Fourth session of Union Peace Conference commences in Nay Pyi Taw

THE fourth session of Union Peace Conference—21st Century Panglong began with an opening ceremony on the first day at the Myanmar International Convention Centre-II in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

The opening ceremony was attended by President U Win Myint, State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, Vice Presidents U Myint Swe and U Henry Van Thio, Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker U Aye Tha Aung, Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker Mahn Win Khang-Than, Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Vice Senior General Soe Win, Amyotha Hluttaw Deputy Speaker U Aye Tha Aung, Union Ministers, Union Attorney-General, Chairman of Nay Pyi Taw Council, Chairman of Peace Commission, senior Tatmadaw officers, Commander of Nay Pyi Taw Command, Deputy Ministers, representatives of Hluttaw and Tatmadaw members, patrons, chairpersons, vice-chairpersons and representatives of political parties.

The NCA-S EAOs were represented by KNU Chairperson Saw Mutu Sae Poe and Vice-Chairperson Pr’do’h Saw Kwe Htoo Win, DKBA Saw Moo Shay, KNU KNILMA-PC Chairperson Saw Hto Lay and Vice-Chairperson Saw Yin Nu, ABSDF Chairperson U Than Khe and General Secretary U Sonny, CNPF Chairperson Pu Zin Cung and Vice-Chairperson Pu Thang Ning Koe, PNLO Leading Patron Khun Okkar and Patron Phyar Tan Khun Thi Saung, ALP Vice-Chairperson Khaiing Soe Naing Aung and Deputy Leader Saw Mra Raza Lin, RCSS Chairperson Sao Yawd Serk and its peace negotiation leader Sao Pawng Kherh, NMSMP Chairperson Nai Han Thar and Vice-Chairperson.
Pyidaungsu Hluttaw discusses signing BIMSTEC agreement, calls for greater action on tax revenues

THE 10th-day meeting of the 17th regular session of the Second Pyidaungsu Hluttaw was held in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

Firstly, Union Minister for International Cooperation U Kyaw Tin explained the proposal sent by the President of Myanmar to sign the BIMSTEC agreement. He said if the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw approves the proposal then they will send a message to the office of the BIMSTEC Secretary-General signaling Myanmar’s readiness to sign the agreement. He said Myanmar needs to sign the agreement like other nations have done in the upcoming 5th BIMSTEC Summit and the BIMSTEC agreement will come into effect after 30 days from the date of all member nations signing the 7 documents of agreement. He said signing the agreement will strengthen BIMSTEC and allow it to establish itself with integrity.

Next, Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Deputy Speaker U Tun Tun Hein called for MPs interested in discussing the proposal to register their names.

This was followed by Hluttaw representatives debating the principles, project progress and expenditure related to the National Project Bill and Union Budget Bill for 2020-2021 FY.

U Khin Cho from Hlaingbwe constituency said if the estimated revenue is not collected then it can cause complications for slated expenditures and make the nation more dependent on loans. He said the 7 goals of CERP needs to be implemented so essential expenditure for 2020-2021 FY will rise. He said all budget proposals should re-evaluate only the essential necessities.

U Maung Maung Ohn from Ayeyawady Region constituency said Myanmar has to import millions of tonnes of petrol every year but the ethanol used to mix with these fuels is produced from domestic alcohol factories based on sugar canes, maize, rice and cassavas. He said the government issued permits for the company in 2008 but it was unsuccessful as the laws and regulations were not very systematic. He said the nation must lead to enact the necessary laws and regulations for sales of fuel and ethanol.

Tatmadaw Pyithu Hluttaw representative Colonel Han Thu said there will be repercussions on many sectors due to COVID-19 so national projects will not be able to fulfill their objectives if estimated revenues are not met. He said the deficit for estimated revenue for 2020-2021 FY should be reviewed and methods to increase revenue should be pursued.

U Myo Win of Mon State constituency said a lot of time is spent on micro numbers when reviewing the budget. He said the Union Government should develop a system that ensures budget proposals do not ask for more than the actual costs or the equipment cost is not too much higher than the project value.

U Khin Maung Thi from Loilem constituency then referred to the Ministry of Education and said there is a high requirement of teachers for basic, middle and higher education and should be fulfilled within this academic year. He said the Ministry of Health and Sports needs to review its policies so that more assistant surgeons come to apply and treat public health.

The matter was further debated by Dr Hla Moe from Aungmyethazan constituency, U Win Htin from Pyapon constituency, Tatmadaw Amyotha Hluttaw representative Colonel Soe Lwin, U Kyaw Min of Letpadan constituency, U Bo Gyi from Chauk constituency, U Tin Tun Naing from Seikkyi Khamautso constituency, U Moe Shwe from Patao constituency, and U Kyaw Soe from Banmak constituency.

Next, the assembly discussed the 2020 Union Tax Bill. Dr Pyae Phyo of Ayeyawady Region constituency motioned for a change in section 23 of the bill by replacing 25 per cent income tax to 20%. He said tax reforms should be made progressively every year and the authorities should ensure the public does not misconstrue tax payments and promote a tax paying culture.

Tatmadaw Pyithu Hluttaw representative Colonel Aung Kyaw Myo said the estimated and actual tax revenue of the nation should be emphasized as the country has to pay back foreign loans. He said this is why the Ministry of Planning, Finance and Industry should keep the tax on tobacco and alcohol unchanged in this bill unchanged.

The bill was further debated by U Aung Myo Latt from Mandalay Region constituency, Tatmadaw Amyotha Hluttaw representative Colonel Saw Tun Aung and Daw Shwe Shwe Sein Lat from Bago Region constituency.

The 11th-day meeting of the Second Pyidaungsu Hluttaw’s 17th regular session will convene on 21 August.—Aung Ye Thwin, Aye Aye Thant

(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)
Who is eligible to vote?
- irrespective of sex or religion
- those who are 18 years of age on the date of the election
- citizens, associate citizens, and those who have permission to become naturalized citizens, who do not contravene the provisions of the Hluttaw Election Law
- a person whose name has been included in the voting list of the respective constituency

Who is ineligible to vote?
- a member of a religious order
- person serving a prison sentence
- person adjudged to be of unsound mind as provided for in the relevant law
- person who has not yet been discharged as an insolvent
- person prohibited by the Election Law
- foreigner or person who has assumed foreign citizenship

Fourth session of Union Peace Conference commences in Nay Pyi Taw

FROM PAGE-1
Nai Aung Min, LDU Chairperson Kyar Khun Sar and other representatives of NCA-S EAOs for the Conference. Those attendees at the Conference were diplomats from foreign missions in Myanmar, representatives of UN agencies and local and foreign NGOs and the invited guests.

The Kayah youth campaigner for peacemaking efforts performed with the song ‘Peace is Essential’.

State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, in her capacity as the Chairperson of National Reconciliation and Peace Centre, delivered an address.

(Speech of State Counsellor is covered on page 4)

Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing also delivered a speech.

(Speech of Senior General Min Aung Hlaing is covered on page 6)

Chairperson of the Restoration Council of Shan State (RCSS) Sao Yawd Serk made an address, in representing NCA-S EAOs.

President U Win Myint, State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, Vice Presidents U Myint Swe and U Henry Van Thio are coming to attend the opening ceremony of Union Peace Conference on 19 August.

PHOTO: MNA

Representatives of ethnic groups and foreign diplomats attend the Union Peace Conference in Nay Pyi Taw on 19 August.

PHOTO: MNA

Group documentary photo of leaders at the Union Peace Conference in Nay Pyi Taw on 19 August.

PHOTO: MNA

(Speech of RCSS Chairperson Sao Yawd Serk is covered on page 10)

Shan Nationalities League for Democracy Vice-Chairperson U Sai Nyunt Lwin made a speech, representing political parties group.

(Speech of SNLD Vice-Chairperson U Sai Nyunt Lwin is covered on page 10)

After a video presentation of national reconciliation and peace efforts, the attendees posed for group documentary photos before concluding the opening ceremony.—MNA

(Translated by Aung Khin)
I welcome and greet all distinguished guests who have come to attend the opening ceremony of the Union Peace Conference – 21st Century Panglong, Fourth Session. May you all have good health and well-being.

The Union Peace Conference – 21st Century Panglong has now reached the fourth session. All those who are concerned with this conference have worked strenuously with deep regard and commitment for peace to move this process forward. Just as our negotiations were gaining momentum, we met difficulties because of the need to prevent, control and treat the COVID-19 pandemic. Even during this period of travel restrictions, and strict health rules and regulations, leaders and representatives of different groups are now assembled in unity in this place today, at this time, in this convention hall. This shows our firm determination to work with resolute spirit for national reconciliation and peace of our country and our Union no matter what difficulties we may have to encounter.

Union Accord, Part III

In this same convention hall, last year in October 2019, at the 4th anniversary of the signing of the NCA (Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement), I urged that we should all strive to reach an agreement for signing Panglong to the Union Accord in three parts. At this present convention, we will be able to sign Part III of the Union Accord in three parts; for this, I wish to thank all those who have worked to make this happen. On that day, at that time, at that ceremony, I said that we have to establish a genuine Democratic Federal Union; in accordance with a federal system we needed to have power-sharing, resource sharing, sharing of tax revenues, all federal units should have equal status, states should have their own state constitutions capable of guaranteeing the right to self-determination. I also spoke about the basic principles which would ensure that in the exercise of powers shared by the states, it should be based on the people. At the moment when we are about to sign the Union Accord, out of the five basic principles, one important principle which is the right of states to formulate their own state constitutions, in other words, guarantee for self-determination, could not be incorporated into the agreement although very tough negotiations were held late into the evening on 12 August; we had to leave it as “to be discussed further”.

Although we could say that the reason this had to be left behind was that agreement could not be reached on the use of the words “state basic law” and “state constitution”; it was the result of attempts to define the meaning of words. In actual fact, this is because of concerns and anxieties existing on both sides. If we made further analysis of these concerns and worries, we would be able to see clearly and distinctly that it was because of looking with suspicion and not having enough trust.

In the 1947 Constitution which emerged based on the Panglong Agreement which was signed by my father and ethnic national leaders, fellow founders of the Union in the last 20th century, it was stipulated thus “all matters relating to the state constitutions would be done in accordance with the law so long as they do not contravene the articles of the Constitution.” If we look at today’s 21st Century Panglong discussions, everyone is in agreement about the right of states to formulate their own state constitutions without contravening or going beyond the bounds of the Union Constitution. With respect to the depth and inherent meanings of phrases and terms for which agreement could not be reached; if both sides saw and understood, I believe that we could negotiate and reach agreement and allay the fears and anxieties.

Regarding this, we will have to continue our negotiations with patience. The main thing we have been able to overcome was our deadlock regarding “not to secede” and “the right to self-determination”. With regard to the right of states to formulate their state constitutions, which would need to be discussed further, I have a positive feeling that we would be able to come to an agreement in the not too distant future. We will continue to work on this to reach an agreement shortly.

Changes during the past five years

In a way, we could say that the reason we are looking at each other with fear and anxiety and have mistrust may be because of the impact of over 70 years of armed conflicts. One reason for having a lack of trust is because of the absence of the willingness to do “give and take” and compromise. It may sound because of an unwillingness to do “give and take”; it could also be because of a weakness in the culture of “give and take” and compromise. There are also some instances where some people think erroneously that to compromise is to admit defeat. It is important to show practically that it could be beneficial for the Union by exercising “give and take” and compromise.

If we look back at the past period of a little over four years, we were able to reach agreement on the basic principles; in the past, these things were unthinkable, these things were very difficult to reach an understanding; we did this in the interest of our country with the future interest of the Union. There are those who are criticizing us, of course. They said – Democratic Federal Union, equality, power-sharing, self-determination, all these are general terms. “What has changed”, they said. I think our critics have perhaps forgotten that between “what is fundamental” and “what is easy” there are many practical differences. Just like “Metta” and the “Loka Pala” principles, although terms like equality, self-determination, power-sharing, are very simple basic principles which had been established since the founding of the Union, I am sure all of you will understand that for these principles to become a practical reality and to be practiced in daily life, it is rather very difficult.

The Union Accord, which we will sign at this conference represents the basic principles which we have fought, which we have suffered, which we have experienced. These have been the aspiration of all ethnic nations for so many years; we have aspired for them but without success; this is our solemn promise to practice in daily life this programme without fail. Therefore, the movement for national reconciliation and peace which we have all marched hand-in-hand is indeed a historic movement. It is also a historic milestone which all of us have been able to erect together.

Peacemakers

Peacebuilding is greater than working for the welfare of Union and national people. It is also a noble deed. Peacebuilding is more meaningful than the silencing of gunfire, bomb explosions and armed clashes. In stead, peacebuilding is aimed for rooting out an underlying attitude that caused the ‘bad politics’ which focused on the power of weapons to gain an advantage in order to achieve success; peacebuilding is the ultimate goal of peacemakers; it can only be regarded that we could perform our duties well; although there are no gunfire and bomb explosions toody, we could experience armed conflicts in the following day; a genuine peacemaker is the one who could end ‘bad politics’ and its underlying attitude which depends on weapon power and might.

Dialogues are not enough to remove such evil culture and attitude; some meetings were held to last longer the negotiation and to restore power for those who just rely on the power; the negotiation meetings failed to turn out results although relevant persons are using beautiful words without having a positive attitude; when we are working closely together to solve the problems, we need to practice a political culture to give and take by suspending a bad culture with a new culture; so, I am emphasizing the establishment of a good culture as it is difficult to eliminate bad behaviours.

It is required to be familiar with the practice of ‘give and take’; it was regarded as a defeat and no one was willing to follow this way in the history; With the concept that negotiations could not find itself in the solution, power was built to avoid the defeat, and the conflicts have prolonged due to the idea of ‘power is the key’; actually, realizing the benefits of ‘give and take’ could build trust gradually; self-trust will be followed by a mutual trust on the dialogue partners and leading to the confidence on the whole collaborative works for ensuring achievement of objectives.

Two options for the Union

Peacebuilding process is not a hurried phenomenon; it is related to the economic development of the country; the impacts of COVID-19 on health and education sectors, affects of global economic recession on Myanmar; the New Normal lifestyle beyond the pandemic.

State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi

State Counsellor and Chairperson of National Reconciliation and Peace Centre makes speech at Union Peace Conference – 21st Century Panglong
Women’s Rights and Gender Orientation Training conducted in Yangon

MYANMAR National Human Rights Commission and Triangle Women Organization jointly conduct “Women’s Rights and Gender Orientation Training” in line with the health guidelines of Ministry of Health and Sports in Yangon yesterday morning.

At the opening ceremony of the training, MNHRC Chairman U Hla Myint, Vice-Chairman, commission members, office staff and experts joined the ceremony.

Commission Chairman U Hla Myint delivered the opening speech and Triangle Women Organization Founder and Director Daw Khin Lay briefed the purposes of training.

While the MNHRC is conducting field study for the public to improve the human rights affairs, to improve the ability of staff members of commission office and to make preparations for New Normal during COVID-19 pandemic, it conducted training workshop on the rights for the people with disabilities with the participation of Myanmar Independent Living Initiative (MILID) on 2 July and another training workshop on the children’s rights with NGO Child Rights Working Group on 22 July.

A total of 35 staff of commission office join the two-day training workshop on women’s rights issues.—MNA

(Translated by Khin Thazin Han)
First, I would extend a greeting to officials of the Union, officials of National Reconciliation and Peace Centre (NRPC), officials of the respective ethnic armed organizations (EAOs), representatives of the respective groups, heads of international organizations and ambassadors of foreign missions and all the delegates attending this fourth session of the Union Peace Conference–21st Century Panglong, and wish you all a peace of mind.

Although it is the fourth session, in fact, it is the fifth session if the Union Peace Conference held during the former government set up under the multiparty democracy system is added. According to the list of comprehensive meetings between the government and the EAOs, there was also a meeting between the government and the three parties of the National Democratic United Front (Ma-da-tha-ya) — the KNU Party, the New Mon State Party and the Karen National Progressive Party — and the Burma Communist Party (BCP) in 1963 during the time of the Revolutionary Council Government. So, it can also be said the sixth session.

Our country practised monarchy till it lost its independence in 1885. There were Bamar kings, Rakhine kings and Mon kings and the hilly regions had Kachin, duwas and Shan chieftains. With the united force of all the national races, the country’s freedom was established. The Second Myanmar Kingdom (Toungoo period) and the Third Myanmar Kingdom (Kombough period) were established. The British launched three aggressive wars against Myanmar and annexed Rakhine-Taninthayi in 1824, the lower Myanmar in 1852 and the entire country in 1855. Myanmar lost its independence and the monarchy met its end when the British put Myanmar under its empire. Under its divide-and-rule policy, the colonialist restored the chieftain administrative system and the duration of the monarchy extended to full supervision. All those systems had ended since 1959 during the post-independence period.

Our country experienced various kinds of administrative systems including the Diriogy, the Second Myanmar Kingdom (Toungoo period) and the Third Myanmar Kingdom (Kombough period) were established. The British launched three aggressive wars against Myanmar and annexed Rakhine-Taninthayi in 1824, the lower Myanmar in 1852 and the entire country in 1855. Myanmar lost its independence and the monarchy met its end when the British put Myanmar under its empire. Under its divide-and-rule policy, the colonialist restored the chieftain administrative system and the duration of the monarchy extended to full supervision. All those systems had ended since 1959 during the post-independence period.

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To make sure that those who return from abroad will get jobs

This COVID matter is still not finished; this challenge has not reached its end-stage; we must still struggle and keep up our efforts; the Union Government will work hard to make sure that those who return from abroad will get jobs; business entrepreneurs should also help as needed; if everyone participated and cooperated, in the long run it will be for the benefit of all; we need to work so that our citizens no longer need to go abroad to seek for jobs and also to ensure that local enterprises will get more qualified workers and increase their productive capacity; this is beneficial for both parties.

(Excerpt from State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's discussions on livestock and fisheries sector with stakeholders on 7 July 2020.)

Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing delivers address at Union Peace Conference – 21st Century Panglong

FROM PAGE-6

Secondly, I would like to point out that some organizations want to link the peace process with other processes. There is nothing more important than the interests of the nation or national interests in a country. In building a democratic system, the phrase 'No organization is above the law' is the fundamental principle for the sustainability of the foundation of democracy. Similarly, it must be borne in mind that no one or no organization is above the national interests in State-building and Nation-building. It is obvious if one takes what is happening at present into consideration.

National interests of our country is non-disintegration, non-disintegration of national solidarity and perpetuation of sovereignty. To implement these causes, we are carrying out peace process. The peace process needs to steadfastly emphasize and reflect the national interests. If peace process is attached to other work processes based on personal desire, political gains and interests of an organization, not only peace process but also other processes will not achieve success. Although the Myanmar saying which goes: “one stroke, two pieces” is a flowery word, I accept that it is necessary to have “one stroke for one piece” in the real life.

For the third point, “it is necessary to firmly stand on the exact and precise basic principles”. Peace processes are based on basic principles. It is the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA). I have given clarifications for many times how the NCA emerged, and what the NCA comprised. And, I explained that the NCA was titled with ceasefire agreement, but the agreements and future tasks included in the NCA were wider than the definition of ceasefire with the aim how to build the future Union. Such kind of agreement signed by many organizations by taking adequate time for negotiation had never come out in the history of peace process in Myanmar. So, NCA is basic principles of peace process. We should not delay from such route. It is very dangerous that responsible persons themselves waver over the agreement as well as do not stand on it firmly. I would like to urge you to fully consider, firmly stand and vigorously do.

A saying in the medical corps goes “prevention is better than treatment”. There is no drug to cure Covid-19 pandemic till today. How do our global people face the world’s pandemic without any drug for treatment? We all are facing it with prevention. We all are encountering it with having high immunity. The main duty of the Tatmadaw is to defend the State. The word of defence is very wide. It cannot be accepted that State defence means protecting the territory of the country and safeguarding of life and property of the people. It is necessary to take its meaning into consideration to safeguard National interests of the State and protect future of the State. It is necessary to build the unity of the country as immunity to have strengthening. We all should conscientiously expose the issues on disintegration of solidarity of the State and lessenning of national immunity of the State. We should make concerted efforts for preventing these issues.

The Tatmadaw on its part is striving for ending the internal armed conflicts which might lessen unity of the State, national immunity and defence capability. The Tatmadaw has been making efforts for ending the armed conflicts in successive eras as well as will strive for such issue in the future.

To be able to successfully implement democracy and federalism, the Tatmadaw has adopted three policies for stability of the State, national unity and development of social economy while participating in the reform process of politics, administration and economy of the State. In doing it, it is necessary to effectively narrow the development gap between states and regions, the gap of social system between rural and urban areas and poor and wealthy gap which are actual needs of the country for ensuring unity and improvement of social life. Narrowing the internal gaps must lead to minimize the gaps between regional and ASEAN countries and our country. Everybody says our country is rich in sources including natural resources. It is right to some extent but not totally right. We are still weak in well-versed human resources qualified for effectively utilize already existed material resources.

For example, a data based on the census population of our country issued in 2014 showed 5.6 million of people in five groups aged between 5 to 21 years had not totally enrolled the schools. It means 5.6 million of 54 million population of our country had not totally attended the school with weakness in knowledge. When I study the census population of the State during the period of 22 years from 1997 to 2019, I found a total of 27 million of children attended basic education schools during the period. There are 22 million children till 2014. A total of 12 million among 27 million of children could reach the fifth standard in 2019. More than a half of those students ended their learning in the primary education. Likewise, a total of 12 million of children learned education in observing the data during the 10-year period from 2000 to 2009. Just 6.4 million of students could reach the fifth standard of middle education. It is actual education situation of our State. The school age children in around 1997 to 2002 become the youths who have turned 18 years to cast vote in the election.

This is why efforts must be exerted to help promote the education of the entire people. I happened to learn that education means promoting the personality skills and way of thinking of a learner rather than directly applying the skills he has learned. World countries are categorized into developed, developing and underdeveloped ones based on education standards. That follows suit for humans as well. Job availability and employment assign- ment are different based on education and performance. To put it simply, we must go to school if we want to pursue education. After studying, we must take exams. These are the things we must do by ourselves. What parents and guardians can do is to enrol their children at school and provide necessities for their schooling and education. Knowing this natural phenomenon, we can change all our differences. This cannot be done through demand. Regarding this, I said at the fourth anniversary of NCA signing in October 2019, "No one else will help us build a federal democratic union. We ourselves will have to build the federal democratic system suitable to our country. All the national people and citizens must work together to do this. Instead of focusing on the only desire incompatible with our prevailing conditions, we should pay attention to all possibilities in order to facilitate the peace process.”

In our country, the multi-party democracy general election is only over two months away. Election is crucial and it is the process in which we must complete for the multi-party democracy we are practising in accord with the people’s wishes. At the third round of the Union Peace Conference-21st Century Panglong conference held in July 2018, I emphasized the need for completing the peace process at the Union Peace Conference to be held in 2020 as we have the election in the same year. At the third anniversary of the NCA signing in October 2018, I reiterated that “Tatmadaw had vowed to complete the peace process by 2020. As it had vowed, eternal peace would be brought to the hands of the people as they aspire”. Designating 2019 as the year of peace, Tatmadaw made unilateral ceasefire for nine months from 21 December 2018 to 21 September 2019 by issuing ceasefire and eternal peace statements, and that had never been seen throughout the peace history of Myanmar. The extended ceasefire from 10 May 2020 to 31 August was also announced. This is because based on the experiences from the 2010 and 2015 elections, we are intentionally trying to ensure stability in conflict are- as and protect the people against any pressure and fear from the armed groups when they cast their ballots. At the same time, we are trying to build a peaceful and stable country. But, those responsible failed to take it seri- ously. We all have responsibility to ensure a free and fair election, choose parliamentary candidates qualified for serving for the peace of the State and national development and ensure the emergence of a visionary government. Thus, all those in attendance will have to make efforts in their respective roles. I would like all the people not only to pay attention to the election but also to ensure a free and fair election.

In conclusion, I would say: “We shall have to observe what is required and what causes hurdles in our peace process and make reform as quickly as possible. We shall have to serve national interests, not self-interests, realizing that nothing is as important as our peace process. We shall have to march towards the peace goal with a sense of oneness and the spirit of Myanmar. All respective regions shall have to try to make the multi-party democracy general election to be held soon free and fair without any suppressive act. Thank you.”
TO bring eternal peace to our country we need to make efforts and have the political will to destroy the mindset of the politics of evil. Only then will we deserve to be peace builders.

To achieve this mission, just sitting at a negotiation table is not enough. The word “negotiation” is beautiful, in the mindsets of the peacemakers. It is also committed to eliminating the root cause of bombs. It is also committed to eliminating the root cause of the war, Myanmar people helped Joseph Stalin to win the war, when Joseph Stalin gave help to the Japanese troops. This is quite remarkable.

In addition, Myanmar was the first country in the world to complete the Treaty of Peace and the Agreement for reparations and economic cooperation with Japan after WWII, which allowed Japan to follow the path of post war reconstruction. As Myanmar signed the treaty, other countries followed suit.

After WWII, Japan was facing severe food scarcity situation. At that period, Myanmar has enormous rice stocks. So, Japan started to import rice from Myanmar. This is a very complex issue. As we negotiate to reach an agreement, we should keep our position and think deeply about the current situation.

A: Mr. Moamar bin Laden, Secretary General of the UN Peace Conference.

Q: It is only a few months away, the General Election will be held in Myanmar. Transition to Myanmar’s democracy is facing many challenges. Can you elaborate on the peace and Reconciliation issue? What steps are necessary for negotiations of the peacemakers. Amb. Sasakawa is an expert to set up a democratic society in Myanmar.

A: I look forward to the democratic transition to democracy began in 2013. The 2013 General Election became a fair and free one. Myanmar deserves appreciation for that achievement. When I would like to express my deepest respect to the people of Myanmar and all those who have worked hard over the years to overcome various difficulties in building a democratic nation in Myanmar. I am convinced that the upcoming General Election in 2020 will be conducted in a free and fair manner.

As the same stands now in the position of fully supporting Myanmar’s democratic nation-building through the partnership of the public and private sectors. Minis- ter for Foreign Affairs of Japan Motoji will visit Myanmar from August 24 to 25. This visit will help to rebuild their country’s position. We would like to extend our gratitude to Myanmar People, Myanmar Government and Myanmar Tatmadaw for warmly welcoming the first visit of Japan’s Foreign Minister in Myanmar facing difficulties. Myanmar is facing many challenges, especially peace is- sues. This is a very complex issue. That is why the Government of Japan has appointed Mr. Sasakawa to play the Special Envoy. The Government of Japan for National Reconciliation in Myanmar for the peace process. As part of his mission, he came to Myanmar, had met with leaders of the ethnic armed organizations, the State Counsellor and the Command- er-in-Chief of Defence Services, The Government of Japan, together with Mr. Sasakawa visited various regions of Myanmar to achieve peace and stability in Myanmar.

Another one is Rakhine State issue which is very complex. In this context, the Government of Japan will stand to- gether with the Myanmar Govern- ment and Myanmar people and will support Myanmar government in all ways. We will provide assistance to Myanmar as and when required. Japan will continue to cooperate with the Myanmar Government in tackling challenges facing Myanmar, including peace building and Rakhine State issue. To recover economy after COVID – 19, Myanmar have to rely heavily on investment as a developing country after COVID-19. We expect Japanese investors to come and invest here.

How can you get investors to come and invest here?

Q: Japan has no change in its position of fully supporting Myanmar’s democratic nation-building through the partnership of the public and private sectors: Ambassador of Japan.

A: We have been working in Myanmar for 25 years. The current government of Japan has followed the principle of the nation-building at the national level and the local level, we will provide assistance to Myanmar for the development of human resources.

At the same time, we will provide assistance to Myanmar to develop economy in the country. Through the partnership of the public and private sectors: we will continue to support the Myanmar Government’s efforts to enhance the quality of living conditions and the economic development of the country.

A: One thing I would like to know is Mr. Motegi, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Japan, what is the reason behind your visit to Myanmar?”

Q: Myanmar is production-based economy. Most of the factories were stopped operating without a halt during COVID-19 pandemic. What is the impact of this pandemic on Myanmar’s economy?

A: More than 100 local and foreign companies are building factories in the Thilawa SEZ. They are still operating without a halt during COVID-19 pandemic. We are working hard to bring back its nationals stranded in the Thilawa SEZ to Myanmar.

Mr. Motegi, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Japan, has said that “Myanmar has become a milestone in our country’s history of peacemaking and fair manner.” We have to work self-reliantly.

A: I have been working in Myanmar’s economy, investments and Myanmar’s people and I owe a debt of gratitude to Myanmar’s economy, investments and Myanmar’s people and their assistance to Myanmar for the development of human resources.

Q: In your opinion, what are the challenges are facing Myanmar’s economy?

A: It is very clear that Myanmar’s economy has been facing challenges due to COVID-19 pandemic. Myanmar Government has taken many difficulties, including the General Election will be held in 2020, will be conducted in a free and fair manner.

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Speech by Sao Yawd Serk, Chairperson of Restoration Council of Shan State, at 4th Session of Union Peace Conference – 21st Century Panglong

I wish to record my expression of gratitude to former President U Thein Sein and his cabinet including former Union Minister U Aung Min for leading the formation of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA), New Mon State Party Chairman Nai Han Thar for leading the EAOs through the Nationwide Ceasefire Coordination Team (NCCT) to create a draft for the NCA together with NCCT members and the Senior Delegation, the leaders from government, Hlahtaw, Tatmadaw, EAOs and political parties for enacting the NCA, UN representatives, foreign diplomats and organizations, Myanmar Peace Centre for their support in the peace process, local organizations and other relevant individuals for their cooperation.

I also wish to honour the Peace Process Steering Team, the current government leaders and Tatmadaw leaders for carrying on with the implementation of the NCA from the previous administration, the National Reconciliation and Peace Centre, and Peace Commission.

The NCA is more than a ceasefire agreement as it will also pave the way for a Federal Union through political dialogue and consultation. The only mechanism in place for holding political dialogue on one side while monitoring to strengthen the ceasefire agreement on the other side.

We aim to establish confidence-building measures, revising and revising to parts of the Constitution and to existing laws based on decisions made at the peace conference, in addition to national reconciliation and establish solidarity as well.

As the patriotism of a single ethnic group is an obsolete concept, we are writing a new history for the new nation that is shared among the ethnic groups living in it together.
Myanmar Hluttaw holds third coordination meeting for 41st AIPA General Assembly

MYANMAR Hluttaw organized the third coordination meeting yesterday to join the virtual 41st ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA) General Assembly. During the meeting at Zabuthiri Hall in the Hluttaw compound, Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker U T Khun Myat, who will lead the Myanmar Hluttaw delegation, coordinated the sector-wise discussions for the General Assembly, made by Deputy Minister for the Office of State Counsellor U Min Lwin, AIPA Joint Committee Chairman U Zaw Thein, Leader of Political sector Daw Su Su Lwin, Leader of economic sector U Naing Htoo Aung, Leader of social sector Dr San Shwe Win, Leader of women affairs sector Nwe Hla Hla Soe, Leader of youth affairs Daw Wint Wah Tun, AIPA administrative sector Leader Daw Pyone Kathy Naing, Director-General from Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Office U Kyaw Soe and Director-General from ASEAN Affairs Department U Hau Khan Sum. The Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker concluded the meeting with his advice to the attendees for making more preparations and better cooperation for the General Assembly. – MNA (Translated by TTN)

Working Committee meets to address COVID-19 impacts on Myanmar’s economy

The eighth meeting of the Working Committee to address the impact of COVID-19 on the country’s economy was held via videoconference yesterday morning. The meeting was chaired by U Thaung Tun, Union Minister for Investment and Foreign Economic Relations. Members of the working committee Union Ministers U Soe Win and Dr Than Myint, Governor of the Central Bank of Myanmar U Kyaw Kyaw Maung and representatives of the Ministries concerned took part in the meeting.

The meeting discussed matters relating to the expedient processing of the loan applications for the second phase of Myanmar’s economy for post-2020, we need to thoroughly consider the remaining provisions included in this agreement completely, successfully and without fail in an accountable, responsible and transparent manner. I would urge all groups to collaborate so that political talks, including the Union Peace Conference – 21st Century Panglong, can be held regularly in order to build a Union based on democracy and federal system that assures democracy, national equality and the rights of self-determination, in accordance with the results of the political talks. (Translated by Zau Htet Oh, Maung Maung Swee)

FROM PAGE-10

create more content for the Union Accord. We need to keep these lessons and experiences to heart as we move forward.

The Union of Myanmar achieved peace after the Panglong Agreement was signed between the various leaders back on 12 February 1947 but because we could not resolve our political issues with political dialogue, we ended up with armed conflicts that kept Myanmar far behind in the developing world.

U Thein Sein officially announced on 18 August 2011 the invitation to resolve our political issues through political dialogue and opened the way to peaceful dialogue. He left a new culture of politics that has become a prominent mark in history.

The current government administration led by the National League for Democracy is equally working hard in the peace process. They managed to persuade the New Mon State Party and Lahai Democratic Union to sign the NCA while still working closely with the coordinating bodies of both sides that took the time and effort to continuously organize meetings to reach fair and acceptable results for everyone. I wish to record my acknowledgment of the hard work of these coordinating bodies.

I am filled with enthusiasm that Part III of the Union Accord involves the framework agreement for implementing the NCA, progressive implementation steps beyond 2020, and basic federal principles. I also heard they agreed to continue discussions on the topics that have not reached a mutual agreement yet. Some matters need more time for discussion.

For post-2020, we need to thoroughly negotiate for implementation of peace process in order to reach agreements. The important tasks are to consider how we will ensure implementation in accordance with the three steps of political plan and the three steps of security plan by linking the plans to the development of political situations. We need clear and exact prior agreements on the tasks. Then, the implementation of the process will be smooth.

We need to have all-inclusive policy plan for inclusion of non-signatories ethnic armed organizations of NCA in the peace process and various levels of political talks for post-2020. Moreover, I would like to urge all to take into account the roles of community-based organizations and social-based organizations. As we, both sides, have already signed the NCA, so we must strictly abide by the provisions of the NCA. Despite difficulties in implementation of the process, we must continue our march towards our goal, which is to build a Federal Union, through the NCA route.

There will be problems, difficulties and obstacles in implementation of the NCA. However, we jointly own the NCA, so we must jointly try to overcome the obstacles. If it achieves success, we must share the fruits of success. All of us must be accountable for the results, whether they are good or bad. Moreover, I would like to express thanks to the government and the Ministry of Health and Sports for arranging required medical examinations and taking necessary measures for prevention, control and treatment of COVID-19 in order that the conference can be convened successfully despite the COVID-19 crisis.

In conclusion, as mentioned in the NCA “in order to achieve lasting and sustainable peace in this country, we, the signatories to this Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement, pledge to each other to diligently work together to implement all provisions included in this agreement completely, successfully and without fail in an accountable, responsible and transparent manner.” I would like to urge all groups to come together so that political talks, including the Union Peace Conference – 21st Century Panglong, can be held regularly in order to build a Union based on democracy and federal system that assures democracy, national equality and the rights of self-determination, in accordance with the results of the political talks.
21st Century Panglong convenes first-day meeting

THE first-day meeting of fourth session the Union Peace Conference–21st Century Panglong was held at Myanmar International Convention Center II (MICC-II) in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday afternoon.

The presiding panel of the first-day meeting was led by Chairperson of the Peace Commission Dr Tin Myo Win, with presiding panel members Tar Hla Pe, Lt-Gen Tin Maung Win, Pu Zing Cung and Dr May Win Myint.

In his opening speech, Dr Tin Myo Win said that there was a two-year gap between the third session and the fourth session of the peace conference because of obstacles. He said that there were many hurdles and challenges, so various approaches, including holding informal meetings and special meetings, were used to settle the differences.

He said that some matters could not be agreed in previous meetings, so top leaders who have the authority to make decisions had to organize special meetings to resolve the matters. He added that all possible approaches including “ten plus ten meeting” were used to overcome the obstacles. He continued that negotiations on not only political issues but also ceasefire and military matters were thoroughly conducted to achieve good results.

Dr Tin Myo Win pointed out that despite difficulties, it is very significant to maintain the route of negotiation and dialogue in order to settle differences and resolve obstacles.

He continued that the government proposed the “Ways Forward for Peace Process” on 13 June, 2019, and Ethnic Armed Organizations welcomed the process. He said that the NRPC Chairperson State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi announced three future peace processes and five federal principles in her opening speech at the ceremony marking fourth anniversary of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) held on 28 October 2019.

Dr Tin Myo Win said that the three future peace processes, which also emphasize on the subjects that should be included in the Part III of the Union Accord, and the five federal principles could facilitate peace talks that were postponed for a long time.

The 8th JCJMC meeting on 8 January 2020 could make eight resolutions, and the UPDJC and JMC meetings could also be restarted, and those meetings facilitated the fourth session of the Union Peace Conference–21st Century Panglong, according to Dr Tin Myo Win.

He said that the peace process is significant not only for making peace but also for building a Democratic Federal Union. He highlighted that despite different backgrounds of different groups in the conference, all have the same determination to build a Democratic Federal Union and the same wish to make peace process successful. In his closing remark, he urged all groups to exert greater efforts to bring about peace, which all citizens have expected.

During the first-day meeting, Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee (UPDJC) Vice-Chairperson Dr Saai Lian Hmung Sakhong explained UPDJC’s report, and the Joint Ceasefire Monitoring Committee - Union Level (JCMC-U) rotating Vice-Chairperson Saw Mathew Aye explained JMC-U’s report. Peace Commission Secretary retired Lt-Gen Khin Zaw Oo submitted a proposal on the NCA Implementation Framework work.

Pyithu Hluttaw MP U Pyone Cho (a) U Htay Win Aung announced detailed programme of the conference, and Maj-Gen Soe Naing Oo announced the rules that all representatives of the conference must follow.

Tar Hla Pe, a presiding panel member of the conference, delivered a concluding speech of the first-day meeting. In his speech, he said that a proposal has already been submitted for the matters related to signing the Part III of the Union Accord, which is the main task of the fourth session of Union Peace Conference.

He pointed out that if everybody genuinely yearns for peace and a Federal Union, the wish will be achieved. He concluded that after signing the Part III of the Union Accord in the conference, all stakeholders should build mutual trust, and exert efforts to reach long-lasting nationwide peace and to build a Democratic Federal Union.— MNA (Translated by Maung Maung Sue)
Japan has no change in its position of fully supporting Myanmar’s democratic nation-building through the partnership of the public and private sectors: Ambassador of Japan

Q: What are the chances of further investments from Japan to strengthen the success of Thilawa SEZ.
A: We highly appreciate the cooperative efforts of the Government of Myanmar and the people for the development of the country amidst COVID-19. In Japan, Myanmar is greatly respected as a good friend. Therefore, the Embassy of Japan in Yangon and the Government of Japan will strive to boost bilateral relations including political, economic and cultural relations.—GNLM

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Daw Khin Myo Myo Aye, L.L.B., Advocate (14833)

For General Re Corporation

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Email address: myanmar@tilleke.com

DATED: August 20, 2020

INTERVIEW/AD

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M.V KOTA HALUS VOY. NO. (KLHU 0141/N)

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V KOTA HALUS VOY. NO. (KLHU 0141/N) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 20-8-2020 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of MKH where it will lie at the consignee’s risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

No claims against this vessel will be admitted after the Claims Day.

Phone No: 2301185

Shipping Agency Department

Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

M/S BENG BAGNEY AGENCIES (S’PORE) PTE LTD

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V ARAWANA

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V ARAWANA VOY. NO. (V0020) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 20-8-2020 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of MKH where it will lie at the consignee’s risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

No claims against this vessel will be admitted after the Claims Day.

Phone No: 2301185

Shipping Agency Department

Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

M/S BENG LINE AGENCIES (S’PORE) PTE LTD

PESTICIDE TRADE NAME CHANGE ADVERTISING

The following pesticide is distributed by OUR FARM CO., LTD and here we would like to pesticide trade name change advertising. Anyone who would like to object or inquire about new trade name contact within 14 days to Joint-Secretary, Pesticide Registration Board, Plant Protection Division, Bayin Naung Road, West Gyogone, Insein Township, Yangon. OUR FARM CO., LTD 09-798097385.

Sr. No. Old Trade Name New Trade Name Active Ingredient Registration Number
1 Multi Ngwe Toe 25 WDG OMI 25 WDG Thiamethoxam 25% WDG P2018-4316

Changing Distributor for Registered Pesticide

Distribution of pesticide registered by Shandong Weifang Rainbow Chemical Co., Ltd is changing from RAINBOW AGROSCIENCES CO., LTD to Marlarmyaing Public Co Ltd. Any objection regarding to this transfer can notify at Co-Secretary, Pesticide Registration Board, Plant Protection Division, West Gyogone, Insein within 2 weeks.

No. Name Active Ingredient Registration Type and No. Registration Date

RAINBOW AGROSCIENCES CO., LTD

Building No. (C), Room No. (402), Level-4, Dagon Center (1), Bargayar Road, Sanchaung Township, Yangon, Myanmar. 0945606160, 09456060180

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Thin Thin May, Advocate (14833)

For General Re Corporation

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Email address: myanmar@tilleke.com

DATED: August 20, 2020
YRTA remains unchanged in collecting school bus fares

By Nyein Nyein

YANGON Region Transport Authority (YRTA) will collect the same school bus fare this academic year as that of last year, said YRTA Managing Director U Aung Nyi Nyi Maw.

Last year, the school bus fares were a minimum of K20,000 to a maximum of K50,000 per student depending upon the distance, he added.

Our YRTA will collect the same school bus fares as last year. But, we will restrict the number of students on board the bus in line with the guidelines of the Ministry of Health and Sports,” he stated.

Although the school bus can carry 28 students, we will take only 14 students to abide by the social distancing rule imposed because of COVID-19, he added.

At present, a total of 90 students including 57 from TTC (Kawmyat), 12 from BEHS (1), North Okkala and 22 from BEHS (6) North Okkala have registered to ride school buses. So, we are arranging to fix the number of students aboard the buses as well as the routes. The remaining schools are still collecting the list of the students, according to YRTA.

Last academic year, YRTA ran 187 school buses for ten schools with around 2,000 students. Yangon Region government bought 200 school buses to transport the students to their respective schools.

(Translated by Hay Mar)

Banana plantation making regular income for growers in Budalin

THE local residents in Budalin Township are growing banana with the use of water irrigated from river pumping project in Budalin Township, Monywa District, and this project has created jobs for the villagers to enable the latter to earn daily income, according to the waged labourers.

Previously, the farmers were growing the crops depending upon the rainwater. After the government has implemented the river pumping project, the local farmers can enjoy a sufficient supply of irrigation water to grow the banana plants. So, the banana cultivation has created job opportunities for the local villagers who are now earning income, according to the waged labourers.

“The weekly regular relief flight programme because there are many Myanmar citizens stranded in the United States, Costa Rica, Mexico and South Korea.

Therefore, the embassy of Myanmar in Washington requested the relevant departments to fly the third particular relief flight to bring back its citizens through South Korea.

The selected relief flights of Myanmar Airways International (MAI) depart from Incheon International Airport, the Republic of Korea at 4:30 pm (KST) and arrive at Yangon International Airport in the evening. The third relief flight will bring back 125 Myanmar nationals.

Under the management of the respective departments, the returnees will be put under facility quarantine in Yangon Region for 21 days on their arrival. The government arranged the first relief flight on 2 August and the second flight on 12 August. The 3rd relief flight will bring back the citizens on 23 August.

Suspension of the international flights at Yangon International Airport has also been extended till 31 August. Myanmar has reported 79 confirmed cases of COVID-19 with six deaths as of 18 August, according to the latest figures released by the Health and Sports Ministry. —Soe Myint Aung

(Translated by Hay Mar)
MYANMAR'S COVID-19 positive cases reached 394 after 18 new cases were reported on 19 August according to Ministry of Health and Sports. The case Nos. 377, 378, 379 had no contact with positive cases and overseas travel history. Case No 394 returned from the Philippines and others from India. Out of the 394 confirmed cases, six died, 329 have been discharged from hospitals and 26 were held under investigation.—MNA

Updated at 8 pm, 19 August 2020

MYANMAR’S COVID-19 positive cases reached 394 after 18 new cases were reported on 19 August according to Ministry of Health and Sports. The case Nos. 377, 378, 379 had no contact with positive cases and overseas travel history. Case No 394 returned from the Philippines and others from India. Out of the 394 confirmed cases, six died, 329 have been discharged from hospitals and 26 were held under investigation.—MNA

Updated at 8 pm, 19 August 2020

Recovery Update on 19 August 2020 after two consecutive tests

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A relief flight of Myanmar Airways International (MAI) landed at the Yangon International Airport yesterday night, bringing back a total of 164 Myanmar citizens who were stranded in Malaysia.

The Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population, the Ministry of Health and Sports, and local officials helped the returnees for health inspections and arranged for 21-day quarantine.

To bring back the Myanmar citizens who are stranded in foreign countries by relief flights and chartered flights in accordance with the instructions from National-Level Central Committee on Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs cooperated with the relevant ministries and Myanmar embassies from respective countries.

The Myanmar Embassy in Kuala Lumpur is cooperating with relevant organizations in Malaysia in accordance with the instructions of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to bring home undocumented Myanmar nationals and those who are detained at cells.—MNA (Translated by Khine Thazin Han)

Ministry of Health and Sports

164 Myanmar citizens fly back home from Malaysia

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The Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population, the Ministry of Health and Sports, and local officials helped the returnees for health inspections and arranged for 21-day quarantine.

To bring back the Myanmar citizens who are stranded in foreign countries by relief flights and chartered flights in accordance with the instructions from National-Level Central Committee on Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs cooperated with the relevant ministries and Myanmar embassies from respective countries.

The Myanmar Embassy in Kuala Lumpur is cooperating with relevant organizations in Malaysia in accordance with the instructions of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to bring home undocumented Myanmar nationals and those who are detained at cells.—MNA (Translated by Khine Thazin Han)
MFF holds Audit Meeting for football development

INTENDING to promote Myanmar football world, Myanmar Football Federation held the Audit and Compliance Committee (1/2020) meeting at the MFF headquarters in Yangon on 18 August, according to the statement with the MFF.

MFF General Secretary U Ko Ko Thein emphasized on tasks and duties of the MFF audit committee, having external audit firm and audit department, scrutinizing plan on budget using for National Football Teams Department, Football Academies, Referees Departments, and Coaches and Football Technical Department.

The meeting was concluded by reviewing over upcoming agendas and matters of the committee, according to the MFF.

LISBON—An inspired Neymar helped Paris Saint-Germain reach the Champions League final on Tuesday, but the fact that the Brazilian was not their best player against RB Leipzig says everything about the frightening strength of Thomas Tuchel’s team and shows why they can be confident of lifting the trophy for the first time.

Neymar has become a different player in his third year in the French capital. His first two seasons at PSG following his 222 million-euro ($264m) transfer from Barcelona were blighted by injuries and constant speculation about a move back to the Camp Nou.

When it became clear last summer that a return to Catalonia would not happen, he knocked down and decided finally to make a proper go of it in Paris. This is the end result.

After scoring in both legs against Borussia Dortmund in the last 16, just before the coronavirus brought football to a halt, he was outstanding in the 2-1 quarter-final win over Atalanta last week in Lisbon and even better in the 3-0 demolition of Leipzig.

Neymar hit the post twice in the first half, including from an audacious free-kick wide out on the right as everyone waited for a cross.—AFP

Former England keeper Hart joins Tottenham on free transfer

LONDON—Former England number one goalkeeper Joe Hart will compete to be number two choice to Hugo Lloris after signing for Tottenham Hotspur on a free transfer on Tuesday (Aug 18).

The 33-year-old signed a two-year contract with Spurs with the club reportedly agreeing to pay him £50,000 (US$66,000) a week, the same as his wages in an unsuccessful spell with Burnley.

“We are delighted to announce the signing of Joe Hart on a contract until 2022,” read a Spurs statement on their website.

Hart will compete with Paulo Gazzaniga to sit on the bench — and get the nod for either League Cup or Europa League ties — as understudy to Lloris, whose own form was far from consistent last season.

He did elicit interest form a variety of clubs ranging from newly-promoted Premier League side Leeds United to second tier Derby County and Scottish champions Celtic.

Hart’s fall from grace has been dramatic — set in train by Pep Guardiola’s arrival as Manchester City manager on 2016.

Guardiola made clear Hart - who won two Premier League titles, two League Cups and an FA Cup with City - was not his type of goalkeeper and sent him on loan to Italian side Torino and then to West Ham.

He finally found a more permanent home with Burnley in 2018 but ended up as number two to Nick Pope last season.—AFP

American Serena Williams seeks to win her 24th career Grand Slam title at the upcoming 2020 US Open to match Margaret Court’s all-time record.—PHOTO: AFP/FILE

US Open presses on despite rash of withdrawals

NEW YORK — US Open organizers said Tuesday that the number of players willing to compete in the Grand Slam had exceeded their expectations despite several high-profile withdrawals over coronavirus fears.

Defending champion Rafael Nadal, top-ranked woman Ashleigh Barty and world number two Simona Halep are among a list of stars opting to skip the event because of concerns about COVID-19.

But Serena Williams, Novak Djokovic and Andy Murray are all still due to play when the tournament begins at Flushing Meadows in New York on August 31.

“As far as our field, in context of the times and how different the world is, I couldn’t be happier. It’s exceeded our expectations,” United States Tennis Association chief executive Mike Dowse said.

“At the end of the day it’s our fans we are here to serve. They’re going to see some unbelievable world class tennis.”

Halep, the current Wimbledon champion, dropped out on Monday, joining high-profile absentees that include reigning US Open champion Bianca Andreescu of Canada and Ukraine’s fifth-ranked Elina Svitolina.

Number seven in the rankings Kiki Bertens and eighth-ranked Switzerland’s Belinda Bencic will also be absent.

The depleted field provides Williams with a golden opportunity as she seeks a 24th career Grand Slam title to match Margaret Court’s all-time record.—AFP

PHOTO: POOL/AFP

PHOTO: MFF

PHOTO: AFP/FILE