

NATIONAL

Vice-Senior General Soe Win comforts military personnel, police in Mandalay Region

PAGE-5

BUSINESS

Myanmar rice export company buying less following transaction problem

PAGE-11

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Tatmadaw pledges to continuously strengthen multiparty democracy entire people aspire: Senior General

CHAIRMAN of the State Administration Council Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing yesterday afternoon met officers, other ranks and families of Kengtung Station at Pyi Nyein Aye Hall of the command headquarters.

Present at the meeting together with the Senior General were wife Daw Kyu Kyu Hla, member of the Council Lt-Gen Moe Myint Tun, Joint Secretary Lt-Gen Ye Win Oo and wife, Commander-in-Chief (Navy) Admiral Moe Aung and wife, senior military officers and their wives of the Office of the Commander-in-Chief, Commander of Tri-ang Region Command Brig-

Gen Myo Min Tun, officers, other ranks and families of Kengtung Station.

In his speech, the Senior General said he would like to explain some points of political changes of the country to officers, other ranks and families. A state of emergency was declared for the country according to the political condition on 1 February. International countries declare their states in the state of emergency at a time when they face natural disasters, pandemics and needs to take security measures for the countries under the law. Although efforts were made to solve the problems of vote-rigging and voter lists' errors in the 2020 election under democratic

ways as much as possible, discussions could not be made to solve the issues. Moreover, as attempts were made to summon the third Hluttaw to form a new government forcibly, the National Defence and Security Council held a meeting to declare the state of emergency for the country. The Pro Tem President assigned the Tatmadaw to control the situations.

The Senior General recounted that he arrived in Shan State (East) before the election to meet Tatmadaw members and families. At the meeting, the Senior General said he urged all to hold a free and fair election and cast votes for those who can serve the interests of their



State Administration Council Chairman Senior General Min Aung Hlaing meets officers, other ranks and families of Kengtung Station and the Senior General is addressing the attendees.

At present, the newly-formed Union Election Commission is inspecting voting lists. In investigating top officials from the previous commission, their commission did not have freeness and followed the president's control and instructions.

regions and the country; if not, they would have the representatives who would not hold the attitude not in conformity with the voters; and as such, all need to cast votes. The Tatmadaw initiated the democracy the entire people aspired in accord with the Constitution 2008. The Tatmadaw wishes to improve the

country and join hands with any government elected to carry out development tasks.

During the preparation period before the 2020 election, some doubts about fairness over the expression of political parties were found in their canvassing activities.

SEE PAGE-3

Republic of the Union of Myanmar
State Administration Council
Nine Objectives

- 1. Political affairs**

 - (a) Building of a Union based on democracy and federalism in practising genuine disciplined multiparty democracy in a full fairness manner
 - (B) Emphasizing of restoration of eternal peace for the entire nation in line with the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA)
 - (c) Continuous practising of the “principle” of peaceful co-existence among countries by holding up the independent, active and non-aligned foreign policy
- 2. Economic affairs**

 - (a) Further development of production based on agriculture and livestock breeding through modern techniques and all-round development of other sectors of the economy as well
- (b) Stability of market economy and inviting international investments to develop the economy of entire ethnic people
 - (c) Encouragement of local businesses to create employment opportunities to be able to produce many products of the State
- 3. Social affairs**

 - (a) For ensuring of dynamism of Union spirit which is genuine patriotic spirit
 - (b) Following customs and traditions of all ethnic nationalities and preservation and safeguarding of cultural heritage and national characters
 - (c) Enhancement of health, fitness and education standards of the entire nation

Five future programmes of State Administration Council

- 1. The Union Election Commission will be reconstituted to carry out tasks that should be done, including inspection of voting lists in accordance with the law.
- 2. Effective measures will be taken for the prevention of current infectious COVID-19 with added momentum.
- 3. Efforts will be made to recover businesses that faced loss caused by COVID-19 in various ways as quickly as possible.
- 4. Emphasis will be placed on restoring eternal peace in the entire nation in line with agreements from the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) as much as possible.
- 5. When missions will be accomplished in accord with provisions of the state of emergency, a free and fair multiparty democracy election will be held in accordance with the Constitution (2008), and further tasks will be undertaken to hand over State duty to the winning party meeting the standards of democracy.

Military medical corps provide healthcare in township hospitals



A local patient is receiving treatments by military medics at Latpadan public hospital.

THE Tatmadaw medical teams comprising Tatmadaw doctors, specialists, and nurses, have been providing necessary medical treatments to the patients in military hospitals and public hospitals.

The Tatmadaw medical teams continued to provide healthcare services such as surgery, dental and oral healthcare, osteoporosis, obstetrics, otorhinolaryngology, gynaecology, hypertension and heart dis-

ease to the patients in health-care services difficulties in Thazi Township People’s Hospital, Hanza hospital, Yinmabin hospital, Nyaungyan Hospital, Tagaung People’s Hospital in Thabeikkyin Township, Sintgaing hospital in Kyaukse township, Yintaw hospital in Pyawbwe township, Pintale hospital in Wantwin Township, Myittha Township People’s Hospital, Welaung hospital in Taungtha Township, People’s hospital in Kyaukpadaung Township, People’s Hospital in Kyauktaga Township, Donzayit hospital in Shwegyin Township and People’s hospital in Latpadan township yesterday.

Officials from respective commands also inspected the hospitals’ medical services. They comforted the patients by providing food aids and necessary things. Locals are reportedly satisfied with the medical support of Tatmadaw. — MNA

Yangon’s circular train runs daily

MYANMA Railways daily operates an RBE train linking three passenger carriages along the Insein-Yangon-Mingalardon-Insein anti-clockwise route for ensuring smooth transport of passengers as of 24 March.

The train leaves Insein railway station at 8:30 am and arrives back at the same station at 12:05 pm, passing Yangon and Mingalardon railway stations.

While running the train, up and down rail tracks near the level-crossing of Pharmaceuticals Factory beyond Kyogone railway station were blocked with two old rail tracks, one rail trowler, one wood log and waste. Likewise, two iron pipes used as a bar of the gate to Butayon street level-crossing in Kamayut were bent to be destroyed by taking out a piece of rail track and setting fire to old tyres and wastes. Moreover, old tyres and materials were set on fire on the up-rail track near the yard of Kyimyindine railway station. So, the fire was put out at the top of five wooden slippers at the line-clear point. Members of the Tatmadaw and Rail Traffic Police Force, local people and officials of Myanmar Railways cleared the route, so the train successful reached the destination station.

Myanmar Railways will open files of the lawsuit against the acts and destruction of unscrupulous violent persons at relevant police stations under the law to take action against them. As Myanmar Railways regularly operates circular trains on a daily basis, local people and staff take the trains. — MNA



Myanmar Railways will open files of the lawsuit against the acts and destruction of unscrupulous violent persons at relevant police stations under the law to take action against them.

Tatmadaw pledges to continuously strengthen multiparty democracy entire people aspire: Senior General

FROM PAGE-1

Moreover, although any tasks cannot be undertaken beyond the prescribed laws and rules, various orders were issued on the pretext of COVID-19 in carrying out the tasks beyond the laws and regulations.

At present, the newly-formed Union Election Commission is inspecting voting lists. In investigating top officials from the previous commission, their commission did not have freeness and followed the president's control and instructions. Their clarifications have been mentioned in the press conferences. Now, the Union Election Commission releases ground inspection findings for each township in detail on a daily basis. The amount of vote-rigging in the findings of the inspection was larger than the previous list issued by the Tatmadaw.

Although the country was peaceful and stable in the first week of the Tatmadaw duty assumption, protests and riots were staged due to incitements of NLD members and supporters as of the second week. At present, protests were transformed into anarchic mobs, breaking the laws, and then to the rebellion. It was found



The Senior General presents foodstuffs and personal goods produced by Tatmadaw factories to the Triangle Region Command Commander yesterday.

rings. They destroyed factories and industries built with local and foreign investments and attacked security forces with arms. Unavoidably, the orders of martial law were imposed on Hlinethaya, Shwepyitha, Dagon Myothit (South, North and Seikkan) and North Okkalapa townships in Yangon Region so as to more effectively perform security, the rule of law and community peace and stability. Riots and protests happen in other countries where protesters peace-

peacefully, the order is given to do so unavoidably.

Currently, the State Administration Council is implementing five future programmes and nine objectives. On the first priority, voter lists are under scrutiny, and findings are released. Upon completion, the combined lists will be released. The Senior General stressed the need to develop political, economic and social sectors. Closure of schools based on the outbreak of COVID-19 causes loss to in-

country. The Tatmadaw must always be ready for serving the interests of the people as well as defending the State. The Senior General praised the Tatmadaw members and families for their good attitudes over the Tatmadaw and the country. All regiments and units need to uplift the capacity of individual Tatmadaw member with the mind-set to investing their efforts for the State. The Senior General stressed the need to have success in military own and manageable scale agriculture and livestock breeding farming tasks. Moreover, it is necessary to organize physical exercises for individual health and fitness and team-wise sports events. For having more expansive knowledge, all need to read and encourage their offspring to read. In addition, children must be taught cultural traditions in Buddhism. Improvement of the Tatmadaw is an obligation for those currently serving the duties. So, all need to strive for handing down the good legacy to posterity. The Tatmadaw pledged to pave the country on the right track of genuine democracy with firm confidence.

After the meeting, the Senior General presented foodstuffs and personal goods produced by Tatmadaw factories to the commander, and Daw Kyu Kyu Hla gave a cash award for maternal and child welfare association of the command to the wife of the commander.

This morning, the Senior General and party heard reports

on four military building tasks of regiments and units under the command, regional security, the rule of law, welfare of military families, and prevention and containment of COVID-19 for the military families and local people presented by Commander of Triangle Region Command Brig-Gen Myo Min Tun.

In his response, the Senior General stressed the need for the military command to ensure peace and stability of Thailand, Laos and China sharing the border with Myanmar and along with the border areas and to effectively carry out drug elimination and cooperation in information exchange. As the events happened to grasp the State power through unfair ways in the 2020 election, everybody knows the Tatmadaw assumed the State responsibilities. As NLD committed voting frauds with more than 10 million suspected voter lists, the act of NLD not in conformity with democracy way could not be accepted. So, the country was declared under the state of emergency. It was found that NLD members and followers committed the acts undesirable over the efforts which were made by the Tatmadaw in accord with the law. EAOs followed them. RCSS/SSA group firstly criticized the work process of the Tatmadaw for assuming State duty. Brigade-5 of KNU attacked the Htimuhta camp of the Tatmadaw with powerful strengths on 27 March without abiding by the prohibition of KNU Leading Committee members and the Chief of KNLA and the NCA.

They are dancing to the tune of countries and organizations which support them. Only when the NLD government still grasps the State power will these countries and organization have the government they can steer. The Senior General stressed need to constantly monitor moves of EAOs and exchange information with relevant countries on time. Regiments and units must always have military caution and awareness to dutifully serve the military operations and security duties in respective military command areas. The Senior General said that the Tatmadaw pledges to continuously strengthen multiparty democracy the entire people aspire. — MNA

At present, protests were transformed into anarchic mobs, breaking the laws, and then to the rebellion. It was found that they set fire to and made attempts to raid residences of innocent people, factories and industries in addition to State administration offices, police stations and law offices by holding .22 gun, percussion lock firearms, air-guns, home-made guns, home-made grenades, bottles of fire and fire-rings.

that they set fire to and made attempts to raid residences of innocent people, factories and industries in addition to State administration offices, police stations and law offices by holding .22 gun, percussion lock firearms, air-guns, home-made guns, home-made grenades, bottles of fire and fire-

fully stage protests in accord with the prescribed restrictions. Some protests not in conformity with the disciplines are cracked down on accord with the law. Security forces did not intentionally kill the people and did not order to do so. If rioters commit harming the lives of the security forces and people wishing to live

dividual students and parents as well as loss to the country. As such, preparations are being made to reopen the schools in a systematic manner.

While the Tatmadaw is serving the interests of the State, all need to strive for shaping the Tatmadaw to become a reliable one of the people and the

Chairman of State Administration Council Senior General Min Aung Hlaing inspects Kengtung bypass construction

CHAIRMAN of the State Administration Council Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, accompanied by council members Lt-Gen Moe Myint Tun and U Sai Lone Saing, council's joint secretary Lt-Gen Ye Win Oo, Commander-in-Chief (Navy) Admiral Moe Aung, senior military officers of the Office of the Commander-in-Chief and Commander of Triangle Region Command Brig-Gen Myo Min Tun inspected the Kengtung bypass construction yesterday.

Firstly, Director U Ye Lin of Road Department of Shan State (East) presented the completion of bypass construction on the Meiktila-Taunggyi-Kengtung-Tachilek route to

the Senior General. The Senior General then discussed the need to pave the quality asphalt-concrete road, systematic drainages, paving methods depending on the climate of Kengtung and die-cast designs of the bridge. He also inspected the operations of the designated dirt road for bypass and instructed the necessary things. The Senior General and party also visited Maha Muni Buddha Image of Kengtung. They donated offertories to the Buddha image and cash to the pagoda board of trustees. The Senior General instructed the pagoda board of trustees regarding the pagoda's centenary festival, which falls on the full moon day of Tazaungmone. — MNA



The Senior General and wife donates offertories and cash to Maha Muni Pagoda board of trustees in Kengtung yesterday.



State Administration Council Chairman Senior General Min Aung Hlaing inspects the Kengtung bypass road construction yesterday.



Total border trade value top \$4.9 bln

The total trade value at 18 border trade camps exceeded US\$4.99 billion from 1 October to 12 March in 2020-2021 financial year, according to the Ministry of Commerce. From 1 October 2020 to 12 March, the total trade value amounted to \$4.99 billion, a decrease of \$66.66 million compared with that of the same period last year. The total border trade value as of 12 March this FY includes \$3.24 billion in export and \$1.76 billion in import. Compared with that of last FY, the export earnings dropped by \$170 million

while the import value up by \$103 million. This time last year saw the total border trade valued at \$5.06 billion. Myanmar conducts border trade with China through Muse, Lweijel, Kampaiti, Chinshwehaw and Kengtung borders. The country carries out border trade with Thailand through Tachilek, Myawady, Kawthaung, Myeik, Hteekhee, Mawtaung and Meisei borders. The cross-border trade camps between Myanmar and Bangladesh are Sittway and Maungtaung. In contrast, the country trades directly with India via the Tamu and Reed borders.

Myanmar mainly exports agricultural products, animal products, as well as forest products, minerals, fishery products and manufactured goods, among other things, while capital goods, raw industrial materials and consumer products are imported into the country. — ACM



Vice-Senior General Soe Win comforts military personnel, police in Mandalay Region

VICE-CHAIRMAN of State Administration Council Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Commander-in-Chief (Army) Vice-Senior General Soe Win separately met and comforted the military personnel, Myanmar Police Force members and their families in Mandalay Region yesterday.

During the meetings, the Vice-Senior General said about the refusal of Hluttaw and NLD government to address more than 10.4 million suspected voting frauds in the 2020 General Election, neglect to hold National Defence and Security Council meeting, declaration of the state of emergency starting 1 February 2021 under the 2008 Constitution due to their forcible taking power and five future programmes of State



State Administration Council Vice-Chairman Vice-Senior General Soe Win meets and comforts the military personnel, MPF members and families in Mandalay Region yesterday.



Administration Council.

He then stressed the need to distinguish the right and wrong news amidst the one-sided information of media and other organizations. He added the broadcasting of discussions by those experienced in the 1988 uprising, unity and equal duty assignment between superiors and lower-level ranks and the importance of health in serving duties.

Then, the Vice-Senior General and wife gave food-stuffs produced by Tatmadaw's factories, presents and cash awards to Mandalay based military personnel, Myanmar Police Force members and their families. — MNA

Security measures conducted to ensure community peace

TATMADAW, Police Force and Fire Brigade jointly conducted security measures to ensure the State's stability, security of people, the rule of law and community peace starting 14 February night.

Tatmadaw, police and fire brigade members also jointly conduct security measures for

the peaceful night and community peace in respective regions and states and keep serving security measures the whole day.

— MNA

Tatmadaw, police and fire brigade members take the joint security measures at night.



Abhidhaja Maha Rattha Guru title conferred on venerable Sayadaw

A ceremony to confer Abhidhaja Maha Rattha Guru title for 2021 took place at Maha Nandithenayama Monastery in Kyunlone Okshaung Ward of Chanmyathazi Township in Mandalay Region yesterday.

The ceremony was graced by members of the Sangha led by venerable title recipient Sayadaw Bhaddanta Ti Loka Bhivamsa (Pali Paragu) of the monastery, Vice-Chairman of the State Administration Council Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Commander-in-Chief (Army) Vice-Senior General Soe Win and wife Daw Than Than Nwe, Council member U Moungh Har, Chairman of Mandalay Region Administration Council U Maung Ko, Commander of Central Command Brig-Gen Ko Ko Oo and wife, senior military officers from the Office of the Commander-in-Chief (Army) and guests.

The Vice-Senior General conferred the title of Abhidhaja Maha Rattha Guru and regalia on venerable Sayadaw Bhadd-



Vice-Senior General Soe Win offers the Abhidhaja Maha Rattha Guru Title to Sayadaw Bhaddanta TiLoka Bhivamsa yesterday.

anta Ti Loka Bhivamsa and offered robes and alms.

Sayadaw of Yadanarbon Building from Maha Dhammika Yama Monastery Bhaddanta Sihanada delivered a sermon, and the congregation shared merits gained.

Sayadaw Bhaddanta Ti Loka Bhivamsa of Maha Nandithenayama Monastery was born of U Han and Daw Paw

Myaing in West Kangyi Ward in TadaU Township of Mandalay Region on 2nd Waxing of Tabaung, 1294 ME, Saturday. He was a novitiate on full moon day of Pyatho, 1305 ME and ordained on 8th waxing of Tabodwe, 1314 ME, under supervision of Sayadaw Bhaddanta Candima of KyunU Pariyatti Learning Centre. Now, the Sayadaw turns 88 with 68 vasa.

The Sayadaw passed Pahtamange, Pahtamalat and Pahtamagyi examinations and obtained Sasana Dhaja Dhamma Cariya title in 1958 and Sasana Dhaja Siripavara Dhamma Cariya title in 1961. The Sayadaw is giving lectures to student monks and novices at Maha Nandithenayama Pariyatti Learning Centre. The Sayadaw compiled the Parajikam Alin Pya treatise. The

Sayadaw served as secretary of Township Sangha Nayaka Committee, Chairman of Questioners Group for TadaU Township Pariyatti Sasana Dhika Examination, questioner for Toungoo Saddhamma Pariyatti Examination, DaikU Pariyatti Sasana Nuggaha Examination and Myingyan Saddhamma Pariyatti Examination and Ovadacariya of Mandalay Chantha Gyi Rice Offering Association. At present, the Sayadaw is serving as a member of the State Central Working Committee of the Sangha. So, Abhidhaja Maha Rattha Guru title was conferred on the Sayadaw for his excellent performances in serving Buddhism's interests.

The Vice-Senior General, wife and party offered gold foils to Maha Muni Buddha Image in Mandalay. Then, they paid homage to ancient Thatta Thukhan Shweyinaye Pagoda, Hsin Kyo Shwegu Katkyaw Pagoda and historic Thanthay Katkyaw Pagoda in Amarapura and donated cash to funds of the pagodas. — MNA

Vice-chairman of State Administration Council meets Mandalay Region Administration Council members

Vice-chairman of State Administration Council Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Commander-in-chief (Army) Vice-Senior General Soe Win met the members of Mandalay Region Administration Council yesterday.

During the meeting, the Vice-chairman of SAC discussed policies and directives made by the SAC Chairman, cooperation work with Myanmar Police Force, Tatmadaw, administrative organizations and the civilians who want community peace, detailed inspections on rioters to stop their activities in the townships and wards, CDM activities and quick arrest of those lead CDM and riots, and actions to be taken against them under the law. He also said that it needs to cooperate in reopening the banks in respective townships to be able to resume the businesses. The relevant officials in business sectors should make efforts to revise the businesses hit by COVID-19, including for renewable energy to ensure



The State Administration Council Vice-Chairman hold talks with the Mandalay Region Administration Council members yesterday.

enough power, preparations for solar system and medium-scale hydropower projects.

He continued that cooperation work is needed in the transportations, local production and

tourism sectors. He then highlighted the COVID-19 vaccination plans, conditions to receive adequate vaccines, healthcare services by the medics following the ethics, cooperation with

region commands for security affairs when the schools are reopened in the coming academic year and refresher courses for teachers with the arrangements of the Ministry of Education.

Then, Mandalay Region Administration Council Chairman briefed their performance, and the vice-chairman of the SAC coordinated the discussion. — MNA

Announcement of Union Election Commission

28 March 2021

- 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 Hsalingyi and Ayadaw townships of Sagaing Region.
- Findings in respective townships 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	96 polling stations in Hsalingyi township of Sagaing Region	109,219	80,865	6,728	469	9,630
2	123 polling station in Ayadaw town-ship in Sagaing	142,366	111,812	17,082	1,046	15,656

- The Union Election Commission has inspected the withdrawal/receipt/use/remaining of ballot papers used for Pyithu Hluttaw Election of Hsalingyi and Ayadaw townships of Sagaing 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.
- A total of 219 polling stations in these two townships took out 281,223 ballots and used 203,074 ballots. It left 713,34 ballots instead of 78,149 ballots. The difference was 7,433 and it found 618 extra ballots. The extra/shortage ballots and illegal extra ballots were found at respective poll stations. Findings were as follows:

Findings on ballot papers for Pyithu Hluttaw Election in each township

Sr	Township	Total polling station	Withdrawal	Used	Exact remaining	Remaining on the Ground	Difference	
							Missing	Extra
1	Hsalingyi	96	121,389	89,585	31,804	30,782	1,421	399
2	Hsalingyi	123	159,834	113,489	46,345	40,552	6,012	219
	Total	219	281,223	203,074	78,149	71,334	7,433	618

Findings on ballot papers for Pyithu Hluttaw Election Hsalingyi Township

- According to the inspection, a total of 96 polling stations in 39 village-tract of 3 Wards in Hsalingyi Township of Sagaing Region took out 121,389 ballots and used 89,585. It left 30,782 ballots instead of 31,804. The extra/shortage ballots were found at respective polling stations. Findings were as follows:

Sr	Subject	Withdrawal	Used	Exact remaining	Remaining on the Ground	Difference	
						Missing	Extra
1	Ward/village tract ballots	114,799	89,328	25,471	24,500	1,370	399
2	Township advance ballots	257	257				
3	Township remaining ballots	6,333		6,333	6,282	51	
Township total		121,389	89,585	31,804	30,782	1,421	399

- It found 1,421 ballots were missing at 96 polling stations in 39 village-tracts of 3 Wards in Hsalingyi Township and also found 399 extra ballots.
- Findings were as follows:

Sr	Ward/Village tract	With-drawal	Used	Exact remaining	Remaining on the Ground	Difference	
						Miss-ing	Extra
1	Ward No (1)	1,800	1,307	493	493		
2	Ward No (2)	1,450	1,152	298	298		
3	Ward No (3)	1,900	1,562	338	338		
4	Kyar Tet	3,900	2,866	1,034	984	50	
5	Kywe Kho	1,650	1,354	296	296		
6	Kying Ton	1,850	1,325	525	525		
7	Kyauk Myak	4,600	3,823	777	773	4	
8	Khon Tha	2,100	1,412	688	688		
9	Chaung Yoe	600	445	155	155		
10	Ngar Khone	3,350	2,598	752	752		
11	Sone Thar	2,250	1,717	533	533		
12	Sar Hton	3,450	2,752	698	698		
13	Sar Khar	1,700	1,272	428	418	10	
14	Zee Chaing	1,350	988	362	362		
15	Zee Pa Ni (south)	1,300	988	312	312		
16	Zee Pa Ni (north)	1,750	1,379	371	371		
17	Nyaung Pin To	1,350	1,010	340	240	100	
18	Nyaung Pin Gyi	5,200	4,218	982	1,032		50
19	Tayar	2,700	1,977	723	723		
20	Ton	2,500	2,053	447	397	50	
21	Taung Pa Lu	3,254	2,852	402	347	55	
22	Htan Zin	3,900	2,968	932	882	50	

23	Du Htauk	1,550	1,292	258	258	-	
24	Done Taw	6,345	4,986	1,359	1,162	197	
25	Hnaw Ku	2,500	1,955	545	545		
26	Paung Wa	1,450	1,083	367	367		
27	Pan Htoo	2,950	2,208	742	738	4	
28	Hpalan Kan	3,300	2,605	695	696		1
29	Phaung Ka Tar	5,250	4,302	948	848	100	
30	Bout Su	2,250	1,717	533	533		
31	Bike Thayet	1,100	810	290	290		
32	Ma Taunt Ta	2,100	1,605	495	445	50	
33	Mo Gyoe Pyin	5,500	4,334	1,166	966	200	
34	Myay Son	3,150	2,407	743	743		
35	Yay Mein	1,200	1,042	158	158		
36	Yone Pin Yoe	1,850	1,268	582	232	350	
37	Shwe Thamin	2,400	1,547	853	853		
38	Ywa Thamin	1,800	1,197	603	453	150	
39	Ywa Shae	7,000	5,780	1,220	1,420		200
40	Let Pa Taung	3,450	2,878	572	572		0
41	Lin Sakyet	3,300	2,244	1,056	1,154		98
42	Thanma Taw	2,450	2,050	400	450		50
Ward/village tract ballots		114,799	89,328	25,471	24,500	1,370	399
Township advance ballots		257	257				
Township Remaining ballots		6,333		6333	6,282	51	
Township Total		121,389	89,585	31,804	30,782	1,421	399

Precautions necessary to prevent risks from UV rays

WITH the arrival of summer, the day-time temperature is spiral upwards, alerting the people to change their behaviour to protect themselves against the risk of skin cancer and skin damage caused by the UV rays from the sun.

A high level of UV rays from the sun is predicted in parts of Myanmar in the coming summer months, in April and May.

Ultra-violet (UV) rays is a danger in the summer season, and the UV index level will be rising day by day.

The simplest precaution

to take is to

minimize

time spent

in the sun.

Go indoors

when the sun

reaches the

highest point

in the sky -

from

10 am to 3 pm.

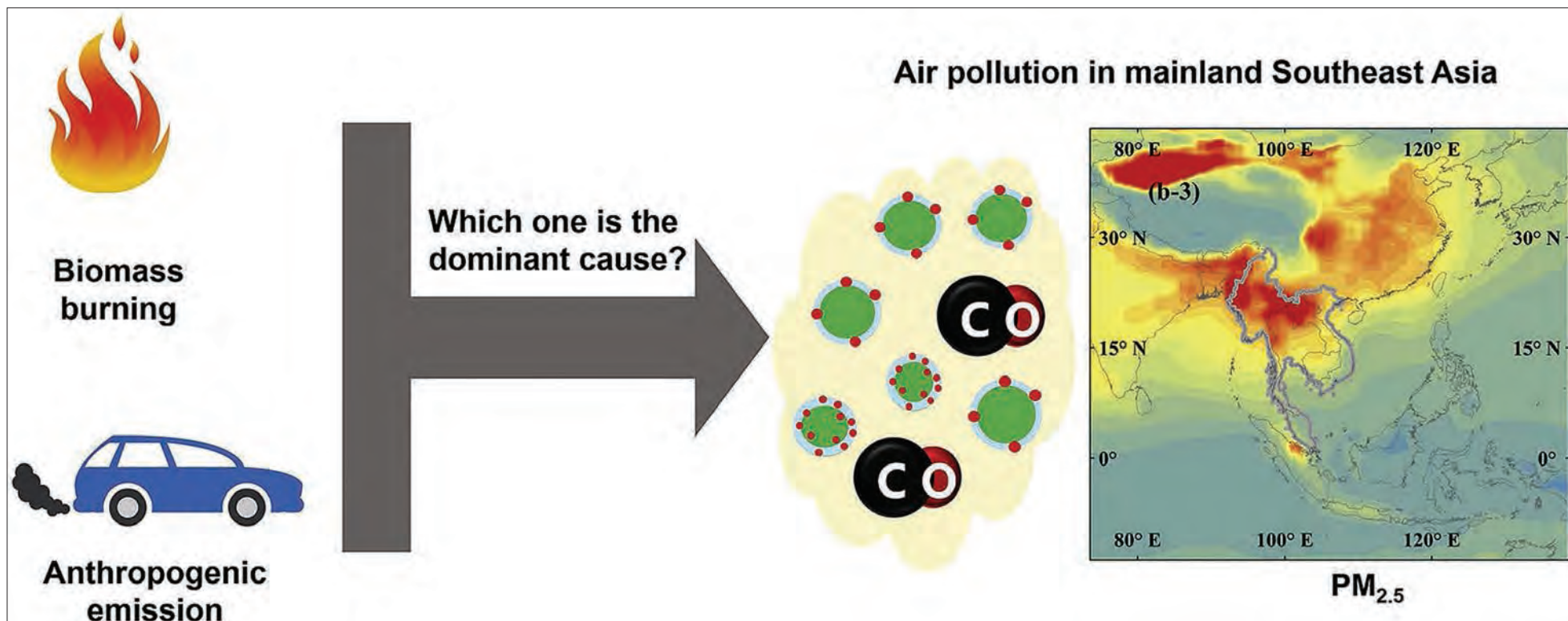
certain UV wavelengths, thus protecting the skin from UV damage to varying degrees.

We need to be ready to protect ourselves from climate change-induced severe weather as the consequences of climate change can cause physical and mental damage.

On account of global warming, the evil effects of natural disasters related to climate change threaten our planet's safety. There have been increased occurrences of natural disasters with greater destructive impact.

Understanding Earth: Biomass Burning

Than Htun (Myanmar Geosciences Society)



Source: Shuai Yin, et al., 2019. Influence of biomass burning on local air pollution in mainland Southeast Asia from 2001 to 2016

As fossil fuels become more expensive and concern about the increase in carbon dioxide and other pollutants produced by fossil fuels in the atmosphere intensifies, industrial researchers have become more invested in developing alternative energy sources. Biomass is one of these alternatives. Many industrial scientists argue that burning of bio-mass is a carbon-neutral contributor to greenhouse gases in the environment. In its simplest form, this argument states that because the photosynthesis that produces the crops draws carbon dioxide out of the environment, burning the plants for energy releases the same carbon dioxide back into the atmosphere. Critics argue that the fertilizer and farm equipment required to produce the biomass add significant carbon dioxide to the atmosphere. (Metz, B., et al., 2007)

What is Biomass?

Biomass is living or once-living biological material. Strictly speaking then, all life is biomass. All plants and animals on Earth today will at some point die and decay-ashes to ashes, dust to dust. In most cases, however, we are referring to vegetation-living or dead (NASA). From energy point of view, biomass is organic matter (based on carbon, hydrogen and oxygen) of non-fossil origin that has an intrinsic chemical energy content. It includes all terrestrial and aquatic vegetation, better known as virgin biomass, and all the biodegradable organic waste, such as municipal solid waste, animal waste, agricultural and forestry residues, and certain types of industrial waste.

Biomass Burning

Biomass burning is the act of burning living, or once-living, biological material. Formerly believed to occur mainly in the tropics, Earth-observing satellites have revealed a global distribution of biomass burning. Although huge fires, often visible from space, occur in the savanna grasslands of Africa and South and South America and tropical forests in South America and Southeast Asia, they can take place wherever vegetation is abundant. Boreal forests for example - found at much higher

latitudes - are major sources of biomass burning.

Biomass burning results from either: 1. natural processes, such as ignition by lightning strikes; or 2. anthropogenic (i.e., human-induced) activity, such as burning vegetation for agricultural land anthropogenic biomass burning can occur almost anywhere on the globe, the majority of biomass burning in the tropics stems from human causes, whereas in extra-tropical regions-such as Boreal forests-natural causes are more common (NASA).

Changing Atmosphere and Ecosystems

When biomass is burned, copious amount of gases and particulate matter are released, billowing smoke plumes can fill the sky, and entire ecosystems can change in seconds. These changes have both long and short-term effects on Earth's atmosphere and climate system.

Biomass burning alters atmospheric composition- by releasing gases and particulate matter-affecting air quality and posing risks to human health and activity. Inhaling carbon monoxide, methane, nitrogen oxides, formaldehyde, and smoke particles can cause asthma and/or heighten other health issues.

Epidemiological studies in the developed world have documented associations between indoor and outdoor exposure to bi-

omass combustion products and a range of adverse health effects. A conservative estimate of the current contribution of biomass smoke to premature mortality in Europe amounts to at least 40,000 deaths per year. As the evidence from studies in the developed world is still limited, further studies are necessary to more precisely quantify the adverse health effects of biomass combustion. This should include comparative studies to document similarities and differences between effects of combustion products from biomass and fossil fuels (Torben Sigsgaard et al., 2014)

Fire emissions include greenhouse gases, such as carbon dioxide (CO₂), nitrous oxide (N₂O), and methane (CH₄). Greenhouse gases, together with other trace gases, lead to changes in atmospheric chemistry, such as the concentration of ozone (O₃)-another greenhouse gas. Increases in greenhouse gases (i.e., CO₂, N₂O, CH₄, O₃) affect Earth's energy balance and warm the Earth's surface, ultimately influencing Earth's climate system.

Despite the increase in research in biomass burning and climate interactions during the 1990s, the current estimates of biomass consumption by fire remain the same as in 1990. Andreea (1991) estimated that the total biomass consumed by annual burning was on average ca. 8,680 teragrams (Tg) (1 teragram

+ 1 million tonnes = 1Q12g) of dry material, with 3,690 Tg coming from savanna burning, 2,020 Tg from agricultural wastes, 1,540 Tg from forests and 1,430 Tg from the burning of wood fuels. In total, this results in the release of 3,500 Tg of carbon in the form of CO₂ annually (JOHN L.INNES, 2000).

However, periodic forest fires are part of the natural cycle, and are actually beneficial. They clear out excessive brush and overgrowth, and return nutrients to the soil, helping maintain a healthy ecosystem.

Although biomass burning can have both positive and negative effects on a vegetated ecosystem, an increase in either natural or anthropogenic biomass burning events could have major repercussions for Earth's climate system. The warming of Earth's climate is expected to increase the number of warm spells, heat waves, and droughts in many regions of the world including southern and eastern Australia, eastern New Zealand, Europe, and the western United States. These changes are likely to increase the number of annual wildfires and health risks. Fortunately, scientists are able to study the location of fires and the effects of biomass burning from the vantage point of space, providing a vital global perspective on fires and how they are impacting Earth-our Home.

Understanding Earth's Intri-

cate System

To assist in understanding Earth's intricate system, scientists often study changes in the cycle of a particular component, such as the cycle of water or carbon. For example, plants participate in the carbon cycle by "inhaling" carbon dioxide and converting it into organic plant matter as part of photosynthesis. Animals then eat these carbon-containing plants (or they eat other animals that have eaten these plants) as a means of generating essential tissues needed for survival. Whether alive or dead, all biomass contains carbon. The continual exchanges of carbon between the biosphere, geosphere, hydrosphere, and atmosphere define Earth's carbon cycle. Carbon moves more quickly through some parts of the carbon cycle than others. Respiration, for example, is a rapid process compared to the lifetimes of trees, carbonate rocks, or fossil fuels.

Sprawling forests, extensive savanna grasslands, and vast oceans are all examples of carbon reservoirs. When forest and grasslands are growing, they absorb and store more carbon than they release, and serve as carbon "sinks." For this reason, forest and other largely vegetated areas play a major role in regulating Earth's climate. A large forest for example, absorbs carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, uses carbon to photosynthesize,

and releases oxygen back into the atmosphere that animals (including humans) breathe to survive. When large forests and other vegetated areas are burned (i.e., biomass burning), the carbon stored within is released into the atmosphere, primarily as carbon dioxide-a greenhouse gas.

Sometimes carbon reservoirs are replenished with new vegetation; this is typically true for the savannas in Africa and South America during the annual growing seasons. New growth removes carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. However, not all carbon reservoirs are replenished, and large-scale fluctuation in these reservoirs affect the global carbon cycle, ultimately impacting Earth's climate system. Conserving planet Earth-our home is our inevitable obligation. This article is intended for young conservation scientists in Myanmar.

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Request to health workers

1. It is appreciated for the strenuous efforts of the medical doctors, nurses, medical experts and other health workers at the respective departments under the Ministry of Health and Sports at the front-line in the fight against prevention, containment and treatment of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19).
2. As the vaccination programme of COVID-19 is being conducted for the public and the real-time healthcare services are required for the people, all the staff members at the respective departments under the Ministry of Health and Sports are strongly urged to return to their duties with taking the well-being of patients into consideration.

Ministry of Health and Sports
8 February 2021

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Announcement of Union Election Commission

FROM PAGE-7

Findings on ballot papers for Pyithu Huttaw Election in AyadawTownship

8. According to the inspection, a total of 123 polling stations in 39 village-tracts of 3 Wards in Ayadaw Township of Sagaing Region took out 159,834 ballots and used 113,489. It left 40,552 ballots instead of 46,345. The extra/shortage ballots were found at respective polling stations. Findings were as follows:

Sr	Subject	Withdrawal	Used	Exact remaining	Remaining on the Ground	Difference	
						Missing	Extra
1	Ward/Village tract ballots	156,254	113,009	43,245	37,452	6,012	219
2	Township advance ballots	480	480				
3	Township remaining ballots	3,100		3,100	3,100		
Total		159,834	113,489	46,345	40,552	6,012	219

9. It found 6,012 ballots were missing at 123 polling stations in 39 village-tracts of 3 Wards in Ayadaw Township and also found 219 extra ballots.

10. Findings were as follows:

Sr	Ward/Villagr tract	Withd-rawal	Used	Exact Remaining	Remaining on the ground	Difference	
						Miss-ing	Ex-tra
1	No (1) Ward	4,250	2,734	1,516	1,016	500	
2	No (2) Ward	2,600	1,854	746	746		
3	No (3) Ward	2,450	1,607	843	792	51	
4	Kan Tha	3,400	2,566	834	834		
5	Kam Pyu	5,150	3,452	1,698	1,449	249	
6	Kyauk Pyauk	2,800	2,223	577	527	50	
7	Ngwe Twin Ywa	2,900	2351	549	349	200	
8	Sin Talei	1,350	967	383	333	50	
9	Zyet	2,150	1,587	563	563		
10	Nyaung Chay Htauk	3,550	2,713	837	637	200	
11	Don Yeit	2,600	1,701	899	899		
12	Ma Le Thar	7,500	6,394	1,106	862	244	
13	Mangyee Sauk	3,100	2,291	809	809		
14	Minn	3,050	2,408	642	442	200	
15	Myay Net	2,400	1,760	640	640		
16	Wa Tan	6,200	4,089	2,111	1,461	650	
17	Pyaw Pon	2,600	2,078	522	522		
18	Wa Yaung	8,250	6,741	1,509	1,459	50	
19	Wet Khe	2,800	2,187	613	713		100
20	Ta Le Bar	4,500	3,200	1,300	1,200	100	
21	Tha Khut Pinle	3,150	2,127	1,023	973	50	
22	Kyun Taw	1,050	793	257	257		

23	Kai	2,500	1,781	719	719		
24	Khin Tha	3,200	2,549	651	653		2
25	Chin Pin	5,250	2,945	2,305	1,605	700	
26	Nget Pyaw Chan	3,750	2,884	866	816	50	
27	Naung Gyi Ahi	5,800	3,719	2,081	1,991	90	
28	Nayr Khin	2,650	2,023	627	577	50	
29	Baung Kya	3,000	2,625	375	492		117
30	Magyee Kan	8,750	6,444	2,306	2,206	100	
31	Hmaw Taw	3,950	2,522	1,428	728	700	
32	Ya Thit	5,750	4,024	1,726	1,626	100	
33	Yay Yo	5,400	3,711	1,689	1,417	272	
34	Ye Chin	3,200	1,857	1,343	943	400	
35	Shar Kone	2,200	1,748	452	452		
36	Lain Hla	3,500	2,231	1,269	919	350	
37	Wa Taw Ma	5,850	4,036	1,814	1,814		
38	Oak Shin Gyi	2,650	2,156	494	494		
39	Oak Shit Gyi	5,850	4,269	1,581	1,479	102	
40	Thit Kyin Gyi	2,000	1,289	711	211	500	
41	Aung Tha	1,700	1,311	389	389		
42	Taung Hmwa	1,504	1,062	442	438	4	
Ward/village tract ballots		156,254	113,009	43,245	37,452	6,012	219
Township advance ballots		480	480				
Township Remaining ballots		3,100		3,100	3,100		
Township Total		159,834	113,489	46,345	40,552	6,012	219

Union Election Commission

Unscrupulous persons set fire to two-unit staff housing of Paywetseikon railway station

UNSCRUPULOUS persons threw a burning bottle of petroleum in Paywetseikon Ward of North Okkalapa Township at about 2 am yesterday.

The flaming bottle fell between the ward administrator office and a staff housing North Okkalapa railway station. It caused an outbreak of fire which ceased at about 2:40 am.

In the event, some parts of the ward administrator office were burnt, but a two-unit staff housing (with 504 square feet of area) and a two-unit toilet (with 36 square feet of area) of Myanmar Railways were lost in the fire. Both buildings were worth about K1.5 million. U Hsan Lwin, station clerk (in-charge) of

Okkalapa railway station and U Zaw Tun Aung, station clerk of Yangon railway station was absent without reason at the workplace as of 19 February.

As they did not reside at the housing, all items of household equipment were lost in the fire.

Myanma Railways opened a file of the lawsuit against acts and destructions of violent, unscrupulous persons at the relevant police station under the law to take action against them. — MNA

The ravages are seen after fire set by unscrupulous rioters at the two-unit staff housing of Paywetseikon railway station yesterday.



Myanmar rice export company buying less following transaction problem



The price of low-quality rice stands at K21,500 at present, with a slight decrease of K21,500 against the previous months, as per the domestic rice market. **PHOTO: GNLM/FILE**

ONLY a small number of rice export companies are purchasing the rice at present owing to the disruption in banking, said U Than Oo, secretary of Bayintnaung Rice Wholesale Centre.

Since early February, the local private banks have shut down, disrupting banking. Consequently, export companies are buying less in the domestic market. The rice exports are currently conducted for the previous contract only.

"The brokers have started buying the summer rice crop. However, the number of buyers has sharply reduced. The banking disruption hinders a new deal. Only the old contracts are being sorted out. Yet, the rice trade is not regular. What a main problem is the shipment with ocean

liners," said U Than Oo.

Additionally, the US dollar is appreciating against the Kyat. However, the farmers are paid lower than the actual market price and suffering losses, he added.

"Despite the gain in US dollar, the rice and paddy are priced lower in the domestic market. The prices should have been offered higher along with the high exchange rate. Moreover, the number of buyers is smaller in the meantime. Only the cash payment is accepted amid political changes. The farmers are also holding the stocks for now," U Than Oo elaborated.

The informal money transfer system Hundi is available in border trade, whereas it cannot be done in maritime trade.

"In Sino-Myanmar border, exchanging Yuan is quite easy through a hundi agent. Similarly, the traders use hundi for exchanging Baht on the Myawady border with Thailand. Nevertheless, overseas trade with European and African countries is carried out with a letter of credit through banks. The disruption in banking poses difficulties to the maritime trade," U Than Oo continued.

The price of low-quality rice stands at K21,500 at present, with a slight decrease of K2,500 against the previous months, as per the domestic rice market.

Bayintnaung rice wholesale centre, a primary market for rice exports via maritime trade, has been closed down since 11 February. —NN/GNLM

String bean growers enjoy fair price, bumper yield in Kyaukse

THE string bean, also known as long bean growers in Kyaukse township, Mandalay Region, are happy as they are getting bumper yield and reasonable price.

The growers from Kyaukse are cultivating short term crops to earn their family income and are growing the string bean on a manageable scale. They are also thriving thanks to the favourable weather.

"This is the harvested time for string bean, and the growers are harvesting the string bean daily to sell them back. If we don't yield the bean in time, the beans are ripe, and the wholesale traders will not like it. We yield around 27 visses of long bean daily. We are selling them to wholesale vegetable traders. The long bean is priced K800 per viss," said Daw Aye Mi San, a long bean

grower from Tada Lae village.

The long bean plant is growing well in loamy soil, and it could heavily yield after cultivating for 70 days. The long bean plant is a favourite plant of leaf beetles and pods. So, the growers need to take care of them and spraying the pesticide if it is necessary. The two packs of the long bean seed are good enough for the manageable scale grower. The long bean's cultivation cost is not very high, and the crops can be sold for many years. The long bean is yielded for five visses on the first harvesting day.

The long bean is necessary crops not for the housewife but for the Myanmar rice noodle soup (locally called Moat Hin Khar) sellers. So, the local growers are happy for making a profit by selling them. —Thet Maut (Kyaukse)/GNLM



The growers from Kyaukse are cultivating short term crops to earn their family income and are growing the string bean on a manageable scale.

Agro exports rise despite drops in other export groups

THE agricultural exports unexpectedly surge over the past five and a half months amid the private banks' closure and reductions in other export groups.

The agricultural exports have topped US\$2.6 billion as of 12 March 2021 in the current financial year since 1 October 2020. The figures reflect a significant rise of \$774 million this FY. According to the trade figures released by the Ministry of Commerce, the agro exports soared from \$1.83 billion in the corresponding period of the 2019-2020FY.

Myanmar's agricultural exports rose regardless of the coronavirus's impact on foreign demand for other export groups and political instability.

At present, some ocean liners suspended cargo transport from Myanmar in recent days.



Myanmar is daily shipping rice, broken rice, green grams, peanuts, various pulses and beans, onion, chilli, fishery products, consumer goods, watermelon and muskmelon to China with over 700 trucks.

The cargo transport will double or triple if we conduct the trade with small ships. It could harm the export sector somehow, according to Myanmar Mercantile Marine Development Association.

However, Myanmar's border trade with China is steadily conducted. Around 1,000 trucks

are daily seen flowing in and out of the Muse, a central cross-border post between Myanmar and China, the traders said.

Myanmar is daily shipping rice, broken rice, green grams, peanuts, various pulses and beans, onion, chilli, fishery products, consumer goods, water-

melon and muskmelon to China with over 700 trucks. Meanwhile, building materials, electric appliances, medical devices, consumer goods, and fertilizer are imported daily with 200 trucks.

Private banks' closure forced the traders to turn to the operators running 'hundi', an informal money transfer system, to make transactions in the border trade.

In the exports sector, the agriculture industry performed the best, accounting for over 22 per cent of overall exports. The agricultural industry's chief export items are rice and broken rice, pulses and beans, and maize. Fruits and vegetables, sesame, dried tea leaves, sugar, and other agro products are also shipped to other countries.

Myanmar agro products are primarily exported to China, Sin-

gapore, Malaysia, the Philippines, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka. Sometimes, the export market remains uncertain due to unsteady global demand.

The country requires specific export plans for each agro product. They are currently exported to external markets based upon supply and demand. Contract farming systems, regional and state agriculture departments, exporters, traders, and some grower groups are required to meet production targets, said an official from the Agriculture Department.

The Commerce Ministry is working to help farmers deal with challenges such as high input costs, procurement of pedigree seeds, high cultivation costs, and erratic weather conditions. —HH/GNLM

Osaka launches campaign to make it new financial centre in Asia

OFFICIALS and business leaders in Osaka Prefecture set up a 30-member group Monday to promote the western Japan city as a new international financial centre in Asia.

The move comes in line with the central government's efforts to boost Japan's standing in global finance at a time when China's imposition last year of a national security law and tightening of its grip on Hong Kong sparked concerns about the semiautonomous territory's status as a major financial centre.

Osaka joins Tokyo and Fukuoka as among prefectures to which the central government aims to bring capital, financial institutions and professionals from around the world.

Tokyo and Fukuoka, southwestern Japan, each set up a similar promotional organization in November and September, respectively.

On Monday, the Osaka promotion group held its inaugural meeting and elected Masayoshi Matsumoto, chairman of the Kansai Economic Federation, as its head and also elected about 30 leaders from the public and private sectors as members.

They agreed to compile a concrete strategy for the goal in spring 2022 after drawing up an interim blueprint around September, according to participants.

Osaka has Japan's first integrated bourse for stocks and commodity futures. The unprecedented all-day system outage



Local government and business leaders in Osaka Prefecture are pictured on 29 March 2021 at the launch of a committee to pitch Osaka city as a new financial centre in Asia. **PHOTO: KYODO NEWS**

at the Tokyo bourse last year has given supporters of Osaka a reason to push the area as an alternative to Tokyo.

While higher taxes and language barriers are often cited as making Japan less attractive than other Asian rivals, Prime

Minister Yoshihide Suga has promised to change that at the parliament in October.—Kyodo News ■

Kyrgyzstan starts vaccine rollout with China's Sinopharm



Kyrgyz Health Minister Alymkadyr Beishenaliyev receives a dose of the Sinopharm vaccine against the coronavirus disease in Bishkek on 29 March 2021. **PHOTO: AFP**

KYRGYZSTAN kicked off its coronavirus vaccination campaign on Monday using China's Sinopharm jab, as the West accuses Beijing and Moscow of using their vaccines as tools to win geopolitical clout.

Russia and China both compete for economic and political influence in Central Asia, a majority Muslim former Soviet region, and also dominate the vaccine race there.

Beijing this month donated 150,000 doses of the two-shot jab

to Kyrgyzstan, enough to vaccinate 75,000 people, or just over one per cent of the 6.5 million population. Energy-rich Kazakhstan rolled out vaccinations last month using Russia's Sputnik V vaccine but intends to introduce a nationally produced jab later.

In Kyrgyzstan, Health Minister Alymkadyr Beishenaliyev had the first shot of the campaign, sporting a vest and a smile after consulting with a doctor.

"I feel fine," Beishenaliyev

told reporters afterwards, while admitting his fear of injections.

Kyrgyzstan has also registered Russia's Sputnik, with Beishenaliyev saying that his country expected to receive up to half a million doses of that vaccine in May or June.

President has antibodies

Authorities in Kyrgyzstan and elsewhere in the region face an uphill battle against vaccine scepticism as they aim to avoid another period like last summer when the virus overwhelmed health systems and tore through communities.

In Kyrgyzstan's capital Bishkek, 54-year-old resident Asylbek Nuraliyev said that he had doubts over Sinopharm's quality, citing the low quality of many Chinese goods that have poured into the country in recent years.

"I think it's better to wait and get the Russian vaccine," Nuraliyev told AFP, adding he would also like to see more analysis of Sputnik's effects.—AFP ■

Oil market rebounds on Suez ship warning

WORLD oil prices rebounded Monday, reversing earlier losses after a warning that the Suez Canal container ship blockage remains a challenging situation.

The head of a Dutch salvage firm helping refloat a huge container ship stuck in the Suez Canal warned that "the challenge is still ahead" despite some success in moving it as the bow remains stuck.

Traders remain on tenterhooks because the canal is one of the most important routes for global trade and crude shipments.

"The good news is that the stern is free but in our view that was the easier part. The challenge is still ahead because you really have to slide the ship, with the weight it is carrying," said Peter Berdowski, chief executive of Boskalis, the parent company of salvage firm Smit Salvage.

"The bow is still com-

pletely stuck... the real challenge, of course is to actually slide the ship away," he told NPO Dutch public radio.

In reaction, oil prices were about one per cent higher in midday London deals, as traders also mulled Thursday's OPEC producers' meeting.

Prices tumbled earlier after salvage teams were said to have managed to partly move the ship which has blocked the Suez Canal for almost a week.

'Ripple effects'

"The market will soon realize that... even if Ever Given leaves the canal within days, some leftover downstream ripple effects should be expected," warned Rystad Energy analyst Louise Dickson.

"Oil loadings, as well as some oil demand could be affected as manufacturers may have to close or pause production as they wait for delayed goods to arrive at plants."—AFP ■

WHO report says ‘very low’ chance of frozen food Covid-19 origin

THE chances that Covid-19 emerged in Wuhan because of imported frozen food are “very low”, international health experts said Monday, casting doubt on one of the main theories China has embraced for the cause of the first coronavirus outbreak in late 2019.

China has questioned the initial assumption the virus originated in the central city as it tries to deflect claims it mishandled the early outbreak, instead focusing on other potential causes as the country began to recover.

The “probability of a cold-chain contamination with the virus from a reservoir is very low”, a team of World Health Organization-appointed and Chinese scientists said in

a long-awaited report obtained by AFP before its official release.

It also said the introduction of the virus into China through frozen food would have been “extraordinary” in December 2019, given the virus had not been detected elsewhere at that time.

While there remained a “possible” chance of such a transmission, it said there was no conclusive evidence that frozen food played any role in the virus’ spread. The report instead concluded it is very likely Covid-19 first passed to humans from a bat through an intermediary animal, and all but ruled out a theory the virus could have leaked from a high-security lab in central China.



This file photo taken on 20 June 2020 shows vendors waiting for customers at their stall selling frozen meat and seafood balls at a market in Beijing. The chances that Covid-19 emerged in Wuhan because of imported frozen food are “very low”, international health experts said March 29, 2021, casting doubt on one of the main theories China has embraced for the cause of the first coronavirus outbreak in late 2019. PHOTO:AFP

After the outbreak, explanations floated by Chinese officials and state-media have ranged from a conspiracy theory

that US soldiers imported the virus in the 2019 World Military Games in Wuhan, to the frozen food theory after a series of outbreaks

linked to workers who handled frozen goods. **Introducing doubt** The theory that the virus was originally imported

into China could help Beijing in its battle against the criticism over the outbreak, experts say.

“The goal is probably to introduce enough doubt to make people question the origin of the virus,” Adam Ni, analyst at the China Policy Centre in Canberra, Australia, told AFP.

At the same time, “there is this dynamic where the harder political leaders in some countries try to blame China for Covid-19, the harder that Beijing tries to put up counter-narratives”, Ni said.

The nationalist Global Times published a report in December that asked in its headline, “Could cold chain imports have sparked Wuhan early Covid-19 outbreak?”—AFP ■

Coronavirus: Latest global developments

HERE are the latest developments in the coronavirus crisis: **‘Missing link’ animal**

A mission of international experts to Wuhan concludes it is very likely that Covid-19 first passed to humans from a bat through an intermediary animal, and all but rules out a laboratory leak.

‘Happy Monday’ England begins easing its lockdown easing on what newspapers dub “Happy Monday” with stay-at-home orders relaxed to allow outdoor gatherings of up to six

people and the resumption of amateur sports. **Brisbane snap lockdown**

More than two million people in Brisbane enter a three-day lockdown after a cluster of cases is detected in Australia’s third biggest city.

Philippines shutdown More than 24 million people in Manila and four neighbouring provinces enter a lockdown as officials warn the week-long restrictions could be extended if infections do not fall.

Muted Holi

Indian authorities clamp down on Holi, one of the country’s biggest Hindu festivals, banning it in some states and territories including Delhi, as the country passed 12 million cases and Mumbai records its highest-ever rise in daily infections.

Merkel plea

Chancellor Angela Merkel pleads with Germany’s 16 federal states to stop straying from agreed pandemic measures, with her Christian Democratic Union party’s ratings plummeting

as the country stumbles in its virus response. **Mind the gap**

The World Health Organization warns against a widening gap between numbers of vaccines in wealthy countries and those distributed to poorer nations through the global Covax initiative.

Oil for vaccines

Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro offers “oil for vaccines” as his country, which is under economic sanctions that particularly affect the oil sector, faces a second wave of infections.

China making Sputnik

Russia has agreed a deal for more than 60 million doses of its Sputnik V vaccine to be produced in China from May.

Chile constitution

Due to a surge in infections, Chilean President Sebastian Pinera floats delaying April elections to May that will choose a commission to rewrite the country’s dictatorship-era constitution.

Too early?

A recent plateau in new infections in the

US was likely linked to the “premature” easing of anti-virus efforts, top pandemic adviser Anthony Fauci says.

2.7 million dead

At least 2,784,276 people have died of Covid-19 around the world since the outbreak emerged in China in December 2019, according to an AFP tally from official sources.

The US is the worst-affected country with 549,335 deaths followed by Brazil with 312,206 fatalities, Mexico with 201,623, India with 161,843 and Britain with 126,592 deaths. —AFP ■

Bank Holiday

All Banks will be closed on 1st (Thursday) April 2021 "BANK HOLIDAY" being public holiday under the Negotiable Instruments Act.

Central Bank of Myanmar

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V EVER CHANT VOY. NO. (0232-029N)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V EVER CHANT VOY. NO. (0232-029N)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **30-3-2021** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **HPT** where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

Damaged cargo will be surveyed daily from 8 am to 11:20 am and 12 noon to 4 pm to Claim's Day now declared as the third day after final discharge of cargo from the Vessel.

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 EVERGREEN MARINE (S'PORE) PTE., LTD.

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V NEGAR VOY. NO. (SCY1097)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V NEGAR VOY. NO. (SCY1097)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **30-3-2021** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **MITT** where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

Damaged cargo will be surveyed daily from 8 am to 11:20 am and 12 noon to 4 pm to Claim's Day now declared as the third day after final discharge of cargo from the Vessel.

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

Phone No: **2301185**

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

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Univ. in Tokyo holds entrance ceremony 1 year late amid pandemic



Sophia University students celebrate at the venue of a belated enrollment ceremony in Tokyo on 29 March 2021. **PHOTO: KYODO NEWS**

SOPHIA University in Tokyo held Monday the first of a series of belated entrance ceremonies for last year's freshers who are now about to enter their second year after the coronavirus outbreak forced the cancellation of the original event last spring.

Some other universities across Japan are also plan-

ning to hold such ceremonies to formally welcome last spring's intake, whose campus life has been greatly restricted by the health crisis. The academic year starts in April in Japan.

Monday's ceremony was attended by about 350 students who are about to complete their first year. Sophia University will

hold a total of six ceremonies through Wednesday to avoid excessive crowding, allowing up to 400 people at one time into a large classroom with capacity to seat up to 700.

"It's finally begun. I'm looking forward to attending classes and talking with friends," said a 20-year-old male economics student who attended Monday's event.

The university will resume face-to-face lectures from next month, having held most classes online since last spring. It also plans to continue to hold some lectures online.

"You have all had a turbulent year," Yoshiaki Terumichi, president of the university, said in the ceremony. "Be aware that you are a small group of people who have been given the opportunity to study." —Kyodo News ■

EU chiefs to see Erdogan in Turkey next week

EUROPEAN Union chiefs Charles Michel and Ursula von der Leyen will travel to Turkey next week for an April 6 meeting with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, an EU spokesman said Monday.

The trip comes after EU leaders agreed at a summit on Thursday that they were ready to improve cooperation with Ankara if Erdogan maintains a current "de-escalation" after a spike in tensions over the eastern Mediterranean last year.

The bloc has been encouraged by the resumption of talks involving Turkey and Greece over a disputed maritime border and by plans to restart UN peace efforts for divided EU member state Cyprus.

But leaders remain deeply wary of Erdogan and there are major concerns over Ankara's recent moves to shut

down an opposition party and its departure from a treaty on violence against women. Last week's summit conclusions said the 27-nation bloc was "ready to engage with Turkey in a phased, proportionate and reversible manner to enhance cooperation in a number of areas of common interest".

But that was only if "the current de-escalation is sustained and that Turkey engages constructively".

The EU has warned it could slap sanctions on its southeastern neighbour if it backtracks.

On the table for discussion is a raft of key Turkish ambitions including modernising a customs union with the EU, liberalizing visa rules and more support for hosting millions of refugees from Syria. —AFP ■

Portugal extends Brazil and UK flight suspension

PORTUGAL will extend its suspension of flights to and from Brazil and the United Kingdom until April 15, the government said Monday, in a bid to limit the spread of Covid-19 variants.

Only residents of Portugal and the European Union will be able to travel between the three countries if they present a negative PCR test conducted within 72 hours of departure, the interior ministry said in a statement. They will also have to undergo a 14-day quarantine upon arrival in Portugal.

Portugal had suspended flights to and from Brazil and the United Kingdom at the end of January when coronavirus variants thought to be more contagious were detected in both countries.

The ministry also said that

travellers from other countries registering Covid-19 infections at rate of 500 cases per 100,000 inhabitants or more— such as France or Italy — are required to quarantine for 14 days after arriving in Portugal by air or land.

The country was put under a second lockdown in mid-January before registering a record one-day rate of 16,500 new infections on January 28. But since that peak Portugal has seen a drop in cases that has allowed the government to ease restrictions gradually.

On Sunday, the country of 10 million people recorded 10 deaths and 365 new infections in 24 hours, according to a daily update published by the national health authorities. —AFP ■

Thousands fleeing besieged Mozambique town by boat

THOUSANDS of survivors of coordinated jihadist attacks in northern Mozambique's Palma town were arriving on boats in the provincial capital Pemba on Monday, according to sources in the city. International aid agency sources said between 6,000 and 10,000 people are waiting to be evacuated to safety following the raid on Palma that began last Wednesday. Extremist militants raided Palma, a town of around 75,000 people in the province of Cabo Delgado that is home to a multi-billion-dollar gas project being built by France's Total and other energy companies.

The government said dozens were killed in the attack, including seven people caught in an ambush during an operation to evacuate them from a hotel where they had sought refuge. A South African is among those



Internally displaced persons await in line during an United Nations World Food Programme's distribution at the "3 de fevereiro escola" school in Matuge district, northern Mozambique, on 24 February 2021. Food packages are distributed at the site for displaced families from Ibo, Mocimboa Da Praia, and Macomia places that have been attacked by armed insurgents in the last two years north of the province of Cabo Delgado. **PHOTO: AFP**

killed, his family said.

The attack is the closest yet to the major gas project since an Islamist insurgency broke out across Mozambique's north in October 2017.

The attack forced expatriate

workers and locals to seek refuge temporarily at a heavily guarded gas plant located on the Afungi peninsula -- 10 kilometres (six miles) from Palma, on the Indian Ocean coast south of the Tanzanian border. —AFP ■

Egypt arrests eight over fatal train crash, revises death toll

EGYPT has arrested eight people over a train collision last week, prosecutors said in a statement Monday that also revised the death toll down to 18 people.

A speeding train on Friday hit another in the Tahta district of southern Sohag province, sending a carriage hurtling into the air and also leaving 200 peo-

ple injured.

"The prosecutor — general ordered that the two drivers... their two assistants, the guard of a traffic control tower, the head of traffic control in Assiut and two other guards ... be remanded in custody," the prosecutor said.

Security and judicial sources told AFP the eight had been

arrested on Friday and Saturday and placed in provisional detention for four days.

The toll from the crash — one of several rail disasters in Egypt in recent years — was revised down to 18. It had already been adjusted down to 19 from 32 by Health Minister Hala Zayed on Saturday.

The prosecutor's statement also cited additional "body parts" that had not been identified, without elaborating and revised the toll for the injured to 200, up from 185 cited by the health minister.

It said investigators had spoken to 133 of the injured, most of whom suffered fractures, as

well as 10 rail officials, station staff and three police officers "in charge of the security of trains".

They had also carried out several signal simulations and tested the speeding train's manual brakes, allowing them to establish that the driver could see the "signage of the control tower". —AFP ■

Newlywed suicide bombers identified in Indonesia church attack

TWO suicide bombers who attacked an Indonesian cathedral on Palm Sunday were newlyweds who joined a pro-Islamic State extremist group, police said Monday, as they arrested others suspected in the plot.

About 20 people were wounded in the powerful explosion outside the church in Makassar city on Sulawesi island while worshippers celebrated the start of Holy Week.

Both suspects were killed instantly after they rode a motorbike into the church compound and, when challenged by security, detonated a bomb packed with nails, police said.

They were the only fatalities.

About 15 victims remained in hospital Monday, with two in intensive care for burn injuries. Four have been discharged.

On Monday, Indonesian authorities said the pair, identified through DNA and fingerprint testing, had been married for about six months.

The male suspect, who was in his mid-twenties, left his family a suicide note that said he was ready to die as a martyr.

The couple belonged to an Islamic study group along with several of nine other suspects arrested since Sunday over their alleged roles in the attack, police said.

“They each had their own role, including buying the ingredients, teaching bomb making, creating the explosives and using them,” National Police Chief Listyo Sigit Prabowo told reporters.

Raids at several locations including at the couple’s home



Indonesian police remove a motorbike that was used by bombers during a reconstruction of the explosion in Makassar on 29 March 2021, one day after the suicide bombing at a cathedral on Palm Sunday. **PHOTO: AFP**

in Makassar and others in Indonesia’s capital Jakarta turned up a cache of powerful explosives and bomb-making ingredients, authorities said.

Sunday’s attack came after

the arrest of dozens of suspected militants in recent months by Indonesia’s counter-terror squad.

A Makassar resident said the male bomber was a street food seller who lived in a rented

house near his parents’ home.

“He was nice as a kid... but when he got older he didn’t really socialize around here,” Nuraini, who like many Indonesians goes by one name, told AFP.

Police said the couple were members of Jamaah Ansharut Daulah (JAD), an extremist group blamed for series of attacks, including 2018 suicide bombings at churches in Indonesia’s second-biggest city Surabaya, which killed a dozen congregants.

Sunday’s explosion at the main Catholic cathedral in Makassar happened just after congregants finished celebrating Palm Sunday, the first day of Holy Week, which commemorates Jesus’s entry into Jerusalem.

It comes a week before Easter.—AFP ■

India dampens down festival fever as pandemic cases pass 12 million



People wearing protective suits as a preventive measure against the spread of the Covid-19 coronavirus, play with coloured powders as they celebrate Holi, the spring festival of colours during a photo opportunity organized by a local club in Kolkata on 29 March 2021. **PHOTO:AFP**

INDIAN authorities clamped down on one of the country’s biggest Hindu festivals on Monday as the country passed 12 million coronavirus cases with financial hub Mumbai recording its highest-ever rise in daily infections.

Public celebrations to mark Holi – a popular festival where people smear colour on each other – were banned in some states and territories, including the capital Delhi, over fears they could become ‘super-spreader’ events, with police patrolling streets in Mumbai to prevent large gatherings. Despite the restrictions, revellers still gathered in neighbourhoods across the country, banging drums and hurling coloured powder at each other.

“We are aware of the pandemic, but we can not ignore the wishes of the people who want to celebrate the festival of colour,” TV actor Debudut Ghosh, who is campaigning for an election in West Bengal state, told AFP in Kolkata. Many people also took to the streets in the northern city of Lucknow in Uttar Pradesh state, the country’s Hindu heartland of 1.3 billion people.

“Had it not been a festival, I would not have stepped out,” septuagenarian B.K. Tiwari told AFP as he carried his colour-smear facemask. The muted celebrations went ahead despite a nationwide surge in coronavirus cases.

India reported 68,020 new daily infections on Monday – a

significant rise from below 9,000 in early February – taking the total number of cases to more than 12 million. “If the outbreak grows at that pace – about five times in five weeks – that’s worrisome,” virologist Shahid Jameel told AFP, adding that the lack of mask-wearing and social distancing was fuelling the surge.

Mumbai reported more than 6,900 new cases – a record for the city of 20 million and more than double last year’s peak.

The western state of Maharashtra, home to Mumbai, is mulling a full lockdown to tackle the spread of the disease after imposing a nightly curfew from Sunday.—AFP ■

Philippines locks down economic hub to fight coronavirus surge

MORE than 24 million people in the Philippines’ economic hub entered a lockdown Monday, as officials warned the week-long restrictions could be extended if coronavirus infections do not fall.

People have been ordered to stay home unless they are essential workers as Metro Manila – the national capital region – and four neighbouring provinces struggle to curb a surge that has strained hospitals.

Only hours into the latest lockdown imposed on the region – which accounts for around half of the country’s economic activity – the health department’s epidemiology chief Alethea de Guzman warned it could be prolonged to bring about a “sustained” drop.

“All options are open,” said Defence Secretary Delfin Lorenzana, who chairs the government’s Covid-19 task force.

More contagious variants of the virus have been blamed for the record spike that has taken the country’s caseload to more than 720,000.

Traffic was backed up for hundreds of metres at checkpoints on major avenues in the capital Manila early Monday as police tried to ensure only essential workers were travelling.

But AFP reporters saw officers periodically open up the roads to ease congestion.

“It’s difficult since it’s no work, no pay,” said July Calma, as she walked home after trying to pay her water bill but finding the office closed.

“We don’t (have savings) because we spend it every day.”

The tighter restrictions affect a fifth of the country’s population.

Church services and other mass gatherings are banned, a 6:00 pm to 5:00 am curfew is in force and public transport has been reduced.

Supermarkets, pharmacies and other essential businesses are allowed to operate, and outdoor exercise is permitted. The lockdown was announced Saturday by presidential spokesman Harry Roque, who initially suggested public transport would be halted.

A previous months-long lockdown crippled the Philippine economy, cost millions of jobs and left many households hungry.

Roque said the decision to tighten restrictions again was “very delicate” and acknowledged extending the lockdown could lead to more people dying from hunger and non-coronavirus illnesses.—AFP ■

FAS install artificial turf system at Jalan Besar Stadium

THE Football Association of Singapore has been completed re-turfing works for the Jalan Besar Stadium for the upcoming football challenge, according to the statement with the football association.

The pitch will provide a high-quality playing surface for

all domestic and international matches held at the venue, officials said. All the construction work starts from July 2020 and ends in this year January, the officials added.

“It is definitely an improvement from the previous surface (as it) is much softer,

and I am looking forward to playing here this year to create more good memories,” said midfielder Shahdan Sulaiman from Lion City Sailors FC.

Goalkeeper Zaiful Nizam from Balestier Khalsa FC also noted, “If you don’t have a proper surface to dive on, you might

get injured on the first dive, and when you have to play 90 minutes, that could be crucial. The soft ground now is better not only just for goalkeepers but also outfield players.” Midfielder Nur Izzati Rosni from Still Aerion FC said, “The pitch is cushion -y, and that is good

for the players as the chance of getting injured is lower. I’m looking forward to playing on this pitch and thinking of that is really exciting, especially if family and friends are coming over to support us and we can hear all the cheers”.—GNLM ■

Southgate hails ‘exceptional’ Mount after Albania win



England's forward Raheem Sterling (L) fights for the ball with Albania's goalkeeper Etrit Berisha (R) during the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 qualification Group I football match between Albania and England at the Air Albania Stadium, in Tirana on 28 March 2021. **PHOTO: AFP**

ENGLAND manager Gareth Southgate says it has taken Thomas Tuchel's arrival at Chelsea to persuade many fans that Mason Mount is an “exceptional player.”

Mount produced an impressive goalscoring performance in England's 2-0 win against

Albania in Sunday's World Cup qualifier in Tirana.

The midfielder is the first Chelsea player to score or assist in three consecutive England appearances since Frank Lampard, who did so in seven games in a row in a run ending in 2013.

Southgate said he had long

been trumpeting the 22-year-old Chelsea player despite previous criticism from supporters.

Mount's second-half strike, which came after a first-half header for Harry Kane, gave England six points from a possible six ahead of Wednesday's home qualifier against Poland, likely to prove their toughest opponents in the group.

“Mason Mount is an exceptional player,” said Southgate. “But I was saying this in the autumn.

“I suppose now (Chelsea manager) Thomas Tuchel picks him probably everybody will agree. When it was Frank (Lampard, whom Tuchel replaced at Stamford Bridge) it didn't count for some reason but he's an exceptional player.

“He finds space intelligently, he manipulates the ball very well, he creates chances, he can score goals. I thought his performance was excellent.”—AFP ■

Tokyo Olympics chiefs prepare to resume ‘safe’ test events

TOKYO Olympics organizers on Monday unveiled virus countermeasures for test events that will resume later this week for the first time since the Games were postponed by the pandemic.

Tokyo 2020 chiefs pledged to hold the remaining 18 test events — which function as dress rehearsals for each sport — in a “safe and secure” manner, to see what they can “learn as we work towards the Games”.

Test events were halted after the sport climbing event was held from 6 to 8 March last year, with Tokyo 2020 staff replacing athletes because of infection concerns.

The first test event since the unprecedented postponement of the Games will be wheelchair rugby on 3-4 April, with water polo to follow one week later.

Tokyo 2020 Games delivery officer Hidemasa Nakamura

said countermeasures would be based on the virus rulebooks unveiled by organizers earlier this year. “We're trying to limit contact, avoid handshakes and other physical contact, and keep distance between athletes — one metre if two isn't possible,” he said.

Cheering will be banned and rooms and common spaces ventilated every 30 minutes.

Fourteen of the test events will be organized by Tokyo 2020, with the other four run by international federations.

Nakamura said the athletics test event at Tokyo's National Stadium on May 9 will be the only event organized by Tokyo 2020 where overseas athletes will participate and spectators will be present. He said fans and overseas athletes will likely be involved in the four events organized by international federations — diving, water polo, artistic swimming and the marathon. —AFP ■

Injured Lewandowski to miss England clash

ROBERT Lewandowski will miss Poland's 2022 World Cup qualifier against England with a right knee injury, the Polish Football Association said on Monday.

The Bayern Munich forward suffered the injury during Sunday's 3-0 win over Andorra in Warsaw in which he scored two goals but had to leave the field in the 63rd minute.

“Healing from this type of injury usually takes between five and 10 days. Therefore Robert Lewandowski will return to the club where he will undergo further rehabilitation,” the statement said.

Lewandowski's absence is a blow to Poland, who will have been counting on their star striker lining up against England in what is the toughest match of their qualifying campaign.

Poland are currently third in Group I on four points, two behind Gareth Southgate's leaders and level with second-placed Hungary following a 3-3 draw in Budapest and Sunday's win.

Lewandowski has scored three times in those two matches, twice against Andorra and a stunning late leveller against Hungary.

Bayern had initially said that the 32-year-old would not be released to play in Wednesday's match at Wembley but changed its mind due to a change in Germany's Covid-19 travel restrictions.

The reigning European champions will be hoping that he will be back in time for the first leg of their Champions League quarter-final with Paris Saint-Germain, which will be played at Bayern's Allianz Arena on 7 April.

Lewandowski is also hoping to break Gerd Mueller's Bundesliga record of 40 goals in a single season, as he sits on a total of 35 with eight league games still to play. The Polish side has already been hit by coronavirus infections.

Two players, midfielder Mateusz Klich and backup goalkeeper Lukasz Skorupski, have tested positive in the past few days. —AFP ■



Poland's forward Robert Lewandowski (C) celebrates scoring the opening goal with his teammates during the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 qualification football match Poland vs Andorra in Warsaw, on 28 March 2021. **PHOTO: AFP**