17th regular session of the Second Amyotha Hluttaw will be convened on 4 August.—Aung Ye Thwin

(Translated by Maung Maung Swe)

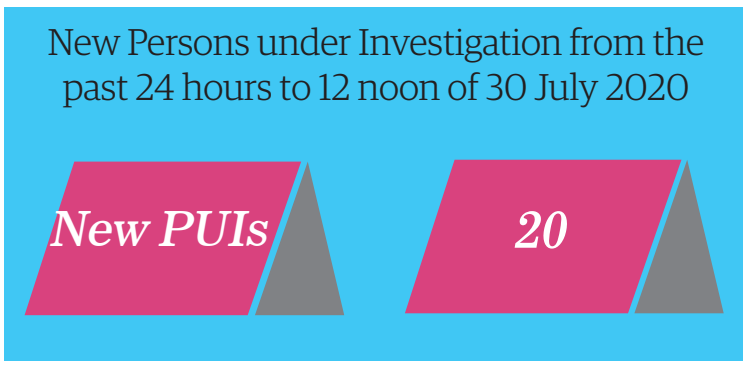
Two new cases of COVID-19 reported in Myanmar on 30 July, total figure reaches 353

MYANMAR'S COVID-19 positive cases reached **353** after **2 new cases** were reported on 30 July according to Ministry of Health and Sports. Case No. 352 returned from Thailand and Case No 353 from Malaysia. Out of the **353** confirmed cases, **six** died, **295** have recovered, **280** have been discharged from hospitals and **20** were held under investigation.—MNA

Updated at 8 pm, 30 July 2020



Recovery Update on 30 July 2020 after two consecutive tests



Two new cases of COVID-19 on 30 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
352	40	Male	Dala Township, Yangon Region	No	Yes, Thailand	Waibargi Specialist Hospital, Yangon	Positive	Keep under Investigation (Twante Township)
353	26	Male	Kyaikmaraw Township, Mon State	No	Yes, Malaysia	District People's Hospital, Kawthoung	Positive	Keep under Investigation (Kawthoung Township

Ministry of Health and Sports

"...We want real freedom and not tinsel and sham of it. When we say real freedom, we mean the freedom not only to plan our political destiny but also the economy and defence of our country by ourselves ..."



(Excerpt from the address made by Bogyoke Aung San at the 2nd session of the Supreme Council of AFPFL, 16 May 1946)

Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker U T Khun Myat receives ROK Ambassador

PYITHU Hluttaw Speaker U T Khun Myat received Mr Lee Sang-hwa, Ambassador of the Republic of Korea to Myanmar, in Nay Pyi Taw, yesterday afternoon.

During the meeting, they exchanged views on cooperation between Myanmar and ROK, the parliaments and friendship ties between people of the two countries, preparations for 2020 General Election, bilateral friendship ties between the two countries, investment, measures related to COVID-19 and legislative affairs.—MNA *(Translated by Khine Thazin Han)*



Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker U T Khun Myat holds meeting with the Ambassador of the Republic of Korea, Mr Lee Sang-hwa in Nay Pyi Taw. **PHOTO: MNA**

CBM Governor holds virtual meeting with US-ASEAN Business Council

GOVERNOR of the Central Bank of Myanmar U Kyaw Kyaw Maung held a videoconference with Chairman, President and CEO of the US-ASEAN Business Council Mr Alexander C. Feildman, Senior Vice President and Regional Managing Director Ambassador Michael W. Michalak and party in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday evening.

At the meeting, the Governor said the Central Bank of Myanmar cut the interest rate by 300 bps from 10 per cent to 7 per cent to reinforce the country economic recovery and to improve business performance, reduced the minimum requirement reserve ratio from 5 per cent to 3.5 per cent to support liquidity in the local financial markets until the end of September, and suspended deposit auction for ensuring sufficient liquidity in local banking services.

The CBM has permitted 13 local banks for mobile banking services, mobile network operators-MNO and non-bank financial institutions-NBFI for mobile financial services.

The Governor added that Myanmar is working for the 'MMQR' which will become the national standard for QR code to implement QR code payment services.

The attendees discussed the development of the small and medium scale businesses during the post-COVID period economic recovery, to promote Myanmar's digital economy and to develop cashless payment systems.

The meeting was attended by the Deputy Governors of the Central Bank of Myanmar U Soe Min, U Soe Thein and U Bo Bo Ngal and senior officials from US companies including Bower Group Asia, Chevron, Chubb, Visa and US ICT Council Myanmar.—MNA

(Translated by Ei Phyu Phyu Aung)



Central Bank Governor U Kyaw Kyaw Maung attends a virtual meeting with US-ASEAN Business Council. **PHOTO: MNA**

Announcement on Extension of the Precautionary Restriction Measures Relating to Control of the COVID-19 Pandemic until 31 August 2020

1. With a view to the further strengthening of measures to contain the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has issued the following announcements regarding temporary entry restrictions for visitors from all countries. All those restrictions were extended until 31 July 2020 by the Ministry's announcement dated 28 June 2020.

(a) Announcement dated 15 March 2020 regarding precautionary measures for all travellers visiting Myanmar;

(b) Announcement dated 20 March 2020 regarding additional precautionary measures for travellers visiting Myanmar and temporary suspension of issuance of visa on arrival and e-visa;

(c) Announcement dated 24 March 2020 regarding additional precautionary measures for travellers from all countries visiting Myanmar;

(d) Announcement dated 28 March 2020 regarding temporary suspension of all types of visas (including social visit visas) and visa exemption services.

2. In order to continue its effective response measures to protect the population of the country from the risks of importation and spread of the COVID-19, the Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has decided to extend the afore-mentioned entry restriction measures until 31 August 2020.

3. In case of urgent official missions or compelling reasons, foreign nationals, including diplomats and United Nations officials, who wish to travel to Myanmar by available relief or special flights, may contact the nearest Myanmar Mission for possible exception with regard to certain visa restrictions. However, all visitors must abide by existing directives issued by the Ministry of Health and Sports relating to the prevention and control of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

"People are the key"

MoI tracks Myanmar media trend to explore its impacts, challenges



Union Minister Dr Pe Myint making a speech at Myanmar media trend discussions at his office on 30 July. **PHOTO: MNA**

THE Ministry of Information held a discussion on the ongoing trend of Myanmar media yesterday.

The discussion was attended by Union Minister Dr Pe Myint, Deputy Minister U Aung Hla Tun, departmental heads, officers, staff members and invited guests.

Union Minister Dr Pe Myint delivered an opening remark, saying that news media workers need to track and thoroughly understand the trend of media, only then they could pace themselves in changing technologies for media development, and could find ways to address possible impacts and challenges.

Deputy Director U Khin Maung Kyi from Internal/External Relations and Information Division, Director U Aung Myo Thant from the Information and Public Relations Department, Editor Daw Khin Yadanar from the News and Periodicals Enterprise, Staff Officer U Aung Aung Oo from Myanma Radio and Television, Assistant Director U Tet Tun Toe from IPRD and Editor Daw Su Yi Mon from NPE presented their discussions.

Attendees at the event took part in the discussions.

Deputy Minister U Aung Hla Tun made his suggestions for cooperation, coordination and exchange of views in the changing trend of media industry.

Union Minister Dr Pe Myint then made a concluding remark on the discussions.—MNA

(Translated by Aung Khin)



Deputy Minister U Aung Hla Tun suggests cooperation, coordination and exchange of view in changing trend of media industry. **PHOTO:MNA**



U Khin Maung Kyi



U Aung Myo Thant



Daw Khin Yadanar



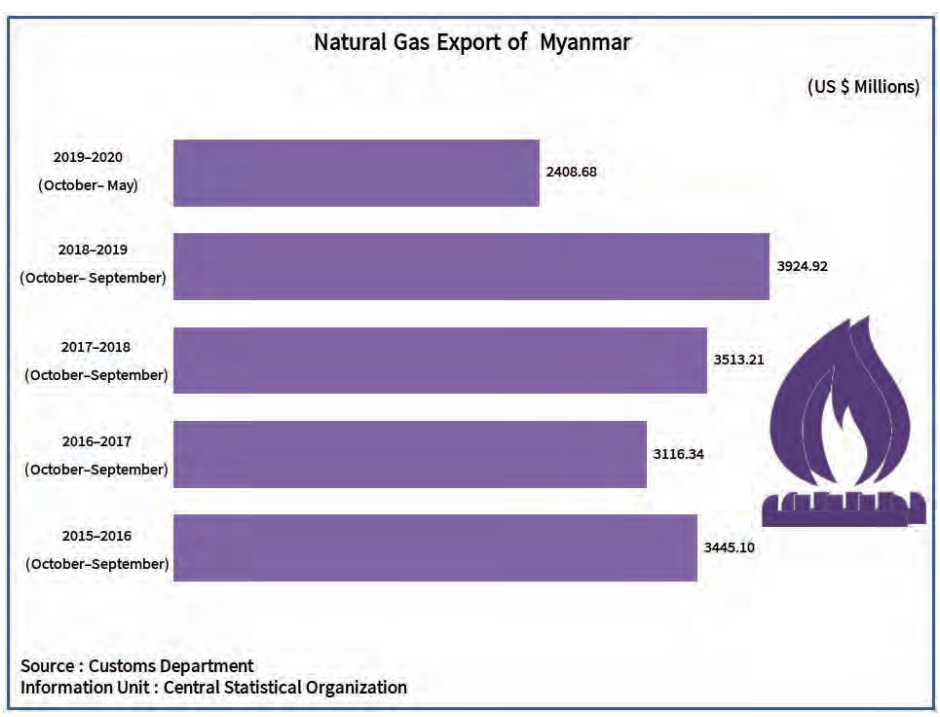
U Aung Aung Oo

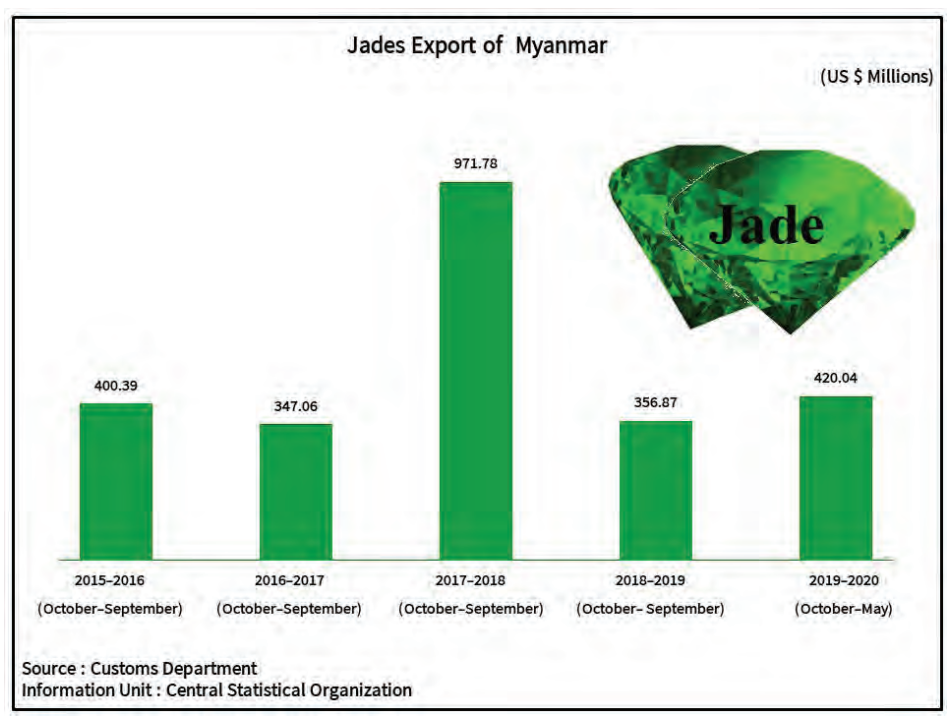


U Tet Tun Toe



Daw Su Yi Mon







Myanmar need not worry about food if systematic management is carried out in this sector

It must be said that the habit of buying non-essential items has declined while people are placing more priority on essential items; the fact that people are thinking more about what is an important issue and what is minor is not a bad thing; some persons working in declining markets might have some difficulties; such problem must be addressed step-by-step; domestic commodity flow, domestic trading and production of value added items must be considered for both local and foreign markets; Myanmar need not worry about food if systematic management is carried out in this sector.

(Excerpt from State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's discussions with senior officer and business persons from trade sector on 30 June 2020)

ILO Convention-138 (Minimum Age Convention) discussion held

THE Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population held virtual meeting with International Labour Organization (ILO) to discuss ILO Convention- 138 (Minimum Age Convention) yesterday morning in Nay Pyi Taw.

Union Minister U Thein Swe, Deputy Minister U Myint Kyaing, (Labour Affairs) Permanent Secretary U Myo Aung, the Directors-General, representatives from Yangon Office of ILO and members of Technical Working Group on Child Labour (TWG-CL), representatives from employer organizations, labour organizations, INGOs and NGOs and Youth Policy Affairs Group took part the discussion.



Union Minister U Thein Swe attends an online meeting to discuss the ILO Convention-138 concerning Minimum Age for Admission to Employment. **PHOTO: MNA**

At the discussion, the Union Minister said that they will disseminate capacity building and knowledge to all the relevant parties to support and implement the convention, and that it was a process which should be done; the responsible officials from the ministry did the own research on the Minimum Age Convention and it had been thought over and over again to reflect the experiences of other countries and the realities of their own; thus, before ratifying the convention, Myanmar National Committee on Child Labour Eradication led by the Vice President(1) was formed with five-year plan in different States and Regions and the implementation of this programme supported the Minimum Age Convention.

Myanmar joined ILO in 1948 and ratified 18 conventions; to live up with those conventions, and with the ILO's advices, the government coordinated employer and employee organizations to implement the existing labour laws; on the ILO's Centenary Celebration Day in 2019, Myanmar considered to ratify the Minimum Age Convention-138 and the agreement was made after the tripartite coordination between employer, employee and government; then, Pyidaungsu Hluttaw decided to accept and practise the convention; the convention will take effect on 8 June 2021; at present, the definition, implementation, educating programme to people and human resource development would be done by cooperating with ministries, regional governments, NGOs, INGOs and UN organizations to plan and implement the convention, the Union Minister said.

The Union Minister also said that Myanmar National Child Labour Eradication programme would be implemented in relation with the Convention-138; by practising the Convention-138, there would be both benefits and challenges; the rules must be followed to practise the convention, especially, to educate the employers from construction, mining and power sectors; the education programmes and courses need to be opened.

Then, the experts from the ILO Yangon Office and Asia- Pacific regional offices discussed the rules to follow in practising the convention, the reviews on relevant laws in Myanmar and the suggestions for further action.—MNA

(Translated by Ei Phyu Phyu Aung)

Union Minister Dr Win Myat Aye presents social pension to senior citizens in Sagaing

UNION MINISTER of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Dr Win Myat Aye provided food supplies, cash assistance and medical equipment for prevention of COVID-19, life jackets and life boats to the flood victims in Sagaing Region yesterday morning.

Social pensions were also given to the age group of 85 years and older.

The Union Minister and party firstly visited Yoon Monastery in Mingin Township and donated Waso-robe and offertories to the leading monk of the monastery.

He also donated K4.2million to construct two units of three-attached public toilet buildings for the flood victims who are taking shelter at the monastery.

The Union Minister provided K388,500 cash assistance, instant noodle, masks and soap bars for COVID-19 to 185 flood victims of Mingin township and presented a motor boat and life jackets worth of K4.2million to the relevant officials to use in rescue works.

He also provided a total of K10,350,000 as monthly social pension to 345 elderly aged 85 and above.

The Union Minister and party visited Shwe Pyi Tan Home for the Aged in Mingin Township, and met the committee members of centre and discussed the processes, trainings of caring for the elderly persons and contributed K500,000 for the fund of centre.—MNA

(Translated by Khine Thazin Han)



Union Minister Dr Win Myat Aye provides cash assistance to flood victims in Sagaing Region on 30 July 2020. **PHOTO: MNA**

MoSWRR, Chinese embassy discuss IDP resettlement in Kachin State



Deputy Minister U Soe Aung holds talks with Mr Tan Shufu, Economic and Commercial Counsellor of the Chinese Embassy, on IDP resettlement programme in Kachin State on 30 July. **PHOTO: MNA**

DEPUTY Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement U Soe Aung and Mr Tan Shufu, Economic and Commercial Counsellor of the Chinese embassy, held a meeting to discuss resettlement programmes for the internally displaced persons in Kachin State yesterday.

In his capacity as leader of the working committee for implementing IDP resettlement in Kachin State, U Soe Aung first thanked the support from China in resettling IDPs in Kachin State. He said they will cooperate in that support and the professional team from Myanmar will work together with the feasibility study group from China.

Mr Tan Shufu said that it was the first visit of economic mission of their embassy during the COVID-19 period; the Chinese government takes serious consideration in resettlement programme in this area; Myanmar and China signed an agreement on economic and technical cooperation; they will hand over 200 million yuan for the resettlement of IDPs in Kachin State, and 4 million yuan from this financial assistance will be handed over soon for resettling villages.

He also called for cooperation of Myanmar in the trips of survey team and in their works.

Director-General U Win Naing Tun, the Secretary of working committee, from the Rehabilitation Department explained the future project and related processes.—MNA

(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)

Public donations towards COVID-19 measures

THE Union Government is doing all it can in preventing, containing and treating the pandemic COVID-19 at the national level and private companies, organizations and individuals have been contributing to the cause as well. The following list details donations made in this regard as of 4:30 pm on 27 July 2020.

No	Donor	Amount of Kyats (In lakhs)
1.	Telenor Myanmar	642.68
2.	Kunming Cuicai Trading Co. Ltd (Yunnan Province, China)	185.87
3.	22nd birthday donation for Maung Shine Htet Aung	100.00
4.	U Myint Htay + Daw Yin Thida Aye	100.00
5.	Telenor SMS-enabled donation programme	57.31
6.	1986 batch of Medical University (1)	54.73
7.	B.Pharm graduates from various sectors	43.10
8.	Myanmar embassies, Myanmar Permanent Representative office, Myanmar consulates (9 offices)	15.00
9.	Daw Khin San Myint (Retired Joint High Court Judge), Kungyangon Tsp, Yangon Region	10.00
10.	91st birthday donation for U Aung Thant, Kyaukkone, Yangon	5.00
11.	Daw Mya Win (Retired nurse), Kyaukme	3.00
12.	Families and friends of Shwe Moe International Co. Ltd and Profora Co. Ltd	2.05
13.	30th birthday donation of Ma Soe Sandi Tun (Temporary Singapore)	2.00
Total		**1,220.74**

Additional donations of cash and hospital equipment/apparatus will continue to be made public.

National-Level Central Committee for Prevention, Control and Treatment of COVID-19

UNHCR, WFP provide COVID-19 test kits to Myanmar

A special flight carrying 20,000 test kits for COVID-19 purchased under UNICEF programme with funds of UNHCR and WFP arrived at Yangon International Airport yesterday morning.

Officials of UNHCR, WFP and UNICEF handed over US$323,888.68 worth of 20,000 test kits to Professor Dr Zaw Than Tun, Director-General of Department of Medical Research under the Ministry of Health and Sports.

WFP Myanmar's Country Director Mr Stephen Anderson said "These kits are intended to further boost and sustain the Government of Myanmar's efforts to avert a second wave of COVID transmissions which is fundamental to keeping poverty and hunger in check".

This latest contribution to the Government of Myanmar builds on collective UN efforts to support the national testing strategy, with 75,000 test kits handed over by the World Health Organization, UNICEF, and UNOPS through its Access to Health Fund, to the Ministry of Health and Sports and its relevant laboratory facilities to date.

The UN has pledged to provide over 90,000 test kits to the Myanmar Ministry, said Mr Stephen.

Professor Dr Zaw Than Tun said, "These COVID test kits are very essential during this period and it cannot be done anything even if we have strong financial status. Now, the UN agencies ordered from the relevant companies and delivered to Myanmar in time so that we can accelerate our efforts in testing COVID-19."

The UN agencies are helping Myanmar in full swing to fight against COVID-19 responses and also providing assistance to promote capacity buildings in controlling spread of the pandemic.

The WFP has arranged relief flights to carry relief aids and medical supplies into Myanmar.—Zaw Gyi

(Translate by Khine Thazin Han)



Myanmar receives 20,000 test kits for COVID-19 donated by UNHCR and WFP on 30 July. **PHOTO: MNA**

19 Myanmar seamen spend hotel quarantine in Kawthoung



Myanmar seafarers arrive in Kawthoung on 29 July evening and currently put under 21-day hotel quarantine. **PHOTO:MNA**

A total of 19 Myanmar seamen who signed off from the MV-Melati-3 (Finafuti) ship anchored in the Andaman Sea arrived in Kawthoung on 29 July evening and are currently held under hotel quarantine.

These 19 Myanmar seafarers had swapped duties with 23 seafarers including Captain U Ye Naung.

The local officials of jetty and health department helped them with medical tests and other supplies and put under 21-day hotel quarantine, while their swabs will be sent to the National Health Laboratory of Yangon.—Kyaw Soe (Kawthong)

(Translated by Khine Thazin Han)

25 Myanmar nationals return home through Chinshwehaw border town

LOCAL authorities in Chinshwehaw border town of northern Shan State received 25 Myanmar returnees from China on 29 July.

Among 9 males and 16 females, 1 person was from Mandalay Region, 2 from Magway Region, 22 from Northern Shan State.

They will go back to respective areas through Lashio.

A total of 13,923 persons have returned Myanmar from China through Chinshwehaw border crossing from 30 April to now.—MNA

(Translated by Ei Phyu Phyu Aung)



Health officials check the body temperature of a returnee from China on 29 July. **PHOTO: MNA**

More supplies reach IDP camps for measures against COVID-19



The Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement is providing medical and relief items to the IDP camps in Kachin, Shan and Rakhine states for prevention of COVID-19 transmission.

Moreover, the ministry is conducting awareness campaigns and motivation works in Nay Pyi Taw council area and other Regions/States.—MNA

(Translated by Aung Khin)

An official provides relief items to a local on 30 July 2020. **PHOTO:MNA**

Items	Kachin			Rakhine	
	Kamine Township	Phakant Township	Mogaung Township	MraukU Township	Myebon Township
	1 camp	2 camps	1 camp	34 camps	
Soap Bar	427			18,860	
Lime Powder bags	40			340	
Campaign Vinyl Sheet	4				

Trade Mark Ads Call Thin Thin May, 09251022355

274 Myanmar nationals come back home via Myawady border bridge on 30 July

A total of 557 Myanmar nationals returned home from Thailand through No. 2 border bridge in Myawady Town, Kayin State, on 30 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 55,272 until now.

The latest group of returnees included 163 males and 111 females from different regions and states.—Htein Lin Aung (IPRD)

(Translated by Aung Khin)



Officials conducting immigration processes to Myanmar returnees from Thailand on 30 July. **PHOTO: MNA**

Fighting child labour requires collective effort of all stakeholders

IN a historic move, Myanmar ratified the ILO Convention-138 that seeks to eliminate child labour and ensure children do not leave school to join the workforce full time, and the treaty will take effect on 8th June, 2021.

The development has been heralded as a positive development, particularly in the context of the current COVID-19 crisis, which threatens the rights, safety and development of the estimated 1.13 million children in child labour across the country.

The Minimum Age Convention 138 requires countries to set a minimum age aligned with the end of compulsory education and under which no one shall be admitted to work in any occupation except light work and artistic performances.

It also prohibits hazardous activities for anyone under 18 years old. In Myanmar, the minimum working age is 14 years old, as per the new Child Rights Law and existing Labour Law.

The Convention also requires countries to establish national policies for the elimination of child labour. Myanmar is the 178th country to ratify the convention and has an estimated 9.3% of the child population aged 5 to 17 in child labour, including more than 600,000 working in hazardous work environments.

> Hence, regarding ILO Convention-138, the Union Government is willing to work with NGOs, INGOs and UN agencies to improve the country's human resources by promoting capacity building among governmental staff, MPs, employees, employers and the people.

Lack of adequate information, capacity and monitoring mechanism would become challenges for tackling child domestic labour in Myanmar. The majority of child labourers can be found in the agricultural sector, factories, or employed as domestic help due to poverty, lack of educational opportunities, and a desire to support their families.

It is going to be a herculean task for implementing the treaty.

Hence, regarding ILO Convention-138, the Union Government is willing to work with NGOs, INGOs and UN agencies to improve the country's human resources by promoting capacity building among governmental staff, MPs, employees, employers and the people. The implementation of ILO Convention-138 must be linked with the three 5-year national level projects on ending child labour.

At present, the Information and Public Relations Department has conducted an educational campaign against child labour in the regions and states, with talks and exhibitions on the subject organized in schools.

In efforts to end child labour, Yangon Region, Bago Region, Ayeyawady Region, Kayin State, and Mon State have been designated as priority areas.

We are confident that the positive role of the non-government organisations (NGOs) and activists would contribute immensely to spreading awareness against child labour and focusing on its prevention, rescue, and rehabilitation efforts.

Social media and E-Democracy in a pandemic

By Anna Malindog-Uy



"Social media" is a term used to describe any of several online platforms that utilize the technology of the internet to facilitate social interaction through written, visual, or audible communication. **PHOTO: JOAQUIN SARMIENTO/AFP/ FILE**

EVEN before the pandemic, Filipinos have long realized the importance of information communication technologies (ICTs) such as personal and networked computers, mobile telephones, the internet and emails, including social media platforms (i.e. Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Linked, etc.). These are used as powerful communication tools in advancing their work, activities, advocacies, and even furthering inter-personal relationships with friends, family members, colleagues, and even strangers living in the country and abroad.

In the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, where access to conventional democratic spaces such as public meetings, and other social and political gatherings is constrained and limited, Filipinos have turned to social media, digital media, collaborative platforms and the like in carrying out public affairs and exercising "active citizenship" virtually. The various "social media platforms" have become all the more relevant and important for Filipinos amid the pandemic.

Social media platforms no longer just facilitate social communications, rather they are now used as communication tools through which Filipinos engage the state, state apparatus, and power-holders in the affairs of the government. They are also the primary means of directly participating in discussions and debates on issues both, local and national that affect their very lives, and more importantly influence local, national, and even international agenda.

"Social media" is a term used to describe any of several online platforms that utilize the technology of the internet to facilitate social interaction through written, visual, or audible communication. Examples of social media include blogging, podcasts, forums, online press releases, and social networking sites like YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn.

Social media also play an important role in facilitating and disseminating vital information about the COVID-19 pandemic, especially on government and societal responses to the crisis. It has become the most relevant "democratic space" for public discussion, debate, and understanding of the novel coronavirus among Filipinos across socio-economic backgrounds and locations. It also facilitates real-time peer to peer information exchanges on COVID-19 related issues and concerns.

Furthermore, social media has become a venue for solidarity and cooperation among Filipinos across boundaries in facilitating help and assistance to the most vulnerable members of society while expressing gratitude and appreciation to all front liners, especially health workers. More than anything, it serves as a medium where Filipinos can directly voice out their criticisms as well as their appreciations of their leaders in government and the government as a whole and even of the private sector concerning COVID-19 and non-COVID-19 issues.

On another note, responsible social media influencers, with their huge number of followers, to a greater extent, facilitate a virtual sense of leadership especially in the dissemination of important information, even in countering misinformation. Something which traditional and mainstream media sometimes fail to do.

As a consequence, both public (state apparatus) and private institutions especially those with resources, are now integrating social networking and social media tools into their communications strategies, to enable them to connect and collaborate formally and informally across institutional and even national boundaries, and with people from different backgrounds quickly and inexpensively.

These social media tools allow institutions to have interactive conversations with their constituencies and the public in general; to have direct and real-time discussions with people, informing them about their cause and potentially influencing the minds of the public and vice-versa; and keep people more engaged and responsive to their causes and discussions.

Challenges

The use of social media is not without its challenges and problems. Social media is an information vacuum that disperses both, knowledge and information at a rapid and wanton speed, which makes it susceptible to abuse, manipulation, embellishment, blaming, gossiping, social vigilantism, chauvinism, and racism. More often than not, online discussions especially on contentious issues like the national response of the Philippines on COVID-19, the Anti-Terrorism Act of 2020, the unsuccessful franchise application of ABS-CBN, and even the recent State of the Nation Address (SONA) of President Rodrigo Duterte, become highly polarised causing divisiveness more than understanding and unity among Filipinos. Thus, social media, especially in the age of COVID-19, if not used responsibly, judiciously, and prudently can be counter-productive.

Since most social media channels remain unmoderated and are not equipped with the facility to credibly establish the identity of individual accounts, cases of internet-based manipulations related to fabricated social media accounts, or disinformation strategies like "fake news", "hate speech" and the like, also saturate social media platforms. These in many ways pose threats to the country's democracy and undermine many informed citizen opinions and decision-making on issues that confront the country, like the novel coronavirus pandemic for example. They also condense public discourse by virtue of – who can mobilise enough online trolls and print and broadcast hacks – to obscure objectivity and the truth.

Thus, in the face of unscrupulous politics, the crisis of 'information disorder', the manifestation of online hate, the proliferation of 'content-marketing', advertising, and the self-serving spin of public relations, propagated and disseminated through social media platforms, are e-issues that need to be countered and addressed, given that public interest is at stake.

Hence, in this "Digital Age", there is not just democratization of communications but also a constant flow of disinformation, misinformation, falsehoods, and fake news. For that reason, people must remain vigilant and prudent in trusting and believing news and information presented to them via social media platforms or any media platforms for that matter.

E-Democracy

The COVID-19 pandemic to a greater extent has made "E (Electronic)-Democracy" more relevant and influential than ever before. Social media has transformed and moved democratic processes from conventional physical spaces to virtual and digitalized ones. Nowadays, social media serves as a democratic space that is potent and formidable in facilitating direct engagement and participation of Filipinos in the affairs of the government, and discussions on issues that affect their lives. Thus, "active citizenship" through the use of various social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and the like in the time of COVID-19 has indeed thrived and gained traction significantly.

Now more than ever, "E-Democracy" and "active citizenship" through various social media platforms are alive and vibrant. To note, "E-Democracy" also known as "digital democracy or internet democracy" broadly means the exercise and support of democratic processes using digital information and communication technologies e.g. social media platforms, while "active citizenship" means people actively involved in the affairs of government and society both, at local and national levels.

Likewise, social media is also an equalizer and empowering tool as it provides people regardless of socio-economic background, education, race, religion, age, sexuality, and status in life, with the venue to voice out their opinions and perspectives on any issues that they may see important to them, and also provides democratised access to information and resources.

Despite the many challenges, particularly concerning the spread and circulation of misinformation, disinformation, and fake news on social media concerning issues related and unrelated to COVID-19, thus far, social media is at the moment the most relevant and vital space for the Philippine government and its relevant institutions, the private sector, humanitarian agencies, social media influencers, regular users and others, to discuss and disseminate information, issues, and concerns related to the novel coronavirus pandemic. The responsible use of social media is thus far imperative and critical.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Anna Rosario Malindog-Uy is a researcher, academic and consultant on a wide array of issues. She has worked with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and other local and international NGOs as a consultant. She is President of Techperformance Corp, an IT-based company in the Philippines.

SOURCE: THE ASEAN POST

Flood Bulletin
(Issued at: 11:00 hrs M.S.T on 30-7-2020)

Flood condition of Ayeyawady River

According to the (10:30) hrs MST observation today, the water level of Ayeyawady River at Nyaung Oo has exceeded by about (1) foot above its danger level. It may remain above its danger level during the next (2) days.

According to the (10:30) hrs MST observation today, the water level of Ayeyawady River at Seiktha has exceeded by about (1) foot above its danger level. It may continue to rise from the present water level about (1) foot during the next (2) days and may remain above its danger level.

Flood condition of Chindwin River

According to the (10:30) hrs MST observation today, the water level of Chindwin River at Phaungpyin has exceeded by about (½) foot above its danger level. It may fall below its danger level during the next (1) day.

Advisory

It is especially advertised to the people who settle near the river banks and low lying areas in NyaungU Township and Seiktha to take precaution measure.

Myanmar Daily Weather Report

(Issued at 7:00 pm Thursday 30th July, 2020)

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

FORECAST VALID UNTIL NOON OF THE 31st July, 2020: Rain or thundershowers will be isolated in Nay Pyi Taw, Lower Sagaing and Mandalay Regions, scattered in Magway Region and (Southern and Eastern) Shan and Kayah States, fairly widespread in Northern Shan and Chin States and widespread in the remaining Regions and States with likelihood of isolated heavyfalls in Upper Sagaing and Magway Regions and Kachin State. Degree of certainty is (80%).

STATE OF THE SEA: Sea will be moderate in Myanmar waters. Wave height will be about (5-8) feet off and along Myanmar Coasts.

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Strong monsoon in the Andaman Sea and South Bay of Bengal.

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 31st July, 2020: Isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (80%).

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 31st July, 2020: One or two rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (100%).

FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 31st July, 2020: Likelihood of isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (60%)

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Magway Myathalun pagoda likely to reopen in August



Myathalun is one of the famous destinations in central Myanmar for the visitors.
PHOTO: ZAYYATU (MAGWAY)

PAGODA board of trustees submitted a proposal to the regional government to permit them to reopen Myathalun pagoda in Magway region on 28 July after preparing in line with coronavirus prevention guidelines, according to the chairman of Myathalun pagoda board of trustees.

"We have already requested the regional government. So, the regional government informed the Coronavirus Central Committee. We will reopen after we are granted permission. We are waiting for the regional government's instruction," said Chairman U Soe Naing of Myathalun pagoda board of trustees.

During the pandemic period, Myathalun pagoda in Magway region has been closed temporarily starting from 30 March to prevent the pagoda from being crowded with the pilgrims. Now, some restrictions were released and the pagoda board of trustees submitted a new proposal to the regional government to allow them to reopen the pagoda.

"We still find coronavirus-positive patients. The pagodas and temples are making all the necessary preparations to be able to reopen the pagodas in towns in other regions including Yangon. The tea shops, restaurants and beer stations are also reopened. So, we hope we can reopen our pagodas soon. However, we need to obey the instructions and guidelines of the health department," said U Aung Ngwe, a resident from Magway Region.

Some have expected that Myathalun pagoda will be permitted to reopen in the first week of August while some are assuming that the pilgrims cannot be controlled on special occasions, according to the locals. —Zayyatu (Magway)

(Translated by Hay Mar)

MR to reopen up/down trains in August

MYANMA Railway (MR) will resume its operation of up and down trains starting from 1 August after suspension of the railway services caused by the outbreak of the global viral disease, according to MR.

Starting from 1 August, the 55-up and 56-down trains in the section of Mandalay-Myitkyina-Mandalay railway, 181-up and 182-down trains in the Pathein-Kyangin-Pathein railway, 69-up and 70-down trains in the Kyimyindaing-Thayawady-Kyimyindaing railway and 103-up and 104-down trains in Pyinmana-Taungdwingyi-Pyinmana railway will be resumed.

Moreover, Yangon-Okkan, Yangon-Mandalay, Yangon-Mawlamyine, Yangon-Pyay, Yangon-Bago, Yangon-Yay, Bago-Yangon and Letpadan-Thayawady railways suspended in the coronavirus period are resuming their operations regularly starting from 1 July.

MR has extended its railway routes suspended due to the pandemic. MR is making arrangements to enable the passengers to sit on board the trains keeping social distancing rules to prevent the virus from spreading. Also, MR is supervising its staff not to allow the passengers to ride on the trains without the tickets.

The schedule of the trains is announced at the railway stations concerned. Each passenger takes two seats to keep physical distancing but MR charges for only one person even when a passenger occupies two seats.—Myint Maung

(Translated by Hay Mar)



Myanma Railway is preparing for resuming most of its services next month. **PHOTO: MYINT MAUNG**

Farmers of quality paddy to get K140,000 per acre in Pathein District

UNDER the programme to remedy the economic impacts caused by the pandemic, the Agriculture Department will provide K140,000 per acre to the local farmers who are growing the good quality paddy grain in Kyaung Gone Township in Pathein District, it is learnt.

Additionally, the department will reclaim a total of 500 acres of land for growing high-quality paddy -- 450 acres for Yeetawmoetaw species and 50 acres for Yaekyanaut species.

Providing of high-quality paddy seeds will enable the local farmers who are working on the high-quality paddy farms to get the jobs for harvesting and genetic exclusion, said U Htin Kyaw Oo, the township head from the Agriculture Department.

There are more than 100,000 acres of monsoon paddy in Kyaung Gone Township. Among them, over 70,000 acres of monsoon paddy have already been planted, said U Min Naung, the head of Township Land Registry Department. —Win Kyaung (IPRD)

(Translated by Hay Mar)

Fishery exports reach $733.8 mln as of 17 July



Marine products of Myanmar account for six per cent of overall export earnings. **PHOTO: (THAN HTAT)**

EXPORT earnings from the fisheries sector during the period between 1 October and 17 July in the 2019-2020 financial year reached US$733.8 million, an increase of $108.97 million from the year-ago period, according to the statistics released by the Commerce Ministry.

Myanmar exports fisheries products, such as fish, prawns, and crabs, to markets in 40 countries, including China, Saudi Arabia, the US, Japan, Singapore, Thailand, and countries in the European Union. However, Myanmar's fishery export volume is much lower compared to neighbouring countries.

The Myanmar Fisheries Federation (MFF) is making concerted efforts to increase fishery export earnings by developing fish farming lakes which meet international standards and adopting advanced fishing techniques.

The MFF plans to establish fish lakes, aqua feedstuffs processing factories, cold storages, and packaging factories, in cooperation with foreign experts.

Myanmar's marine products account for six per cent of overall export earnings, the Ministry of Commerce's data showed.

At present, the fisheries sector is hit hard by the coronavirus outbreak. More than 3 million people are relying on this sector and the businesses need the government's support to keep surviving amid the pandemic, said MFF Secretary U Win Kyaing.

The government's recent relaxation on land use policy regarding fish and prawn farming will enhance the sector and help the breeders get access to formal loan, he said.

There are over 247,000 acres of fish farms and 240,000 prawn breeding farms across the country.

Myanmar exported 340,000 tonnes of fishery products worth $530 million in the 2013-2014FY, 330,000 tonnes worth $480 million in the 2014-2015FY, 360,000 tonnes worth $500 million in the 2015-2016FY, 430,000 tonnes worth $600 million in the 2016-2017FY, 560,000 tonnes worth $700 million in the 2017-2018FY, and over 580,000 tonnes in the 2018-2019FY, according to the Commerce Ministry.—GNLM

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

Bago Region Investment Committee endorses 3 foreign enterprises creating 1,000 new jobs

THE Bago Region Investment Committee, at a videoconference held on 29 July, has endorsed three foreign projects and approved five foreign enterprises to increase capital, according to the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration (DICA).

The investments of those projects including the expansion of capital by the existing enterprises are estimated at US$8.119 million and K680 million.

The projects will create about 1,000 jobs. The investments in the Bago region primarily flow into the manufacturing business.

Nearly 90 foreign businesses are being executed in the Bago Region, according to Bago Region Investment Committee.

According to the statistics released by the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration, Yangon Region absorbs 60 per cent of all investments in Myanmar, Mandalay attracts 30 per cent, while the other regions and states receive only a small share of investments.

To simplify the verification of investment projects, the Myanmar Investment Law allows the region and state Investment Committees to grant permissions for local and foreign proposals, where the initial investment does not exceed K6 billion, or $5 million. —GNLM

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

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Myanmar bean body calls for extension of black bean import deadline

By Nyein Nyein

MYANMAR Pulses, Beans and Sesame Seeds Merchants Association (MPBSSMA) has asked India's Embassy to Myanmar and the Ministry of Commerce to extend the deadline for black bean import as the deadline is August-end, said U Min Ko Oo, secretary of the association.

"At present, Myanmar's Commerce Ministry has requested the Indian government to extend the import deadline. Furthermore, the association will make further efforts through the ministry. It has also directly sent a request to the Indian embassy. Earlier, the import quota of 400,000 tonnes of black beans was set for the 2020-2021 Fiscal Year. Later, they narrowed the deadline by August-end. However, we will continue appealing for the deadline extension", he said.

India rapidly changed the import period to three months by August-end 2020 from the earlier set deadline of March 2021, as per their official notice.

With the changes in India's policy on bean importation, Myanmar still falls short of the target. The growers have already sold out the beans and they are in the hands of traders. They have stockpiled around 200,000-250,000 tonnes of black beans, the association stated. "Myanmar cannot ship the entire quota by the deadline in any possible way. India's companies have been granted import licence from early July, while some have not received licence until now. Therefore, trading can start in mid-July. If the deadline is April-end, the country can ship only 20 per cent of quota (approximately 80,000 tonnes), he noted.

The prices of the black bean are pegged at around K940,000-945,000 per tonne, while pigeon peas are priced K800,000-805,000 per tonne, as per the market's data. Myanmar is the top producing country of black bean that India demands. Besides Myanmar, Australia and Africa grow other kinds of peas such as pigeon peas, green grams and yellow peas, the association stated.

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)



Ministry of Commerce is discussing Indian government to extend its deadline of black bean import from Myanmar. **PHOTO : MIN HTET AUNG**

German economy shrinks by record 10.1% in Q2 on virus hit



Destatis said efforts to contain the COVID-19 outbreak had led to "a massive slump" in exports and imports, although government spending had increased over the period. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

BERLIN — The German economy shrank by a record 10.1 per cent in the second quarter as coronavirus lockdowns took their toll, official data showed Thursday, but experts say a recovery is already under way.

Federal statistics agency Destatis called the quarter-on-quarter decline in gross domestic product "historic" and far bigger than any slump seen during the 2008-2009 financial crisis. Economy Minister Peter Altmaier had warned earlier this year that the pandemic would push Europe's top economy into "the worst recession" in its post-war history, ending a decade of growth.

Analysts had expected a slightly smaller contraction of around nine per cent for the April-June period.

Destatis said efforts to contain the COVID-19 outbreak had led to "a massive slump" in exports and imports, although government spending had increased over the period.—AFP ■

U.S. tech giants' top executives grilled by lawmakers in antitrust hearing

WASHINGTON — Top executives of Amazon, Apple, Facebook and Google on Wednesday testified virtually before the U.S. House Antitrust, Commercial, and Administrative Law Subcommittee, which hit them with tough questions over their practices.

"The purpose of today's hearing is to examine the dominance of Amazon, Apple, Facebook, and Google," David Cicilline, a Rhode Island Democrat and chairman of the subcommittee, said in his opening remarks, noting that these platforms have wielded their power "in destructive, harmful ways" in order to expand.



Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos testifies Wednesday via video before the House Judiciary antitrust subcommittee. The hearing also featured the heads of Apple, Facebook and Google. **PHOTO: MANDEL NGAN/POOL/AFP**

"Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, these corporations already stood out as titans in our economy," Cicilline said. "In the wake of COVID-19, however, they are likely to emerge stronger and more powerful than ever before."

Representative Jerrold Nadler, a New York Democrat, pressed Facebook Founder and CEO Mark Zuckerberg on the company's purchase of Instagram, arguing that Facebook made the move to stifle competition. The four tech executives apparently sought to dismiss such accusations, saying that they compete fairly, and also tried to downplay their market dominance in their respective fields.

Amazon Founder and CEO Jeff Bezos, for example, said in his opening remarks that Amazon accounts for less than 4 per cent of retail market in the United States, and it competes against large, established players like Target, Costco, Kroger, and Walmart. Cicilline, however, noted that Amazon operates across a vast array of businesses -- from cloud computing and movie production to transportation logistics and small business lending, and the company's market valuation recently hit 1.5 trillion U.S. dollars, more than that of Walmart, Target, Salesforce, IBM, eBay, and Etsy combined.— Xinhua ■

In globalized market, French growers embrace 'slow-flowers' movement

AMSTERDAM — In Amsterdam's suburbs, the forklift trucks have already resumed their incessant loading of crates of flowers as the Netherlands' horticulture giants get back to deliveries across the globe after the virus lockdown.

Every day, the Netherlands' massive flower industry sells tonnes of French flowers to French consumers, just one sign of years of Dutch dominance of the globalized market.

But as the pandemic pushes consumers to look more locally, French flower growers are hoping to break Dutch hegemony by selling home-grown produce with less of an impact on the climate as part of the so-called "slow flowers" movement.

Started in the United States as a way to promote local farm and flower produce, the movement is growing as it supports local economies and ethical producers in a shift away from industrialised commerce.

Figures vary, but executives at French affiliate of Dutch giant FleuraMetz estimate 70 per cent of the world's flower production now makes its way through Holland, even produce that is not grown on Dutch soil.

"We sell 30,000 different varieties," said Michel Van Schie, spokesman for Royal Flora Holland, another Dutch horticulture giant.—AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

U.S. GDP in 2nd qtr. shrinks at 32.9% pace, worst since 1940s

WASHINGTON — The U.S. economy dived an annualized real 32.9 per cent in the April to June period amid the coronavirus pandemic, the worst quarterly deterioration since comparable data became available in 1947, the Commerce Department said Thursday.

The contraction in terms of inflation-adjusted gross domestic product, which followed a 5 per cent drop in the preceding quarter, underscored the devastating impact of the public health crisis that has led to the widespread shuttering of businesses and stay-at-home orders in an effort to slow the spread of the virus.

However, the headline figure was better than the market forecast of a 34.1 per cent decline.—Kyodo ■

Prosecutors accuse ex-PEMEX boss of taking $10.5m bribe

MEXICO CITY — Mexican prosecutors accused the former boss of state oil company PEMEX of accepting a bribe worth more than $10 million from Brazilian construction giant Odebrecht at his trial in Mexico City on Wednesday.

Emilio Lozoya is accused of receiving huge payments in return for lucrative public works contracts.

"You knew that the funds were from Odebrecht and you received $10.5 million as a result of bribes," said a prosecutor at the trial, which is taking place by videoconference.

Prosecutors said Lozoya's mother and wife were also involved in the fraud.

The bribes were allegedly used to buy buildings for family members or transfered to accounts in Europe in a bid to "hide" the origin of the funds.

In return Odebrecht obtained a $39 million "profit" in the "award of works" contracts.

The trial is taking place by videoconference because Lozoya, 45, has been in hospital suffering from anaemia since returning to Mexico on July 17 following his extradition from Spain, where he was captured in February.—AFP ■

Shell dives to $18.1bn loss on virus-hit oil market

THE HAGUE — Anglo-Dutch energy major Royal Dutch Shell posted Thursday a colossal net loss of $18.1 billion (15.4 billion euros) for the second quarter, blaming massive asset writedowns on the coronavirus-hit oil market, and flagged that job cuts are on the way.

The performance, contrasting sharply with profit after tax of $3.0 billion a year earlier, was sparked by a huge $16.8-billion charge on chronic fallout both from COVID-19 and collapsing oil prices.

The vast charge was taken "as a result of revised medium- and long-term price and refining margin outlook assumptions in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and macroeconomic conditions as well as energy market demand and supply fundamentals," Shell said in a results statement.

The dire performance meanwhile reflected lower prices for oil, liquefied natural gas (LNG) and gas, while it was also adversely impacted by lower refining margins and oil products sales volumes.

Production dipped six per cent to 3.4 million barrels of oil equivalent per day in the reporting period -- and is forecast to drop further in the third quarter.

'Resizing'

"Shell has delivered resilient cash flow in a remarkably challenging environment," said Chief Executive Ben van Beurden in Thursday's statement.

"We continue to focus on safe and reliable operations and our decisive cash preservation measures will underpin the strengthening of our balance sheet."—AFP ■



Oil firms like Shell are booking massive losses as lower oil prices force them to reduce the value of their assets. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

Strong sales of cleaning products amid pandemic boost P&G results

CINCINNATI — Strong sales of cleaning products and soaps amid the coronavirus crisis more than compensated for lackluster demand for shaving products, lifting Procter & Gamble's quarterly earnings, the company reported Thursday.

The US consumer products giant, whose brands include Mr Clean, Cascade and Gilette, scored an impressive 11 per cent surge in second-quarter sales in fabric and home care, the standout division in the period.

"We remain highly relevent across the board," said Chief Financial Officer Jon Moeller, who said consumers were keeping larger inventories of products at home to avoid store visits.

"Consumers generally are carrying higher inventory levels. They also are consuming more," said Moeller, adding that shoppers had also had more money for household items that might have otherwise gone to travel or eating out.

Moeller said consumers were using more detergent because they were washing clothes after just one use. Sales of some items, such as Bounty paper towels, were up "strong" double digits in the quarter, he told reporters on a conference call.—AFP ■



Strong sales of soaps and cleaning products boosted Procter & Gamble earnings amid the coronavirus crisis.
PHOTO: AFP/FILE

Huawei overtakes Samsung as top smartphone seller

BEIJING — China's Huawei has overtaken Samsung to become the number-one smartphone seller worldwide in the second quarter on the back of strong domestic demand, industry tracker Canalys said Thursday.

Canalys said the embattled firm, which is facing US sanctions and falling overseas sales, shipped 55.8 million devices — overtaking Samsung for the first time, which shifted 53.7 million units.

The findings marked the first quarter in nine years that a company other than Samsung or Apple has led the market, Canalys said. —AFP ■

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Notice of Commencement of EIA Investigation Phase

The members of the Bawdwin Joint Venture Company Limited (BJV) plan to redevelop the existing lead, zinc and silver mine located in Namtu township, Kyauk Me District, Northern Shan State, Myanmar.

Redevelopment will involve demolition of some existing infrastructure and construction of new infrastructure to support mining and processing activities within the 38 km^2 existing mining concession.

An Environmental and Social Impact Assessment is currently being undertaken in accordance with Myanmar's Environmental Laws and Procedures. The Scoping Report, Terms of Reference, Public Participation Plan and Grievance Mechanism are available at the Information Centers listed below and on BJV's website set up in the project area or from the website given below.

Public consultation relating to the project will be carried out in Namtu and Bawdwin in August 2020 and will be held in accordance with Government COVID19 public gathering guidelines.

	Namtu	Bawdwin	Tiger Camp
Time	9:00 - 3:00	9:00 - 3:00	9:00 - 3:00
Date	August 12-18	August 19-24	August 25-29
Venue	Namtu GAD office	Bawdwin Sport Complex	Theatre

For further information, to submit comments, or lodge a grievance, please visit the Information Centers located at Bawdwin Upper Village, Bawdwin Lower Village and Tiger Camp or send us an email by visiting https://bawdwinjv.com

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Pakistan shows concerns over India's induction of Rafale jets

ISLAMABAD — Pakistan on Thursday expressed serious concerns over India's induction of Rafale fighter jets imported from France into the Indian Air Force and said it could lead to an arms race in South Asia.

A batch of five Rafale jets reached at Indian air force station Ambala in the northern state of Haryana on Wednesday. The five aircraft is the first tranche of the 36 planes bought by India from France.

"We have seen reports of recent acquisition of Rafale jets by Indian Air Force. According to some former senior Indian officials and several international publications, these Rafale jets have dual-capable systems that can also be modified as nuclear weapon delivery platforms," Pakistan's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Aisha Farooqui said.



A handout picture released by France's Dassault Aviation shows an Indian Air Force Rafale aircraft taking off from Merignac airbase in southern France. **PHOTO: AFP**

"It is well known that India continues to expand and modernize its nuclear arsenal both in terms of type and number of delivery systems. In addition to this, India has nuclearized the Indian Ocean and continues to increase the readiness of its arsenal," Farooqui said at her weekly press briefing in Islamabad.—Xinhua ■

Philippines arrests former MP over wife's killing

MANILA — A former Philippine congressman and religious cult leader was arrested Thursday over his wife's killing and corrupt practices, police said, ending a years-long manhunt.



Ruben Ecleo is escorted by officers outside police regional headquarters in Manila, following his arrest. **PHOTO: AFP**

Ruben Ecleo, 60, was head of a group called the Philippine Benevolent Missionaries Association when his wife's remains were found in a bin bag at the bottom of a ravine on the central island of Cebu in 2002.

He was arrested months later in a police raid on his home on the island of Dinagat, during which 17 people were killed.

Ecleo was bailed in 2004 and won a House of Representatives seat in 2010 -- held up as an example of an infamous culture of impunity in the country, where the rich and powerful are rarely held to account.

In 2012, a year after he stopped attending the trial, a Cebu court convicted him of parricide and sentenced him to 30 years in prison.

Manila police described Ecleo as the "#1 Top Most Wanted Person" in the Philippines.

A police report said he was arrested Thursday at a gated housing enclave in the northern city of Angeles, where he had been living under another name.

His driver was also detained for trying to obstruct Ecleo's arrest, police added.

In 2006, another court convicted Ecleo of corruption committed when he was a town mayor in Dinagat in the early 1990s.—AFP ■

Tokyo asks restaurants, bars to shut early as virus spikes

TOKYO — Tokyo's governor called Thursday for restaurants, bars and karaoke parlours to shut earlier to help contain the coronavirus as the Japanese capital reported a record number of new infections.

"The current situation is more serious than before," said Yuriko Koike, citing experts.

"There were several clusters in Tokyo... We have no time to waste," she said, adding the number of infections through group dining is increasing.

Japan has so far escaped the epidemic relatively lightly, with around 32,500 infections and just over 1,000 deaths since the first case was detected in January.

But the number of cases has been on the rise since the government lifted a state of emergency two months ago.

"Tokyo will have to declare a state of emergency if the situation gets worse," Koike said.

Businesses in the capital that serve alcohol and karaoke parlours will be asked to close at 10 pm, from August 3 until the end of the month, Koike said.

The city's government will offer subsidies of 200,000 yen ($1,900) to medium and small-sized firms that cooperate, she added.

"It's not realistic to ask them to close entirely," she said.

Complying is voluntary, with no penalties for those who don't, and comes as the capital reported 367 coronavirus cases just a day after a record single-day nationwide figure of 1,264 new cases.—AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

N. Korea again claims no novel coronavirus infection cases

BEIJING — North Korea's most influential newspaper again claimed Thursday that nobody has been infected with the new coronavirus so far in the country, saying measures will be stepped up to prevent the pandemic from spreading there.

If North Korea lets its guard down, that would trigger a "crucial crisis," said the Rodong Sinmun, the newspaper of the Workers' Party of Korea.

The official Korean Central News Agency said Sunday that a first suspected case of the novel coronavirus in North Korea had been detected, prompting leader Kim Jong Un to convene an emergency meeting of the ruling party.

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, the news agency said.— Kyodo ■

Philippines to stockpile Avigan for COVID-19 treatment

MANILA — The Philippine government said Thursday it will stockpile Japanese anti-flu drug Avigan, to treat severe cases of the new coronavirus, as planned clinical trials for the drug draw closer.

Carlito Galvez Jr., presidential adviser and head of the national task force handling the pandemic, said the government is looking for ways to treat severe cases to prevent more deaths.

"This is why we are buying high-flow nasal cannula, and we will also stockpile remdesivir and Avigan, as well as blood plasma (from COVID-19 survivors) so that our severe cases will not become fatalities," Galvez said during a press conference in Metro Manila. Favipiravir, an oral antiviral drug sold under the brand name Avigan, is manufactured by a subsidiary of Japanese firm, Fujifilm Holdings Corp. A government review on the usage of Avigan in the Philippines has already concluded, according to Philippine Health Undersecretary Rosario Vergeire, suggesting clinical trials could start soon.— Kyodo ■

Muslim pilgrims to scale Mount Arafat for peak of hajj

MACCA — Muslim pilgrims converged Thursday on Saudi Arabia's Mount Arafat for the climax of this year's hajj, the smallest in modern times and a sharp contrast to the massive crowds of previous years.

A tight security cordon has been erected all around the foot of the rocky hill outside Mecca, also known as Jabal al-Rahma or Mount of Mercy.

Pilgrims, donning masks and observing social distancing, were brought in buses from neighbouring Mina, state television showed, as Saudi authorities impose measures to prevent a coronavirus outbreak.

They were subject to temperature checks and attended a sermon -- which state media said was translated into 10 languages -- before they set off on the climb to the summit for hours of Koran recitals and prayers to atone for their sins.

The scene was strikingly different to last year's ritual when a sea of pilgrims ascended Mount Arafat, marshalled by tens of thousands of stewards in a bid to prevent any crushes.



A first trickle of pilgrims arrives at Mount Arafat outside Mecca for a day of Koran recitals and prayers to atone for their sins that is the climax of the hajj. **PHOTO: SPA/AFP**

After sunset prayers, pilgrims will make their way down Mount Arafat to Muzdalifah, another holy site where they will sleep under the stars to prepare for the final stage of hajj, the symbolic "stoning of the devil".

It takes place on Friday and also marks the beginning of Eid al-Adha, the festival of sacrifice.

The hajj, one of the five pillars of Islam and a must for able-bodied Muslims at least once in their lifetime, is usually one of the world's largest religious gatherings.

But only up to 10,000 people already residing in the kingdom will participate in this year's ritual, compared with 2019's gathering of some 2.5 million from around the world.

"You are not our guests but those of God, the custodian of the two holy mosques (Saudi Arabia's King Salman) and the nation," Hajj Minister Mohammad Benten said in a video released by the media ministry on Wednesday.

Security cordon

A security cordon has been thrown around the holy sites to prevent any security breaches, an interior ministry spokesman said.

Riyadh faced strong criticism in 2015 when some 2,300 worshippers were killed in the deadliest stampede in the gathering's history.

But this year, those risks are greatly reduced by the much smaller crowd.—AFP ■

Bolivia records 10% increase in coca cultivation in 2019: UN

VIENNA — Bolivia recorded a 10 per cent increase in coca cultivation in 2019 as compared to the previous year, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) said on Wednesday.

That amounted to an increase from 23,100 hectares to 25,500 devoted to the crop, a primary ingredient in cocaine but which is also used to make tea or is chewed raw in several Andean countries. Bolivia is the third largest producer of cocaine in the world after Colombia and Peru, according to the UNODC.



Bolivian anti-narcotics police officers prepare to incinerate cocaine at La Rinconada, on the outskirts of La Paz, in December 2019 -- the country reported a 10 per cent increase in coca cultivation in 2019 . **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

The data was compiled from satellite imagery and information collected on the ground.

One of the main coca producing areas of Bolivia is in the central Cochabamba department, a bastion of peasant support for exiled former president Evo Morales.

UNODC said it has detected "the presence of coca plantations in six of the 22 nationally protected areas" in Bolivia, where the harvesting of coca is prohibited.

In Bolivia it is legal to chew coca leaves and use them to make tea or in religious Andean rituals.

Morales passed a law in 2017 that almost doubled the legal area allowed for coca cultivation from 12,000 to 22,000 hectares.—AFP ■

US federal forces agree on conditional pullout from Portland

PORTLAND — President Donald Trump's administration on Wednesday agreed to a deal to defuse weeks of clashes in the US city of Portland with the withdrawal of federal forces whose presence enraged protesters, but the timing remained in dispute.

Oregon Governor Kate Brown said the forces -- whose deployment was seen by many as part of Trump's law-and-order strategy for re-election -- would begin their phased pullout on Thursday. Acting Homeland Security Secretary Chad Wolf indicated, however, that the officers will withdraw only if there are guarantees that local police can ensure the federal courthouse will be secured.

Trump's administration earlier this month sent the federal tactical teams, many wearing combat-like gear, to intervene in the western city after weeks of protests against racism and police brutality saw windows broken and graffiti scrawled on the federal courthouse and other buildings.

But their deployment only served to inflame the situation, especially following video footage of protesters being snatched off the street by federal forces and put into unmarked cars.

"After my discussions with (Vice President Mike) Pence and others, the federal government has agreed to withdraw federal officers from Portland," Brown tweeted Wednesday.

"They have acted as an occupying force & brought violence. Starting 30 July, all Customs and Border Protection & ICE officers will leave downtown Portland." In his statement, Wolf said he and Brown had "agreed to a joint plan to end the violent activity in Portland directed at federal properties and law enforcement officers."—AFP ■

Russia jails US ex-marine for 9 years over police assault

MOSCOW — A Russian court on Thursday sentenced former US marine Trevor Reed to nine years in prison for assaulting two police officers while drunk last year.

Reed, a 29-year-old student and former marine from Texas, allegedly attacked police after attending a party in Moscow.

He appeared wearing a facemask in a cage for defendants in a courtroom in the Russian capital as the judge read out the guilty verdict, saying the police officers had suffered "mental and physical harm".

Reed was handed nine years in a penal colony, according to an AFP reporter in the courtroom.

"This is completely a political case," Reed told journalists after the verdict. "I will be asking my government for political support". The case has caught the attention of US diplomats in Russia and US Ambassador John Sullivan said he was following proceedings along with the trials of other Americans detained in Russia.—AFP ■

MFF, FIFA discuss football development amid pandemic



Myanmar Football Federation president U Zaw Zaw discusses football development matters with FIFA via online on 29 July 2020.
PHOTO: MFF

MYANMAR Football Federation (MFF) president and Asian Football Confederation (AFC) vice president U Zaw Zaw discussed ASEAN and Myanmar's football development along with difficulties during the pandemic period with Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) president Gianni Infantino through videoconference on 29 July, according to the statement with the MFF.

AFC president Salman Bin Ibrahim Al Khalifa and presidents from football associations of ASEAN countries also attended the virtual conference.

During the meeting, U Zaw Zaw discussed the coronavirus-preventative process of Myanmar Football Federation and Ayeyawady Foundation in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Sports, launching quarantine centres at Myanmar National Football Academies and Myanmar National Football teams' apartments to help the quarantined persons during the pandemic period, hard times being faced by players and their families, and football sponsors in most of the countries due to the pandemic, and the preparatory process being undertaken by MFF for making ready to hold the football tourneys again after getting permission by the government. The MFF president also stressed on the equal rights of getting COVID-19 Relief Loan by FIFA and supporting women football tourneys nationwide.

Next, FIFA president discussed planning to hold FIFA World Cup every two years instead of every four years and eight Asian countries to be included in the World Cup tourneys.—Lynn Thit (Tgi) ■

AFF Suzuki Cup 2020 postponed until next year

THE ASEAN Football Federation (AFF) announced yesterday that the AFF Suzuki Cup 2020 will be postponed until 2021 for safety with the coronavirus pandemic, according to the AFF's statement.

The AFF Suzuki Cup Task Force Committee recently held a meeting before reaching this decision and detailed fixtures for the tourney will be released later, according to the AFF.

AFF president Major-General Khiev Sameth said: "Since the onset of COVID-19, the AFF has been closely monitoring guidance from the World Health Organization (WHO), Health Ministries, government agencies, FIFA and AFC".

Adrian Staiti, president of APAC at Sportfive, the exclusive commercial partner of the AFF Suzuki Cup, also said, "Sportfive supports the decision by the AFF to postpone the AFF Suzuki Cup 2020 to ensure the safety and well-being of all players, partners, staff and fans. While we are disappointed that we are unable to hold the tournament this year, we will work closely with the AFF to monitor the situation and look forward to working with our partners to deliver a great tournament for the fans of ASEAN next year."

The AFF Suzuki Cup Football tourney is an apple of everyone's eyes for ASEAN region and it has possessed fan attendance of more than 750,000 in 2018.—Lynn Thit (Tgi) ■

No spectators for US Open golf due to COVID-19

NEW YORK — The 120th US Open will be staged without spectators at Winged Foot on Sep 17-20 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the US Golf Association (USGA) announced Wednesday (Jul 29).

The USGA consulted state officials before ruling out fans over health and safety issues.

The major showdown in suburban New York would have been the first to allow fans since the US PGA Tour resumed play in June after a three-month shutdown due to the deadly virus outbreak.

"Following months of consultation and scenario planning with local and state health officials, we have jointly decided that hosting the US Open without spectators will provide the best opportunity to conduct the championship safely for all involved," USGA chief executive officer Mike Davis said.

"We will miss the excitement of the fans and what their presence brings to the championship. We look forward to welcoming them again to future US Opens."

The PGA Tour had planned to have fans at the Memorial tournament two weeks ago but rising numbers of cases in Ohio prompted state officials to scratch that idea.

Spectators will also be absent from next week's PGA Championship at TPC Harding Park in San Francisco, the first major championship of a year where the regular schedule was thrown into chaos by the virus.

The US Open was postponed from June to September and staged without the usual trademark qualifying rounds, the field selected by rankings and other methods.

The PGA was moved from May to August while the Masters was shifted from April to November and the British Open was called off altogether.

Organizers had pushed to try and have spectators at the US Open.—AFP ■

Brighton sign Ajax defender Veltman

LONDON — Brighton signed Netherlands defender Joel Veltman from Ajax for an undisclosed fee on Wednesday (Jul 29).

Veltman agreed a three-year contract with the Premier League side. The 28-year-old helped Ajax win the Dutch title three times after coming through the club's vaunted academy.

"We're delighted to welcome Joel to the club," Brighton boss Graham Potter said.

"He has terrific experience from his time with Ajax including the Champions League and, of course, with the Dutch national team.

"He's an excellent defender who can play at right-back and at centre-half, but he's also comfortable in possession.

"He is really looking forward to the challenge of playing in the Premier League and we're delighted he is now a Brighton player and we're looking forward to working with him."

Capped 22 times by Holland, Veltman was part of the 2014 World Cup squad and also played in Ajax's Europa League final defeat to Manchester United in 2017. He becomes the second arrival at the AMEX Stadium this week after England midfielder Adam Lallana joined the Seagulls following his departure from Liverpool.—AFP ■



Ajax's Dutch defender Joel Veltman has joined Brighton. **PHOTO: AFP/JOSE JORDAN**