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THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

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Announcement of Union Election Commission
8 May 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 Kyunsu and Launglon townships of Taninthayi Region.
2. Findings in respective townships were as follows:

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Manufacturers urged to seek ways for commercial-scale manufacturing of products, penetrate local and foreign markets

ENCOURAGEMENT should be given to increase yields of quality agriculture and livestock products and sell value-added products with the aim of developing the rural areas, creating job opportunities for local people and enhancing the living standard of local people, said Union Minister for Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation U Tin Htut Oo on 8 May morning.

In meeting with officials and members of Pan Ayeya industrial cooperative society at the mat workshop in Pantanaw Township in the morning, the Union minister noted that all stakeholders in a chain of production need to seek the ways and means for manufacturing the products which are symbols of respective regions on a commercial scale and for penetrating the local and foreign markets.

Union Minister for Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation U Tin Htut Oo views quality Murta mats.

The Union Minister invited those of the society to seek technical assistance from the Agriculture Department and Small-scale Industries Department to produce Murta mats.

While in Pantanaw Township, the Union Minister visited Global Earth agriculture and fish value-added production public Company Ltd and viewed hatching of fingerlings, breeding of fingerlings in steel tanks and production processes, operation of fish meal factory, cold storage and value-added fish product factories and advanced staff housings. The company appointed more than 10,000 labourers in its production lines.

The Union Minister also met with officials from Myanmar Fisheries Federation and finished fish producers and discussed local food sufficiency, the requirement of agricultural inputs and fish research in cooperation with local and foreign companies and the MFF.

In the evening, the Union Minister inspected the water collection tank and filtering tank at the Pathein water supply project in Mayanchaung. Upon completion, the project will supply 4.5 million gallons of drinking water to the local people of Pathein urban area per day. So far, the project has completed by 86 per cent. — MNA

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Republic of the Union of Myanmar
State Administration Council
Nine Objectives

1. Political affairs

(a) To build a Union based on democracy and federalism, through a disciplined and genuine multiparty democratic system that is fair and just.
(b) To emphasize the achievement of enduring peace for the entire nation in line with the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA).
(c) To continue implementing the principle of peaceful co-existence among countries through an independent, active and non-aligned foreign policy.

2. Economic affairs

(a) To enhance production based on agriculture and livestock through modern techniques and strengthen all-round development in other sectors of the economy.
(b) To develop a stable market economy and promote international investment in order to enhance the economic development of the entire National people.
(c) To promote and support local businesses to create employment opportunities and increase domestic production.

3. Social affairs

(a) To ensure a strong and dynamic Union spirit, the genuine spirit of patriotism.
(b) To respect and promote the customs and traditions of all National peoples and preserve and safeguard their cultural heritage and national characteristics.
(c) To enhance the health, fitness and education quality of the entire nation.

Five-Point Road Map of the State Administration Council

1. The Union Election Commission will be reconstituted and its mandated tasks, including the scrutiny of voter lists, shall be implemented in accordance with the law.
2. Effective measures will be taken with added momentum to prevent and manage the COVID-19 pandemic.
3. Actions will be taken to ensure the speedy recovery of businesses from the impact of COVID-19.
4. Emphasis will be placed on achieving enduring peace for the entire nation in line with the agreements set out in the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement.
5. Upon accomplishing the provisions of the state of emergency, free and fair multiparty democratic elections will be held in line with the 2008 Constitution, and further work will be undertaken to hand over State duties to the winning party in accordance with democratic standards.

Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Anti-Terrorism Central Committee
Declaration of Terrorist Groups
Notification No 2/2021

12th Waning of Tagu 1383 ME
8 May 2021

The Anti-Terrorism Central Committee has issued this order with the approval of the State Administration Council in exercising sub-section (e) of Section 6 and sub-section (b) of Section 72 of the Anti-Terrorism Law.

1. Unlawful Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw-CRPH and National Unity Government NUG formed by CRPH constantly incited Civil Disobedience Movement-CDM participants to commit violent acts. Many riots occurred in many places of the country due to their incitements. They perpetrated bombing, arson, manslaughter, and intimidation to disrupt the state administrative machinery due to the influence of the leaders of CRPH and NUG. Moreover, NUG established People Defence Force-PDF. Violent acts occurred in the name of regional defence forces instigated by NUG and PDF. It is found that their acts to join CDM, threatening non-CDMs, inciting students and teachers not to go to schools, supporting terrorist acts and perpetrating such terrorist acts violate Section 3 (b) and Sub-section 13 of the Counter-Terrorism Law – acts with the intent to cause fear in public, to force Government or any internal and external organization to do an illegitimate act or to refrain from doing a lawful act, and other acts, stipulated by the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Law No 23 on 4 June 2014.
2. Therefore, unlawful associations – Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw-CRPH, National Unity Government-NUG, People Defence Force-PDF and all their subordinates have been declared as terrorist groups.

Chairman
Anti-Terrorism Central Committee

7 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 9 May, total figure rises to 142,954

MYANMAR'S COVID-19 positive cases rose to **142,954 after 7 new cases** were reported on 9 May 2021 according to the Ministry of Health and Sports. Among these confirmed cases, **132,023** have been discharged from hospitals. —MNA

Fulfil the needs for the betterment of sports grounds

THE Senior General noted that relevant ministries must strive for improvement of the sports sector. Plans are underway to fulfil the needs for the betterment of sports grounds which plays a crucial role in holding the sports competitions.

(Excerpt from the speech to the Management Committee meeting made by the Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Administration Council Chairman Senior General Min Aung Hlaing on 23 April 2021)

State-owned sawmills need to produce semi-finished and finished sawn timber with good outturn and operation ratio: MoNREC Union Minister

U KHIN MAUNG YI, Union Minister for Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation, yesterday met officials at No 10 sawmill of Myanma Timber Enterprise in Thanlyin Township.

After hearing the reports by officials, the Union Minister urged officials of the foreign trade and sawmill department and timber-based industries department to coordinate the tasks to adjust the volume of lots depending on prices, market and demand for earning income.

He instructed them to produce the semi-finished and finished sawn timber with a good outturn and operation ratio.

He stressed the need to produce the finished goods using by-products, monitor the market situation, demand, production of sawn timber and ground stocks on a monthly basis and spend the budget to be auditable.

The Union Minister inspected the work process of No 10 sawmill, No 1 and No 2 furniture factories and viewed round teak, Manjansha and black bamboo plantations planted by Myanma Timber Enterprise in Thanlyin wood-based industrial region. — MNA

Union Minister U Shwe Lay inspects road, bridge construction works in Rakhine State

UNION Minister for Construction U Shwe Lay presided over a coordination meeting on work plans and completed operations in 2020-2021FY with the Departments of Buildings, Highways, Bridges, Urban and Housing Development, Rural Road Development of Rakhine State yesterday.

During the meeting, the Union Minister said it should conduct the standard operations to be completed in time. The staff need to follow the COVID-19 health rules and report their difficulties to the department heads concerned.

The departments also should emphasize their duties in conducting the projects to meet the fixed standards and make preparations for natural disasters and transportation.

The relevant departments' heads presented the work plans and ongoing operations in 2020-2021FY with a Powerpoint presentation, and the Union Minister coordinated the discussion.

Moreover, the Union Minister met with the Command Staff Colonel of Western Colonel Kyaw Kyaw Than, township administrative body chairman U Htay Aung and other officials.

The officials discussed the construction of the new Thayu (Pepadone) Bridge build by the ministry, safe passing of fuel bowsers on the current suspension bridge, upgrade works on the downtown junction and stone pillar with directional signs in An Township, roads to be implemented by the Department of Rural Road Development, the strength of suspension road and land areas for a new bridge.

The Union Minister and party inspected the An-Padekyaw-Maei road section and paving of tar road on the Maei-Kyaukpyu section.

The officials then checked the paving of concrete road on the Taungup-Maei-Kyaukpyu

(Taungup-Maei) section. Deputy Director U Ye Min Maung of Road Special Team (18) clarified the concrete paving operation between 0km and 69.20km on the Taungup-Maei road section.

The Union Minister left instructions on the necessary things regarding the road paving system and tree planting programme on the traffic island. — MNA

Electrical engineers, staff urged to minimize outage of electricity

THE projects to generate electricity must be implemented with momentum through renewable energy such as hydropower and solar power so as to meet the more demands, said Union Minister for Electricity and Energy U Aung Than Oo in meeting with officials of Thahtay hydropower project on 8 May.

During his tour of the project site on Thahtay Creek, 12 miles northeast of Thandwe of Rakhine State, the Union Minister inspected progress of implementing the project and functions of the 230KV Taungup (Baryay) main power station.

In his instructions, the Union Minister urged them to systematically use the machinery to be installed at the project site, make utmost efforts for timely completion of the project and emphasize contribution to local tourism industry and conservation of the environments.

The project which started in 2008-2009 financial year will build a 111-megawatt power station to generate 386 million kilowatt hours per year to increase electricity to Rakhine State and feed electricity to the national grid.

So far, the project has completed by 65.48 per cent. Efforts are being made to finish the project in 2024.

Likewise, Upper Kengtawng hydropower project has completed by 63.99 percent, Upper Yeywa hydropower project 48.68 percent and middle Paunglaung hydropower project, 6.14 percent.

The Union Minister viewed round the site for resettlement of the local people who moved from Payit and Yaykauk villages involved in the project area and instructed officials to fulfill their needs.

He also inspected the 230-KV Taungup (Baryay) main power station and left instructions on inspection for transformers and accessories of the main power station for minimizing the outage of electricity.

On 7 May, he met with Rakhine State, district and township level engineers and staff at Thandwe District Electrical Engineer Office and urged them to arrange full supply of electricity to respective regions.—MNA

Cash assistance provided to senior citizens, those with disabilities in Yangon Region

THE committee for the rights of the persons with disabilities cooperates with relevant organizations, UN agencies, NGOs and INGOs, and the organizations for the disabilities in making efforts for emergence of a system to classify grades of disabilities and register those with disabilities, said Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Dr Thet Thet Khine at the ceremony to provide assistance for charity organizations, those with disabilities, senior citizens and storm victims on 8 May.

At the ceremony held at the office of Yangon Region Administration Council, the Union Minister continued to say that the committee for the rights of the persons with disabilities was formed with officials from relevant ministries and representatives from the organizations for those with disabilities to be able to enjoy the services provided for the public.

The Union Minister and officials presented K794.199 million for charity organizations from Yangon Region, K951.27 million as social pension to 31,709 senior citizens, K2.61 million for 78 disabled persons from the region, K22.4615 million as cash assistance for storm victims of Yangon Region to the chairman of Yangon Region Administration Council and officials.

The Union Minister and party viewed construction of Drug Rehabilitation Centre in the compound of Yangon Rehabilitation Camp at the corner of Kaba Aye Pagoda Road and Parami Road in Mayangon Township.

In the afternoon, she viewed round progress of conducting vocational courses at Hngetawsan youth training school under the Social Welfare Department in Kawhmu Township of Yangon Region.

At Mingalar Youth Development Parahita Home in Twantay, the Union Minister donated alms to the abbot and provided K56.073 million as cash assistance for the home for 2020-2021 financial year to officials.—MNA

RTAD reports: 33 killed, 196 injured in highway traffic accidents during Jan-Apr period

MYANMAR'S traffic accidents on Yangon-Mandalay Highway in the first four months of 2021 left 33 dead and 196 injured, according to news released by the Roade Transport Administration Department.

Between January and April 2021, a total of 96 road accidents occurred on the highway connecting commercial hub Yangon with the second-largest city Mandalay.

Myanmar witnessed total road accidents of 2,083 cases in Q1, with 972 people killed and 2,839 injured.

Over speeding is the leading cause of accidents on the country's roads and expressways. Other causes include reckless driving, unsafe vehicles and severe weather condition.

Highway accidents were reported in 744 cases in 2016 with 170 people killed and 1,304 injured, 555 cases in 2017 with 116 dead and 863 injured, 474 cases in 2018 with 103 killed and 884 wounded, and 524 cases in 2019 with 108 killed and 1,019 wounded.

The traffic fatality rate dropped to 84. The injuries also fell to 446 in 2020 due to travel restriction in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, with 412 cases reported. – KK/GNLM

COVID-19 protective gears provided to Kokang Self-Administered Zone Administration Body

THE ceremony to provide the COVID-19 protective gears to Kokang Self-Administered Zone Administration Body held in Laukkai of Northern Shan State yesterday.

Commander of North-East Command Brig-Gen Hla Moe and officials of the departments concerned joined the event.

The Commander firstly remarked and donated 200 RDT (test kit) and 4,000 masks to the Kokang Self-Administered Zone Administration Body members. – MNA

The North-East Command Commander presents COVID preventive aids in Laukkai.

Strong wind destroys houses, schools

ABOUT four villages were severely affected, and schools and houses destroyed after a strong wind swept across Nyaunglebin Township of Bago Region on 8 May.

Tatmadaw members of the Nyaunglebin station conducted rescue and rehabilitation works.

The strong wind destroyed 53 houses, 2 schools and a chicken firm, ripping off the roofs of houses.

The relevant officials inspected the rescued works and provided food aids to the victims yesterday morning.—MNA

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Tatmadaw provides treatments to over 190,000 outpatients

Loacl patients are seen receiving treatments at the military hospitals.

MILITARY hospitals in the townships of regions and states are giving medical treatments to the people to solve their difficulties in healthcare services. A total of 193,874 outpatients and 60,033 inpatients reached these hospitals from 5 February to date.

Senior medical experts, medics and nurses have conducted 9,027 major operations and 4,612 minor operations. The senior doctors gave intensive treatment the severe cases.

These hospitals managed for the birth of 11,671 babies to date. Of those, 4,668 cases are done in the caesarean section and 7,003 cases in ordinary delivery. — MNA

One education staff arrested for making attempts to deteriorate stability of State

ACTIONS have been taken under Section 505-A of the Penal Code against those who incite State service personnel, health staff, education staff, banking staff and other departmental staff to participate in CDM activities, oppress or threaten and do social punishment to deteriorate the State administrative machinery.

The police arrested an education staff named Myat Myat Aung, who lives at No (266) in Mingala street in Thinbaw Seik Ward of Dawei Township in Taninthayi Region, at her house for posting fake information, inciting other education staff to join CDM via social network and participating in protests on 8 May.

The case was opened against the detainee under Penal Code section 505(a)/505(c) at Dawei Myoma police station. — MNA

One killed, one injured by handmade bomb

THE rioters attacked the security forces with handmade bombs in the Myinmu township of Sagaing Region yesterday. It left one man injured and another one dead.

About 30 rioters staged a strike at Shwe Saw Lu Pagoda in Margha Ward of Myinmu Township, and the security members detained two men.

Moreover, about 200 people surrounded the police station and moved back as the police dispersed the crowd.

Then, about 50 people set the tire on fire at Myoma market in Aung Zaya Ward, and the police dispersed them. But they attacked the security members.

Meanwhile, Thae Ko Maung threw the handmade bomb to the police, and the bomb exploded near him. Similarly, another man attempted to throw the bomb, and it exploded in his hand and he died on the spot.

The victims were taken to Myinmu hospital. — MNA

Announcement of Union Election Commission
8 May 2021

FROM PAGE-1

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 CS
1	163 polling stations in Kyunsu township of Taninthayi Region	114,161	88,045	25,470	727	9,828
2	112 polling stations in Launglon township of Taninthayi Region	127,574	79,827	12,536	1,088	14,778

3. The Union Election Commission has inspected the withdrawal/receipt/use/remaining of ballot papers used for Pyithu Hluttaw Election of Kyunsu and Launglon townships of Taninthayi Region together with the respective township election sub-commission, head of police force, Immigration and Population and administrators in accordance with Section 53 of the Hluttaw Election Law.

4. According to the inspection, a total of 275 polling stations in these two townships took out 265,440 ballots and used 164,868 ballots. It left 98,599ballots instead of 100,572 ballots. The difference was 3,585 ballots and it found 1,612 extra ballots. The extra/shortage ballots were found at respective polling stations. Findings in respective townships were 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	Kyunsu	163	124,627	87,816	36,811	35,874	993	56
2	Launglon	112	140,813	77,052	63,761	62,725	2,592	1556
	Total	275	265,440	164,868	100,572	98,599	3,585	1612

Findings on ballot papers for Pyithu Hluttaw Election in Kyunsu Township

5. According to the inspection, 163 polling stations in Kyunsu Township took out 124,627 ballots and used 119,450 as ward/village-tract ballots, 735 as township advance ballots and 4,442 as township remaining ballots (reserve). The extra/shortage ballots were found at respective poll stations. Findings were as follows:

Sr	Subject	Withdrawal	Used	Exact remaining	Remaining on the Ground	Difference	
						Missing	Extra
1	Ward/village -tract ballots	119,450	87,081	32,369	31,432	993	56
2	Township Advance ballots	735	735				
3	Township Remaining ballots	4,442		4,442	4,442		
Total		124,627	87,816	36,811	35,874	993	56

6. According to the inspection, of 119450 ballots of 163 polling stations, they used 87,081 ballots and left only 31,432 instead of 32,369. Moreover, it found 993missing ballots at 14 polling stations and 56 extra ballots at 2 polling stations.

7. The numbers of township advance ballots 735 and remaining ballots (reserve) 4,442 were in conformity with the findings of inspection team.

8. Of 124,627 ballots for the whole Kyunsu Township, they used 87,816 ballots and if found 35,874 unused ballots.

9. Findings were as follows:

Sr	Ward/Village-Tract	Total polling station	Withdrawal	Used	Exact remaining	Remaining on the Ground	Difference	
							Missing	Extra
1	No 1 Ward	2	2,250	1,513	737	736	1	
2	No 2 Ward	1	550	442	108	108		
3	No 3 Ward	1	1,100	849	251	251		
4	No 4 Ward	1	400	334	66	66		
5	Kattalu Village-tract	2	2,400	1,950	450	450		
6	Kapa Village-tract	9	5,000	3,932	1,068	1,068		
7	Yaymyitgyi Village-tract	7	2,750	2,145	605	601	4	
8	Donpaleau Village-tract	8	4,050	3,124	926	876	50	
9	Tarlapine Village-tract	9	3,950	3,003	947	895	52	
10	Kamgyi Village-tract	9	7,350	5,561	1,789	1,539	250	
11	Warrit Village-tract	4	2,200	1,616	584	567	17	
12	Mingote Village-tract	3	2,200	1,703	497	497		
13	Maunghlaw Village-tract	2	2,500	1,332	1,168	1,176		8
14	Zaykami Village-tract	2	1,550	1,231	319	319		
15	Nyaungbi Village-tract	3	3,600	2,693	907	907		
16	Khwelkhayan Village-tract	11	7,200	5,524	1,676	1,724		48
17	Thantote Village-tract	3	2,350	1,802	548	490	58	
18	Tawpyar Village-tract	7	6,200	4,295	1,905	1,802	103	
19	Kanmaw Village-tract	10	11,550	76,26	3,924	3,924		
20	Sakhanthit Village-tract	7	5,700	4,738	962	912	50	
21	Yaykantaung Village-tract	11	6,800	5,237	1,563	1,505	58	
22	Thaechaung Village-tract	8	5,800	4,026	1,774	1,722	52	
23	Kabin Village-tract	14	7,200	5,400	1,800	1,700	100	
24	Kawzayar Village-tract	6	4,600	3,561	1,039	1,039		
25	Maetaw Village-tract	8	7,250	5,269	1,981	1,835	146	
26	Bandahne Village-tract	9	4,700	3,321	1,379	1,327	52	
27	Maai Village-tract	6	8,250	4,854	3,396	3,396		
	Ward/village -tract Total ballots	163	119,450	87,081	32,369	31,432	993	56
	Township Advanced ballots		735	735				
	Township Remaining ballots		4,442		4,442	4,442		
	Township Total	163	124,627	87,816	36,811	35,874	993	56

Findings on ballot papers for Pyithu Hluttaw Election in Launglon Township

10. According to the inspection, 112 polling stations in 4 Wards and 41 Village-tracts of Launglon Township in Taninthayi Region took out 140,813 ballots and used 77,052 ballots. It left 62,725 ballots instead of 63,761 . The extra/shortage ballots were found at respective poll stations. Findings were as follows:

Sr	Subject	Withdrawal	Used	Exact remaining	Remaining on the Ground	Difference	
						Missing	Extra
1	Ward/village -tract ballots	129,600	75,928	53,672	52,837	2,391	1,556
2	Township Advance ballots	2,463	1,124	1,339	1,339		
3	Township Remaining ballots	8,750		8,750	8,549	201	
Total		140,813	77,052	63,761	62,725	2,592	1,556

11. There were 2,592 missing ballots and 1,556 extra ballots at 112 polling stations in 4 Wards and 41 Village-tracts of Launglon Township.

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12. The inspection team examined only the ballots as they did not find the ballot receipts used at No (3) polling station of Thayagone village-tract of Launglon Township. Therefore, the exact numbers of advance ballots and remaining ballots were not known.
13. Findings were as follows:

Sr	Ward/Village-Tract	Total Polling Stations	Withdrawal	Used	Exact re-maining	Difference	
						Missing	Extra
1	Ka Ward	2,050	1,186	864	864		
2	Kha Ward	1,200	727	473	473		
3	Pantinin Village-tract	6,350	3,335	3,015	2,911	104	
4	Maungmakan Village-tract	6,900	4,439	2,461	1,911	550	
5	Kyauksin Village-tract	8,450	6,561	1,889	1,939		50
6	Myohaung Village-tract	4,050	2,,288	1,762	1,612	150	
7	Taungminpyaung Village-tract	2,000	1,184	816	816		
8	Khamaungtaung Village-tract	2,750	1,414	1,336	1,318	18	
9	Nakhantaw Village-tract	1,250	817	433	433		
10	Sakhangyi Village-tract	4,200	2,767	1,433	1,483		50
11	Kamyawkin Village-tract	4,100	2,744	1,356	1,358		2
12	Kamyawgyi Village-tract	3,450	2,239	1,211	1,161	50	
13	Thayargon Village-tract	2,300	1,479	821	517	304	
14	Minyat Village-tract	4,200	2,414	1,786	1,536	250	
15	Ywahaungwa Village-tract	1,200	620	580	580		
16	Pandale Village-tract	2,350	1,386	964	964		
17	Innzauk Village-tract	4,550	2,478	2,,072	2,072		
18	Thabyar Village-tract	3,350	1,971	1379	1,269	110	
19	Gangae Ward	1,550	902	648	648		
20	Gagyi Ward	1,850	1,138	712	712		
21	Waidi Village-tract	4,550	1,857	2,693	2,393	300	
22	Pyinhtaine Village-tract	1,100	579	521	521		
23	Panyit Village-tract	850	597	253	303		50
24	Sanhlan Village-tract	2,150	1,354	796	796		
25	Teezit Village-tract	2,200	1,386	814	814		
26	Hnyinmaw Village-tract	2,650	1,466	1,184	1,184		
27	Sitpye Village-tract	3,650	1,944	1,706	1,606	100	
28	Laythunkhan Village-tract	1,300	630	670	670		
29	Kanyonkyun Village-tract	2,150	1,044	1,106	1,106		
30	Kahtaungni Village-tract	750	274	476	426	50	
31	Yayphyu Village-tract	8,850	5,046	3,804	3,700	104	
32	Kadetngaeseik Village-tract	700	329	371	370	1	
33	Kadetgyi Village-tract	3,150	2,302	848	2,251		1403
34	Pyinkyaung Village-tract	1,550	848	702	702		
35	Kyetyettwin Village-tract	3,600	1,551	2,049	1,,999	50	
36	Thabyayshaung Village-tract	3,500	1,788	1,712	1,712		
37	Tawkyae Village-tract	1,850	860	990	990		
38	Thakyettaw Village-tract	4,600	2,367	2,233	2,234		1
39	Kyauktwin Village-tract	1,000	559	441	441		
40	Zalut Village-tract	1,550	795	755	755		
41	Kyaukwutpyin Village-tract	1,350	833	517	517		
42	Kyauknimaw Village-tract	2,550	1,720	830	830		
43	Autkyaukwut Village-tract	4,300	2,680	1,620	1,370	250	
44	Kyaukmatat Village-tract	1,450	949	501	501		
45	Pyingyikyun Village-tract	150	81	69	69		
	Ward/village -tract Total ballots	129,600	75,928	53,672	52,837	2,391	1,556
	Township Advance ballots	2,463	1,124	1,339	1,339		
	Township Remaining ballots	8,750		8,750	8,549	201	
	Township Total	140,813	77,052	63,761	62,725	2,592	1,556

Union Election Commission

Terrorists commit terror acts with use of grenades, homemade mines and bombs

GROUPS of terrorists and rioters exploded State-owned buildings, some residences of the people and planted homemade mines on public roads.

Ma Aye Lay, 37, was injured in a blast from a polyethylene bag near the southern arch of Mahazedi Pagoda in Ywabe Ward of Pyay Township at 6 pm on 8 May. The wounded was sent to Pyay Hospital to take medical treatment for the unserious injuries.

An explosion happened in front of Thant Zin clinic on Thitsa road in Ward 2 of Hpa-an in Kayin State at 7:05 pm. The explosion of a homemade mine left a woman and a child injured (unserious). Likewise, two terrorist men (under scrutiny) by motorcycle threw two homemade mines at the township development committee office in Ward 9 at 7:10 pm. The explosion of mines caused damage to a door and a fluorescent lamp.

At 7:15 pm, two terrorist men (under scrutiny) driving a motorcycle threw a 36 mm grenade at Eindu police station in Hpa-an Township, but it did not explode. Terrorists threw three homemade mines to the police station and staff housings. The explosion happened behind the housing. Security forces detained

Dagon Myothit (South).

Khin Lin Htwe (a) Po Htwa, 30 of Eindu Village. No one injury and damage happened in the incident.

At about 8 pm, two men (under scrutiny) by motorcycle threw a homemade mine at the office of Township Immigration and Population Department in Hsa Ward of Pyigyidagun Township of Mandalay Region. The mine exploded on 128th street without injury and damage.

At about 8:30 pm, a blast happened in Hayma Malar South Ward in Mahaaungmye Township. A homemade mine blasted near Sanda May snack shop at the corner of 78th and 37th streets, leaving no injury and damage.

A terrorist threw a grenade at the house of U Aung Hla, 63 of Ohdan Ward 6 in Mogaung in Kachin State, at 8:35 pm. Security forces found a grenade without fuse bearing APDF (TAS) letter from the house's compound and deactivated it. At the same time, security forces saw the explosion of a homemade mine in the compound of U Tin Hlaing's house. The blast did not affect anything.

At 9:15 pm, a homemade mine was found in front of No 2 Basic Education High School in Ward 3 of Myawady in Kayin State.

At 10:30 pm, security forces found pieces of the exploded PVC pipe, one detonator, one circuit chip, two wires, parts of mosquito repellent bottle, 3.7-volt cell chamber and gunpowder in the drain of Myoma BEPS between 7th and 8th streets in Shwechi Ward in Pyinmana.

At about 1 am on 9 May, an armed insurgent group exploded the 300 feet long and 25 feet wide Chaungwa bridge at the border of Kachin State and Sagaing Region. The explosion destroyed about an eight square area on the bridge in Kachin State without any injury. At present, vehicles cannot pass the bridge.

At 2:25 am, an explosion happened on the lane linking Natmauk and Duya roads in Yangyiaung Ward of Ye, Mon State. The blast destroyed the brick wall and two windows of the house, but no one was injured.

At about 4:20 am, a terrorist (under scrutiny) threw a homemade bomb at the house of Daw Mya Mon Aye, 43, in Konzaung Village in Pwintbyu Township, leaving no injury and damage.

At 6:15 am, security forces found an explosion of the homemade mine in front of the house of U Aung Ko Latt in Shwekanyinpin Village in Kyaunggon Township.

A blast occurred at the township education office in Ward 8 of Natogyi Township in the Mandalay Region, and another blast at Kanbawza Bank in Ward 4 at 6:15 am. The base of the ATM and its steel door were damaged in the explosion.

Security forces found a homemade mine near the level crossing on Ayeyawun Road in Ward 22 of Dagon Myothit (South) Township at 6:40 am and deactivated the mine. The security forces also deactivated homemade mines in Ward 1 of Kamayut Township, Ward 8 of Hline Township, Ward 2 of Kamayut Township and No 2 BEHS in Zaygon Ward of Mogaung in Kachin State in the morning.

At 9:20 am, a homemade mine exploded near the hall in front of the staff housing of Chin State Administration Council in Haka. The explosion caused damage at six corrugated iron sheets. Security forces are investigating the terrorist cases to take effective action against the offenders under the law. — MNA

10 MAY 2021
THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

Don't forget gratitude to learning society, teachers and motherland

OUR country has on 5 May reopened the universities, degree colleges, colleges and institutes, which were closed for more than one year, for students to resume their learning.

At present, the infection rate of COVID-19 in Myanmar is less than that of neighbouring countries. So, Myanmar's higher learning institutions have been reopened in line with the health guidelines for COVID-19.

Although the government is striving for the development of the education sector in order to turn out the educated, political opportunists do not wish to see such development by committing sabotage acts with imposition to threaten the teachers and students not to attend the universities.

In fact, students are taught under the education policies adopted by the previous governments. So, students, teachers, parents and administrative bodies need to join hands in ensuring the smooth process of the education system.

Nowadays, the government arranges new academic plans for university students to create opportunities for studying law and economic subjects. All university students have a chance to pursue the aforesaid subjects to broaden their scope of knowledge to be applied in practical fields.

The government plans to endow the students with the law and economic subjects so as to stand tall in their lives for doing businesses with basic legal knowledge on dos and don'ts to carry out everything.

University students who are learners of higher education have the knowledge to some extent for analyzing the good deeds and wrongdoings. They clearly know all the acts benefiting the State and the people or not. Those endowed with a wider skill and knowledge is capable of analyzing everything. So, they have chances to choose their ways of lives based on knowledge obtained from learning.

> Hence, those educated persons need to constantly seek and stand on the right track with the right attitude for firmly holding their future. So, they should not forget their learning society and the gratitude of teachers as well as the motherland forever.

In the future, the majority of those university students will have the capacity to take the leading role in their respective fields and then to step up their positions to be able to take responsibilities at different higher levels.

Hence, those educated persons need to constantly seek and stand on the right track with the right attitude for firmly holding their future. So, they should not forget their learning society and the gratitude of teachers as well as the motherland forever.

■ ■ ■

WHO Approves China's Sinopharm COVID-19 Vaccine

The World Health Organization (WHO) on Friday approved the Sinopharm COVID-19 vaccine for emergency use – the first Chinese jab to receive the WHO's green light.

THE United Nations (UN) health agency signed off on the two-dose vaccine, which is already being deployed in dozens of countries around the world.

The WHO has already given emergency use listing to the vaccines being made by Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna, Johnson and Johnson, and the AstraZeneca jab being produced at sites in India and in South Korea, which it counts separately.

"This afternoon, WHO gave emergency use listing to Sinopharm Beijing's COVID-19 vaccine, making it the sixth vaccine to receive WHO validation for safety, efficacy and quality," WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told a news conference.

"The Strategic Advisory Group of Experts on Immunisation, or SAGE, has also reviewed the available data, and recommends the vaccine for adults 18 years and older, with a two-dose schedule."

An emergency use listing by the WHO paves the way for countries worldwide to quickly approve and import a vaccine for distribution, especially those states without an international-standard regulator of their own.

It also opens the door for the jabs to enter the COVAX global vaccine-sharing scheme, which aims to provide equitable access to doses around the world and particularly in poorer countries.

COVAX Call

"The addition of this vaccine has the potential to rapidly accelerate COVID-19 vaccine access for countries seeking to protect health workers and populations at risk," said Mariangela Simao, the WHO's assistant director general for access to health products.

"We urge the manufacturer to participate in the COVAX facility and contribute to the goal of more equitable vaccine distribution."

Currently only AstraZeneca and some Pfizer jabs are flowing through the scheme.

This picture shows a syringe and boxes of the Chinese Sinopharm COVID-19 vaccine during a mass vaccination campaign at the Boris Trajkovski Arena in Skopje on 6 May, 2021. **PHOTO: AFP**

Bruce Aylward, the WHO lead on COVAX, said Sinopharm was "looking at trying to provide substantial support, make substantial doses available."

"It has been very interested in looking at playing a role to help with the global response, which is encouraging."

The WHO recommended that the two Sinopharm shots be taken three to four weeks apart.

The vaccine's efficacy for symptomatic and hospitalized cases of COVID-19 was estimated to be 79 per cent when all age groups are combined, it said.

The agency said few adults over 60 were enrolled in clinical trials of the vaccine, so its efficacy could not be estimated in that age group.

Nevertheless, "there is no theoretical reason to believe that the vaccine has a different safety profile in older and younger populations," it said.

The Sinopharm vaccine is already in use in 42 territories around the world, fourth behind AstraZeneca (166), Pfizer-BioNTech (94) and Moderna (46), according to an AFP tally.

Besides China, it is being used in Algeria, Cameroon, Egypt, Hungary, Iraq, Iran, Pakistan, Peru, the United Arab Emirates, Serbia and the Seychelles, among others.

Second Chinese Vaccine Next

A clutch of other vaccines is on the road towards WHO emergency use listing.

A WHO decision is expected within days on Sinovac, a second Chinese-made vaccine already being used in 22 territories.

But WHO experts said Friday they have now asked Sinovac for additional information and are waiting for answers before they can make a recommendation.

Behind Sinovac, Russia's Sputnik V vaccine is the next furthest ahead in the process.

SOURCE: AFP

EU invites 'concrete' US plan on lifting vaccine patents

Europe on Saturday passed the ball back to Washington in a debate over Covid vaccine patents, pushing the US for a concrete proposal and a commitment to export much-needed jabs.

GERMANY'S Chancellor Angela Merkel, speaking after a summit of EU and Indian leaders, said the EU had exported much of its own production and that America should follow suit.

"Now that a further part of the American population has been vaccinated, I hope that we can come to a free exchange of components and an opening of the market for vaccines," she said.

European Council chief Charles Michel said the bloc was ready to discuss a US offer to suspend patent protection on vaccines -- once the details are clear.

"We are ready to engage on this topic, as soon as a concrete proposal would be put on the table," Michel said at an EU summit in Portugal that discussed that subject, among others.

He added that the EU had doubts about the idea being a "magic bullet" in the short term and encouraged "all the partners to facilitate the export of doses."

France's scepticism was plain, with President Emmanuel Macron declaring "patents are not the priority".

A debate on the issue could be "a very good idea," Macron suggested, but he added: "I call very clearly on the United States to put an end to export bans not only on vaccines but on vaccine ingredients, which prevent production.

"The key to producing vaccines more quickly for poor countries and developing countries is to produce more, to lift export bans."

Italy's prime minister, Mario Draghi, echoed that.

"Before getting to the liberalization of vaccines, other simpler things should be done, such as removing the export block that today the US firstly and the UK continue to maintain," he said.

Ursula von der Leyen said waiving patents "will not bring a single dose of vaccine in the short- and medium-term". **PHOTO: POOL/AFP**

"This, I would say, is the first thing to do," he said. "The fact of liberalizing the patents, even temporarily, does not guarantee the production of the vaccine."

While at the summit, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen announced a contract with drugs giant Pfizer/BioNTech for up to 1.8 billion doses of their patented vaccine had been concluded. Part of that supply is for EU exports to countries in need.

Influential voices support the push to waive patents, not least that of Pope Francis, who criticized putting "the laws of the market or intellectual property above the laws of love and the health of humanity".

The World Health Organization, India and South Africa have all called for patents to be temporarily suspended.

'Global cooperation' needed

The EU leaders' comments came on the second day of an summit that featured a bilateral meeting between the EU and India, where authorities on Saturday said the pandemic killed 4,000 people in a single day.

In a joint statement, both sides said "global cooperation" was needed to fight the pandemic and they "supported universal, safe, equitable and affordable access to Covid-19 vaccines, diagnostics and treatments".

"The vaccination process is not a race amongst countries but a race against time," they said, underlining the EU's contributions to the WHO-backed Covax facility and India's role producing many of the vaccine doses distributed around the world.

EU officials briefing journalists in Brussels on the issue of waiving patents said the hoarding of crucial ingredients needed for vaccines was a larger obstacle than patent protection.

The United States is not in a position to export Covid vaccine doses to countries in need because contracts it signed with vaccine-makers prevent their use outside of America, and the Defense Production Act restricts exports until Americans are vaccinated first.

That contrasts with the EU, which has sent more than 200 million doses abroad -- as many as it kept for itself -- prompting von der Leyen to describe the bloc as "the pharmacy of the world".

EU officials are worried that Washington's gambit to get around its own blockage by invoking a suspension of patents will end up painting Brussels as a villain if it does not follow suit.

An EU official briefing journalists on the complexities on the issue said on Friday that lifting patents, by itself, "will not fix things".

SOURCE: AFP

Public information

Yangon Region Administration Council is working with relevant departments to help the businesses in the region. People are informed to contact the following phone numbers to get assistance for their small and medium-scaled businesses and investments which are facing some delays and working to do new businesses.

Phone numbers: 01 830 1975, 01 830 2175

Yangon Region Administration Council

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The Global New Light of Myanmar ရောင်စုံသတင်းစာများ
မှာယူဖတ်ရှုလိုခြင်းနှင့် သတင်းစာများရောက်ရှိမှု မရှိခြင်းတို့ကြောင့်
အခက်အခဲများဖြစ်ပေါ်ပါက အောက်ဖော်ပြပါ ဖုန်းနံပါတ်များသို့
ဆက်သွယ်နိုင်ပါသည်-

- သတင်းနှင့်စာနယ်ဇင်းလုပ်ငန်း(ရုံးချုပ်)၊ ဧရာပြည်တော်။ ဖုန်း-၀၆၇-၃၄၁၁၁၈၊ ၀၉-၄၃၀၃၉၆၂
- ဧရာပြည်တော်သတင်းစာတိုက်(ဧရာပူသီရိမြို့နယ်) ဖုန်း-၀၆၇-၃၆၁၀၇၊ ၀၉-၄၂၀၄၀၆၈၆၃
- မြန်မာ့အလင်းသတင်းစာတိုက်(ရန်ကုန်) ဖုန်း-၀၁-၅၅၄၃၁၇၊ ၀၉-၄၄၈၄၂၂၁၄
- ကြေးမုံသတင်းစာတိုက်(ရန်ကုန်) ဖုန်း-၀၁-၈၂၉၂၈၃၀၊ ၀၉-၄၅၀၀၂၅၅၇၀
- The Global New Light of Myanmar (ရန်ကုန်) ဖုန်း-၀၁-၈၆၀၄၅၂၊ ၀၉-၉၈၃၉၂၄၉၉၁
- ကိုယ်ပွားသတင်းစာတိုက်(မန္တလေး) ဖုန်း-၀၂-၃၀၄၇၂၂၊ ၀၂-၄၀၄၅၅၀
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- ကိုယ်ပွားသတင်းစာတိုက်(လားရှိး) ဖုန်း-၀၈၂-၂၂၀၄၀၆
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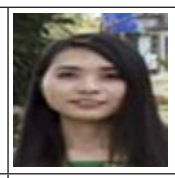
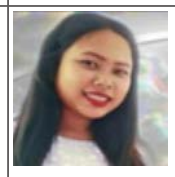
သင့်ရေပင်နှိုးများအောင်မြင်ဖို့ မြန်မာ့အလင်း ကြေးမုံ
GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

Files opened against nurses who participated in CDM activity with attempts to deteriorate peace and stability of the State

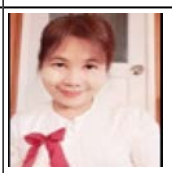
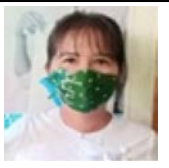
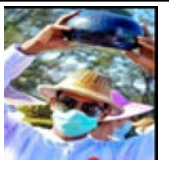
THE following nurses have been charged under Section 505-A of the Penal Code for inciting State service personnel and health staff to participate in CDM activities, themselves participating in it, supporting CDM activities and CRPH unlawful association with the aim of deteriorating the State administrative machinery.

Sr	Name	Hospital	Address	Section of Penal Code	Photo
1	Daw Myint Myint Wai (Senior Nurse)	Shwebo Hospital	Shwebo Town, Sagaing Region	505-a	
2	Daw Thida Myint (Senior Nurse)	Kawlin Hospital	Kawlin Township, Sagaing Region	505-a	
3	Daw Aye Aye Tun (Senior Nurse)	Rakhinechaung Station Hospital	Dala Township, Yangon Region	505-a	
4	Daw San San Tint (Senior Nurse)	Letpadan Hospital	Paungde Township, Bago Region	505-a	
5	Daw San San Mar (Senior Nurse)	PwinOoLwin Hospital	TadaU Township, Mandalay Region	505-a	
6	Daw Yi Yi Htwe (Nurse)	Kengtung General Hospital	Kengtung Township, Shan State (East)	505-a	
7	Daw Khin Poe Lay (Nurse)	Thaton Hospital	Thaton Town, Mon State	505-a	
8	Nan Sanda Win (Nurse)	Myawady General Hospital	Myawady Town, Kayin State	505-a	
9	Daw Han Tha Tun (Nurse)	Phayathonzu Hospital	Phayathonzu Town, Kayin State	505-a	
10	Daw Su Su Win (Nurse)	TadaU Hospital	TadaU Town, Mandalay Region	505-a	

It was reported that as arrangements are being made to arrest the nurses who were opened files of lawsuits, effective action will be taken against those who admist those nurses as supporting participants in CDM and CRPH movements.—MNA

Files opened against education staff who participated in CDM activity with attempts to deteriorate peace and stability of the State

THE following teachers have been charged under Section 505-A of the Penal Code for inciting State service personnel and education staff to participate in CDM activities, themselves participating in it, supporting CDM activities and CRPH unlawful association with the aim of deteriorating the State administrative machinery.

Sr	Name	Occupation	Address	Section of Penal Code	Photo
1	U Naing Lin Tun	Assistant Lecturer, Yangon Technological University (Hmawby), Hmawby Township	Sangyoung Township, Yangon Region	505-a	
2	Daw Aye Aye Myat	Assistant Lecturer, Yangon Technological University (Hmawby), Hmawby Township	Bago Town, Bago Region	505-a	
3	Daw Chaw Ei Thein	Headmistress, BEPS (Kyokon), Hlegu Township	Hlegu Township, Yangon Region	505-a	
4	U Soe Thura Kyaw	Senior Assistant Teacher, BEHS-Branch Gyobyu, Taikkyi Township	Aphauk Town, Yangon Region	505-a	
5	U Thiha Khin Soe	Junior Assistant Teacher, BEPPS (Kyeepinlahar), Taikkyi Township	Taikkyi Township, Yangon Region	505-a	
6	Daw Marlar Nyein	Primary Assistant Teacher, BEPPS (Yesu), Hmawby Township	Hmawby Township, Yangon Region	505-a	
7	U Min Thukha	Primary Assistant Teacher, BEPS (Shawpon), Taikkyi Township	Aphauk Town, Yangon Region	505-a	
8	U Nyi Tun	Primary Assistant Teacher, BEPS (Chaungthaya), Zigon Township	Zigon Township, Bago Region	505-a	
9	U Aung Ye Lin	Primary Assistant Teacher, BEPS (Thabyaypin), Kyunsu Township	Kyunsu Township, Taninthayi Region	505-a	
10	Daw Aye Aye Mon	Peon, office of the Township Education Officer, Maubin Township	Nyaungdon Town, Ayeyawady Region	505-a	

As tasks are being carried out to arrest those education staff charged, people are urged to inform nearby police stations about those education staff and action will be taken against the persons under the law for admitting those education staff. —MNA

Natural gas export tops US$1.2 bln in seven months (Oct-Apr)

MYANMAR'S exports of natural gas in the seven months (Oct-Apr) of the current financial year2020-2021 amounted to US$1.238 billion, the Commerce Ministry's data showed.

The figures indicated a sharp drop of $880 million compared to the year-ago period. During the corresponding period of last FY, Myanmar's natural gas export generated an income of $2.124 billion.

Natural gas is included in the list of major export items of Myanmar. Over 10 per cent of the country's total export earnings come from the sale of natural gas.

There are 53 onshore blocks and 51 offshore blocks, totalling 104 blocks. A total of 25 onshore blocks and 31 offshore blocks are operating under foreign investment. Natural gas extraction is being made at the Yadana, the Yedagun, the Shwe, and the Zaw Tika offshore blocks and onshore drilling blocks. According to the Ministry of Electricity and Energy, yearly extraction is elevated to cubic feet 670.36 billion from 600 billion last year.

The Shwe natural gas field, located offshore from Rakhine State, was discovered in 2014. Natural gas extracted from the area is exported to China.

The Yadana natural gas project is being carried out by the TOTAL Company, with its pipeline supplying natural gas to Thailand. Natural gas is also extracted in Yedagun, located offshore from Taninthayi and discovered in 1992. The Zawtika Project in the Gulf of Moattama mainly supplies natural gas to neighbouring Thailand.

Production at Yadana and Yedagun is declining, and those projects will be halted in the coming years.

Natural gas is included in the list of major export items of Myanmar. Over 10 per cent of the country's total export earnings come from the sale of natural gas.

Myanmar's exports of natural gas stood at $3.5 billion in the 2019-2020 FY, $3.9 billion in the 2018-2019 FY, $3.5 billion in the 2017-2018FY, $3.116 billion in the 2016-2017 FY, and $3.445 billion in the 2015-2016 FY, as per Commerce Ministry data. – KH/GNLM

YGEA calls for Telegraph Transfer system for gold export, import

The country needs to monitor the gold and jewellery exports and imports in order to ensure there is no illegal income.

YANGON Region Gold Entrepreneurs Association (YGEA) has requested the State Administration Council (SAC) to resume the Telegraph Transfer (TT) system for gold export and import transaction, said U Myo Myint, chair of YGEA.

At the present time, gold export has come to a stop after the international remittance for a gold transaction was changed from Telegraph Transfer (TT) to Letter of Credit (LC), he added.

"Gold export is not going well. Only through the TT system, the trade will go smooth. If the transaction is permitted only with LC, the trade will completely halt. The YGEA has recently submitted a request for the resumption of TT payment system to the SAC," U Myo Myint elaborated.

As per the notification released by the Ministry of Commerce on 12 August 2020, the transaction for gold export and import can be done only with the LC system.

Myanmar is placed on the Grey List by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF). This inter-governmental body sets anti-money laundering standards. Therefore, the country needs to monitor the gold and jewellery exports and imports in order to ensure there is no illegal income. According to Trade Department, the payment method was changed to LC as per the notification released by the Commission.

The payment using LC can take about two months, cost banking service changes by two sides, and increase the charges for security matter in transport. Consequently, gold trading in the international market has also stalled due to volatile prices, YGEA stated. The domestic gold market might recover if the resumption of the TT system is allowed. Japan and the Republic of Korea primarily purchase gold and other jewellery pieces, and other tourists also buy them, the YGEA stated.

Myanmar gave the green light to gold exports and imports in January 2018, with the aims of eradicating illegal trade, earn revenue for the country and maintaining the market's stability. – NN/GNLM

US dollar hits all-time high at K1,660 on 9 May

THE bullish US dollar trend continues, and the US dollar value against Kyat reached the highest of K1,660 in history in the afternoon of 9 May, local forex market's data showed.

The dollar exchange rate stood at K1,469 on 31 March and strengthened to K1,495 on 6 April. The US dollar is constantly strengthening in the local forex market. The rate rose by over K160 in a month.

Nevertheless, the local forex market rate is K43 higher than the rate set by the CBM. A dollar exchange rate was set by the CBM at K1,567 on 9 May, whereas it stood at K1,610 in the local forex market, a money changer reported.

A dollar was valued at only K1,330 in January-end. The dollar exchange rate jumped to K1,441 in February, with an increase of K100 as against January's rate. The bullish US dollar extends its rise at present.

The dollar gain will benefit the exporters. Yet, it will hike up the local food prices. The currency intervention is required to steer the own currency value. The current political changes in Myanmar affect the currency market. Some people want to hold the hard currency during difficult times, a market observer shared his opinion.

The local forex market's data showed that the dollar exchange rate touched the maximum of K1,345 and the minimum of K1,327 in January 2021. The rate moved in the range of K1,335-1,465 in February. It reached the lowest of K1,420 and the highest of K1,550 in March.

In 2020, the exchange rate moved in the range of K1,465-1,493 in January, K1,436-1,465 in February, K1,320-1,445 in March, K1,395-1,440 in April, K1,406-1,426 in May, K1,385-1,412 in June, K1,367-1,410 in July, K1,335-1,390 in August, K1,310-1,355 in September, K1,282-1,315 in October, K1,303-1,330 in November and K1,324-1,403 in December.

In 2019, the rates are pegged at K1,508-1,517 in July, K1,510-1,526 in August, K1,527-1,565 in September, K1,528-1,537 in October, K1,510-1,524 in November and K1,485-1,513 in December.

On 20 September 2018, the dollar exchange rate hit an all-time high of K1,650 in the local currency market. – HH/GNLM

Italy eyes new rules for EU, UK, Israel arrivals mid-May

Passengers queue to be tested for Covid-19 before boarding a cruise liner in Savona, near Genoa. **PHOTO: AFP**

ITALY is hoping to drop the quarantine requirement for visitors from the rest of the European Union, Britain and Israel by mid-May, Foreign Minister Luigi Di Maio said on Saturday.

"The aim is to reopen to visitors from foreign countries which have reached a high level of vaccinations, loosening some measures as early as mid-May," he said after talks with Health Minister Roberto Speranza.

"We are working to overcome the 'mini quarantine' for those who come from European countries, the United Kingdom and Israel, if they have a negative test, proof of vaccination or have recovered from coronavirus in the last six months." The current rules on EU arrivals expire on May 15.

Di Maio said Italy would also be working to increase the number of "Covid-free" flights to and from the United States, and to end the quarantine requirement from June.

Italy began a cautious reopening on April 26 after months of coronavirus restrictions, with bars and restaurants permitted to serve customers outdoors.

The country is desperate for the return of tourists as it seeks to recover from a major recession sparked by the pandemic, but health experts still urge caution.

Italy recorded another 10,000 new cases of Covid-19 on Saturday and 224 deaths, taking the total to more than 122,000 -- the highest rate in the EU.

"I, like I think most Italians, want to reopen, I want people to go back out to work, to have fun, to be together," Prime Minister Mario Draghi told reporters Saturday after an EU summit in Portugal.

"But... we have to do it safely, that is, calculating the risk that we run." —AFP ■

Spain ends Covid state of emergency

SPAIN has lifted a state of emergency in place since October to fight the pandemic, allowing Spaniards to travel between regions for the first time in months.

"I was fed up with not being able to get out of Madrid," jewellery designer Blaca Valls told AFP on Saturday, echoing the relief of many in the country over the easing of restrictions.

"I felt frustrated, locked down, with no freedom," added the 46-year-old who plans to go to Galicia, in northwest Spain, next weekend to celebrate a birthday.

Argentina Enriquez, a 37-year-old Mexican student, said she was impatiently waiting to head to the countryside to enjoy barbecues with friends, play the guitar and go for walks.

"Just being together... a lot of emotions," she said.

Although the emergency measure, which expired at midnight (2200 GMT Saturday) will lead to more freedoms, it is a headache for the country's 17 regional governments responsible for health care.

The state of emergency provided them with a legal framework to impose measures -- such as nighttime curfews or a ban on non-essential travel between regions -- that limited freedoms. Except for a few days over Christmas when the restrictions were lifted, people have not been able to travel to other regions, go on holiday, or see family.

Discouraged by the surge in infections after Christmas, the authorities did not loosen internal travel restrictions during Easter week, normally a peak travel period in Spain. —AFP ■

The state of emergency had prevented non-essential travel between regions. **PHOTO: AFP**

Mexico to ease capital lockdown, resume quake drills

People take part in an earthquake drill in Mexico City on January 20, 2020. **PHOTO: AFP**

MEXICAN authorities announced Friday a further easing of pandemic lockdown measures in the capital and the resumption of earthquake simulation drills, reflecting a decline in new coronavirus cases and deaths.

Mexico City will move next week to yellow status, the second lowest of four under the country's traffic-light system, Mayor Claudia Sheinbaum announced.

The move will ease restrictions on capacity or opening hours for businesses including shops, cinemas, casinos, amusement parks and banks.

The government also announced nationwide plans to restart earthquake and other disaster drills that were suspended last year because of the pandemic.

The exercises, held regularly before the health crisis, aim to prepare the country for the inevitable next major tremor to strike one of the most seismically active regions on Earth.

In Mexico City and other areas of seismic risk, the May 19 drills will simulate an earthquake with a magnitude greater than 7, while elsewhere authorities will pick a different type of disaster.

Alarms will ring out in the capital, whose warning system using seismic monitors aims to give residents up to two minutes' warning of earthquakes with epicenters along the Pacific Coast.

Mexico's official Covid-19 death toll of around 218,000 is one of the highest in the world, and the actual figure is believed to be significantly worse. —AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Madagascar receives first coronavirus vaccines

MADAGASCAR on Saturday received its first batch of coronavirus vaccines through the Covax global sharing scheme, one of the last countries in Africa to obtain the prised jabs following months of resistance by the president.

While countries across the globe scrambled to secure doses of the precious shots, Madagascar's President Andry Rajoelina showed little interest in inoculation and instead continued to promote a locally brewed herbal drink as the only required coronavirus "cure".

But an unprecedented infection resurge last month forced Rajoelina to bow to growing criticism of his handling of the pandemic and agree to a vaccine rollout.

The first shipment of 250,000 Oxford/AstraZeneca jabs landed on the Indian Ocean island nation on Saturday. —AFP ■

Covid claims two India Olympic hockey gold winners on same day

TWO members of India's last Olympic gold medal-winning hockey team in Moscow 1980, Ravindra Pal Singh and Maharaj Krishan Kaushik, have died from coronavirus on the same day.

Their families said they died hours apart on Saturday: Singh, 60, in the northern city of Lucknow and Kaushik, 66, later in New Delhi. Both had been on ventilators in hospitals. India has been battling a huge surge in infections in recent weeks with new deaths passing 4,000 for the first time on Saturday. Kaushik went on to coach the India men's side to gold at the 1998 Asian Games in Bangkok. He also coached the women's side that took bronze at the 2006 Asian Games in Doha.

Singh also played for India at the 1984 Olympics in Los Angeles, but retired because of chronic back injuries.

"His contribution to Indian sports will always be remembered," said Sports Minister Kiren Rijuju in a tribute. —AFP ■

European leaders postpone decision on patent waiver of COVID-19 vaccines

PRESIDENT of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen said on Saturday at the end of the social summit of the European Union (EU) held in the Portuguese city of Porto that leaders of the EU countries understand that there are "more pressing issues" than patent waiver on vaccines against COVID-19. Speaking to journalists, von der Leyen said this topic "is important," but will be discussed "in the long term, not in the short or medium term."

According to her, Europe should not "lose sight of the main urgencies," which are "production of vaccines as soon as possible and how they will be distributed in a fair and equitable way."

The EU executive stressed that "the European Union is the pharmacy of the world."

"Up to today, 400 million doses of vaccines have been produced in the European Union. And 50 percent of them -- 200 million doses -- have been exported to 90 different countries in the world. So we invite others to do the same," she added.

According to her, "this is the best way, in the short term, to address bottlenecks and lack of vaccines worldwide."

"We have now delivered over 200 million doses to the European people. So we are on track to achieve our objective of enough doses being delivered in July to vaccinate 70 percent of the European adult population. Close to 160 million Europeans now have already received a first shot of the vaccine, that's over 25 percent of the EU population," she noted. She also announced that the EU has concluded the negotiations with BioNTech-Pfizer for a new contract which secures 1.8 billion doses of vaccines through 2023. Von der Leyen was glad to report that the legal and the technical work on the EU travel certificate -- the vaccination certificate -- is on track for the system to be operational in June.

The U.S. on Wednesday agreed to support waiving IP restrictions on COVID-19 vaccines at the World Trade Organization (WTO). French President Emmanuel Macron said during the social summit that he is "available to debate the proposal, but that this is not the solution" to increase the speed of vaccination. — Xinhua ■

Demonstrators hold a rally to "Free the Vaccine," calling on the U.S. to commit to a global coronavirus vaccination plan that includes sharing vaccine formulas with the world to help ensure that every nation has access to a vaccine, on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., U.S., May 5, 2021. **PHOTO: AFP**

U.S. dollar share of global central bank reserves drops to 25-year low: IMF

Some expect that US dollar's share of global reserves will continue to fall as emerging market and developing economy central banks seek further diversification of currency composition of their reserves. **PHOTO: AFP**

THE share of US dollar reserves held by central banks fell to 59 per cent — its lowest level in 25 years — during the fourth quarter of 2020, according to a recent survey by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Findings of the IMF's Currency Composition of Official Foreign Exchange Reserves (COFER) survey say this partly reflects declining role of US dollar in global economy in the face of competition from other currencies used by central banks for international transactions.

If the shifts in central bank reserves are large enough, they can affect currency and bond markets, said Serkan Arslanalp, Deputy Division Chief in balance of payments division of IMF's statistics department, and economist Chima Simpson-Bell. The share of US dollar assets in central bank reserves dropped by 12 percentage points — from 71 to 59 per cent — since the euro was launched in 1999, they said in a blogpost posted on IMF's website.

Meanwhile, the share of the euro has fluctuated around 20 per cent while the share of other currencies including Australian dollar, Canadian dollar and Chinese renminbi climbed to 9 per cent in the fourth quarter. However, the fact that value of US dollar has been broadly unchanged while its share of global reserves has declined indicates that central banks have indeed been shifting gradually away.

Some expect that US dollar's share of global reserves will continue to fall as emerging market and developing economy central banks seek further diversification of currency composition of their reserves. A few countries like Russia have already announced their intention to do so. —ANI ■

Hainan FTP to become world's largest duty-free market

THE Hainan free trade port (FTP) will likely become the world's biggest duty-free market in the near term if it continues on its current growth curve, according to a report jointly released by KPMG China and The Moodie Davitt Report.

By the end of 2020, offshore duty-free business in Hainan was worth approximately 5 billion U.S. dollars, boosted by an enhanced shopping policy, said the report.

It was released on the sideline of the ongoing inaugural China International Consumer Products Expo.

In July 2020, the province increased its annual per capita duty-free shopping limit from 30,000 yuan (about 4,638 U.S. dollars) to 100,000 yuan.

Noting that the business environment in the Hainan FTP benefits from the country's national strategies, institutional design, and policy supports, the report said its open free trade and offshore duty-free policy have created fertile ground for the development of the retail travel industry.

The rapid offshore duty-free sector development in Hainan since 2011 has played a significant role in its growing allure and status as an international tourism consumption center, it said.

China released a master plan last June to build the island province into a globally influential and high-level free trade port by the middle of the century. —AFP ■

China's e-commerce logistics activities expand in April

CHINA'S e-commerce logistics sector reported moderate growth in April, according to an industry survey jointly conducted by the China Federation of Logistics and Purchasing and e-commerce giant JD.com.

The index tracking e-commerce logistics activities rose to 111 points last month, up from 109.4 points in March, the survey showed.

The total demand for e-commerce logistics fell in the period, with the sub-index tracking the total business volume coming in at 127.8 points, down 0.3 points from the previous month.

Demand for e-commerce in rural areas maintained its growth momentum, with the sub-index tracking e-commerce logistics in these regions standing at 129.1 points, up 3.6 points from March.

The survey predicted that residents' consumption will continue to increase, and that the e-commerce index will maintain its stable and positive trend in May, influenced by the Labor Day holiday.— Xinhua ■

HAPPY 45th BIRTHDAY TO SAYARMA MAYFLORA
(10th May 2021)

U.S.A (Ko Ko)

Fire and rehire: Britain's new labour battleground?

AS coronavirus wreaks severe economic damage, some British employers stand accused of taking a highly controversial measure to stay afloat: fire and rehire.

The practice, which involves dismissing employees and re-engaging them on inferior terms, flared up in April, when British Gas dismissed almost 500 engineers after they refused to accept new contracts.

Last year, British Airways staff battled with the national airline's management over proposed fire-and-rehire schemes, while supermarket giant Asda faced a similar stand-off in 2019.

As coronavirus wreaks severe economic damage, some British employers stand accused of taking a highly controversial measure to stay afloat: fire and rehire. **PHOTO: AFP**

Bus drivers in Manchester, coffee workers at Jacobs Douwe Egberts and distribution centre employees for Tesco are now locked in disputes over new contracts which unions have denounced as fire-and-rehire tactics.

Fire and rehire is allowed in Britain but Prime Minister Boris Johnson has called it "unacceptable", and trade unions and the main opposition Labour party are demanding a ban.

Unite, the UK and Ireland's largest union, claimed fire and rehire is "ripping through workplaces like a disease".

A survey of 2,231 workers by the Trades Union Congress umbrella group found almost one in 10 were told to reapply for their jobs on worse terms or face dismissal, with young and ethnic-minority workers disproportionately affected.— AFP ■

Major US pipeline shut by ransomware attack

THE largest fuel pipeline system in the United States was forced to shut down its entire network after a ransomware attack, the operating company said in a statement Saturday.

The Colonial Pipeline Company ships gasoline and jet fuel from the Gulf Coast of Texas to the populous East Coast through 5,500 miles (8,850 kilometres) of pipeline, serving 50 million consumers.

It said it had been "the victim of a cybersecurity attack" which involved ransomware -- attacks that encrypt computer systems and seek to extract payments from operators.

"In response, we proactively took certain systems offline to contain the threat, which has temporarily halted all pipeline operations, and affected some of our IT systems," it said.

"A leading, third-party cybersecurity firm was engaged, and they have launched an investigation into the nature and scope of this incident, which is ongoing. We have contacted law enforcement and other federal agencies," the statement continued.

Colonial, based in the southern state of Georgia, is the largest pipeline operator in the United States by volume, transporting 2.5 million barrels of gasoline, diesel fuel, jet fuel and other refined petroleum products per day.

The attack prompted calls from cybersecurity experts for improved oversight of the industry to better prepare for future threats. — AFP ■

The Colonial Pipeline serves millions of customers on the East Coast, including Washington Dulles International Airport. **PHOTO: AFP**

African nations gear up to polish image at Dubai Expo

AFRICAN nations are attending this year's Dubai Expo 2020 in force, hoping to project an image of a modern and ambitious continent and shed stereotypes of conflict and underdevelopment.

The six-month mega-event, delayed by the Covid pandemic, is a milestone for the wealthy Gulf emirate.

It has spent some $8.2 billion transforming a barren stretch on the outskirts of the city into an eye-popping site bristling with high-tech pavilions. As the huge project nears completion ahead of the scheduled October 2021 opening, African delegates touted their ambitions to generate trade and investment at a high-level meeting this week.

With nearly all African states represented for the first time, Expo provides a stage to advertise a "continent that is ready to move forward" and "a secure place to do business," Levi Uche Madueke from the 55-member African Union told AFP.

The six-month mega-event is a milestone for Dubai which has spent some $8.2 billion creating an eye-popping site bristling with high-tech pavilions. **PHOTO:AFP**

"The time has come for us to actually reach out to the world, and for the world to understand us, and also see how they can collaborate with us," said Madueke, the AU's head of strategic partnerships.

Since the first World Expo was held in London in 1851, global fairs have been used to showcase innovations and as a branding exercise for participating countries.

And in its quest to gain influence on the international scene, the United Arab Emirates has increased its political and economic presence in Africa in recent years, particularly in the eastern Horn. — AFP ■

Japanese airlines eye low-cost services to drive post-pandemic growth

WHILE uncertainty remains over when — or if — travel demand will make a full-fledged recovery from the coronavirus pandemic, Japan's two major airlines are positioning themselves to take advantage of any upturn with a punt on low-cost services.

With leisure demand expected to recover much faster than business travel, ANA Holdings Inc. and Japan Airlines Co. are both strengthening ties with low-cost carriers.

But the move by the two airlines, which have established themselves as full-service carriers, could be a double-edged sword, aviation experts say.

ANA Holdings, the parent company of All Nippon Airways Co., is planning to launch a new LCC brand in the year to March 2023 with flights connecting Japan with Southeast Asia and Oceania.

Its domestic rival JAL, meanwhile, said Friday it will make Spring Airlines Japan Co. a consolidated subsidiary in June. The unit of China's major LCC Spring Airlines Co. will take its place in the JAL group alongside wholly-owned budget airline Zipair Tokyo Inc., which started operations last year in the midst of the pandemic.

The two budget carriers reflect JAL's strategic shift away from what used to be seen as the Japanese airline's cautious stance on LCCs.

"The coronavirus pandemic is greatly changing the structure of air travel demand and consumer behaviour, along with the market environment. We will promote reform to create a sustainable business structure," JAL President Yuji Akasaka said at a press conference on its latest earnings Friday. — AFP ■

Just short of majority, Scottish independence party demands referendum

THE Scottish National Party on Saturday won a fourth term in power in the devolved parliament just short of an outright majority, with its leader Nicola Sturgeon reiterating her demand for a fresh referendum on independence.

The SNP won 64 seats in the 129-seat parliament in Thursday's vote, just shy of the 65 it was seeking for an overall majority to lend strength to its push for a referendum, a demand British Prime Minister Boris Johnson has condemned as "reckless."

The Scottish Conservatives retained their second party status with 31 seats while Scottish Labour won 22 seats, followed by the Scottish Greens with 8 seats and the Liberal Democrats with 4. The result saw little change from the last vote in 2016. The UK vote in local and regional elections on "Super Thursday" were the first major polls since Brexit and the pandemic. The count was much slower than usual due to virus safety measures.

Johnson's Conservative Party performed strongly in England, outdoing Labour in its traditional heartlands although the main UK opposition party held onto power in the devolved parliament in Wales. But the focus was on Scotland, where the vote for the devolved parliament in Edinburgh saw the ruling SNP seek the nation's backing for its planned "indyref2", which could reshape the UK. Sturgeon brushed off the lack of an outright majority, saying that along with the Scottish Greens, Holyrood had an increased pro-independence majority. — AFP ■

A vote for the devolved parliament in Edinburgh tested public support for the SNP's plan to hold a fresh referendum on independence. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

New York Times Square shooting leaves three injured, including a child

New York police officers stand guard after two women and a four-year-old girl were injuring by gun fire in Times Square, New York on May 8, 2021. **PHOTO:AFP**

A shooting in New York's bustling Times Square on Saturday injured a four-year-old girl and two women, in the latest incident of gun violence in the city, police said.

The shooting took place just before 5:00 pm local time (9:00 pm GMT), at the intersection of 7th Avenue and 44th Street, a NYPD spokesperson told AFP.

The three victims were a four-year-old child in a stroller, who was hit in the leg while her family was buying toys, a 46-year-old woman hit in the foot, and a 23-year-old tourist from Rhode Island hit in the leg.

They were hospitalized in Manhattan, and their lives were not in danger, said New York police commissioner Dermot Shea, at a press briefing.

Shea said the three bystanders -- who did not appear to know each other -- stumbled into an argument between two to four men, at least one of whom fired a gun.

No arrests had been made by early evening. Police issued an appeal for witnesses and released surveillance camera footage of a wanted man.

Times Square, one of New York's tourist hotspots before the pandemic, has changed since theaters all closed in March 2020.

According to a recent report by the Times Square Alliance, the neighborhood business association, the area recorded 25 violent crimes in the first quarter of 2021, up from 17 in the same period of 2020.

At the end of March, a video of an assault on an older woman of Asian descent shocked the neighbourhood. — AFP ■

Armed groups gather outside Corinthia Tripoli hotel

ARMED groups gathered outside a Maltese-owned hotel in Tripoli on Friday night, as political tensions in the Libyan capital escalated.

Video posted to social media showed armed and uniformed men standing at the entrance to the five-star Corinthia Hotel. More than 20 armed vehicles are believed to have gathered outside the hotel. Sources told Times of Malta that the armed group demanded a meeting with council president Mahamed Younes al-Menfi and two other deputies. The Libyan News Observatory reported that the groups also searched cars belonging to al-Menfi and Foreign Minister Najla al-Mangoush.

The Corinthia Hotel in Tripoli. **PHOTO: CORINTHIA**

A spokesperson for the presidency council confirmed that the building had been raided but claimed that nobody from the council was in the building at the time of the incident. Malta's ambassador to Libya Charles Saliba told Times of Malta that all Maltese on site are safe. Nobody is believed to have been injured in the incident.

The Corinthia Hotel Tripoli, which is owned by Maltese business group International Hotel Investments, was the site of a terrorist attack in 2015 that left 10 people dead. Friday's raid appeared to be an eruption of tensions against the national unity government's foreign minister, el-Mangoush, over the sacking of the government's intelligence chief. — AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Scores more wounded in new Jerusalem clashes

SCORES of people were injured Saturday as Israeli police fired water cannon and rubber bullets to disperse Palestinian protesters in annexed east Jerusalem, a day after fierce clashes at the city's Al-Aqsa mosque.

The fresh violence, a day after more than 200 people were wounded at the mosque, prompted international calls for an end to the violence.

Police said they dispersed the rally in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood where demonstrators had thrown stones at security forces.

Officials said Sunday a rocket had been fired from the Gaza Strip, with the Israel Defence Forces responding by striking a "military target" in the south. Earlier, officers had fired tear gas towards protesters on the border. — AFP ■

Death toll rises to 50 from blasts near Afghan girls school

THE death toll from bombs planted outside a girls' school in an area of the Afghan capital populated largely by Shiite Hazaras rose to 50 Sunday as the Taliban denied government accusations that they were behind the bloody attack.

The Saturday's blasts – the deadliest in more than a year – rocked the west Kabul district of Dasht-e-Barchi, a regular target of Sunni Islamist militants.

It comes as the United States military continues to pull out its last 2,500 troops from the violence-wracked country despite faltering peace efforts between the Taliban and Afghan government to end a decades-long war.

Describing Saturday's carnage, Interior Ministry spokesman Tareq Arian told reporters that a car bomb first detonated in front of the Sayed Al-Shuhada School, and when the students rushed out in panic two more devices exploded. — AFP ■

Women's football event of Malaysia set to hold this month

A premier football event for women in Malaysia named Tun Sharifah Rodziah Cup (PTSR) will be held this month with the zonal competition, said ASEAN football authorities.

With the zonal level, the tourney includes five zones: North, East, Central, Sabah and Sarawak zones.

"The top eight teams from the five zones level will then take part in the national championship directly organized by the FA of Malaysia (FAM)", football authorities stated.

With the supervision of the Football Association of Malaysia, the premier women's football event was established in 1976 as a women's football competition competed by the teams around Malaysia.

The tournament was held consistently until 2004 and was postponed for 11 years. Then in 2015, the women's event comes back to action with the 28th edition.

Starting from 2018, the tournament was participated by eight teams in total, and officials set group format systematically.

Melaka team secured a champion position in the 2019 version of the competition while Kedah won the 2018 edition of the women's tourney. —GNLM ■

Chelsea beat Man City to delay Premier League title party

CHELSEA forced Manchester City to put their Premier League title party on hold on Saturday, winning 2-1 to boost their own chances of a top-four finish in a dress rehearsal for the Champions League final. Raheem Sterling gave the home side the lead just before half-time at an empty Etihad Stadium but Hakim Ziyech levelled and Marcos Alonso bundled in the winner in the dying seconds.

Chelsea celebrate their win against Manchester City. **PHOTO : AFP**

City could be crowned champions before they play again. Second-placed Manchester United face three matches before Guardiola's men are next in action, against Newcastle on Friday.

The point lifts Chelsea into third spot, six clear of fifth-placed West Ham with just three games to go.

Thomas Tuchel's in-form team ended City's dreams of a historic quadruple by beating them in the FA Cup semi-final last month and they once more proved tricky opponents.

City, who have a huge 13-point advantage over second-placed Manchester United, are certain to win their third Premier League title in four years but must now wait for it to be confirmed. Pep Guardiola made nine changes from the side that saw off Paris Saint-Germain in the second leg of the Champions League semi-final in midweek, with Ederson and Ruben Dias the only players to keep their places.

Chelsea made five changes following their triumph over Real Madrid.

The home side dominated possession in the early stages, with Ferran Torres firing over after a thrust down the right and Benjamin Mendy shooting wide.

Raheem Sterling was booked in the 12th minute after catching Timo Werner with his studs but the punishment could have been worse.

Werner had the ball in the net just after the half-hour but he was well offside and Sterling had a shot at the other end but clear-cut chances were at a premium.

Ziyech tested Ederson in the City goal as the half-time break neared but moments later the home side were ahead. —AFP ■

Neymar extends PSG contract to 2025

NEYMAR has signed a contract extension that will see him stay at Paris Saint-Germain until the end of the 2024-2025 season, the reigning French champions announced on Saturday. The Brazilian has claimed three Ligue 1 titles with PSG since arriving in 2017 from Barcelona for 222 million euros ($270 million) in what remains the most expensive transfer in history.

"I am really pleased to continue my adventure at Paris Saint-Germain," the 29-year-old said in a club statement after signing a contract extension until June 20, 2025. "I am very happy in Paris, and proud to be part of this squad, to work with these players, a great coach and to be part of the history of this club."

PSG coach Mauricio Pochettino said in a press conference: "Everyone in the PSG family is happy that a player of Neymar's talent has extended his contract."

Neymar has also won two French Cups with PSG, but the major honour that he was bought by the Qatari-owned club to win, the Champions League, continues to prove elusive.

He helped PSG to reach last season's Champions League final where they were beaten by Bayern Munich but the club's chances of reaching the final again were crushed by Manchester City on Tuesday -- and Neymar was ineffectual in the 2-0 semi-final second-leg defeat in England.

There has frequently been speculation in Spain that Barcelona wanted to re-sign him, but Neymar's decision to extend his deal in the French capital is not a surprise as he has looked increasingly settled at PSG in recent months.

Lionel Messi said in September 2019 he would have "loved" Neymar to return to the club.

"I would have loved for Neymar to come. I don't know if Barca did everything possible to bring him back but it's true that negotiating with PSG is not easy," he said at the time. —AFP ■

'Canelo' Alvarez stops Saunders to unify super middleweight titles

SAUL "CANELO" ALVAREZ stopped Billy Joe Saunders in eight rounds on Saturday to unify three super middleweight titles in front of the largest US crowd in history to watch an indoor boxing event.

Four-weight world champion Alvarez retained his World Boxing Council and World Boxing Association titles and seized Saunders' World Boxing Organization belt when the previously undefeated Briton retired on his stool after taking a beating in the eighth round.

Alvarez won by technical knockout after Saunders' corner called a halt in front of 73,126 fans at AT&T Stadium, which was also the biggest to watch an American sports event since the coronavirus pandemic.

Saunders didn't budge from his stool saying he couldn't see out of his right eye which was badly swollen from Alvarez's precision blows.

Alvarez could sense victory in the eighth as he chased the southpaw around the ring waving his arms in the air as if to let the pro-Mexican crowd know that the end was near.

"I knew it," Alvarez said. "I think I broke his cheek. He didn't come out to fight because I broke his cheek."

Saunders headed from the ring to the hospital to get medical treatment on his injured eye.

The previous largest indoor crowd for a boxing card in the United States had been 63,350 for Muhammad Ali's rematch against Leon Spinks in 1978.

Alvarez, who improved to 56-1-2 with 38 knockouts, was ahead on all three judges' scorecards, 78-74, 78-74 and 77-75, when Saunders did not come out for the ninth round. —AFP ■

Saul "Canelo" Alvarez lands a big left-hand on Billy Joe Saunders during their super middleweight title fight in Arlington in fromt of a record 70,000-plus fans. **PHOTO : AFP**