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THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

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Military hospitals continue providing healthcare to civilians

MILITARY hospitals in the townships of regions and states provide medical treatments to the people to solve their difficulties in healthcare services. A total of 75,588 outpatients and 4,069 inpatients reached these hospitals from 5 February to date.

Senior medical experts, medics and nurses have conducted 3,426 major operations and 1,825 minor operations. The senior doctors treat severe cases. These hospitals managed for the birth of 4,848 babies, while 4,848 pregnant women were taken to the respective military hospitals.

Officials from the respective commands also provided the patients with foods, and medial workers were provided cash assistance.

Tatmadaw medical team seen looking after one of the local civilian patients and providing healthcare services for them.

Tatmadaw medical teams provide healthcare services in hospitals with no civilian doctors

The Tatmadaw medical teams consisted of Tatmadaw doctors, specialists, and nurses providing the necessary medical treatments to the patients in military hospitals and public hospitals.

The Tatmadaw medical teams provided health services related to surgery, dental and oral healthcare, osteoporosis, obstetrics, gynecology, hypertension and heart disease to the patients in Thazi Township Hospital, Hanzada hospital, Yinmabin hospital, Tagaung Public Hospital in Thabeikkyin Township, Sintgaing hospital in Kyaukse township, Yintawtite hospital in Pyawbwe township, Kyauktaga Public Hospital, Donzayit hospital in Shwegyin Township, Bago Region and Latpadan township hospital.

Officials from respective commands also inspected the medical services for the local populace. They comforted the patients by providing food aids and necessary things. It is reported that residents are satisfied with the medical support of Tatmadaw. —MNA

Press release on findings from investigation into Daw Khin Kyi Foundation

DAW KHIN KYI Foundation, chaired by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, was established with six members in 2013, and since January, and it is found that from January 2013 to January 2021, US$7,900,647.71 (over US$7.9 million) had flowed into the foundation's three foreign currency accounts with the donations from foreign NGOs and INGOs including US1.5 million (over 900,000 Pound sterling) from RBC Trustees (UK) from England, and over US$ 1.5 million (22 million yuan) from Yunnan International Non-Government Organization (YINGOs) of China, and the donations from companies and private donors including the Suu Foundation in the US, Mongolia, the Czech Republic, South Korea, Japan, Italy, Turkey, Singapore, India, New Zealand and Taiwan. Over US$6.8 million have been withdrawn, and over US$1 million is kept saving.

During that period, a total of over K36.7 billion donated by 51 donors at home and abroad has flowed into 13 Myanmar currency accounts. Of them, over K30.6 billion were withdrawn, and over K6.04 billion is still kept in savings now.

Besides, over K17.8 million are found in total at the foundation's eight bank accounts at the Myanma Economic Bank (Kawhmu), the Cooperatives Bank (CB), the Ayeyawady Bank (AYA), the United Amara Bank-UAB and the KBZ Bank.

Regarding the spending, it is found that over K3.71 billion were spent on the construction of buildings and other related facilities built by Thiha Minswe Company for La Yaung Taw Horticultural Training Academy in Nay Pyi Taw, including the cost for 101.33 acres for HTA building and related facilities, and 23.855 acres of practical plantation.

The Daw Khin Kyi Foundation hired the land and building at No. 60, Takatho Yeiktha Road, Bahan Township, of the Yangon Region Government at K1.5 million per month for a five-year contract from 22 January 2019 to 21 January 2024 and opened its head office there.

According to the Union Auditor-General Office, if the hire of the land and building for the foundation in Yangon is calculated following the standards and taxation for the 2018-2019 financial year of the Internal Revenue Department, the hire of the land and building causes a loss of K2.607 billion per year. Similarly, if the hire of land and building is calculated at the rate of the private real estate businesses in March 2021, the hire causes a loss of K1.4 billion per year.

When a fee for the hire of land or building is decided, the cost shall be set at a street value in an area where a state-owned land and building is located, but the fee calculated at a street value rate can be underestimated if the hire of a project is considered priorities for the development of the country's economy and investment, said a directive of the Office of President in 2018. However, it is found that the directive is not concerned with a non-governmental or social organization.

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Announcement of Union Election Commission
17 March 2021

1. Regarding the Multiparty General Election held on 8 November 2020, the Union Election Commission has inspected the voter lists and the casting of votes of Pazundaung, Hline, Kamayut, Dagon and Seikkyi/Khanaungto townships in Yangon Region.
2. Findings in each township were as follows:

Findings on voter lists in each township

Sr	Township and numbers of polling stations	Township sub-commission	List from Immigration department	Those involved in voting list without citizenship scrutiny cards	Those involved in voter list more than three times holding one CSC	Those involved in voter list more than two times holding one CSC
1	26 polling stations in Pazundaung Township of Yangon Region	35,871	27,390	521	18	1,030
2	87 polling stations in Hline Township of Yangon Region	141,442	100,750	6,145	126	5,346
3	37 polling stations in Kamayut Township of Yangon Region	70,999	62,956	1,505	40	2,322
4	13 polling stations in Dagon Township of Yangon Region	21,004	20,943	373	3	328
5	35 polling stations in Seikkyi/Khanaungto Township of Yangon Region	26,055	25,574	3,651	6	404

3. The Union Election Commission has inspected the withdrawal/receipt/use/remaining of ballot papers used for Pyithu Hluttaw Election of Pazundaung, Hline, Kamayut, Dagon and Seikkyi/Khanaungto townships in Yangon Region, together with the respective township election sub-commission, head of police force, Immigration and Population and administrator according to the Hluttaw Election Law Section 53.
4. According to the ground inspection, a total of 198 polling stations of these five townships took out 311,651 ballots and used 195,055. It left 109,673ballots instead of 116,596. The difference was 130,59 ballots and it found 6,136 extra ballots. The extra/shortage ballots and illegal extra ballots were found at respective poll stations. The extra ballots were found and so it seemed to print the ballots illegally. The findings in each township are as follows:

Findings on ballot papers for Pyithu Hluttaw election in each township

Sr	Subject	Total polling station	Withdrawal	Used	Exact remaining	Remaining on the ground	Difference	
							Missing	Extra
1	Pazundaung	26	39,987	23,001	16,986	16,161	1,378	553
2	Hline	87	149,215	91,320	57,895	53,044	7,936	3,085
3	Kamayut	37	70,490	43,992	26,498	25,487	2,816	1,805
4	Dagon	13	22,252	15,663	6,589	6,167	537	115
5	Seikkyi/Khanaungto	35	29,707	21,079	8,628	8,814	392	578
	Total	198	311,651	195,055	116,596	109,673	13,059	6,136

Findings on ballot papers for Pyithu Hluttaw Election in Pazundaung Township

5. According to the inspection, a total of 26 polling stations in 10 Wards of Pazundaung Township took out 39,987 ballots and used 23,001 ballots. It left only 16,161 ballots instead of 16,986. The extra/shortage ballots ballots were found as follows:

Sr	Subject	Withdrawal	Used	Exact remaining	Remaining on the ground	Difference	
						Missing	Extra
1	Ward/Village-tract ballots	36,450	22,280	14,170	13,333	1,378	541
2	Township ballots	3,537	721	2,816	2,828	-	12
Total		39,987	23,001	16,986	16,161	1,378	553

6. It found 1,378 ballots missing together with 541extra ballots at 26 polling stations in 10 Wards of Pazundaung Township. The township sub-commission have 2,828 ballots instead of 2,816.
7. Findings in Pazundaung Township were as follows:

Sr	Ward	Total polling stations	Withdrawal	Used	Exact remaining	Remaining on the ground	Difference	
							Missing	Extra
1	No (1) Ward	5	5,300	2,406	2,894	2,372	571	49
2	No (2) Ward	4	7,500	4,083	3,417	3,352	65	
3	No (3) Ward	2	2,350	1,799	551	708	20	177
4	No (4) Ward	1	550	440	110	85	25	
5	No (5) Ward	2	2,500	1,700	800	720	80	
6	No (6) Ward	1	1,350	1,065	285	255	30	
7	No (7) Ward	4	5,900	3,783	2,117	2,005	127	15
8	No (8) Ward	2	3,400	2,427	973	1,163	30	220
9	No (9) Ward	3	4,400	3,008	1,392	1,422	50	80
10	No (10) Ward	2	3,200	1,569	1,631	1,251	380	
	Township total	26	36,450	22,280	14,170	13,333	1,378	541
	Township remaining ballots		3,537	721	2,816	2,828		12
	Township total		39,978	23,001	16,986	16,161	1,378	553

SEE PAGE-6

Such acts intend to harm the morality of people, so legal actions are necessary

ACTION is being taken against the civil servants participating in the CDM. Some have taken their salaries without going to work, citing various reasons. Respective ministries will take action after systematic inspections. There are illegal contents and photos depicting those wearing indecent clothes contrary to Myanmar culture circulating, especially in social media.

(Excerpt from the speech to the meeting of the State Administration Council made by the Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Administration Council Chairman Senior General Min Aung Hlaing on 2 March 2021)

Republic of the Union of Myanmar Working Committee to address impact of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) on the Country's Economy

Press Release 1/2021
17 March 2021

1. The Working Committee to address the impact of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) on the Country's Economy disbursed loans from the COVID-19 Fund with 1 per cent interest rate per year to businesses which are hit by the COVID-19 on 9 April 2020, and the loans which were taken out earliest will turn a year soon and the time comes to be paid off to the committee.

2. To help the domestic businesses continue to run with the smooth financial flow, the State Administration Council has instructed the committee to extend the end of the loans period to six months from the set date.

3. Hence, it is hereby announced to those who took out the loans from the COVID-19 Fund that the end of the loans period has been extended to six months from the date for returning the loan.

Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Administration Council Order No 104/2021

5th Waxing of Tabaung 1382 ME
17 March 2021

Appointment of State Administration Council member

Dr Banyar Aung Moe is appointed by the State Administration Council as a member of the State Administration Council in accord with Article 419 of the State Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

Sd/
Aung Lin Dwe
Lieutenant - General
Secretary
State Administration Council

MoRAC minister seen meeting with the Board of Trustees members of Shwedagon Pagoda yesterday.

Union Minister U Ko Ko pays homage to Shwedagon, Gabar Aye pagodas

UNION MINISTER for Religious Affairs and Culture paid homage to Shwedagon Pagoda and Gabar Aye Pagoda and donated flowers, water and gold robes to the pagodas yesterday in Yangon.

During the visit to the pagodas, the Union Minister instructed officials to comply with the COVID-19 health guidelines of the Ministry of Health and Sports for the people can pay homage to the pagoda as well as to carry out pagoda renovation and religious activities according to the instructions of the revered Sayadaws and financial regulations of the pagoda trustees.

The Union Minister also added it is necessary to systematically carry out the security and disaster prevention activities for the pagodas.—MNA

Request to Public

1. Democracy practices have granted the public for freedom of speech, practices and living. Such freedoms should not harm others. Diverse views of others should be understood, but should not be disturbed or harassed. However, with the reason of human rights, some persons are now under pressured, harassed and threatened in breaching the laws. Undisciplined acts could lead to tarnish the image of democracy.
2. For preventing destructive actions against stability of the state, safety of the public and rule of law, it is also required to proper actions in line with the law.
3. All the people who favour justice, freedom, equality and safety are requested to oppose breaching the laws and prevent such actions for the benefit of country and people.

Press release on findings from investigation into Daw Khin Kyi Foundation

FROM PAGE-1

According to the Union Auditor-General Office, it is found that the buying of land for the La Yaung Taw Horticultural Academy and Facility Site in Nay Pyi Taw at K5 million per acre rate causes a loss of K26.43 billion if calculated at the taxation rate over land sales for the wide road project set by the Nay Pyi Taw Thiri-5 Township Revenue Department of the Internal Revenue Department for the 2018-19 financial year and causes a loss of K18.15 billion if calculated at a rate for an inner road project.

When the investigation was taken into the construction of a one-storey L-shape facility site-building measuring at 105ftx64ft and 144ftx56ft for the La Yaung Taw Horticulture Training Academy-HTA in Nay Pyi Taw, Thiha Min Swe Company confessed that the building was constructed at the cost of K1.06 billion for Daw Aung San Suu Kyi on the land owned by the foundation. The building is intended to be used as a museum in the future.

Hence, it is found that the State did not earn the fee it deserves for using the land owned by the State. The construction of a building with finance from the foundation for the chair of the foundation has deviated from the foundation's objective, which pledges to uplift the people's health, education, and socio-economy.

Further extensive investigation is being conducted into the Daw Khin Kyi Foundation's cash flow, expenditure, and savings. More formation will be released when the investigation completes.—MNA

MoALI discusses drinking water supply in water-scarce villages in summer

THE Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation held the meeting on drinking water supply in water-scarce villages in summer yesterday morning in accordance with the health guidelines in Nay Pyi Taw.

At the meeting, Union Minister for Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation U Tin Htut Oo said the current availability of drinking water in Myanmar is over 77% at present. However, due to climate change, the low amount of rainfall, depletion of water in lakes due to rising temperature, summer water scarcity may continue. He discussed plans for short-term and long-term activities and issues that need to be addressed immediately and planned to use the solar system in distributing waters in regions and states.

Union Minister U Tin Htut Oo chairs the MoALI meeting on drinking water supply for the water-scarce villages in summer yesterday.

Director-General for Rural Development Department U Khant Zaw discussed the summer water scarcity conditions, short-term and medium-term plans to provide water if there is a water shortage, the completion status of regional development work being implemented in the current FY. Director-General for Irrigation and Water Utilization Management Department U Bo Bo Kyaw discussed cooperation plans in activities for drinking water supply in summer water-scarce villages.

Deputy Minister Dr Aung Gyi said the problem of drought, which used to be confined to hot and dry areas, in now being experienced across the country, including in the highlands due to climate change, and it is necessary to cooperate not only with one department but also relevant departments including non-governmental organizations in order to solve this problem successfully.

The Department of Rural Development (DRD) uses the Rural Water Supply – Management Information System (RWS-MIS) to capture current water use and operational status in villages digitally.

Last summer, 394 villages were expected to face water shortages. In practice, water was distributed to 347 villages in a timely manner. It is estimated that there will be about 300 summer water scarcity villages this year, and information has been collected in advance and connected to villages by mobile phone. During the current fiscal year, 1,981 rural water supply projects will be implemented, benefiting about 1.4 million people in 1,932 villages.—MNA

Announcement of testimony of Say Paing Construction Owner U Maung Waik on NLD's Chair Daw Aung San Suu Kyi

THE State Administration Council's Information Team said about the testimony of former Yangon Chief Minister U Phyo Min Thein that he gave $600,000 and 7 visses of gold (11.431 kg) to Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, during the press briefing held on 11 March 2021.

Therefore, the Union-level departmental heads were examined, and U Maung Waik, owner of Say Paing Construction, said in his video clip:

"I am U Maung Waik, the owner of Say Paing Company. I established my construction company in 2014, and it is still running today. Meanwhile, I donated and supported in cash to the respective cabinet members of government for the good of my businesses.

In 2017, one of my company staff introduced Daw Khin Khin Oo to me. She was working at Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's house. Around May 2018, I paid respect to Daw Aung San Suu Kyi at her house through the help of Daw Khin Khin Oo.

At that time, I gave a black envelope which includes USD100,000 to Daw Aung San Suu Kyi for Daw Khin Kyi Foundation in front of the families of U Kyaut San and U Hla Myo.

Also, in 2019, I gave a

U Maung Waik.

black envelope which includes USD150,000 to Daw Aung San Suu Kyi herself at her house. In February 2020 again, I gave USD50,000 to Daw Aung San Suu Kyi at her home. In April, I met with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and gave USD250,000 to her. There were no witnesses in those cases.

According to his words, he gave a total of $550,000 to Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, Chair of NLD— $100,000 in May 2018, $150,000 in May 2019, $50,000 in February and $250,000 in April 2020.

Therefore, it is found that Daw Aung San Suu Kyi committed corruptions according to the testimony of U Maung Waik. So the Anti-Corruption Commission starts its investigation to take action against her under Anti-Corruption Law. —MNA

Myanma Gems Emporium Central Committee meeting held in Nay Pyi Taw

UNION MINISTER for Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation U Khin Maung Yi attended Myanma Gems Emporium Central Committee's meeting yesterday.

During the meeting, the Patron of the central committee Union Minister discussed finished gemstone production on a manageable scale and job opportunities to support the people living hand-to-mouth, micro and small enterprises and local businesses.

The meeting was attended by Deputy Minister U Min Min Oo, CBM Deputy Governor U Win Thaw, Nay Pyi Taw Administration Council Member Colonel Min Naung, the Directors-General, Managing Directors and officials of Myanmar Gems and Jewellery Entrepreneurs Association.—MNA

Union Minister U Khin Maung Yi chairs the MGECC meeting yesterday.

Myanmar CMP (cutting, making, packing) supervisory committee holds meeting

THE Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population held the Myanmar CMP coordination meeting (Cutting, Making, Packaging) Supervisory Committee yesterday afternoon in Nay Pyi Taw.

The State Administration Council reformed the Myanmar CMP Supervisory Committee with 15 members on 21 February 2021. The CMP Business Inspection Sub-Committee, CMP Wages and Revenue Sub-Committee, the CMP Export and Import Supervision Sub-Committee and the CMP Business Advisory Committee were formed to support the CMP Business Supervisory Committee.

The CMP Supervisory Committee is responsible for scrutinizing the company's business application or businessperson, which intends to operate under the CPM system. It will check whether the CMP activities are being carried out under the existing laws, whether the notices issued are being complied with the current regulations, whether tax is paid or not, whether workers are paid in full and whether the statistics are kept in order or not.

Union Minister U Myint Kyaing presides over the CMP supervisory committee meeting in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

At the coordination meeting, Union Minister for Labour, Immigration and Population U Myint Kyaing, in his capacity as the Chairman of the Myanmar CMP Supervisory Committee, called on discussion whether or not to continue the formation of the committee's field inspection teams. He said CMP businesses were started by the garment industry and many other industries, including footwear, hat making, rubber production, transformer spare parts business, lens business, medical equipment.

He continued it can be seen that the CMP business has increased due to the increasing numbers of conversions from domestic investment to foreign investment and the easing of operations for the convenience of companies. He added that the CMP business industry is a crucial industry for economic development in developing countries.

He further said that the country would be able to create many good job opportunities and access to technology, gain international market share, and bring many benefits such as infrastructure and socio-economic development if the management of the business development is improved.

The Union Minister urged the meeting attendees to focus on the successful implementation of the CMP business, vital for its economic development.

The meeting also discussed the formation of the three sub-committees and the advisory committees, the field inspection team's current activities, coordination with relevant departments, and improved CMP products' quality and gained market share in foreign markets and current business challenges and needs.

The meeting was also attended by Deputy Minister for Planning, Finance and Industry U Ko Ko Lwin, Deputy Minister for Labour, Immigration and Population U Win Shein and committee members, permanent secretaries, and directors-general respective ministries.—MNA

Legal action charged against U Mahn Win Khine Than

ACCORDING to the Myanmar Police Force's statement yesterday, U Mahn Win Khine Than, son of U Mahn Than Shein, has been charged by the law.

Under Section 122 (1) of the Penal Code on 17 March 2021 at Myawady District Court, he was charged for accepting the appointment of interim vice-president by the Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH), which is committing high treason, for giving the speech as a rival government head of the country by betraying the State, and calling for the overthrow of the legally-standing State Administration Council in line with the Constitution. He is now under a charge of felony No. (21/2021).—MNA

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Dekkhina District Court issues arrest warrant for U Kyaw Moe Tun

U KYAW MOE TUN was charged under the law, according to the statement of the Myanmar Police Force.

It stated that Permanent Representative of Myanmar to the United Nations, U Kyaw Moe Tun said he represents NLD-led government and delivered the message of CRPH, which commits high treason, at the informal meeting of the United Nations General Assembly held in New York on 26 February.

He said to oppose the Tatmadaw government, extend support from the international community to those resisting, support the CRPH, release the detained leaders, and continue the measures to end the military takeover.

He did not follow the State order and directives. He committed high treason by representing the unlawful organization, which does not represent the government. He was dismissed as a civil servant under the Civil Services Personnel Law, rules and regulations starting 27 February.

As U Kyaw Moe Tun committed high treason and attempted to destroy the State Administration Council (government), which is legally standing in line with the Constitution, and urged the people to oppose the State government, he was prosecuted under the Penal Code Section 122 (2) for committing high treason at Dekkhina district court on 17 March. He is now under a charge of felony No. (32/2021). The Dekkhina district court has issued an arrest warrant for him.—MNA

Announcement of Union Election Commission

FROM PAGE-2

Findings on ballot papers for Pyithu Hluttaw election of Hline Township

8. According to the inspection, a total of 87 polling stations in 16 Wards of Hline Township took out 149,215 ballots and used 91,320 ballots. It left only 53,044 ballots instead of 57,895. The extra/shortage ballots were found as follows:

Sr	Subject	Withdrawal	Used	Exact remaining	Remaining on the ground	Difference	
						Missing	Extra
1	Ward/village-tract ballot	145,950	89,134	56,816	48,880	7,936	
2	Township advance ballot	2,186	2,186	-	-	-	
3	Township remaining ballot	1,079	-	1,079	4,164	-	3,085
Total		149,215	91,320	57,895	53,044	7,936	3,085

9. A total of 7,936 ballots were missing at 87 polling stations in 16 Wards of Hline Township. The township sub-commission have 4,164 remaining ballots instead of 1,079 and so it found 3,085 extra ballots.

10.Findings in Hline Township were as follows:

Sr	Name	Total polling station	Withdrawal	Used	Exact remaining	Remaining on the ground	Difference	
							Missing	Extra
1	No (1) Ward	6	12,650	8,017	4,633	4,530	103	
2	No (2) Ward	7	10,600	6,510	4,090	3,342	748	
3	No (3) Ward	4	5,050	2,422	2,628	1,577	1,051	
4	No (4) Ward	3	4,200	2,684	1,516	1,421	95	
5	No (5) Ward	4	7,100	4,030	3,070	2,768	302	
6	No (6) Ward	4	4,500	2,798	1,702	1,507	195	
7	No (7) Ward	8	14,650	9,505	5,145	4,528	617	
8	No (8) Ward	4	4,450	2,829	1,621	1,420	201	
9	No (9) Ward	5	7,450	4,347	3,103	3,153	50	
10	No (10) Ward	6	7,200	3,986	3,214	2,485	729	
11	No (11) Ward	6	8,600	5,334	3,266	2,994	272	
12	No (12) Ward	7	14,300	8,677	5,623	4,763	860	
13	No (13) Ward	9	20,400	12,667	7,733	6,682	1,051	
14	No (14) Ward	3	4,350	2,524	1,826	976	850	
15	No (15) Ward	3	4,300	2,586	1,714	1,464	250	
16	No (16) Ward	8	16,150	10,218	5,932	5,370	562	
Ward total		87	145,950	89,134	56,816	48,880	7,936	
Township advance ballots			2,186	2,186	-	-	-	
Township remaining ballots			1,079	-	1,079	4,164	-	3,085
Township total			149,215	91,320	57,895	53,044	7,936	3,085

Findings on ballot papers for Pyithu Hluttaw election in Kamayut Township

11. According to the inspection, a total of 37 polling stations in Kamayut Township took out 70,646 ballots and used 43,992 ballots. The extra/shortage ballots ballots were found in each ward/village-tract. It found 2,816 ballots missing and 1,805 extra ballots which are not issued by UEC. Findings were as follows:

Sr	Subject	Withdrawal	Used	Exact remaining	Remaining on the ground	Difference	
						Missing	Extra
1	Ward/Village-tract ballots	69,324	42,826	26,498	25,467	2,816	1,785
2	Township advance ballots	1,166	1,166	-	20	-	20
Total		70,490	43,992	26,498	25,487	2,816	1,805

12.They took out 70,646 ballots from district commission and distributed 69,480 ballots to ward/village-tract sub-commission via township sub-commission. The ward/village-tract sub-commission issued 69,324 ballots to the polling stations and so 156 ballots were missing without using at ward/village-tract sub-commission. According to the data of ward/village-tract, the ballots were missing at 10 polling stations and the reserve ballots and extra ballots were found at 11 polling stations. Findings were as follows:

Sr	Ward	Polling station No	Withdrawal	Used	Exact remaining	Remaining on the ground	Difference	
							Missing	Extra
1	Ward (1)	2	1,100	1,004	96	106		10
2	Ward (1)	3	1,450	956	494	594		100
3	Ward(2)	1	1,850	1,174	676	830		154
4	Ward(2)	2	1,450	794	656	652	4	
5	Ward(2)	3	1,050	596	454	504		50
6	Ward(3)	1	2,298	1,155	1,143	306	837	
7	Ward(3)	2	2,200	1,388	812	785	27	
8	Ward(3)	3	1,900	1,246	654	522	132	
9	Ward(3)	4	2,900	1,679	1,221	1,288		67
10	Ward(3)	5	2,300	1,065	1,235	685	550	
11	Ward(3)	6	2,450	1426	1,024	358	666	
12	Ward(3)	7	1,500	1,002	498	528		30
13	Ward(4)	3	1,826	1,026	800	824		24
14	Ward(5)	1	1,450	1,418	32	732		700
15	Ward(5)	2	1,850	1,141	709	609	100	
16	Ward(5)	3	2,050	996	1,054	754	300	
17	Ward(6)	1	2,100	1,472	628	778		150
18	Ward(6)	2	1,100	1,042	58	308		250
19	Ward(8)	2	1,300	888	412	262	150	
20	Ward(8)	4	950	734	216	466		250
21	Ward(10)	1	1,350	636	714	664	50	
	Remaining on the ground					20		20
Total			36,424	22,838	13,586	12,575	2,816	1,805

Findings on ballot papers for Pyithu Hluttaw election in Dagon Township

13. A total of 13 polling stations in Dagon Township withdrew 22,252 ballots and used 15,663 ballots and they left only 6,167 ballots instead of 6,589. The shortage/extra ballots were found as follows:

Sr	Subject	Withdrawal	Used	Exact remaining	Remaining on the grund	Difference	
						Missing	Extra
1	Ward/Village-tract ballots	20,736	14,872	5,864	5,442	537	115
2	Township ballots	1,516	791	725	725	-	
	Total	22,252	15,663	6,589	6,167	537	115

14. A total of 537 ballots were missing and it found 115 extra ballots at 13 polling stations in 5 Wards of Dagon township. Findings were as follows:

Sr	Ward	Withdrawal	Used	Exact remaining	Remaining on the ground	Difference	
						Missing	Extra
1	Yaw Min Gyi	5,750	3,605	2,145	1,947	245	47
2	U Wi Sar Ra	2,750	1,863	887	887	-	-
3	Pyay Road east	5,650	4,050	1,600	1,402	224	26
4	Pyay Road west	3,650	3,009	641	595	46	-
5	Phaya Gyi	2,936	2,345	591	611	22	42
Township total		20,736	14,872	5,864	5,442	537	115
Township advance ballots		800	791	9	9		
Township remaining ballots		716		716	716		
Township total		22,252	15,663	6,589	6,167	537	115

Findings on ballot papers for Pyithu Hluttaw election in Seikkyi/Khanaungto Township

15. A total of 35 polling stations in Seikkyi/Khanaungto Township withdrew 29,707 ballots and used 21,079 ballots and they left only 8,814 ballots instead of 8,628. The shortage/ extra ballots were found as follows:

Sr	Subject	Withdrawal	Used	Exact remaining	Remaining on the ground	Difference	
						Missing	Extra
1	Ward/Village-tract ballots	27,700	20,940	6,760	6,602	380	222
2	Township advance ballots	151	139	12	-	12	-
3	Township remaining ballots	1,856	-	1,856	2,212	-	356
Total		29,707	21,079	8,628	8,814	392	578

16. It found 380 ballots missing and 222 extra ballots at 35 polling stations in 9 Wards of Seikkyi/Khanaungto Township. The township sub-commission have 2,212 ballots instead of 1,856.

17. Findings in Seikkyi/Khanaungto Township were as follows:

Sr	Subject	Withdrawal	Used	Exact remaining	Remaining on the ground	Difference	
						Missing	Extra
1	Seikkyi (east)	5,500	4,087	1,413	1,360	94	41
2	Seykkyi (west)	4,750	3,315	1,435	1,416	36	17
3	Khanaungto (east)	5,950	4,586	1,364	1,431	48	115
4	Khanaungto (west)	2,600	1,985	615	569	50	4
5	No 5,6,7	3,800	2,679	1,121	980	152	11
6	Pan Pin Chaung	1,350	1,088	262	267		5
7	U Tun Oh	1,550	1,356	194	204		10
8	Chaung Wine Lay	950	812	138	150		12
9	Tha Khin Ba Thaung	1,250	1,032	218	225		7
	Ward/Village-tract total	27,700	20,940	6,760	6,602	380	222
	Township advance ballots	151	139	12		12	
	Township remaining ballots	1,856		1,856	2,212		356
	Township total	29,707	21,079	8,628	8,814	392	578

Union Election Commission

Manufacturing exports fall by $1.64 bln as of 5 March

EXPORTS of finished industrial goods drastically fell to US$3 billion between 1 October and 5 March in the current financial year 2020-2021, a severe drop of $1.64 billion compared with the corresponding period of the previous FY, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

As per the ministry figures, the exports of finished industrial goods totalled $4.68 billion during the same period in the 2019-2020FY.

Myanmar's manufacturing sector is largely concentrated in garment and textiles produced on the Cutting, Making, and Packing basis, contributing to the country's GDP to a certain extent.

Myanmar's garment export dropped by over 25 per cent as of the first quarter of the current FY compared with a year-ago period on the back of a slump in demand by the European Union market, the Ministry of Commerce stated.

Myanmar's garment industry has been facing challenges such as raw material supply disruption and orders' cancellation amid the pandemic. Additionally, the current political conditions would drag down the sector, a market observer shared his opinion.

At present, the CMP garment factories temporarily shut down and left thousands of workers unemployed.

Myanmar mainly exports CMP garments to markets in Japan and Europe and the Republic of Korea, China, and the US.

The garment sector is among the prioritized sectors driving up exports. The CMP garment industry has emerged as a promising one, with preferential trade from Western countries. Yet, the country's current political changes are likely to aggravate the garment industry, traders stressed.

Myanmar's garment factories operate under the CMP system, and those engaged in this industry are striving to transform CMP into the free-on-board (FoB) system. As the factories cannot enter into a contract for FoB, Own Design Manufacturing (ODM) and Own Business Manufacturing (OBM), the income is limited, according to the MGMA.

According to data from the Ministry of Commerce, exports of garments manufactured under the cut-make-pack (CMP) system were valued at US$4.798 billion in the last financial year 2019-2020.

Although the sector is struggling due to the cancellation of order from the European countries and suspension of Western countries' trade during the pandemic, export values rose in the previous FY (1 October 2019-30 September 2020).

The export value of CMP garments was only $850 million in the 2015-2016FY, but it has tripled over the past two FYs. In the 2016-2017FY, about $2 billion was earned from exports of CMP garments. The figure increased to an estimated $2.5 billion in the 2017-2018FY and $2.2 billion in the 2018 mini-budget period (from April to September). It tremendously grew to $4.6 billion in the 2018-2019FY, according to the Commerce Ministry.

Since an outbreak like COVID-19 might happen in the future, it is necessary to prepare for a sufficient raw materials supply. That being so, the public and private sectors will cooperate in setting up the supply chain on our own sources, including weaving, knitting, dyeing, and sewing factories.

The MGMA has more than 500 members and garment factories in Myanmar, employing more than 400,000 workers. Investors prefer to invest in countries with inexpensive labour, such as Myanmar. -- KK/GNLM

18 MARCH 2021
THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

Prepare for strong wind season

THE beginning of the windy season will see a return of gale-force winds in the evenings in March and April, the first two months of our summer season.

The Meteorology and Hydrology Department has issued strong wind in the whole country during March and April and urged the people to be aware of strong wind, with gusts ranging 35-45 km mph.

The weather bureau has stated that during March and April, isolated rains or thundershowers are likely in the afternoons or evenings, accompanied by strong winds, hail, thunder, and lightning, due to convective clouds created by gradually rising day temperatures across the country.

Gale-force winds hit parts of Myanmar every year, destroying homes, toppling trees, and causing fatalities and injuries. Most areas across the country have experienced strong winds during the day due to high temperatures.

> Gale-force winds hit parts of Myanmar every year, destroying homes, toppling trees, and causing fatalities and injuries.

Hence, people should take "full precautions" in the evenings and take "necessary action" to protect themselves and their property.

Besides, people need to be cautioned to prepare for power outages and to eliminate anything around their houses that could spark or be a source of ignition. These strong winds could potentially bring down tree branches or even whole trees.

Operators of vessels in rivers in affected areas should remain alert for tornadoes that can occur during thunderstorms.

People should stop everything and stay indoors when a storm wind hits.

As the weather transitions from winter to summer, the day-time temperature will spiral upwards, and we can expect more severe weather patterns rather than normal conditions as the world warms up due to climate change. Disasters are predicted to happen regularly and can impact all people without discrimination, and the public is still obligated to respond to disasters. The people who are paying the heaviest price when it comes to weather events are becoming more extreme, unpredictable, and erratic.

To reduce losses, disaster preparedness must begin at the grassroots level, but ministries and regional authorities must take a leading role in the drive.

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Two Virtues That Protect the World

By Sann Ni Lar Winn

THE Five precepts prescribe for every Buddhist consist of:

(1) abstaining from killing,
(2) abstaining from taking what is not given
(3) abstaining from sexual misconducts,
(4) abstaining from telling lies,
(5) abstaining from taking or using intoxicants:

According to the Buddha, there are two virtues that provide us with the best protection -- if we earnestly practice them. They are: —

(1) Hiri = Shame at doing evil (Moral Shame)
(2) Ottappa = Fear of the results of doing evil (Moral Dread)

If everybody realizes and respects the principles of "Hiri" (Shame at doing evil) and "Ottappa" (Fear of the results of doing evil) are equal to the two virtues that protect the world. In another way, the human society will be peace and calm on account of realizing and respecting the principles of "Hiri" and" Ottappa". There has no character of terrorism and anarchism in this society. I think that "Hiri" and "Ottappa" are the essential ethic in the world.

In everyone would like to do evil, he will be punished by law and order because our society doesn't want to accept terrorism and anarchism.

As proof, I think that evil is like faeces, and "Ahirica" (lack of moral shame) is like the pig. Every pig would like best to eat faeces.

Likewise, "Ottappa" (Lack of dread) is like the moths, and they don't afraid of the flames. Everyone without "Hiri" and "Ottappa" never don't fear to do evils. "Hiri" is moral shame or conscience. It arises out of understanding what is right or wrong, good or bad, and developed through a constant application of moral vigilance.

A person who practices "Hiri" does not do anything rashly or without proper forethought but will always exercise precaution in all actions. Before doing anything, he wisely asks himself, "Is it right or wrong?" "Is it good or bad?". If he finds it to be wrong or bad, he will not do it, no matter what the temptation. However, if he realizes after an unprejudiced consideration that what he intends to do is right and good, he will make an effort to finish the task and not give it up.

"Hiri" can be compared to the aversive feeling a person who loves cleanliness may experience when he sees something loathsome of disgusting. He may not, for instance, put his hand into a trash bag full of stinking garbage if he can avoid it. When he comes across a puddle of mud and dirt, he will step aside to avoid getting himself and his clothes smudged.

Likewise, an individual who practices "Hiri" feels disgusted with all bad actions, physical, verbal and mental and would endeavour to avoid them as far as possible. He does not do such things as stamping his feet before his parents taking impolitely back at them, of having an unkind and disrespectful thought towards them, for he knows that such doing is bad and unbecoming of a good Buddhist and would make their parents very unhappy indeed.

"Ottappa" is moral dread or fear to do something wrong or moral. It is the result of a firm belief in the doctrine of "Karma", which states that willful action being about an appropriate consequence, sooner or later.

An individual who has "Ottappa" is afraid of evil deeds because he knows that they will bring evil results and unhappiness to himself and others. He will not, on the other hand, hesitate to do the right things, firmly believing that the consequences thereof will be pleasant and beneficial. Unfortunately, people tend to do just the opposite of what they should they are brave to do evil but afraid to do good.

"Ottappa" can be compared to fear of a poisonous snake. Just as an individual avoids the snakebite, knowing that such is fatal, even so, an Ottappa person tries to prevent evil because he knows that its consequences are painful. He does not do wrong things even when he is sure that he will not be caught, for he understands that the law of "karma" operates at all time and all places. Thus, he is also encouraged to do good even if no one else notices it or acknowledge his good deeds.

Therefore, the "Dhammapada" said that the evil-doer, he suffers here, and hereafter, he suffers in both the worlds. The thought, "Evil have I done, "torments him, and he suffers even more when gone to realms of woe".

"But the doer of good delights here and hereafter, he delights in both the worlds. The thought, "Good have I done," delight him, and he delights even more when gone to realms of bliss".

I believe that "character is permanent power", so the famous philosopher who was named" Aristotle" said that "when health is lost, something is lost. When wealth is lost, nothing is lost. When character is lost, everything is lost."

In conclusion, for my part, if the people practise these two virtues (Hiri and Ottappa) the world will indeed be well protected, and there would be less need for law. No evil deeds will be committed even in secrecy. The world will thus be a very happy place for us all.

Ref:

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WHO experts say countries should keep using AstraZeneca jab

WORLD Health Organization experts on Wednesday recommended countries continue to use the AstraZeneca vaccine, but said they were looking into the jab's safety after a slew of countries suspended its use over health fears.

The WHO, Europe's medicines regulator and AstraZeneca itself have repeatedly said the vaccine was safe after several countries reported feared links with blood clots or brain haemorrhages.

The suspensions have marred the global vaccine drive aimed at ending a yearlong pandemic that has already killed more than 2.6 million people around the world since it first emerged in China in late 2019.

But the WHO's vaccine experts said Wednesday it was still better to take the AstraZeneca vaccine than not—adding that it was looking into available data on the jab.

"The WHO Global Advisory Committee on Vaccine Safety is carefully assessing the latest available safety data," the UN health agency said in a statement.

"At this time, WHO considers that the benefits of the AstraZeneca vaccine outweigh its risks and recommends that vaccinations continue."

The recommendation echoed a similar statement from the European Medicines Agency on Tuesday advising countries to continue using the vaccine, saying there was no link with clots.

Several countries from France to Venezuela to Indonesia said they would not use the vaccine after several reports emerged of blood clots and brain haemorrhages in people who had received the vaccine.

The British-Swedish jab has been dogged by controversy from early on in its rollout, after some countries initially recommended it for people over the age of 65 and then backpedalled, saying there was insufficient data for people in the age group that had received the shot.

Senior citizens receive doses of the Sinopharm Covid-19 vaccine at an inoculation venue inside an Expo Centre in Lahore, Pakistan. **PHOTO: AFP**

The firm later sparred with the EU, which accused it of failing to fulfil vaccine contracts after the bloc's immunization campaign came under fire for a sputtering start.

Crisis of the century

The head of the EU Commission on Wednesday threatened to introduce export curbs to stop suppliers within the EU from sending jabs outside the bloc to ensure "reciprocity" from other vendors.

Ursula von der Leyen singled out Britain, which she accuses of operating a de facto export ban to achieve its own vaccine success at home, which London furiously denies.

She said the EU was "still waiting" for its AstraZeneca orders to come out of production sites in Britain, despite the fact that 10 million doses from other manufacturers had entered the United Kingdom from the EU.

"This is an invitation to show us that there are also doses from the UK coming to the European Union, so that we have reciprocity," she said. The warning came as the EU chief also unveiled plans for a digital certificate that could allow people who have been vaccinated to travel freely withing the bloc.

The pass could also apply to people with a recent negative test, or who have been previously infected and therefore are presumed to have antibodies, she said, calling the pandemic "the crisis of the century".

Source : AFP

MYANMAR GAZETTE

Heads of Service Organizations transferred and confirmed

1.The following persons are transferred as Heads of Service Organizations shown against each of their names.

Name	Appointment
(a) U Aung Aung Director-General Administration and Human Resources Development Department Central Bank of Myanmar	Director-General Governor's Office Central Bank of Myanmar
(b) U Myo Min Director-General Governor's Office Central Bank of Myanmar	Director-General Administration and Human Resources Development Department, Central Bank of Myanmar

2. The following persons are confirmed as Heads of Service Organizations shown against each of their names, after the one-year probation period.

Name	Appointment
1. U Shwe Maw	Director-General Myanma Petrochemical Products Supervision and Inspection Department Ministry of Electricity and Energy
2. U Nyan Tun	Managing-Director Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise Ministry of Electricity and Energy

Objectives of 76th Anniversary Armed Forces Day

FOR the Tatmadaw to join hands with the entire nation to safeguard democracy, which is the aspiration of all the nationalities of the country, from deviating from its path, in accord with the basic principles of the Constitution, while observing Our Three Main National Causes, which is the national policy;

To protect the people from all dangers including natural disasters at any time and in any situation and to provide all-round assistance for ensuring social security of the people;

To restore eternal peace based on NCA, without deviating from Our Three Main National Causes, as the cessation of armed conflicts is the principal requirement in realizing democracy;

To build a strong and compact Standard Army, which has the combat prowess and combat power, to effectively safeguard the State peace and stability and sovereignty.

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Union Minister Dr Nyunt Pe visits school principal refresher course in Nay Pyi Taw

MoE minister seen meeting high and middle school principals, who are attending the management, finance and education refresher course, to prepare for reopening schools.

UNION Minister for Education Dr Nyunt Pe and Deputy Minister Dr Zaw Myint, U Zaw Win and officials, visited the Basic Education High School and Middle School Principals management (management, finance, education) refresher course held in Zabuthiri Township and Zeyathiri Township in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

During the visit, the Union Minister said plans are underway to reopen the basic education schools according to the 22 rules of the COVID-19 preventive measures that have been closed for a year and with the cooperation of the respective education officers in regions and states. He also said doctoral programmes and final-year degree courses would be reopened in April and May.

The Union Minister added it is necessary for school principals to prepare for their schools and to present the requirements openly and that books will be provided to the school library.

He stressed the need to have equal assets in schools as well as equal teaching and excellent management, adding it is vital to ensure equal learning opportunities without discrimination between rich and poor, rural or urban, since students are the leaders of the future.

The Union Minister also urged the school principals to work together to reopen schools and higher education systems by raising the quality of their management.

The attended school principals presented the requirements, and the Union Minister — MNA

Roadblocks removed in Yangon

TATMADAW members, Myanmar Police Force and municipal staff collectively removed the roadblocks on Insein road in Hline Township of Yangon Region yesterday, and YCDC members Dr Zaw Win and U Aung Naing inspected their operations.

They removed the roadblocks from Thiri Yadana market to Thu Kha street in Hline Township. The residents offered them drinking waters, soft drinks and snacks.

Similarly, they removed five barriers on Bogyoke Aung San Road (between Bo Myat Tun and Thein Phyu roads), Bo Myat Tun Road (between Bogyoke Aung San and Anawyahtar roads) in Botahtaung Township with 1 Loader and 2 Tippers, other blocks on Y bridge on Kyaikkasan road in Tamway Township with 2 Tippers while with 1 Loader and 2 Tippers on Ahlone road (between lower Kyimyindine and Ngu Wah streets), with 1 Dozer and 3 vehicles on Kyaik Wine Pagoda Road (between Min Dhamma and Insein roads) in Mayangon Township, with five cars on West Horse Course Road and East Shwegondine Road (between Thathana Yeiktha Road and West Horse Course Road) in Bahan Township, with another five vehicles on Anawyahtar street (between Bo Aung Kyaw and Pansodan streets), 39th, 38th and 37th streets.

Moreover, they removed barbed wires, sandbags, bamboo mattings, poles, woodblocks, used tires, stones, bricks, iron bars and old concrete mixers at 41 places on Yankin road, Yan Shin road, Moe Kaung road (between Thitsar and Aung Zeya streets), Kaba Aye Pagoda Road, Parami road, West Horse Course road, Industrial (1) road (in front of CBM) to facilitate the public transport. — MNA

Tatmadaw members, Myanmar Police Force and municipal staff collectively removed the roadblocks on Insein road in Hline Township of Yangon Region yesterday.

MoSWRR minister discusses implementation of recommendations on Rakhine State

Union Minister Dr Thet Thet Khine chairs the meeting to discuss the ways to slove the prolong conflicts in Rakhine State.

THE Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement organized a meeting on implementing the recommendations on Rakhine State yesterday.

Union Minister Dr Thet Thet Khine discussed the ways to solve the prolong conflicts in Rakhine State, efforts of former governments for the interests of the Rakhine community, progress in solving difficulties that occurred in 2012 due to the conflicts and cooperation works between the relevant departments and organizations in carrying out the socio-economic development of Rakhine State following the policies and directives of the State Administration Council.

Then, the Deputy Director-General of Natural Disaster Management briefed the formation of Rakhine State Investigation Commission and Advisory Commission on Rakhine State, and performances carried out based on the recommendations of these commissions in the respective sector of Rakhine State.—MNA

MoHT Union Minister discusses tourism-related matters

UNION Minister for the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism U Maung Maung Ohn held a coordination meeting with relevant staff officers yesterday.

During the meeting, the Union Minister discussed the creation of safe trips or recreational processes for the people in the post-COVID-19 pandemic, which is the focus of the State Administration Council Chairman, prioritization of domestic tours to Bagan-Mandalay-Pyin Oo Lwin-Ngapali-Chaung Tha and Ngwe Saung and plans to ease travel restrictions in line with the COVID-19 health rules.

He continued that the ministry also received directives to reopen the hotels and revive the tourism sector. The inspections will be conducted in reopening the hotels in line with the Enchanting Myanmar Health and Safety Protocols.

The Union Minister also said arrangements are being made with the relevant ministries to provide the COVID-19 vaccine to the hotel staff.

He also instructed the departments' heads to manage the junior staff to serve duties according to the Civil Service regulations and be free from party politics.

He stressed the need to cooperate to accelerate the tourism development programmes as per the ministry's policy and procedures.

Then, the attendees to the meeting coordinated the meeting by presenting their work plans. — MNA

Union Minister U Maung Maung Ohn chairs the MoHT corrdination meeting to discuss tourism revival on 17 March 2021.

Tomato growers enjoy price hike in Pwintbyu

The growers from Pwintbyu township are annually cultivating the tomatoes in September. The nursery plants are transplanted to the ground after 15 days, and the fruits could be yielded after three months.

THE villagers from Pwintbyu township in the Magway region cultivate the vegetables and crops on a commercial scale using the Mone creek water and underground water. Tomato is the leading commercial crops for their villages.

"Earlier, the tomato was sold for K300 per viss. Now, it is selling for K500 per viss. Thus, people are being delighted with their tomato cultivation," said the growers form Dedaye village in Pwintbyu township.

Pwintbyu township is in fair weather condition. So, people in the township are engaged in agriculture businesses and growing seasonal corps. The local people from Pwintbyu township are growing the perennials as well as a variety of vegetable crops on a commercial scale using Mone creek water and underground water. This year, the local farmers have to struggle because the tomatoes are sold at K300 per viss in the abundantly yielding season. The tomato price has risen, and it is fetching K500 per viss, said Ko Han Zaw Thet, a tomato grower from Dedaye village, Pwintbyu Township.

"The villagers in our township are cultivating the seasonal crops. They are growing paddy, sesame, peanuts, corn, green peas, Lima bean, mango, jackfruit, Thanaka, drumstick and Sterculia Versicolor Wall. This year, the tomato yield is abundant, and the growers are making a good profit.

The growers from Pwintbyu township are annually cultivating the tomatoes in September. The nursery plants are transplanted to the ground after 15 days, and the fruits could be yielded after three months. The fruits could be harvested for up to 6 months. Tomato cultivation can generate an income of K1.5 million per 1,000 trees, and the cultivation costs K100,000. —Ye Win Naing (IPRD)/GNLM

Betel leaf cultivation earns growers regular income in Ngaphe

THE growers from Hson Gon village in Ngaphe township in the Magway region are growing the betel leaves on a manageable scale in their farmlands and earning regular family income. The local villagers are being engaged mainly in the agriculture business.

When we cultivate the betel leaves, we have to dig two feet to add the irrigation water. The soil has been prepared for planting with the same volume of sand, compost and cow dung. Afterwards, the seeds have to be planted one foot apart. After two months, the plants need to be cleaned and sprayed with foliar fertilizer.

Currently, the plants are two years old. There are more than 850 plants of betel leaves in the Hson Gon village. The farmland owners are hiring two persons daily to pick up ten visses of betel leaves. The wages are K600 per viss of the betel leaves.

The betel leaves are priced at K3,000 per viss for small leaves and K6,000 per viss for big leaves in the Padan and Letpandaga villages' wholesale market. There are 450 betel leaves in one viss. Some of the betel vendors bought big leaves and cut them in the middle.

"Consequently, the betel leaf growers earn a daily family income of an average of K20,000 to K30,000. So, those interested in cultivation should grow the betel leaves in their farmlands. At present, there are five betel leaf growers in our village," said U Maung Maung Myint, a betel leaves grower from Hson Gon village. — Ma Yu (Ngaphe)/GNLM

Currently, the plants are two years old. There are more than 850 plants of betel leaves in the Hson Gon village.

Sweden is latest country to stop using AstraZeneca vaccine

Swedish health authorities said Tuesday they had suspended the use of AstraZeneca's Covid-19 vaccine, following the example of many other EU countries after reports of possible serious side effects. **PHOTO: AFP**

SWEDISH health authorities said Tuesday they had suspended the use of AstraZeneca's Covid-19 vaccine, following the example of many other EU countries after reports of possible serious side effects.The Public Health Agency (FHM) said it was halting the use of the vaccine "as a precautionary measure" following reports of "suspected side effects".

Sweden's state epidemiologist Anders Tegnell told national news agency TT that 10-20 cases in Europe of post-jab haemorrhages were the main concern and needed further investigation. Other EU countries have suspended the use of the vaccine amid reports of blood clots, but FHM stressed that no such serious side effects had been confirmed in the Scandinavian country. The European Medicines Agency is to hold a special meeting on Thursday to decide whether measures are needed.—AFP ■

Bulgaria busts cash forging operation at university

BULGARIAN authorities busted a university printworks in capital Sofia that was making fake euro and dollar bills worth millions, police and prosecutors announced Tuesday.

Fake banknotes worth a total of 3.6 million euros ($4.3 million) and $4.0 million in dollar bills were seized in the operation conducted in cooperation with the US Secret service, the chief of Bulgaria's anti-organised crime directorate Lyubomir Yanev told reporters.

A 49-year-old man -- an employee of the printworks -- and a 54-year-old woman were detained, he said. The pair had no previous convictions.

The two were most probably part of a larger scheme that saw the counterfeit money smuggled to Ukraine and Europe, Yanev added. "There is no evidence that the university authorities knew about this activity," Sofia police chief Georgy Hadzhiev said, with officials declining to give the name of the institution.

The money was made after working hours and on weekends, Yanev explained, adding that initial assessments pointed to it being of "relatively good" quality.—AFP ■

Bulgarian authorities busted a university printworks in capital Sofia that was making fake euro and dollar bills worth millions. **PHOTO: AFP**

UK police officer in court on kidnap, murder charges

Many local women say they don't feel safe alone on the streets of London. **PHOTO: AFP**

A British police officer was remanded in custody when he appeared in court Tuesday charged with the kidnap and murder of a woman who vanished as she walked home in London.

The disappearance of Sarah Everard sparked outrage and a national debate on women's safety in public places, prompting the government to promise enhanced police patrols at night and funding to make the streets safer.

London police are also under pressure after they broke up a vigil for Everard on Saturday. Widely shared footage showed mostly male officers struggling with and restraining female protesters. Wayne Couzens, 48, appeared via videolink in a London court to face charges of the kidnap and murder of Everard, a 33-year-old marketing executive who went missing in south London on March 3. —AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Sri Lanka says burqa ban is for national security

THE Sri Lankan government insisted Tuesday that preventing Muslim women from wearing a burqa or niqab was a national security move, as it faced protests over the decision.

Sri Lankan Muslims decried the measure as a new act of discrimination against their community, which accounts for 10 per cent of the 21 million, Buddhist-majority population.—AFP ■

Six EU states demand vaccine 'correction mechanism'

SIX central and eastern European Union heads of government urged Brussels on Tuesday to find a "correction mechanism" to fix what they called the unfair distribution of coronavirus vaccines within the bloc.

Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz, after hosting talks with five EU counterparts in Vienna, told reporters it was "important" to come up with a "technical" solution with Brussels institutions "so that for example, Bulgaria doesn't receive only a third as much (per capita) as Malta".—AFP ■

Lightning may have sparked life on Earth, study finds

LIGHTNING strikes may have supplied primordial Earth with enough phosphorus to support the emergence of life, according to new research Tuesday that offered an alternative explanation as to how living organisms were born.

Phosphorus is a vital building block of life as we know it, forming basic cell structures and the double helix shape of DNA and RNA. —AFP ■

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With migrant workers stuck at home, Russia leans on its own

RUSSIAN construction executive Vitaly Lychits bemoans a shortage of cheap foreign workers during the coronavirus pandemic as he walks across frost-covered ground at a building site in southwest Moscow.

For years, Russia has relied on migrant labourers to do some of the hardest and worst paying jobs, especially in industries like construction and agriculture that face chronic labour shortages.

Now, with millions of foreign labourers from the former Soviet Union stuck at home due to pandemic-induced border closures, Russian companies have had to adapt, hiring more expensive workers from the country's regions.

With millions of foreign labourers from the former Soviet Union stuck at home due to pandemic-induced border closures, Russian companies have had to adapt, hiring more expensive workers from the country's regions. **PHOTO: AFP**

"Migrants worked until the end of the year, then they went home for the holidays and now it's problematic for them to come back," Lychits, deputy director of construction at Granelle, a Moscow-based developer, told AFP.

"We're hiring workers from Russian provinces despite the fact that we have to factor in extra labour costs." Granelle, which is mainly active in and around Moscow, typically employs workers from Armenia, Ukraine, Belarus, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

With temperatures hovering around minus 14 degrees Celsius (6.8 degrees Fahrenheit) at the Moscow construction site, several Armenian workers huddled around a makeshift fire pit.

Aged between 20 and 50, they said they missed home. —AFP ■

China's automotive aftermarket hits 1 trillion yuan in 2020: Ministry of Commerce

Photo taken on July 12, 2020 shows the display area of FAW-Bestune during the 17th China Changchun International Automobile Expo in Changchun, northeast China's Jilin Province. **PHOTO: XINHUA**

CHINA'S automotive aftermarket is estimated to have hit 1 trillion yuan ($153.78 billion) in 2020, said the country's Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM) Wednesday. The sector has given a tremendous boost to consumption related to the auto industry, the ministry added.

The automotive aftermarket refers to deals and services related to sold automobiles. Citing China Automobile Dealers Association, MOFCOM said that over 14.34 million used vehicles were traded last year in China, down by 3.9 per cnet from a year ago. The decrease narrowed 15.7 per cnet compared with that in the first half of the same year. Total transaction volume stood at 888.8 billion yuan, shrinking 5.0 per cnet year on year.

MOFCOM estimated that the country had recycled and dismantled nearly 2.4 million scrapped vehicles last year, up 4.5 per cnet year on year, including 2.06 million automobiles and 332,000 motorcycles.

According to the All-China Federation of Industry and Commerce, the value of the Chinese car tuning market hit 65.2 billion yuan last year, up 7.1 per cnet from a year ago. The country is seeing increasing demand from customers to modify their vehicles. Statistics released by the Ministry of Transport indicated that as of the end of 2020, China had issued business permits to 214 online car-hailing firms, as well as 2.89 million licenses to car-hailing drivers. A total of 2.1 billion car-hailing orders were placed in the fourth quarter last year, according to a national monitoring platform for the industry. — Xinhua ■

Higher gasoline prices fuel Canada inflation

CANADIAN inflation rose 1.1 per cnet in February from a year earlier as gasoline prices increased for a third straight month, the government said Wednesday.

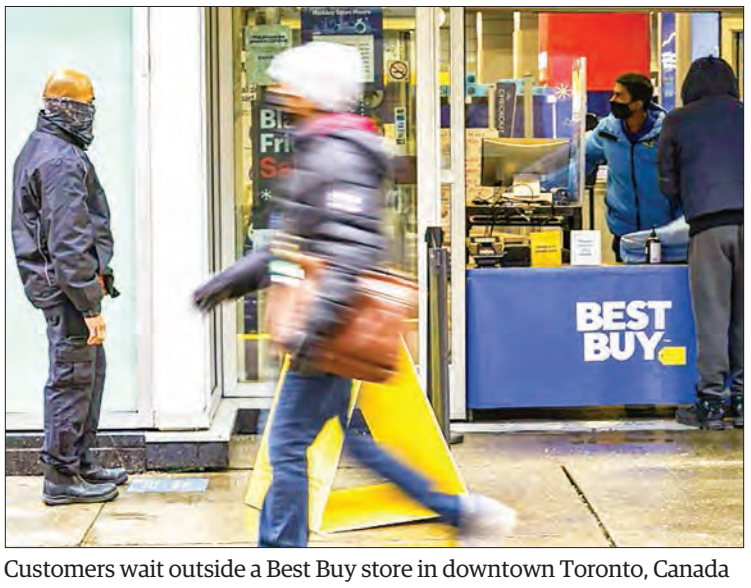
The hike in gasoline prices came amid a gradual recovery in global demand, as well as crude oil supply cuts in major oil-producing countries and shutdowns in the southern United States due to bad weather.

On a monthly basis the consumer price index rose 0.1 per cnet in February. Analysts had expected it to rise 0.7 per cent.

According to Statistics Canada, low interest rates and strong demand for homes with more space continued to push prices higher for new housing, marking the largest yearly gain since February 2007.

The costs of food, passenger vehicles and household appliances such as stoves and refrigerators were also up.

Costs of hotel accommodations, meanwhile, remained low as public health authorities maintained restrictions on non-essential travel to slow the spread of Covid-19. —AFP ■



Customers wait outside a Best Buy store in downtown Toronto, Canada on November 23, 2020 to pick up online orders. **PHOTO: AFP**

NEWS IN BRIEF

New US homebuilding drops 10.3% in February: govt

AS severe winter weather hit parts of the country last month, US home construction plummeted, with new housing starts falling 10.3 per cent, the Commerce Department said on Wednesday.

The largest drops were in the Northeast and Midwest, where the weather was the worst, but the South also saw a decline even as growth continued in the West, as construction firms scrambled to meet the demands of a hot housing market. —AFP ■

Asia traders move cautiously as they focus on Fed

ASIAN investors drifted Wednesday after a two-day advance, with focus on the Federal Reserve's crucial policy meeting that comes against a backdrop of heightened inflation fears fuelled by an expected economic resurgence.

While the battle against the coronavirus continues to rage and some countries reimpose containment measures, the rollout of vaccines, signs of slowing infections and huge government and central bank largesse are providing massive support to equities. —AFP ■

Top US officials arrive in Seoul with China, N. Korea on agenda

Talks between US Secretary of Defence Lloyd Austin (L) and South Korean officials are expected to focus on the North and China. **PHOTO: AFP**

PENTAGON chief Lloyd Austin arrived in Seoul on Wednesday with top US diplomat Antony Blinken following for talks with South Korean officials to bolster a united front against an increasingly assertive China and the nuclear-armed North.

The South is the second leg of their inaugural overseas trip, and like their first stop, Japan, a leading security ally of the United States.

The Biden administration is focused on rallying alliances with its key Asian partners to counter a rising China.

North Korea is likely to move up the agenda in the South, where the US stations 28,500 troops to defend it against its neighbour.

The allies kicked off joint military exercises last week and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's influential sister warned Washington this week against "causing a stink at its first step" if it wants to "sleep in peace for coming four years".

The statement by Kim Yo Jong, a key adviser to her brother, was the reclusive state's first explicit reference to the new leadership in Washington, more than four months after Joe Biden was elected to replace Donald Trump -- although it still did not mention the 78-year-old Democrat by name.

The US envoys will meet on Thursday with President Moon Jae-in, who brokered the talks process between Kim and Trump in 2018. —AFP ■

New era beckons for Cuba, without a Castro in power

CUBA will emerge from the April congress of its all-powerful Communist Party without a Castro at the helm for the first time in over 60 years.

And while the country is unlikely to abandon its military, socialist approach to government any time soon, observers expect some nods, albeit meek ones, to economic modernization and social liberalization in future.

The country's de-facto leader, Raul Castro, 89, is handing over the reins after 13 years in the seat he inherited from his revolutionary leader brother Fidel, who was in charge for almost 50 years before that.

In Cuba's one-party system, the Castros have consecutively held the top position in the Communist Party and the country -- that of first secretary -- since 1959.

The first secretary is more powerful than the president -- a position both Castros also held.

Then in 2018, Raul Castro ceded the Cuban presidency to Miguel Diaz-Canel, a major shift for the country that still largely sees Fidel Castro as its revolutionary father and savior.

Fidel Castro is still widely hailed as Cuba's revolutionary father and savior. **PHOTO: AFP**

In a shuffle of the top brass that has long been sewn up, Diaz-Canel will become the first non-Castro elected first secretary at the party's five-yearly congress to be held in Havana from April 16 to 19.

This will see Castro officially enter retirement and voluntarily give up any claim to political power.

New constitution

A new constitution adopted in May 2019 with almost 80 percent approval among eligible voters 18 and older, states that the country's commitment to socialism was "irreversible." —AFP ■

Harry speaks to Charles, William after bitter TV interview: friend

PRINCE Harry has spoken to his father and brother after he and his wife Meghan Markle raised allegations of racism in the royal family during an explosive TV interview, a friend said Tuesday.

In the interview, Harry said that his father Prince Charles had cut him off financially and at one point stopped taking his calls, and he also described his damaged relationship with Prince William.

Harry and Meghan, whose father is white and mother is Black, now live in California after stepping away from royal duties.

The British monarchy has been rocked by the couple's allegations that an unnamed royal asked how dark their child's skin would be before he was born.

"I did actually call them to see how they were feeling, and it's true Harry has talked to his brother and he has talked to his father too," Gayle King, a US television presenter and friend of the couple, said on CBS.

"The word I was given was that those conversations were not productive, but they are glad they have at least started a conversation."

King said the couple were "frustrated" that alleged racism in the royal family had dominated the news agenda since the interview was broadcast on March 7. —AFP ■

Prince Harry and his wife Meghan sit down with Oprah Winfrey for a TV interview that rocked the royal family. **PHOTO: AFP**

NEWS IN BRIEF

France's Sarkozy on trial again after graft conviction

Former French president Nicolas Sarkozy went on trial Wednesday over claims of illicit financing for his failed 2012 re-election bid, just two weeks after a landmark conviction for corruption.

On March 1, the 66-year-old became France's first post-war president to be sentenced to prison when he was given a three-year term, two years of which were suspended, for corruption and influence peddling. —AFP ■

Top French court to rule on rape allegations against firefighters

France's top appeals court will rule on Wednesday whether three firefighters accused of assaulting a teenage girl more than a decade ago should have been charged with rape instead of sexual abuse, in a case that has ignited a national debate on consent.

The woman has gained strong support from feminist groups, who staged protests in several cities last month, at a time when French politicians are debating a bill that would ban sex with children under 15.

Julie (not her real name) alleges she was raped by more than 20 firefighters in the Paris area between 2008 and 2010, when she was aged between 13 and 15 and receiving treatment for severe anxiety attacks. —AFP ■

Everest-bound Bahraini prince probed over vaccine 'gift'

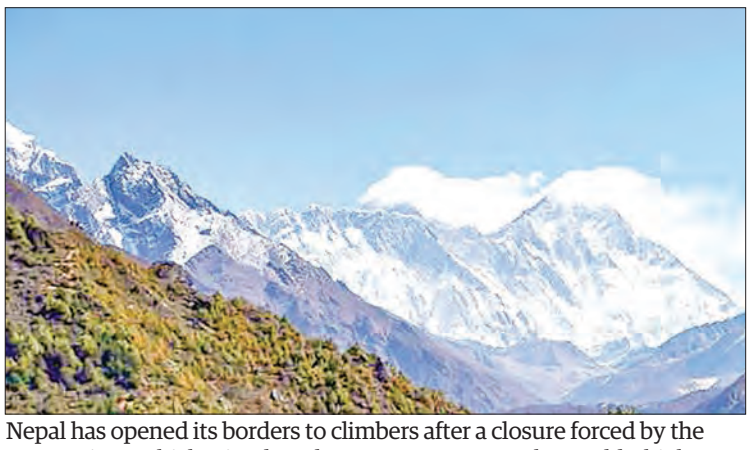
NEPAL is investigating how a Bahraini prince planning to climb Mount Everest brought 2,000 coronavirus vaccine doses to the country without prior approval, authorities said.

Sheikh Mohamed Hamad Mohamed Al Khalifa who flew into Kathmandu on Monday planned to donate the AstraZeneca shots in a village, according to the Nepali Embassy in Bahrain.

"It was brought without meeting the required procedure and prior consent from our office, we are investigating and will take a decision on whether it can be used," Santosh KC, spokesman for the Department of Drug Administration, told AFP on Wednesday.

The prince's group, which includes members of the Bahrain Royal Guard, is returning to Nepal after climbing the 8,163-metre (26,781-feet) Mount Manaslu and the 6,119-metre (20,075-feet) Lobuche in October.

At the time, there was a ban on foreign visitors because of the pandemic but Nepal made an exception and granted a permit to the sheikh's team.



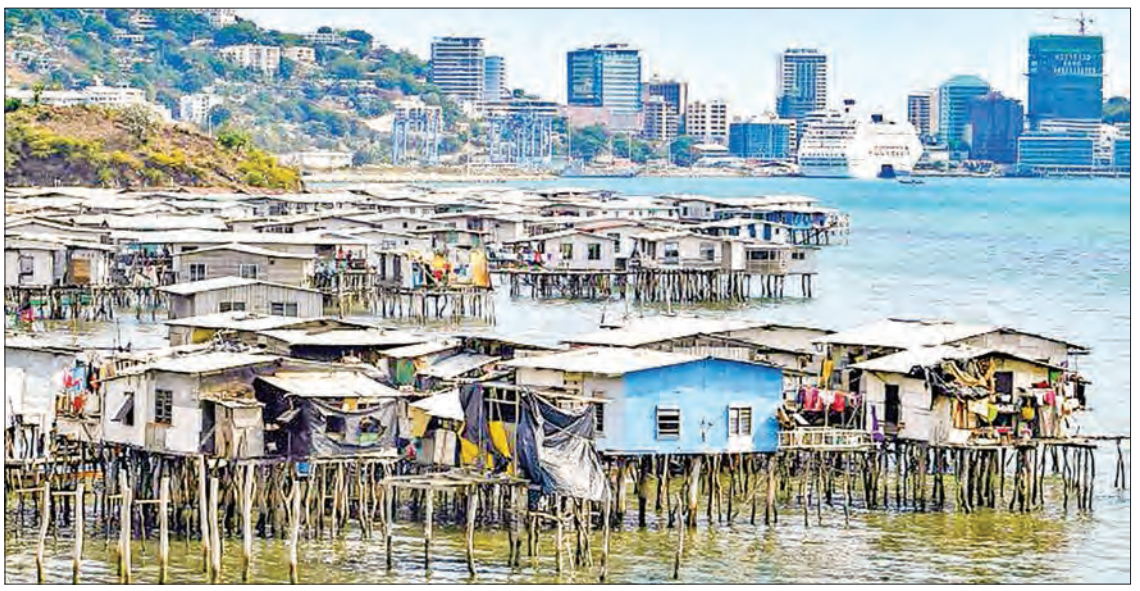
Nepal has opened its borders to climbers after a closure forced by the coronavirus, which wiped out last year's season on the world's highest peak Mount Everest. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

Nepal has now opened its borders to climbers, and the prince and his team are among the first to come to Everest this year after the virus wiped out last year's season on the world's highest peak.

The pandemic was a devastating blow to the many thousands of people in Nepal, from guides to hoteliers, who depend on the climbing industry for their livelihoods.

Mountaineers must now quarantine for seven days and present a negative test before heading out on their expedition. Nepal began a vaccination drive in January after receiving one million doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine from India.—AFP ■

Covid-hit Papua New Guinea calls for 1m emergency AstraZeneca doses



Australia says hospitals in the PNG capital Port Moresby are detecting Covid in about half of new patient admissions. **PHOTO: AFP**

PAPUA New Guinea's health minister on Wednesday told AFP the country's record wave of coronavirus infections will "spike" further in coming weeks, calling on drug-maker AstraZeneca to urgently deliver one million vaccine doses to staunch the looming crisis.

Jelta Wong warned his under-resourced nation was already "running at full throttle" to prevent a wave of coronavirus cases from running out of control, saying new lockdowns and overseas help were urgently needed.

"In the next couple of weeks, there is going to be a spike in the cases," he said, amid rising fears of an impending health disaster in the impoverished South Pacific nation of nine million.

Papua New Guinea rapidly shut its international borders at the beginning of the pandemic, limiting infections to just a few hundred and dodging the worst ravages of the global crisis.

But more than 1,000 new cases have been uncovered this month alone, and with testing rates still low, there are fears the real total is much higher.

"The community transmission is out there, and I'm pretty sure that we haven't detected a lot of it," Wong admitted. "But we're running at full capacity just to ensure that we do get to all places."

With hospitals reporting a surge in patients and emergency staff falling sick, Australia on Wednesday said it was rushing 8,000 doses to its northern neighbour to inoculate frontline workers. In Canberra, Prime Minister Scott Morrison also called for AstraZeneca to divert one million Australian-bought doses to Papua New Guinea as soon as possible. —AFP ■

Belarus has convicted more than 400 in protest crackdown

MORE than 400 people have so far been convicted in a sweeping crackdown in Belarus following mass protests against President Alexander Lukashenko's regime last year, prosecutors said on Wednesday.

The ex-Soviet country was gripped by months of demonstrations after Lukashenko claimed re-election in an August vote that the opposition and Western diplomats said was rigged.

As the demonstrations subsided, activists, protesters and journalists were prosecuted and the court system has since become a conveyor belt of guilty verdicts.

"To date, prosecutors have sent 468 criminal cases to courts against 631 people in connection with participation in illegal mass events and protests that grossly violate public order," the Prosecutor General's office said in a statement. —AFP ■

Japan's failure to recognize same-sex marriage unconstitutional: court

JAPAN'S failure to recognize same-sex marriage is unconstitutional, a court ruled Wednesday, in a landmark first verdict on the issue that was welcomed with joy by campaigners.

More than a dozen same-sex couples filed lawsuits in district courts across Japan in 2019 seeking recognition of gay marriage. Japan is the only Group of Seven nation that still does not recognize the unions.

In the first ruling on the lawsuits, a court in northern Japan's Sapporo rejected a request for damages of one million yen ($9,000) per person for plaintiffs who argued they were being denied the same legal rights as heterosexual couples.

But the verdict rules that the failure to provide ways for same-sex couples to "enjoy even a part of the legal effects that arise from marriage... violates article 14" of the constitution, which says that "all of the people are equal under the law".

"I couldn't hold back my tears. The court sincerely gave its thorough attention to our problem and I think it issued truly a good decision," a male plaintiff told reporters outside the courthouse.

The verdict said however that it would not uphold the damages demand as lawmakers may have struggled to legislate on the issue.

Still, lawyers for the plaintiffs, surrounded by rainbow flags, held up a sign outside the court declaring the ruling "a huge step towards equality in marriage".

Opposition lawmaker Kanako Otsuji, one of the few Japanese politicians who is openly LGBT, said in a tweet that she was "truly, truly happy" about the verdict.

"With this ruling, I urge the Diet, as the legislative branch of the government, to deliberate a proposed amendment to the civil code to make same-sex marriage possible," she wrote.

'Partnership' certificates

Japan's constitution stipulates that "marriage shall be only with the mutual consent of both sexes". —AFP ■

But the verdict rules that the failure to recognize same-sex marriage violates constitutional requirements for equality before the law. **PHOTO:AFP**

Three groups of 2021 AFC Champions League to be held in Thailand

THAILAND will host the three groups of the 2021 Asian Football Confederation (AFC) Champions League: Group F, Group G and Group J in the East region of the 2021 AFC Champions League, according to a statement released by the AFC.

The decision was made by the AFC with regards to the AFC tournaments, which will be launched in June 2021.

Ahead of the upcoming tourney, AFC General Secretary Dato' Windsor John said,"On behalf of the Asian football family, I would like to thank all our Member Associations for their interest in hosting our club competitions and commitment towards ensuring we continue to place the safety and wellbeing of our players, teams, and officials at the forefront of all our priorities."

"The AFC are most grateful for the support of the AFC Competitions Committee and our commercial partners, and we will continue to safeguard the interests of all stakeholders as we strive to ensure a safe and successful 2021 club football season," he added.

"As part of the bidding process, which was opened to all Participating Member Associations, a wide range of requirements were put in place to ensure adherence to the highest health and safety protocols and standards. These include minimum travel and quarantine restrictions for away clubs, the convenience of flight connections and the medical situation in the host country, sufficient venues to organize the matches and, most importantly, mandatory Covid-19 test to be organized for all players and officials, the costs of which will be borne by the AFC", football authorities stated.—GNLM ■`

Uefa wants fans at every Euro match

Uefa says it may chop and change the venues if a host city is insisting on holding a match behind closed doors. **PHOTO: AFP**

LAUSANNE — European football's governing body Uefa is working on a plan to ensure that every match at this year's delayed pan-continental Euros will be staged in front of fans.

Held over from 2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic, this summer's championship is due to be held in 12 different countries.

Uefa says it may chop and change the venues if a host city is insisting on holding a match behind closed doors. "If a city proposes a no-fans scenario, the matches due to be held there 'could' be switched 'to cities able to welcome supporters'," Uefa told AFP on Wednesday (March 17).

The federation's president, Aleksander Ceferin, assured Croatian newspaper Sportske Novosti on Sunday that the June 11-July 11 event would not be "staged in front of empty stands".

"Every host most guarantee the presence of fans," he said.

While the prevalence of ultra-contagious variants of Covid-19 rule out any easing of restrictions, a 'fans are obligatory' criteria could see the tournament reduced to being held in "10 or 11 countries",Ceferin indicated.

Host cities have until April 7 to let Uefa know what their scenarios are in terms of attendance ahead of an executive committee meeting on April 19, on the eve of the federation's annual congress in Montreux. —AFP ■

Guardiola admits pressure to win Champions League at Man City

PEP Guardiola admits he has felt under pressure to win the Champions League since becoming Manchester City manager after they qualified for the quarter-finals for a fourth successive year.

The Premier League leaders sealed a 4-0 aggregate win against Borussia Moenchengladbach in Budapest on Tuesday after a 2-0 victory in the second leg, courtesy of goals from Kevin De Bruyne and Ilkay Gundogan.

The Champions League is the one major prize that has eluded Guardiola since he arrived at the Etihad in 2016.

"Since the first year I arrived they told me that you have to win the Champions League," said the City boss, who won Europe's elite club competition twice as Barcelona manager. "It is always on our shoulders but I'm not concerned about that.

If you deserve it in football, you go through. If you don't, you don't."

City, who have never been crowned European champions, are chasing an unprecedented quadruple in the current campaign.

They look almost certain to win a third Premier League title in four seasons, face Everton in the FA Cup quarter-finals on Saturday and play Tottenham in the final of the League Cup in April. —AFP ■

Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola. **PHOTO: AFP**

Stage set for Ibrahimovic's return in Milan's decider with United

Zlatan Ibrahimovic announced his return to international football after nearly five years away on March 16, 2021. **PHOTO: AFP**

PARIS — Zlatan Ibrahimovic looks set to face Manchester United in AC Milan's Europa League showdown with the English giants on Thursday (March 18) as the resurgent 'Rossoneri' aim to announce their return to the big stage.

The Swede should be in good spirits after announcing his return to international football after nearly five years away on Tuesday, and appears to be winning the race to face his old club in the second leg of their last-16 clash at the San Siro. The tie is locked at 1-1, with Milan having the slight advantage thanks to Simon Kjaer's stoppage-time away goal in the first leg at Old Trafford last week.

Italian media reported on Tuesday that the veteran forward trained with the rest of the Milan squad and should be available for the first time since he left his side's 2-1 win at Roma with a thigh injury at the end of last month. Since then he has made headlines on a different kind of stage, co-hosting the Sanremo music festival which is possibly Italy's biggest pop cultural event. With 14 goals in 14 league games, the 39-year-old was a major reason behind Milan occupying top spot in Serie A for large periods of this season and his return to Old Trafford for the first leg had been highly anticipated before he picked up his injury. —AFP ■