

## NATIONAL

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# THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

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Friday, 3 April 2020

## State Counsellor posts results of Wednesday's discussions on her Facebook account

**I**n her first post, State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi said that she never had any intention to use Facebook, but this time, she has the social media account created for quick and effective contact with people in facing against the COVID-19 challenges.

On the second day, she wrote about the video conference meeting with four frontline Coronavirus workers and gave an update regarding this.

She wrote: "Regarding the report of nurse Daw Nan Htet Htet Khaing, the water supply project will be implemented by the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement and the Department of Rural Devel-

opment. Our teams have sent 10 units of PPE, 200 pairs of gloves, 200 masks and 5 thermometers from Patheingyi."

"In relation to the discussion of Dr Khin Rupa Soe from Hlinethaya Township, we have given out 500 units of PPE today. The regional government has arranged the four ferry cars which were included in the discussion of U San Maung Maung from the We Love Yangon civic society. Other well-wishers are also making donations. Yangon Region government and the wards and village administrators will arrange for the alms at the monasteries. Regarding the demand of U Kaung Myat Thu from the Aung volunteers group, the Yangon

Region government will provide two ferry buses, while the government will also donate 10 sets of computer if there are no donors for this."

The State Counsellor also said, "We are fulfilling the requirements of the people. I am very glad to communicate with the people. My father, who was a monastic boy from central Myanmar, sometimes used to conclude his speeches using Pali words. Quoting the words of my father, 'May all our people be free from danger. In addition, may all the people of the world be free from danger.'—MNA

(Translated by Aung Khin)

## Regions, States intensify preventive measures against COVID-19 as infection cases reach 20

**T**OWNS and wards across the country are trying to mitigate community spread of Coronavirus by disinfecting public places as the country registered 20 cases of Coronavirus infection yesterday.

Four more patients confirmed with the Coronavirus infection are from the same family in Paukaung, Bago Region.

The municipality sprayed streets and vehicles on the road where the patients having with the Coronavirus infection lived and public places including places for facility quarantine, markets, community centres and religious buildings.

Private donors and departmental officials have arranged hand washing facilities outside public places and offices while health workers and volunteers are distributing pamphlets on health awareness against the novel Coronavirus disease.

Meanwhile, local health



A road in Yangon is being disinfected yesterday in efforts to prevent the COVID-19 infection. **PHOTO: PHOE KHWAR**

officials in townships visited the people receiving the facility quarantine and provided

health care to them.

From 6 pm, 1 April, 2020 to 6 pm, 2 April, there are 42 new

patients monitored for their health as the samples from them were sent to the National

Laboratory (Yangon).—GNLM

(Translated by Kaw Zin Lin)

Republic of the Union of Myanmar  
Union Election Commission  
Notification 77/2020  
10<sup>th</sup> Waxing of Tagu, 1381 ME  
(2 April 2020)

Permission to register as a  
political party

Wa National Party headquartered at No 39, Panlon Street at Panlonlan Ward in Hopan, Wa Self-Administered Division, has been permitted to register as a political party in accordance with Section 9 of the Political Parties Registration Law on 2 April 2020. The registration number of the Wa National Party is 128.

(Hla Thein)  
Chairman  
Union Election Commission

Newspapers to be distributed  
alternately for Myanmar New  
Year holidays

THE News and Periodicals Enterprise of Ministry of Information announced that daily newspapers will be published in turns during the Myanmar New Year holidays.

While the Myanma Alinn newspapers will be published on 12, 13 and 14 April, and the Mirror and the Global New Light of Myanmar will temporarily cease publishing operations during this period.

While the Mirror and the Global New Light of Myanmar newspapers will resume operations on 15, 16 and 17 April, the Myanma Alinn will temporarily cease operations on those days.

Similarly, the extra pages in ethnic languages from the Sub-Printing House (Mawlamyine) will temporarily cease printing operations on 12 April, the Shwe Pyi Rakhine Ponyeik sector from Sub-Printing House (Sittway) will temporarily cease printing on 15 April, the Rakhine Shwe Myay sector from Sub-Printing House (Sittway) will temporarily cease printing on 16 April and the extra pages in Shan ethnic language from the Sub-Printing House (Taunggyi) will temporarily cease printing operations on 16 April and will resume normal production after Myanmar New Year holidays.

Advertisements will be received at the newspaper offices, which will remain open during these holidays. All newspapers will resume normal production starting 18 April. —News and Periodicals Enterprise

(Translated by TTN)

Republic of the Union of Myanmar  
Union Election Commission  
Notification 78/2020  
10<sup>th</sup> Waxing of Tagu, 1381 ME  
(2 April 2020)

Termination of registration and dissolution of  
political parties

1. Union Election Commission permitted Wa National Unity Party that had been allowed to form as a political party with the registration No 10 of the Notification 47/2010 on 21-5-2010, Wa Democratic Party with the registration No 29 of the Notification 69/2010 on 2-6-2010 and Wa Liberal Democratic Development Party with the registration No 101 of the Notification 31/2016 on 18-11-2016.
2. Wa National Unity Party, Wa Democratic Party and Wa Liberal Democratic Development Party applied to the Union Election Commission to combine them and to be registered as one political party under the name of “Wa National Party” and the UEC permitted the Wa National Party as a political party with registration No 128 and with Notification 77/2020 on 2 April 2020. Hence, according to the Political Parties Registration Rule 25 of the Union Election Commission, Wa National Unity Party, Wa Democratic Party and Wa Liberal Democratic Development Party, which were registered as political parties, shall be abolished. Properties owned by each abolished party shall be handed over to the Wa National Party.
3. It is hereby announced that Wa National Unity Party, Wa Democratic Party and Wa Liberal Democratic Development Party have been terminated and the parties have been dissolved as of 2 April 2020.

(Hla Thein)  
Chairman  
Union Election Commission

Nay Pyi Taw Council chairman presides  
over COVID-19 awareness talks



Nay Pyi Taw Council Chairman Dr Myo Aung greets local administrators of wards and villages in Nay Pyi Taw at the COVID-19 awareness campaign. PHOTO: MNA

THE COVID-19 awareness campaign was conducted at Pynmana Township in the Nay Pyi Taw Union Territory yesterday.

Dr Myo Aung, chairman of Nay Pyi Taw Council, attended the meeting with local administrators of wards and villages in Ottathiri Township, Pobbathiri Township and Zeyathiri Township.

In his opening remark, Dr

Myo Aung emphasized the administrators are pivotal to the prevention of COVID-19 transmission at the local level, and it must be carried out as a national task to avoid a serious outbreak in some European countries.

He advised the prevention as a fundamental way, with social distancing at least the distance of three feet each other, washing hands with soaps and wear-

ing a facemask, while the local administrators need to explain preventive measures against the COVID-19 and arrange isolation places to accommodate the persons under investigation for 14 days.

The member of Nay Pyi Taw Council and officials made awareness talks on COVID-19 prevention. —Soe Moe (IPRD)

(Translated by Aung Khin)

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# “People are the key”

## Well-wishers donate cash, hospital equipment to COVID-19 national committee

THE National-Level Central Committee on Prevention, Control and Treatment of Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) welcomed donations of cash and hospital equipment by business firms, associations and individuals at the Ministry of Health and Sports in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday afternoon.

Union Minister Dr Myint Htwe, the Secretary (2) of the central committee, received the donations.

On behalf of the donors, U Ko Ko Gyi, the chairman of People’s Party, explained the donations and returned certificates of honour. The Union Minister expressed thanks for aid which will be used in anti-COVID-19 measures and in

upgrading of intensive care units at the hospitals for the positive patients.

The donations on 2 April included K30 million from CB Bank, K10 million from U Soe Thein and wife (Shwe Baho BRC Factory and Nyein Chan Thu Company), K13.08 million from the Central Cooperative Society and regional member societies, K13.2 million from well-wishers abroad and home, K6 million from Luoyang Northern Ek Motorcycle Co., Ltd (Dagon Motorcycle China), K2.5 million from U Kyaw Zin Tun (Autumn Flower Co., Ltd) and K5 million and 100 units of personal protective equipment from the People’s Party.—MNA

(Translated by Aung Khin)



Union Minister Dr Myint Htwe receiving the cash donation from well-wishers for National-Level Central Committee on Prevention, Control and Treatment of Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19). PHOTO: MNA

### Public contributions to the fund of National-Level Central Committee on Prevention, Control and Treatment of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

The government is increasing its momentum for measures against the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (Covid-19) pandemic. For the successful implementation of these measures, the following companies, organizations and individuals have contributed cash donations until 4:30 pm on 2 April 2020.

Donors	Amount (million kyats)
1. CB Bank	30
2. Daw Khin Kyi Foundation	15
3. Well-wishers home and abroad	13.2
4. Central Cooperative Society and member societies	13.08
5. Sweet Home family	10.00
6. U Soe Thein and family (Shwe Baho BRC Factory & Nyein Chan Thu Company)	10.00
7. Luoyang Northern Ek motorcycle Co. Ltd (Dayang motorcycle China)	6.00
8. People’s Party, Chairman U Ko Ko Gyi and members	5.00
9. U Kyaw Zin Tun (Autumn Flower Co.,Ltd)	2.50
10. Individual donors from 26 to 31 March	128.35
<b>Total</b>	<b>233.13</b>

Further donations of cash and hospital supplies / equipment will be published.

National-Level Central Committee on Prevention, Control and Treatment of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

### Updated information about COVID-19 surveillance at 8:00 pm, 2 April 2020

- The Ministry of Health and Sports is closely monitoring and conducting surveillance on the Covid-19 at international gateways, at the public hospitals, community-based monitoring and private healthcare facilities.
- There were 43 new persons under investigation between 6 pm on 1 April and 6 pm on 2 April.
- Laboratory results of the National Health Laboratory (Yangon) on specimens from a total of 62 persons under investigation and the persons under the quarantine of homes or hospitals on 2 April 2020 has shown four positive case of COVID-19 (Table 1), and the remaining 58 persons were tested negative.
- Four family members of Case 015 were quarantined at their home in Paukkaung Township in Bago Region. All the four persons—the husband (47 years) of Case 015, her son 10 years, her daughter 8 years and her niece 18 years were tested negative in their specimens. They will be transferred to the designated hospital for medical treatment.
- Out of 19 COVID-19 positive cases, 1 is at Tiddim hospital in Chin State, 9 at Waibargi hospital, 1 at Kandawnadi hospital in Mandalay, 1 at Nay Pyi Taw People’s Hospital, 1 at Lashio People’s Hospital. Health conditions of 17 positive patients are good and two patients at Waibargi hospital is being isolated for intensive care.
- As Myanmar has found more COVID-19 positive cases, persons in close contacts with these patients are identified and restricted on their travels. People are advised to strictly follow the awareness of the Ministry of Health and Sports.

Laboratory results on COVID-19 , 8:00 pm, 2 April 2020

Sr	Age (year)	Gender	Travel History in previous 14 days	Place for medical treatment	Quarantine Date	Lab result on Covid-19
17	47	Male	No	Paukkaung Township Public Health Department	31 March 2020	Positive
18	10	Male	No	Paukkaung Township Public Health Department	31 March 2020	Positive
19	8	Female	No	Paukkaung Township Public Health Department	31 March 2020	Positive
20	18	Female	No	Paukkaung Township Public Health Department	31 March 2020	Positive

(Translated by Aung Khin)

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A Myanmar National Airlines aircraft sits on the tarmac at Yangon International Airport. PHOTO: MNA

## Myanmar National Airlines to fly cargo flights for medical supplies

MYANMAR National Airlines announced that it will reopen its Yangon-Bangkok-Yangon route to transport important medicines and medical equipment as well as other commodities.

Pilot U Khout Khant Maung said the flights will begin on 3 April but will only make six to seven flights in the entire month, as there won't be daily flights. He said the main cargo will be medical supplies and equipment donated from Thailand and other

purchases from Yangon. MNA has currently scheduled the flights for 3, 8, 11, 22, 25 and 29 April. MNA will have no passenger flights, only cargo flights, and the airports will be open for other planes carrying medical supplies and emergency medical flights. Myanmar has closed all of its airports on 30 March 2020 for inbound flights according to the Department of Civil Aviation. —Aye Min Thu, Zarni Maung

(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)

## Announcement to farmers

1. The Myanmar Agricultural Development Bank (MADB) under the Ministry of Planning, Finance and Industry is offering the agricultural loan and the agricultural and rural development loans (JICA, Two Step Loan), and the agricultural and livestock loans (MEB, Two Step Loan) in each season to the farmers for agricultural investment.

2. The MADB will reduce interest rates on the loans of agriculture loan, JICA, Two Step Loan, MEB, Two Step Loan as follows:

Sr. Types of Loan	Existing Rate (annual)	Reduced Rate(annual)
(a) Agricultural loan	8%	7%
(b) JICA, Two Step Loan	8%	6.5%
(c) MEB, Two Step Loan	9%	8%

3. Rate for saving deposit of farmers will be reduced from 8% to 6.5% per annum to adjust with declining rate of the loan.

4. The change of rate for both loan and deposit will take effect on from 1 April 2020 onwards.

Myanmar Agricultural Development Bank  
Ministry of Planning, Finance and Industry

## Co-op stores in Yangon sell commodities at normal prices

HOUSEHOLD items and commodities are on sale at the cooperative stores in Yangon Region at normal prices.

Officials from the regional Cooperative Department inspected the sales at its stores in

Hlinethaya and Ahlon townships on 1 April morning.

They also visited Kayan Township, checked the commodity prices to ensure normal rates, and gave advice on COVID-19 awareness guidelines at

the stores for both the staff and the customers, and door-to-door sales for rice and cooking oil without causing out of stocks at the stores.—MNA

(Translated by Aung Khin)



Officials from the regional Cooperative Department inspect the sales at the stores in Yangon. PHOTO: MNA



Health workers spraying disinfectant in Nyaungdon. PHOTO: NAY LINN (NYAUNG TONE)

## Nyaungdon Tsp implements COVID-19 prevention processes

NYAUNGDON Township Pyithu Hluttaw representatives, management committee, health department, government departments and civil society organizations are regularly spraying disinfectants to combat COVID-19.

Over a hundred people returning from abroad are being taken care of in the local government school buildings. Officials from the health department and other government departments, civil society organizations and local residents are providing assistance as well.

Basic commodities such as rice and cooking oil are being

sold at normal prices with a bag of rice being sold for K24,000, with about 100,000 bags of rice arranged.

The Ayeyawady Region Government has also issued orders for restaurants, tea shops, liquor shops and other roadside stalls and hawkers to suspend dine-ins and offer takeaway instead.

ROE Youth Network, Piti Youth Philanthropic group, the fire department and Red Cross are collaborating to spray disinfectants in public places, starting from 1 April.—Nay Linn (Nyaungtone)

(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)

# COVID-19 Fund loan applications now open



The Republic of the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry's staff working for an event at the UMFCCI office. PHOTO: KO HTET (MIRROR)

BUSINESSES facing repercussions from COVID-19 can apply for loans from the COVID-19 Fund online, according to the Republic of the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (UMFCCI).

Applications can be sent to the UMFCCI and state/regional merchant and industry associations between 29 March and 9 April. Applications can also be sent online to <https://umfccicovid19loan.mitcloud.com> starting from 2 April.

Applications can also be submitted at the UMFCCI or state/regional associations in person. For more information, please contact 09-677727403,

09-677727404, 09-777727405, on Viber, Hotlines and email [covid-19@umfcci.com.mm](mailto:covid-19@umfcci.com.mm).

To remedy the economic impacts caused by Coronavirus (COVID-19), CMP enterprises, hotels and tourism services, along with small and medium enterprises (SMEs), are designated as priority sectors that need assistance, and a COVID-19 Fund of K100 billion has been set up by the Union Government to distribute loans to them.

The loans will be provided to enterprises that are included in the priority sector at an interest of 1% for a one-year period.—Ko Htet (Mirror)

(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)

## MyCO boosts company registration up to 75,000 in 20 months: DICA

By Nyein Nyein

THE number of companies registered on the online registry system, MyCO, has touched 75,000 in 20 months since the establishment of an online platform, according to the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration (DICA).

The registration and re-registration of companies on the MyCO website commenced on 1 August 2018, in keeping with the Myanmar Companies Law 2017. Since then, more than 29,608 new companies and 46,377 existing companies have registered and re-registered through MyCO, bringing the total number of registered companies to 75,985 by March-end. At present, 100 per cent of the applicants are using the online registration platform, according to the data provided by the DICA. MyCO is receiving more than 1,000 applications from new companies every month. This year, the figures of registered companies stood at 1,415 in January, 1,298 in February and 1,015 in March, as per the DICA data.

In addition, all registered companies need to file annual returns (AR) on the MyCO registry system within two months of incorporation, and at least once every year (not later than one month after the anniversary of the incorporation), according to

Section 97 of the law.

According to Section 266 (A) of the Myanmar Companies Law 2017, public companies must submit annual returns and financial statements (G-5) simultaneously.

All overseas corporations must submit ARs in the prescribed format on MyCO within 28 days of the financial year ending, as per Section 53 (A-1) of the Myanmar Companies Law 2017.

A total of 10,436 companies were suspended for failing to submit AR forms within the due date. Newly established companies are required to submit ARs within two months of incorporation or face a fine of K100,000 for filing late returns. The DICA has announced any company which fails to submit its AR within 13 months will be notified of its suspension (I-9A). If it fails to submit the AR within 28 days of receiving the notice, the system will show the company's status as suspended. Companies can restore their status only after shelling out a fine of K50,000 for late filing of AR, K100,000 for the restoration of the company on the Register, and K100,000 for late filing of documents.

If a company fails to restore its status within six months of suspension, the registrar will strike its name off the register, according to the DICA notice.

(Translated Ei Myat Mon)

## Myanmar's exports to Hong Kong surpass import in 2019-2020FY Q1

THE value of Myanmar's bilateral trade with Hong Kong touched US\$155.37 million in the first four months of the current fiscal year 2019-2020 (October-January), with exports surpassing imports, according to the data provided by the Ministry of Commerce.

Between October and January, Myanmar has shipped goods worth \$152.75 million to Hong Kong and imported goods valued at \$2.6 million.

Myanmar's major items of export to Hong Kong include precious stones, agricultural and fishery products, and garments. The nation mainly imports tele-

communications equipment and optical goods.

Myanmar-Hong Kong trade was valued at \$232.395 million in the last FY 2018-2019, \$238 million in the mini-budget period (April to September 2018), \$385.63 million in the 2017-2018 fiscal year, \$234.46 million in the 2016-2017FY, and \$316 million in the 2015-2016FY, the Commerce Ministry's data showed. Hong Kong is one of the world's leading financial centres, logistics hub, and an international legal and dispute resolution services centre for Asia. It has positioned itself to play a prominent role in facilitating trade and

investment flows and has been working towards closer economic integration with ASEAN countries, including Myanmar.

The economic interaction between Myanmar and Hong Kong has been increasing rapidly. Hong Kong has emerged as the largest investor in Myanmar in the current fiscal with 35 Hong Kong-based firms pumping in \$1.28 billion in real estate development, electricity, and garment businesses as of February-end, according to the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration (DICA).—GNLM

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

## Price gouging on essential goods to be punished under laws

By Nyein Nyein

"Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) will take actions against those who are gouging prices on medical supplies, pharmaceuticals, and foodstuffs under the section 5 of the Essential Supplies and Services Law, with a maximum term of 3-year imprisonment and fines, during the prevention, containment, and treatment of COVID-19 spread," DCA Director U Swe Tint Kyuu told the Global New Light of Myanmar (GNLM) on 2 April.

"Price always vary depending on the principle of supply and demand. It is hard to do price-fixing. We can check only if the price is much higher than fair price or it is on average profit margin.

We will scrutinize them whether they comply with the law or not," he said. Any complaint on price gouging can be filed at 48 Consumer Information and Complaint Centres in the respective regions and states, he added.

"Following the notification, we will take action in line with the law. There are two complaints filed in Nay Pyi Taw. We have directed the region and state offices to take immediate action against price gouging", he stated.

The Ministry of Commerce has issued the order to protect the goods, in the exercise of the power set out in the Notification No 26/2020 of the Union Government dated 30 March 2020.

Under the Section 4, Sub-section (a) of the Essential Supplies

and Services Law, the Ministry of Commerce has designated health aid equipment for prevention, control and treatment of the Coronavirus Disease, medicines and consumer goods as essential goods. Starting from 30 March, the Ministry has banned speculation in the market by selling and distributing the products or storage of the goods to play the market. Those who violate the law will face legal actions under section 5 of the law.

Therefore, the Department of Consumer Affairs encouraged the people to follow the government's guidelines on COVID-19 and urged the sellers and businesspersons to strictly follow the notification.

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

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**K10 mln given for facility quarantine in each township, Bago Region**Bago Region Chief Minister U Win Thein gives the K 10 million for facility quarantine camps in Bago Region. **PHOTO: TIN SOE (BAGO)**

EACH township from Bago region has received K10 million for facility quarantine camps on 31 March at Taw Win Hintha hall of

Bago regional government office.

At the cash-assistance giving ceremony, Chief Minister U Win Thein of Bago Region said

that the committees are taking preventive measures against Covid-19. Myanmar nationals are still returning from abroad to their native towns. If we can conduct systematic home quarantine and facility quarantine, the treatment will be more effective. We also need to do an awareness campaign on protection from Covid-19 infection. If people do not follow the rules and regulations during their home quarantine and facility quarantine periods, they need to know the action will be taken against them according to the existing laws. The chairpersons of the Covid-19 prevention committees and related ministers received

K10 million for facility quarantine camps in each township of Bago Region. Then, the officials from the related ministries and departments presented the necessities and the chief minister made his instructions to buy more medical supplies.

Up to 30 March, there are 165 facility quarantine camps for the returnees abroad in Bago district, in addition to 146 camps in Pyay district, and 122 camps in Thayarwady district, where a total of 3,201 departmental staff are providing medical services to these people.—Tin Soe (Bago)

*(Translated by Hay Mar)***Onion growers in Kyaukpadaung unhappy at less profit**

THE onion farmers in Kyaukpadaung are earning less profit as onion prices are declining after harvesting of the winter onion in Kyaukpadaung Township in Mandalay Region, said U Nan Tin, a local onion grower from Moak Gone village.

The price of onion is K500 per viss after yielding of the winter onion. At the same time, the onion growers are faced with the scarcity of the labour and also with high labour charges.

"More than 20 villages near Kyetmauktaung creek and dam have grown the winter onion. The onion started to grow in October and November. After 45 days, the onion from the nursery can be transplanted to the farmland. The onion growers use natural fertilizers such as cow and goat manure on their onion farm. After one and a half month, the growers put urea fertilizer depending upon the onion plant. The onion plants are watered day and night till 15 days before

harvest time," said U Zaw Chin, a local onion grower from Setpyarkyin village.

The onion growers have to pay K3,000 for female labour, K6,000 for male labour from 9 am to 4 pm and K6,000 per one trailer route during the onion harvest time as well as other charges. The planting of the winter onion costs K2 million

per acre. However, they earn only K500 per viss after harvesting time. So, we are so unhappy about that, according to a local onion grower from Kyaukpadaung township.

In 2017-2018 fiscal year (FY), Myanmar earned over US\$9 million from the export of 22,000 tonnes of onion. Myanmar also earned over \$20 million

from the export of 87,000 tonnes of onion in 2018-2019 FY. Myanmar has exported onion mostly to China, Thailand, India and Bangladesh.

The onion is mostly grown in Monywa, Myingyan, Taungtha, Pakokku, Kyaukse, Mandalay and Magway regions.—Ko Htein (Ngathayouk)  
*(Translated by Hay Mar)*Farmers planting the onions in a farm in Kyaukpadaung Township. **PHOTO: KO HTEIN (NGATHAYOUK)****Japan, Myanmar ink \$445 mln loans for MR, Thilawa projects**

JAPAN and Myanmar officials have signed an agreement to obtain the Japan ODA loan for two projects – Yangon-Mandalay railway upgrade project phase 1 (part-3) worth Yen 40.604 billion and the infrastructural development project in Thilawa phase 3 worth Yen 7.339 billion, according to the Embassy of Japan in Myanmar.

The Japanese Ambassador to Myanmar and the officials from the Ministry of Planning, Finance and Industry signed the loan agreement on 31 March 2020 concerning the two loan

projects worth Yen 47.943 billion (approximately US\$445 million).

These two projects will contribute towards the socio-economic development in Myanmar. These ODA loan projects aim to upgrade the 620 km -long railway, between Yangon and Mandalay.

Myanma Railway (MR) has upgraded the Yangon-Mandalay railway project dividing into three parts spending of JICA ODA loans and the national fund. The first part of the project between Yangon and Toungoo is about 166 miles, while the second part of the project is Toungoo-Mandalay project at a distance of about 219 miles. MR has signed an agreement with the Construction for Consultancy Service (CMC) for part 2 Toungoo-Mandalay project.

Currently, ground construction has begun for Yangon-Bago railway and Yangon circular railway project which is part of Yangon-Mandalay railway upgrading project phase 1, according to MR.

Six express trains, two mail trains, four Yangon-Nay Pyi Taw trains are running over Yangon-Mandalay railway. Upon

completion of the upgrade of whole Yangon-Mandalay railway project, the trains could run at a speed of 100 kilometres per hour and more air-con coaches will be attached on the railway.

MR has targeted to complete 166-mile-long Yangon-Toungoo railway project in 2022 and 219-mile-long Toungoo-Mandalay project in 2023.

The initial five-year Yangon-Mandalay railway upgrading project (2018-2023) will cost \$2.7 billion of JICA loan.—Aye Maung

*(Translated by Hay Mar)*

# All hands on deck to stop a once-in-a-lifetime pandemic

By António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations

**O**NLY by coming together will the world be able to face down the COVID-19 pandemic and its shattering consequences. At an emergency virtual meeting last Thursday, G20 leaders took steps in the right direction. But we are still far away from having a coordinated, articulated global response that meets the unprecedented magnitude of what we are facing.

Far from flattening the curve of infection, we are still well behind it. The disease initially took 67 days to infect 100,000 people; soon, 100,000 people and more will be infected daily. Without concerted and courageous action, the number of new cases will almost certainly escalate into the millions, pushing health systems to the breaking point, economies into a nosedive and people into despair, with the poorest hit hardest.

We must prepare for the worst and do everything to avoid it. Here is a three-point call to action — based on science, solidarity and smart policies — for doing just that.

## First, suppress transmission of the coronavirus.

That requires aggressive and early testing and contact tracing, complemented by quarantines, treatment, and measures to keep first responders safe, combined

with measures to restrict movement and contact. Such steps, despite the disruptions they cause, must be sustained until therapies and a vaccine emerge.

Crucially, this robust and cooperative effort should be guided by the World Health Organization, a member of the United Nations family; countries acting on their own — as they must for their people — will not get the job done for all.

## Second, tackle the devastating social and economic dimensions of the crisis.

The virus is spreading like wildfire, and is likely to move swiftly into the Global South, where health systems face constraints, people are more vulnerable, and millions live in densely populated slums or crowded settlements for refugees and internally displaced persons. Fuelled by such conditions, the virus could devastate the developing world and then re-emerge where it was previously suppressed. In our interconnected world, we are only as strong as the weakest health systems.

Clearly, we must fight the virus for all of humanity, with a focus on people, especially the most affected: women, older persons, youth, low-wage workers, small and medium enterprises, the informal sector and vulner-



Secretary-General António Guterres. PHOTO: UN.ORG

able groups.

The United Nations has just issued reports documenting how the viral contagion has become an economic contagion, and setting out the financing needed to address the shocks. The International Monetary Fund has declared that we have entered a recession as bad as or worse than in 2009.

We need a comprehensive multilateral response amounting to a double-digit percentage of global Gross Domestic Product.

Developed countries can do it by themselves, and some are indeed doing it. But we must massively increase the resources available to the developing world by expanding the capacity of the IMF, namely through the issuance of special drawing rights, and of the other international financial institutions so that

they can rapidly inject resources into the countries that need them. I know this is difficult as nations find themselves increasing domestic spending by record amounts. But that spending will be in vain if we don't control the virus.

Coordinated swaps among central banks can also bring liquidity to emerging economies. Debt alleviation must also be a priority — including immediate waivers on interest payments for 2020.

## Third, recover better.

We simply cannot return to where we were before COVID-19 struck, with societies unnecessarily vulnerable to crisis. The pandemic has reminded us, in the starkest way possible, of the price we pay for weaknesses in health systems, social protections and public services. It has



underscored and exacerbated inequalities, above all gender inequity, laying bare the way in which the formal economy has been sustained on the back of invisible and unpaid care labour. It has highlighted ongoing human rights challenges, including stigma and violence against women.

Now is the time to redouble our efforts to build more inclusive and sustainable economies and societies that are more resilient in the face of pandemics, climate change and other global challenges. The recovery must lead to a different economy. Our roadmap remains the 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals.

The United Nations system is fully mobilized: supporting country responses, placing our supply chains at the world's disposal, and advocating for a global cease-fire.

Ending the pandemic everywhere is both a moral imperative and a matter of enlightened self-interest. At this unusual moment, we cannot resort to the usual tools. Extraordinary times demand extraordinary measures. We face a colossal test which demands decisive, coordinated and innovative action from all, for all. SOURCE: UNIC-Yangon

## Masks are everywhere in Asia, but have they helped?

**T**HE use of face masks in Asia during the coronavirus outbreak has been far more widespread than in the West, where governments have urged people to reserve supplies for frontline medical staff, so have they helped limit infections?

Experts agree that the ordinary surgical masks commonly worn in parts of Asia during cold and hayfever seasons are not a foolproof way to prevent coronavirus infection.

But people infected with the virus are advised to wear them to stop the spread to others, and there is evidence that transmission can happen before a person knows they are sick. That has bolstered the argument of mask



The Japanese ministry is considering providing about 40 masks per household. PHOTO: AFP

supporters who believe they can help limit the outbreak.

In parts of Asia, mask-wearing has been a key response to the outbreak, with Japan's gov-

ernment announcing Wednesday each household would get two reusable cloth versions, and Hong Kongers not only wearing them but sending them to relatives

abroad.

Keiji Fukuda, director and clinical professor at the University of Hong Kong's School of Public Health, said people in the city see wearing a mask "as a way that the individual is trying to protect both the larger society as well as the self".

"But where I grew up, in the US, wearing masks is seen by some, if not many, as a personal infringement — an unwanted imposed obligation," he told AFP.

The use of masks in parts of Asia with relatively low numbers of infections and deaths from the virus, including Japan and Hong Kong, has led some to theorise mask-wearing is making the difference.

But experts are sceptical.

Ben Cowling, a professor at the University of Hong Kong's School of Public Health, instead credits a range of public health measures implemented in these countries.

These include "identifying cases and isolating them, tracing and quarantining their contacts, and also implementing social distancing in the community," he told AFP.

## False sense of security

And Fukuda too cautioned against thinking of mask-wearing "as a magic X-factor".

"Some places like Singapore have generally done very well without strongly emphasising masks," he noted.

SOURCE: AFP

# Higher public participation is key to overcoming COVID-19 challenges

**A**S part of efforts to overcome the global COVID-19 pandemic, it is very important for each person to observe social distancing, and those who have close contacts with infected patients or live in outbreak areas should practice the 14-day self-quarantine without fail. Hence, our people are also advised to follow the directives of the health authorities, and not see the 14-day quarantine as an obstacle. Only then can we overcome this crisis.

Meanwhile, health authorities and workers who are on the frontline of fighting the COVID-19 infection are obliged to clearly explain to the public about the directives and guidelines issued by various ministries.

We are confident that we can overcome current challenges with the participation of the people, as they are also on alert to the pandemic thanks to the correct and timely information distributed by the health authorities and reliable sources.

We are confident that we can overcome current challenges with the participation of the people, as they are also on alert to the pandemic thanks to the correct and timely information distributed by the health authorities and reliable sources.

It has been found that announcing health guidelines and information over loudspeakers in wards and villages is a very effective strategy in fighting the infectious disease. Hence, we must put more strenuous efforts into this strategy.

It has long been said that information is a very powerful tool in overcoming the crisis.

Not only medical practitioners and health workers on the front line, but also the public wants, needs and demands regular, accurate and complete updates about the spread of the Coronavirus in our country.

We understand that our country has a big job to do in managing the crisis, from resource mobilization to supplying the public with accurate information.

But, in overcoming this crisis, following official guidelines and directives is the best way to ensure success.

explain to the public about the directives and guidelines issued by various ministries.

At the same time, health authorities are taking steps to expand the intensive care units at hospitals in regions and states, in the face of possible increases in number of patients, following the formation of clinical management committees in regions and states.

Despite challenges, the authorities are preparing to send human resources, medicines and medical equipment as part of a resource mobilization to hospitals.

There are challenges in quarantine travel restrictions on the ground, though quarantine officers are assigned to enforce the rules in townships.

When compared with other countries, Myanmar has higher public participation in fighting the pandemic, which is a very valuable contribution by the people towards the country in this time of crisis.

# Fourth Year Work Progress of Ministry of Construction

By Shin Minn, Photo by Kay Kay

**T**HE Ministry of Construction is working hard for the completion of roads, bridges, and urban amenities in the country with over 330 towns and cities under standardized urban planning.

Urban planning is a technical and political process concerned with the control of the use of land and design of the urban environment, including transportation networks, to guide and ensure the orderly development of settlements and communities.

Covering (80) per cent of village areas with road access for (90) per cent of rural population, (42,000) kilometres long standardized roads for use round the year are under the care of the Ministry of Construction.

Road constructions are in line with the ASEAN Class III specification with the minimum requirement of (18) feet width driveways paved with asphalt roads and concrete roads. With an intent to achieve this asphaltget, all the bridges are designed with (24) feet width in two lanes pathway implemented in reinforced concrete bridge / precast concrete bridge / iron frame bridge are in the pipeline for implementation.

An interview was arranged on the Fourth Year Work Progress of Ministry of Construction.

**U Han Zaw, Union Minister, Ministry of Construction**

**Question:** Please tell us the policy, aim and objective, tasks, strategies, and tactics of the Ministry of Construction.

**Answer:** With multifaceted aims and objectives we are working on all round development for the social development of the entire population. The tasks included such as that of the road and bridge constructions; that of housing constructions; that of parallel development in the construction of roads, bridges, and urban planning in states and regions; that of uplifting GDP of the country with the least budget in spending for transport sector; that of reducing the travelling time for the passengers; that of clearing hindrances in building roads and bridges; that of comfortable and cozy housing projects for the population; that of the sustainability of village roads and bridges; and that of socio-economic development of rural communities.



Union Minister U Han Zaw

Housing projects are meant for accommodating one million households planned out to be realized by the government and the private sector. Moreover, (80) per cent of village areas and (90) per cent of rural population will have access village roads for use the whole year. Tasks are to be realized year by year. Similarly, by the year 2030, village roads with the stretch of (55,000) miles are to be upgraded to Class (A) for the portion of (25,600) miles in (12) feet width paved with asphalt elements on concrete elements. Moreover, Class (B) roads with the stretch of (17,000) miles paved with asphalt or concrete or stones. Moreover, (12,400) long class (C) roads will be paved in (12) feet width in gravel or hard layer materials.

**Q: Kindly explain on the strategies and tactics on the projects.**

**A:** The implementations are carried out with the government budget. When feasible, some tasks are being implemented through the Private Public Partnership which is called PPP Programme. The projects included development partners such as JICA, ADB, WB, KOICA and TICA utilizing grants and loans.

**Q: Tell us the drafting of rules and regulations.**

**A:** The Ministry of Construction is in the lead for drafting the Myanmar National Building Code (MNBC) in collaboration with the UN Habitat and Myanmar Engineering Association. The relevant ministries involved in the tasks and completed in 2016 in English version. The official Myanmar version is in process to be completed in 2020. Building Construction Industry Law (BCID Law) is drafted beginning 2018, and that the documents are being referred to Union Attorney General Office and the

Ministry of Planning, Finance and Industry, and the final remarks are being received.

On 29 January 2016, the Law on Collective Ownership of Building has been enacted; on 7 December 2017 the Bye-Law on Collective Ownership Building has been released; on 4 December 2018, the amended Bye-laws are released. Law on National Housing Development (Draft) and the Law on National Level Urban Planning (Draft) are in the process of drafting. The main and mega projects namely New Mandalay Resort City is in the pipeline in Pyin Oo Lwin in Mandalay Region. The Eco Green City Project, the Korea-Myanmar Industrial Complex (KICM) Project is in Hlegu Township of Yangon Region. Housing Projects namely Smart District and Ayeyar Wun and Yadanar Projects are in Dagon Seikan Township of Yangon Region. Moreover, Yangon Amata Smart and Eco City Project are situated in Dagon Myo Thit (East and South) in Yangon Region. In later part of the projects, the Ministry of Construction is entrusting regulatory bodies to oversee the tasks with proper rules and regulations including quality control, free from bribery and corruption.

All the construction tasks are to be implemented by the relevant ministries, the offices of regional government and state governments. Fourth Year Work Progress Report of Ministry of Construction would be explained by the Deputy Minister.

**Dr. Kyaw Lin, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Construction**

**Q: Kindly explain the ongoing tasks and the fourth year's progress as a whole of the Ministry of Construction.**

**A:** First of all, I would like to talk about the work being implemented

by the Building Department. The department is carrying out the building construction tasks across the country in accordance with the prescribed norms and standards with fine quality control and that all the planned asphalt roads are to be accomplished on time. With a view to monitor and quality control of all the work across the country, standardized norms are prescribed to have equal result. Therefore, the Building Department has drafted "Building Construction Industry Development Law (BCID Law)" and submitted to Pyidaungsu Hluttaw. When enacted, the said law would cover all regulatory in making similar prescribed standards. At a time, when the BCID Law is enacted, we need to apply "Myanmar National Building Code (MNBC). The code under referral is in the process of final stage in English versions with the assistance of UN Habitat and Myanmar Engineering Association. The translation into Myanmar is also completed on (95) per cent, and that the translated documents are to be distributed across the country. When the BCID Law is enacted, we need to distribute assortment of manuals related to construction sphere, the fire fighting sphere, and the safety and protection sphere. These relevant documents are being drafted and approved with the assistance of KOICA. The relevant instructions would be circulated when the BCID Law is released.

**Q: Please explain us about the ISO Laboratory under the Ministry of Construction.**

**A:** The Building Department has established own laboratory. The laboratory examines the parts of the building structure. Now, our laboratory has been tagged with ISO/ IEC 17025: 2017, and that



Deputy Minister Dr. Kyaw Lin

Myanmar establishments mostly have ISO with 9001 Quality Management System. The ISO 9000 family of quality management systems is a set of standards that helps organizations ensure they meet customers and other stakeholder needs within statutory and regulatory requirements related to a product or service. Directives are to be issued for the quality consistency, for the finer quality, and for the timely completion of the tasks.

**Q: Please explain the fourth year's progress reports of the Road Management Department and Bridge Management Department.**

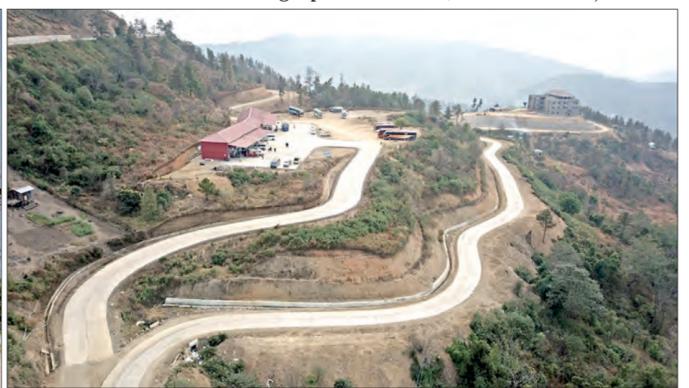
**A:** I would like to explain fourth year work progress as well as the previous three years works implementation in terms of region-wise programmes and state-wise programmes. First of all, I take pleasure in talking about (2000) miles long roads located in Kachin State. Out of (2000) long stretch, (26) per cent of roads are neither asphalt roads nor concrete roads. The other (74) per cent of driveways are asphalt roads and concrete roads accessible for use the whole year round. One amazing factor of road in that part is Myitkyina - Sumprabum - Putao road stretching (220) miles. In the past, the portion of that road was infamous as "Bwet Tan Lan" (muddy swampy messy road), which tormented the travellers for three nights or four nights on the road. The road customarily snapped up during rainy days. Within short span of three years, the nightmarish journey has been substituted with asphalt roads and concrete roads.

In May 2020, an event would be hosted to celebrate the successful commissioning of the road. With the completion of the road, a traveler could depart Myitkyina at

SEE PAGE-10



New building for the South Okkalapa Maternal and Child Hospital, built by the Ministry of Construction.



Ring roads encircling Hakha, Chin State.



## Myanmar Daily Weather Report (Issued at 7:00 pm Thursday 2nd April, 2020)

**BAY INFERENCE:** Weather is generally fair over the East Central Bay and a few cloud to partly cloudy over the Andaman Sea and elsewhere over the Bay of Bengal.

**FORECAST VALID UNTIL AFTERNOON OF THE 3rd April, 2020:** Light rain or thundershowers are likely to be isolated in Upper Sagaing Region, Kachin, Northern Shan and Chin States. Degree of certainty is (60%). Weather will be partly cloudy in the remaining Regions and States.

**STATE OF THE SEA:** Sea will be slight to moderate in Myanmar waters. Wave height will be about (3-6) feet off and along Myanmar Coasts.

**OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS:** Likelihood of isolated rain or thundershowers in Upper Sagaing and Taninthayi Regions, Kachin and Chin States.

**FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 3rd April, 2020:** Partly cloudy.

**FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 3rd April, 2020:** Partly cloudy.

**FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 3rd April, 2020:** Partly cloudy.

## Invitation to young writers for Sunday Special

The Global New Light of Myanmar is accepting submissions of poetry, opinion, articles, essays and short stories from young people for its weekly Sunday Next Generation Platform. Interested candidates can send their work to the Global New Light of Myanmar at No. 150, Nga Htat Kyee Pagoda Road, Bahan Township, Yangon, in person, or by email to [ce@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com](mailto:ce@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com) with the following information: (1) Sector you wish to be included in (poetry, opinion, etc.), (2) Own name and (if different) your penname, (3) Your level of education, (4) Name of your School/College/University, (5) A written note of declaration that the submitted piece is your original work and has not been submitted to any other news or magazine publishing houses, (6) A color photo of the submitter, (7) Copy of your NRC card, (8) Contact information (email address, mobile number, etc.). - Editorial Department, The Global New Light of Myanmar

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## Fourth Year Work Progress of Ministry of Construction

### FROM PAGE-9

6:00 pm in the evening. Journey completed in a single day. Going up above from Putao, one reaches beautiful Pan Nann Din Town at the foot of Hkakabo Razi Mountain, believed to be Myanmar's highest mountain. Moving further, one arrives at Naun Mon Town. In the past, a traveller needed to spend four nights on the rugged trail as there was no motorway to drive. Nowadays, fine roads with connecting bridges have been constructed in place of rugged trails. One may enjoy in a single day trip from Putao to Pan Nan Din Town and then to Naung Mon Town.

In the past, Myitkyina – Bhamo Road was terrible and dreadful in shape, and that the traveller needed to spend time for one whole day. In easing the travel time, Myitkyina – Bhamo Road is under repair to complete the journey in just two hours. The whole section of Shwebo – Myitkyina Road has been expanded to (18) feet width as asphalt road, connecting with concrete bridges.

In Kayah State, there are (500) total miles of roads in the areas, and that (80) per cent of the roads have been improved into asphalt roads and concrete roads. The remaining (20) per cent of roads are to be improved into asphalt and concrete roads. It has been completed for (100) per cent use in all weather condition throughout the year.

During the fourth year of work progress, Kantara Waddy Bridge in Kayah State had been inaugurated. During the short span of three years, all the necessary roads and bridges have been successfully delivered to the public. With regards to Kayin State, only (20) per cent out of (800) miles long roads needed to be transformed into asphalt roads and concrete roads. The other portion of (80) per cent has been upgraded into asphalt roads and concrete roads, making roads accessible all year round.

The Kayin State is particular in a special way as it has trade links with Thailand. In other words, the development of road communications in the state is supportive to the development of trade of Myanmar. With that in perspective, Myanmar – Thai Friendship Bridge Number (2) has been successfully commissioned in Myawady Town. In connection with the bridge, there is road named Eindu – Kawka-reik Road, which is in process of upgrading with the loans taken

from Asian Development Bank amounting US\$ 120 million. The construction is expected to be completed during dry open season. When completed, the motorway from Hpa-an to Myawady would be much developed. Moreover, Kawka-reik Bridge is located on that particular road, and that the bridge has been upgraded with the aid assistance of JICA.

In Chin State, there are over (1,300) miles long roads, and that only (16) per cent left to transform into asphalt and concrete. A total of (84) per cent of roads have been upgraded within three years time. Since the advent of incumbent government, emphasis has been given for the development of road communications in Rakhine State and Chin State. Therefore, priority is being given in number one slot for the development of road communications in these two states. In the past, a traveller needed to spend two to three night on the road to arrive at Kyee Kharr Town and Toon Zan Town in the northern part of Chin State. Paletwa Town in southern part of Chin State could take enormous



The Bago River-crossing Thanlyin Bridge No. 3 linking Yangon, Thanlyin and Thilawa Special Economic Zone is under construction.

time to travel in the past.

Nowadays, the travel from Kyee Kharr Town in northern part to Paletwa Town in southern part could be reached by vehicle in a shorter period of time. Tasks of road buildings are being done in four years time.

An airport is on the agenda scheduled to open soon in Falam of Chin State. With focal point in Falam some roads such as Falam – Hakha; Falam – Reed; Falam – Tiddim have been equipped with asphalt roads and concrete roads during four years time.

Recently, Kalay – Falam – Hhaka with (124) miles long road is to be repaired with the loans from the World Bank, and that feasibility survey is in progress. The road is to be upgraded soon.

In Sagaing Region, there are (2,800) miles of motorways, and that (95) per cent of all roads are accessible all year round. At this juncture, I would like to say about La Hai Town, a place very difficult to reach in the past. Nowadays, travelling between Kamti and La Hai takes only about three and half hours. La Hai Town is not a far away town any more. Moreover, road to Lai She Town is only (42) miles and that the town is not upgraded through asphalt road.

In the past, Nam Yoon Town could be reached only through Kachin State. Nowadays, the town is connected with motor roads during four years' time. During dry season in summer people could travel from La Hai to Nam Yoon in day trip. Better roads are being provided to Sagaing Region, at the desire of Ye Oo local people, river crossing bridge (Ye Oo Bridge) has been constructed.

In Taninthayi Region, there are (1,709) miles long road connections and that only (16) per cent is yet to be upgraded. Kaw Thaug could be reached within

concrete. Ayeyawady River crossing bridge at Tayet—Aunglan Town in Magway Region is now under construction. In Mandalay Region, only (3) per cent is left to transform into asphalt roads. Mandalay Region must have a better road communication as the area is major trade centre with China. As Mon State is linking trade with Thailand, the roads and bridges must be in good shape, and that focus is given in this matter.

**Q: Please tell us on the task undertaken in Rakhine State where state leaders have directed for priority.**

**A:** Rakhine State has been given priority. In the past, it takes (12) hours to reach Ngapali, now it takes only (8) hours. So also, the travel from Minbu to Ann takes (18) hours, and now it takes only (10) hours. The bridges are upgraded with reinforced concrete. From Anghu Maw to Buthidaung and Maungdaw in northern part are being paved with concrete roads with UEHRD plans. Moreover, four roads of Mayu Mountain

In 2016, about average (3,000) vehicles used the expressway each day, and that over (700) accidents had occurred in that year, with (170) deaths. Therefore, the expressway has been repaired as necessary, and the number of car accidents has been reduced.

In 2019, around (5,000) vehicles drove on the expressway each day in that year, with (500) accidents only, down from (700) in the previous year (2016). The number of deaths was only (108). Upgrading of roads will be continued.

**Q: Tell us about Department of Urban and Housing Development.**

**A:** The main task is urban planning, and that a total of (21) urban planning has been created. Matters with regards to urban planning have been taken up for cooperation with foreign organizations. During the planned period low-cost housing, moderate-price housing is being constructed in Yangon Region and Ayeyawaddy Region. Regions and states have undertaken in the constructions for the employees housing. The department is working in cooperation with Land and Housing Corporation (LH) of Korea for the construction of the Korea Myanmar Industrial Complex (KMIC).

**Q: Please explain the implementations of the Department of Rural Road Development.**

**A:** The department has categorized Class (a), Class (b), and Class (c) on the rural roads that has stretched over (55,000). In the year 2030, a total of (90) per cent would come under all year round accessible rural roads. The President in his speech delivered on 17 April 2018, he promised in providing (600) miles rural roads in the country. Our Ministry of Construction fulfilled the directive of the President by paving gravel roads, laterite roads, concrete roads, asphalt roads. We have successfully paved more than the length of roads being promised by the President.

In conclusion, I would like to say that our Ministry has five different departments, and that the departments are working to the best of their abilities for the development of sector-wise tasks such as roads, bridges, and urban and housing.

Interviewer: Thanks to the Deputy Minister for providing us with all the relevant information.

Translated by UMT (Ahlon)

a single day. There are (3) bridges under construction. The names are Tamote Lut Lut Bridge; Pulone Tone Tone Bridge; and Taninthayi Bridge, and that they are to be completed in 2020.

In Bago Region, there are (1,342) miles long roads and that only (5) per cent is necessary to be upgraded. The main strategic task in Bago Region is the linking of Pyay in the Bago West and Toungoo in the Bago East. It is linking with seven mountain crossing roads or Bago Yoma crossing roads, with the bridges constructed in reinforced concrete. Over (2,000) miles of roads in Magway Region, (99) per cent is being upgraded for use in all year round. Mone Chaung Bridge is to be upgraded with reinforced

crossing have been realized.

**Q: Please tell us about the fourth year progress tasks in the remaining regions and states.**

**A:** In Shan State, Yangon Region, and Ayeyawaddy Region, the roads and bridges have been upgraded. Moreover, Pathein Bridge in Ayeyawaddy Region is earmarked to open in June. Myaung Mya Bridge and Labutta Bridge have been opened. Many more bridges have been upgraded.

**Q: Tell us about Yangon – Mandalay Expressway.**

**A:** Road accidents have occurred on the expressway, and that public outcry and worry were heard.

# Key Coronavirus developments

More than 500,000 coronavirus infections have been diagnosed in Europe, over half the global total.

## Duterte tells Philippine police to shoot dead trouble-makers

Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte has told security forces they should shoot dead anyone causing “trouble” in areas locked down due to the coronavirus pandemic.

About half the country’s roughly 110 million people are currently under quarantine — including millions in deep poverty, left jobless by tough restrictions on movement.

Hours before Duterte gave the order in a speech late Wednesday, nearly two dozen people from a slum community in the capital Manila were arrested for holding a protest that accused the government of failing to provide food aid to the poor.

## Director of the anti-epidemic department insists they are clear of cases

North Korea remains totally free of the coronavirus, a senior health official in Pyongyang has insisted, despite mounting scepticism overseas as confirmed global infections near one million.

The already isolated, nuclear-armed North quickly shut down its borders in January after the virus was first detected in neighbouring China, and imposed strict containment measures.

Pak Myong Su, director of the anti-epidemic department of the North’s Central Emergency Anti-epidemic Headquarters, insisted that the efforts had been completely successful.

## US Navy evacuates virus-struck aircraft carrier Roosevelt

The US Navy is evacuating thousands of sailors from the nuclear-powered aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt in Guam after its captain warned a coronavirus outbreak was threatening the lives of the crew.

There have been 93 COVID-19 cases discovered among the 4,800-strong Roosevelt crew so far, according to the US Navy.

Pentagon officials said Wednesday they were rapidly arranging hotel rooms on the

Pacific island for many of the personnel, while organizing a skeleton team of uninfected sailors to keep the ship operational.

## Latest hotspot closed to public over coronavirus

The Grand Canyon was closed to visitors with immediate effect Wednesday, making the Arizona landmark visited by millions each year the latest tourist hotspot to shut over the coronavirus pandemic.

The closure follows several warnings in recent days by county officials and Navajo Native American leaders over crowds continuing to gather at the natural wonder.

## Lufthansa puts 87,000 workers on reduced hours

European airline giant Lufthansa said Thursday it has placed 87,000 workers — more than 60 per cent of its workforce — on government-backed shorter hours schemes, as air travel idles amid the coronavirus crisis.

Among the group’s 135,000 employees, cabin crew, ground crew and for the first time ever pilots are all affected by the measure, a spokesman told AFP.

## Greece seals off virus-hit migrant camp

Greece on Thursday sealed off a migrant camp near Athens after 21 of its residents tested positive for the coronavirus — beginning with a new mother at an Athens hospital.

“From today the facility is placed under sanitary isolation for two weeks,” the migration ministry said in a statement.

## Google boosts support for checking coronavirus facts

Google on Thursday said it is pumping \$6.5 million into fact-checkers and nonprofits as it ramps up its the battle against coronavirus misinformation. Fact-checking organizations, which often operate on relatively small budgets, are seeing a surge in demand for their work as mistaken or maliciously false information about the pandemic spreads, according to Alexios



About half the Philippines’ roughly 110 million people are currently under quarantine. PHOTO: AFP

Mantzarlis of the Google News Lab.

## Global air passenger demand sees steepest decline since 9/11

The coronavirus pandemic sent global air passenger demand plunging 14 per cent in February, marking the steepest decline in traffic since the 11 September attacks in 2001, the global aviation association said Thursday.

“Airlines were hit by a sledgehammer called COVID-19 in February,” Alexandre de Juniac, head of the International Air Transport Association, said in a statement, pointing out that global numbers had slumped 14.1 per cent year-on-year in February, while the drop for carriers in the Asia Pacific region was 41 per cent.

## Boeing Announces Voluntary Layoff Plan

Boeing unveiled a voluntary worker layoff programme Thursday, telling employees that it hoped to avoid “other workforce actions” as the aviation industry reels from the coronavirus crisis.

The initiative was announced by Boeing Chief Executive David Calhoun, who said such belt-tightening was needed amid the hit to the industry caused by the pandemic.

Boeing’s financial picture was already a bit cloudy prior to the coronavirus outbreak because of the crisis surrounding the 737 MAX, which has been grounded for more than a year following two fatal crashes.

## Half a million confirmed cases across continent

More than 500,000 coronavirus infections have been diagnosed in Europe, over half the global total, according to official sources at 11 am on Thursday.

The continent has recorded 508,271 cases and 34,571 COVID-19 deaths, compared to global figures of 940,815 and 47,836 respectively. The worst-hit countries are Italy with 13,155 fatalities and Spain with 10,003 — both have more than 100,000 confirmed infections.

However the true number of cases and deaths is likely far higher as many countries are only testing cases that require hospitalisation.

## Health minister contracts COVID-19

Israeli Health Minister Yaakov Litzman, a leading member of the ultra-Orthodox Jewish community, has tested positive for COVID-19, forcing Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to re-enter precautionary quarantine, officials said Thursday.

Netanyahu’s previous quarantine, imposed earlier this week after one of his staffers tested positive for the novel coronavirus, had ended Wednesday night, his office said. The premier’s new seven-day self-isolation was imposed following his contacts with the 71-year-old Litzman, the prime minister’s office said.

## Emirates to resume limited passenger flights

Emirates Airline said Thursday it is to resume a limited num-

ber of outbound passenger flights from April 6, less than two weeks after its coronavirus-enforced stoppage.

“Emirates has received approval from UAE authorities to restart flying a limited number of passenger flights,” its chairman, Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al-Maktoum, said on Twitter.

“From 6 April, these flights will initially carry travellers outbound from UAE,” he said, adding that details would be announced soon.

## ‘State of emergency’ declared

President Faure Gnassingbe of Togo has declared a three-month “state of emergency” and curfew aimed at stopping the spread of coronavirus.

The tiny West African nation of eight million has so far recorded 36 confirmed infections and two deaths from the disease.

## Greece seals off migrant camp

Greece on Thursday sealed off a migrant camp near Athens after 21 of its residents tested positive for the coronavirus — beginning with a new mother at an Athens hospital.

“From today the facility is placed under sanitary isolation for two weeks,” the migration ministry said in a statement.

Hours before the new cases were announced, Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis had praised health safeguards at Greek camps.

REFERENCES  
AFP; RTL News Updates

# Thingyan talk-show on Maung Do Cherry Myay continues



Thingyan talk is being shot at the MRTV, Yangon. PHOTO: MNA

THE second part of the Thingyan talk-show of the film 'Maung Do Cherry Myay' was recorded at MRTV studio in Yangon yesterday.

The TV programme intends to keep the spirit of Thingyan alive during the suspension of pandals and the festival in general for the prevention process against COVID-19. The pro-

gramme will be broadcast on TV and the Internet and is a collaboration between the Ministry of Information, Myanmar Motion Picture Organization, Music Association, movie producers, film owners and officials from the Film Development Center.

The TV programme incorporates the talents of Academy Daw Swe Zin Htaik, Academy

Aung Lwin, Academy Khin Than Nu, and Daw May Myint Yi.

'Maung Do Cherry Myay' was produced by Mandalay, screenwriting by Win Oo and the TV programme will discuss the intricacies of the film and will be broadcast on MRTV channel. -Ni Ni Myo (FDC)

(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)

# Yangon-Cocogyun marine trip to be suspended

YANGON Region Transport Authority announced yesterday that its Yangon-Cocogyun marine trip scheduled on 3 April will be suspended.

The YRTA planned to conduct the Yangon-Cocogyun round trip in the first week of every

month. The first trip conducted on 21 January and second trip on 4th March.

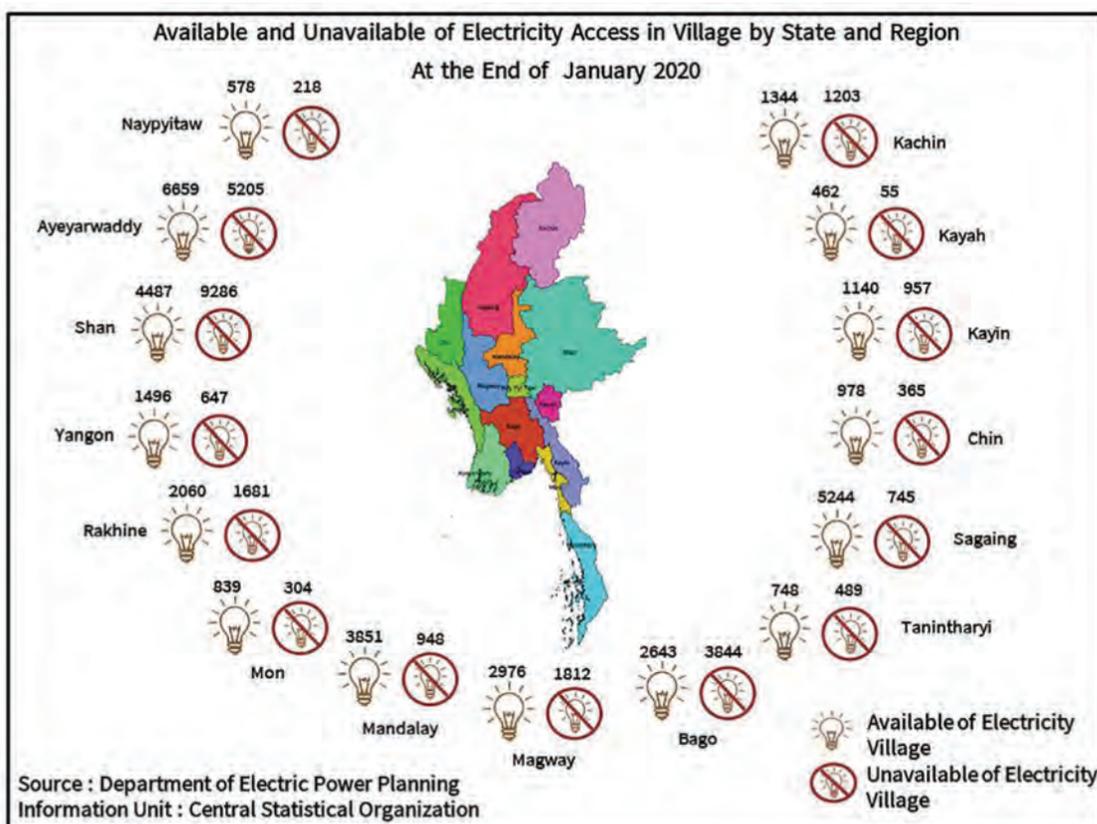
The YRTA is starting the service for the convenience of residents and government staff working in the area.

The Yangon-Cocogyun

round trip will take 80 hours (6 days). The ship can carry about 60 passengers, including 20 crew members, and 300 tons of goods, but the vessel carry mostly goods during the previous trips.—Aung Thu Ya

(Translated by Kyaw Zin Tun)

## Access to electricity



# COVID-19 health awareness raised in Mann Oil Field, Minbu

MINBU Township health authorities had public awareness against the COVID-19 virus infection in 14 villages closed to Mann Oil Field and villages in Minbu.

the MPRL E&P, distributed pamphlets about the health awareness and disseminated knowledge on the COVID-19 disease over a loudspeaker. — MNA

The team, in cooperation with the CSR team of

(Translated by Kyaw Zin Lin)



Health care providers alerting the townspeople to the COVID-19 menace in Minbu. PHOTO: MNA

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### SoftBank Group withdraws \$3 bil. tender offer plan for WeWork

TOKYO — SoftBank Group Corp. said Thursday it has withdrawn a plan to buy up to \$3 billion worth of shares in the operator of WeWork as part of a bailout package to rebuild the struggling US co-working space operator.

The Japanese investment giant said it had scrapped part of the rescue scheme as "certain conditions to the tender offer were not satisfied," citing the New York based-company's failure to obtain the necessary antitrust approvals by Wednesday.

Many governments have also restricted WeWork's operations due to the coronavirus pandemic.

SoftBank Group said in a statement that the termination of the tender offer will have no impact on WeWork's operations, customers and its five-year business and strategic plan.—Kyodo News ■

### Morocco's '\$65-million' real-estate swindle

RABAT — "Give us our money!", demands a group of home buyers, standing on land that should by now be finished condos — one of many fictitious projects that together comprise what is described as Morocco's biggest-ever property scam.

Adverts on state television had promised dream homes at three for the price of two, while brochures boasted of ornately carved wood finishings and copious marble.

But it was all a fantasy — more than 600 million dirhams (about 57 million euros, \$65 million) allegedly disappeared, leaving more than 1,000 buyers out-of-pocket, according to one of the lawyers representing them.

In a country where corruption is endemic, the unprecedented scale of the alleged fraud has generated political waves.

Called upon by deputies to address the issue in parliament, Prime Minister Saad Eddine El Othmani said the government was absolved of any blame, provoking indignation among defrauded investors who have appealed to King Mohammed VI.—AFP ■

# Global economy could shrink by 1 pct in 2020 due to COVID-19 pandemic: UN

UNITED NATIONS — The global economy could shrink by up to 1 per cent in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and may contract even further if restrictions on economic activities are extended without adequate fiscal responses, according to analysis released Wednesday by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA).

The UN-DESA briefing finds that millions of workers are at risk of losing their jobs as nearly 100 countries close their national borders. That could translate to a global economic contraction of 0.9 per cent by the end of 2020, or even higher if governments fail to provide income support and help boost consumer spending.

According to the forecast, lockdowns in Europe and North America are hitting the service sector hard, particularly indus-



Photo taken on 23 March, 2020 shows two pedestrians walking on a nearly empty street in Washington D.C., the United States. PHOTO: XINHUA

tries that involve physical interactions such as retail trade, leisure and hospitality, recreation and transportation services. Collectively, such industries account for more than a quarter of all jobs in these economies.

As businesses lose revenue, unemployment is likely to increase sharp-

ly, transforming a supply-side shock to a wider demand-side shock for the economy.

The severity of the impact will largely depend on the duration of restrictions on the movement of people and economic activities and on the scale and efficacy of responses by national

treasuries.

Against that backdrop, the UN-DESA is joining a chorus of voices across the UN system calling for well-designed fiscal stimulus packages which prioritize health spending and support households most affected by the pandemic.—Xinhua ■

# European industry retools to fight coronavirus

BARCELONA — A multitude of 3D printers hum nonstop at Spanish firm BCN3D, which like dozens of others across Europe has switched gears to supply hospitals with equipment to fight the coronavirus.

A few days ago the company still was printing parts for other printers, but now it is churning out black frames for face shields needed by doctors and nurses.

“We want to tell the healthcare sector that we are here, they can count on us... to use all our technology in the fight against this serious pandemic,” communications director David Martinez said.

From Castelldefels, 10 kilometres (six miles) down the coast from Barcelona, the company has already supplied more than 1,500 face shields to around 60

hospitals. By the end of the week they hope to have supplied more than 3,500.

Similar changes are happening across Europe, where a variety of companies are retooling to produce health equipment that is in short supply, from masks to life-saving ventilators. Spanish perfume maker Puig is whipping up hand sanitiser, while auto-makers Seat and Renault have altered assembly lines to boost ventilator supplies and Fiat is focusing on face masks.

European planemaker Airbus is also making face shields at plants in Spain and Germany. The fashion industry is doing its part as well against the pandemic that was killed more than 30,000 people in Europe, with more than three-quarters of the deaths registered in Italy and Spain.—AFP ■



BCN3D has already supplied more than 1,500 face shields to around 60 hospitals. By the end of the week they hope to have supplied more than 3,500. PHOTO: AFP

# US manufacturing sector contracts in March amid COVID-19 fallout

WASHINGTON — Economic activity in the US manufacturing sector contracted in March amid mounting COVID-19 fallout, the Institute for Supply Management (ISM) reported Wednesday.

The Purchasing Managers’ Index (PMI) stood at 49.1 per cent, down 1 percentage point from the February reading.

Any reading below 50 per cent indicates the manufacturing sector is generally contracting. The PMI contracted for five straight months from August to December last year amid US-China trade tensions.

“Comments from the panel were negative regarding the near-term outlook, with sentiment clearly impacted by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and energy market

volatility,” Timothy Fiore, chair of the ISM’s manufacturing business survey committee, said in a statement.

“The PMI returned to contraction territory, and with a negative trajectory,” Fiore said.

A business executive from machinery industry said, “COVID-19 has caused a 30-per-cent reduction in productivity in our factory.”

“COVID-19’s spread in the US may start impacting our domestic business,” said an executive from fabricated metal products industry. “As for Asian suppliers, they are starting to get back up to speed.”

An executive from food, beverage & tobacco products, however, said that “we are experiencing a record number of orders due to COVID-19.”—Xinhua ■

## Myanma Port Authority “Notice of High Tide”

Exceptionally high spring from 20.01 feet to 20.31 feet high above the chart datum are expected to occur in Yangon River during the period of April 8<sup>th</sup> to April 10<sup>th</sup>, 2020. Please be noted that it is not serious level of tide because the highest tide level have reached up to 22 feet above the chart datum in year 2014 and 2015, and this notice is normally issued whenever high tide of Yangon River is expected to reach over 20 feet high above the chart datum in order to take precautionary measures to the public living near river foreshore area of Yangon City.

## MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY HOLIDAY NOTICE

As the wharves, warehouses and chellan Offices of Yangon Port will be closed on the 10<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2020 to 17<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2020 Thingyan Water Festival (New Year Public Holiday), Loading, Unloading and delivery for Goods will be received on Payment as Holiday Fees.

Trade Mark Ads  
Call  
Thin Thin May,  
09251022355,  
09974424848

**Notice to call Special General Meeting of Coffee Concepts (Myanmar) Limited (the “Company”) for reduction of share capital**

Notice is hereby given as required by Section 116 (e) of the Myanmar Companies Law that:

(1) the Company incorporated in Myanmar with Certificate of Incorporation No. 105504551 and having its registered office at Corner of Mahabandoola Road and Thein Phyu Road, Level 8A, Union Financial Centre (UFC), Botahtaung Township, Yangon, Myanmar will call a Special General Meeting of the Company (“SGM”) to consider and, if thought fit, to approve the reduction of share capital by way of selective reduction (“Capital Reduction”), and

(2) the Company had filed the Notice of SGM and associated documents with regard to the Capital Reduction to the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration through Myanmar Companies Online (MyCO).

# Thai premier imposes indefinite curfew to curb virus spread

BANGKOK—Thai Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha on Thursday imposed an indefinite curfew across the country to curb the spread of the novel coronavirus.

In a televised address, Prayut said the curfew, beginning Friday, will be in effect from 10 pm until 4 am of the following day, continuing every day until notice is given otherwise.

People are prohibited from leaving their residences, except those who have specific assignments, including medical teams, bank employees, airport staff and transportation workers.

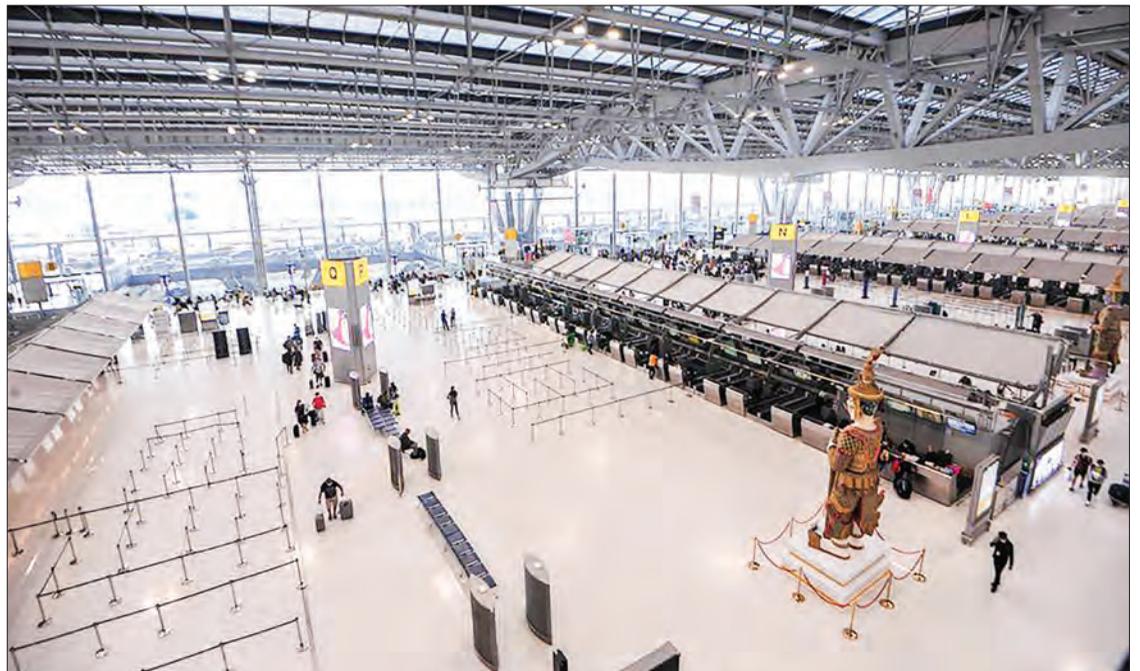
The elevated measure was aimed at increasing the government's ability to control the virus through reducing the movement of people.

“You may feel that it is in-

convenient, but we have to adjust ourselves to survive,” Prayut said. “Do not panic. You can come out to buy products during the daytime, but you have to strictly adhere to social distancing,” he added.

During the curfew period, officials or employees with assignments require the documents from their agencies or companies while traveling. Violators will face up to two years imprisonment or up to 40,000 baht (\$1,200) fine, or both. Thailand declared a state of emergency on 25 March, under which people were told to stay at home and avoid grouping, while commercial and entertainment facilities were closed. Shops selling items for daily life are allowed to stay open at specific times.

—Kyodo News ■



Passengers are seen at the departure hall of Suvarnabhumi Airport in Bangkok, Thailand, 16 March, 2020. Thailand on Monday announced 33 new COVID-19 infection cases, bringing the total tally to 147. **PHOTO: XINHUA**

## Indonesia frees 18,000 inmates from bursting jails over virus fears

JAKARTA — Indonesia has released some 18,000 inmates in a desperate bid to stop coronavirus from rampaging through its notoriously overcrowded prison system, authorities said Thursday.

The mass release comes days after the Southeast Asian nation said it would free more than 30,000 inmates to take pressure off prisons and jails beset by unsanitary conditions and long at risk of infectious diseases.

The UN has called on countries to release vulnerable inmates, with Afghanistan last week announcing it would set free some 10,000 prisoners.

“Our target is to release 30,000 inmates in total, but it could end up being more,” said Rika Aprianti, a spokeswoman for the Corrections Directorate General.

“This is part of the plan to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in prisons.”

She offered few details, but a government release order included juvenile offenders and adult

prisoners who had served at least two-thirds of their sentences.

Prisoners were advised to self quarantine at home after release. Among them was Firdaus, a fisherman jailed in 2017 on Sulawesi island for stealing a gold ring.

“I was scared of being infected in prison, not to mention that the guards come and go so we don't know who they've had

contact with,” said the 33-year-old, who was set for release in November. But his relief was tempered by the thought of others still inside. “I'm not that happy because I left my friends behind,” he said. Indonesia's creaking prison system has just 522 institutions for some 270,000 inmates. It suffers from regular jailbreaks and criticism for its often deplorable conditions.—AFP



Indonesian inmates at a Jakarta prison talk via video to family members after visits were stopped because of coronavirus fears. Authorities have now gone further, and are releasing tens of thousands of prisoners in a bid to stop the spread of the virus in overcrowded jails. **PHOTO: AFP**

## Shenzhen becomes 1<sup>st</sup> mainland Chinese city to ban dog and cat meat

BEIJING — The southern Chinese city of Shenzhen has banned the production and consumption of dog and cat meat, becoming the first mainland Chinese city to do so in the wake of the coronavirus outbreak in the country.

“Cats and dogs as pets have established a closer relationship with humans than other animals, and banning the consumption of dogs and cats and other pets is a common practice in many developed countries, Hong Kong and Taiwan,” a representative of the city government said in a post Wednesday.

“Such a ban reflects today's demands and spirit of human civilization,” the representative said.

The new food safety regulation will come into effect on May 1 as part of a wider effort to prevent future outbreaks of viruses.

The central government banned all “illegal” trade and eating of non-aquatic wild animals



Activists try their best to rescue a cat at a free market ahead of the Yulin Dog Eating Festival in Yulin city, south China's Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region on 19<sup>th</sup> June 2014. **PHOTO: KYODO NEWS**

in late February after the virus was traced to a seafood market in the central Chinese city of Wuhan that also traded in wild animals, including bats and snakes.

The national ban, in addition to the already outlawed practice of trading certain wild animals, imposes heavier penalties on offenders.—Kyodo News ■

## Lebanon discriminating against refugees in virus response: HRW

BEIRUT — Lebanese authorities have introduced “discriminatory restrictions” exclusively targeting Syrian refugees as part of their response to the coronavirus, Human Rights Watch said on Thursday.

Lebanon hosts between

1.5 and 2 million Syrians, nearly one million of whom are officially registered as refugees with the United Nations.

Human rights groups have repeatedly accused the Lebanese government of pressuring refugees to return to Syria despite

the absence of any settlement to end a conflict now in its 10th year.

An outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has made matters worse for Syrian refugees in the country.

Since early March, at least eight municipalities have imple-

mented curfews that restrict the movement of Syrian refugees to certain times because of coronavirus concerns, HRW said.

It said the measures were introduced before the government announced a nationwide curfew and include tight restrictions that

do not apply to the rest of the population.

“There is no evidence that extra curfews for Syrian refugees will help limit the spread of COVID-19,” said HRW refugee rights researcher Nadia Hardman.—AFP ■

# EU chief 'concerned' about Hungary virus emergency law

BRUSSELS — European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen expressed concern on Thursday over a coronavirus emergency law in Hungary that has given nationalist premier Viktor Orban sweeping powers.

While saying EU countries may need extraordinary measures to tackle the pandemic, she added: "I am concerned that certain measures go too far — and I'm particularly concerned with the situation in Hungary."

Hungary's parliament, dominated by Orban's ruling party, handed the prime minister the power from Tuesday to rule by decree until his government decides the virus crisis is over.

The emergency law also threatens journalists with prison if they publish what it deems "falsehoods" about the virus or the government's actions to slow it.

The law has sparked alarm among rights groups, media organisations and several EU countries, with fears it was a power grab by Orban, who has ruled Hungary for the past decade.

Thirteen EU nations, including heavyweights France and Germany, issued a joint



Hungary's parliament handed the prime minister the power from Tuesday to rule by decree until his government decides the virus crisis is over. PHOTO: AFP

statement on Wednesday that — without explicitly naming Hungary — said they were "deeply concerned about the risk of violations of the principles of rule of law, democracy and fundamental rights arising from the adoption of certain emergency measures".

Von der Leyen up to now had been similarly circumspect, avoiding singling Hungary out by name. On Tuesday, she emphasised that coronavirus emergency measures in EU countries must be limited, proportionate and cannot last indefinitely.

## EU threatens 'action'

As part of her response to questions on Thursday specifi-

cally on Hungary, von der Leyen said where measures do not meet those criteria "we will take action as necessary as we have already done in the past".

Her Commission, she added, was "mapping the whole situation" and weighing them against those standards.

Orban's government argues that it is upholding EU values and press freedom with the emergency law. His spokesman for international relations tweeted on Wednesday that "the Hungarian state of emergency and extraordinary measures are congruent with the treaties and Hungarian constitution and targeted exclusively at fighting the coronavirus".—AFP ■

# Global virus cases near a million as Spain sees record deaths

MADRID — Confirmed coronavirus cases approached one million around the world on Thursday as Europe reeled from the pandemic and the US prepared for what President Donald Trump warned would be "horrific" days ahead.

The virus claimed thousands more lives in its relentless march across the globe, including nearly 1,000 new deaths in Spain, despite more than half of the planet subjected to some form of lockdown.

And it continued to wreak havoc on the global economy, with Spain reporting its biggest monthly increase in jobless claims on record and the US expected to reveal more massive job losses.

Since emerging in China in December, COVID-19 has infected more than 940,000 people — including at least 500,000 in Europe

— and claimed more than 47,000 lives, according to a tally by AFP from official sources.

World Health Organization head Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said there had been a "near exponential growth" in new cases over the past five weeks and a doubling of deaths in the past week alone.

"In the next few days we will reach one million confirmed cases and 50,000 deaths," he told a virtual news conference on Wednesday, warning that Africa and Latin America needed to be prepared for a wider impact.

## 'Slowdown' in Spain

New figures on infection rates and virus-related deaths would show Thursday whether there were signs the epidemic could be peaking in Europe, where at least 34,000 have died.—AFP ■



Medical staff wearing protective clothing take test samples for the COVID-19 coronavirus from a foreign passenger at a virus testing booth outside Incheon international airport near Seoul. PHOTO: AFP

# Iran, US heat up war of words on Iraq despite virus pandemic

TEHRAN — Iran said Thursday it "only acts in self-defence" after President Donald Trump warned it against attacks on US troops in Iraq, as a new war of words heated up despite the coronavirus pandemic.

Tensions between the arch-foes flared in Iraq where the United States deployed Patriot air defence missiles prompting

neighbouring Iran to warn of consequences and demand a US withdrawal.

Both countries have been hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has claimed more than 5,000 lives in the United States and more than 3,000 in Iran.

"Unlike the US — which surreptitiously lies, cheats & assassinate — Iran only acts in

self-defence," Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif tweeted.

"Don't be misled by usual warmongers, AGAIN," he said, addressing US President Donald Trump,

"Iran starts no wars but teaches lessons to those who do," he added.

Trump warned Iran on Wednesday that it would pay a "heavy price" in the event of further attacks on US troops.

He tweeted that "upon information and belief, Iran or its proxies are planning a sneak attack on US troops and/or assets in Iraq." In response, Zarif wrote on Twitter that "Iran has FRIENDS: No one can have MILLIONS of 'proxies'"

Iran responded angrily to the US Patriot deployment warning that Washington risked leading the Middle East to disaster in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic.—AFP ■



Iran says the United States has missed the "historic" opportunity presented by the coronavirus to lift sanctions criticised even by its own allies without losing face. PHOTO: AFP

# Combating COVID-19: Scott Morrison announces free childcare program for working parents

SYDNEY — Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison on Thursday announced a free childcare programme for working parents who are unable to take care of their children at home especially during the coronavirus crisis.

"If you have a job in this economy then that is an essential job," Morrison was quoted as saying by Sydney Morning Herald. "It is important that all of those parents who have

children, that they get access to childcare and those facilities will be there for them," he added.

The childcare centres will prioritize the children of essential workers who find it difficult to care for their children at home, and will then try to accommodate the parents who have taken their children out of schools and care homes in view of the surging cases of COVID-19.—ANI ■

## Myanmar Football Federation president gives health insurance benefit for caregivers

THE Myanmar Football Federation president U Zaw Zaw who is also the Chairperson of the Ayeyarwady Foundation and AYA SOMPO Insurance Company Limited donated Kyats 500 million fund for Health Insurance worth for caregivers in Myanmar, who are actively working relentlessly across Myanmar to combat world threatening Coronavirus COVID-19 disease, according to the statement with the Myanmar Football Federation.

The funding was realized after the discussion between Union Minister for Health and Sports Dr Myint Htwe and Chairperson of the Ayeyarwady Foundation and AYA SOMPO Insurance Company Limited and Myanmar Football Federation president U Zaw Zaw.

The Ayeyarwady Foundation owned by U Zaw Zaw has already provided services at



Myanmar Football Federation president U Zaw Zaw visits the health care provision room for quarantine person. **PHOTO: MFF**

the AYA Bank's Training Centre for their accommodation, daily meals and transportation services for the doctors and nurses from Waibargi Hospital, who are currently facing the difficulties of commuting and lodgings.

The Health Insurance Benefit Fund will use for the

front line healthcare providers who are willingly volunteering at the hospitals and various areas throughout Myanmar to feel safe for their health while caring for the COVID-19 patients, according to the Myanmar Football Federation.

—Lynn Thit (Tgi) ■

## Well-wishers donate cash, food to Lethwei clubs amid COVID-19

MYANMAR traditional lethwei competitions throughout the nation has been postponed as COVID-19 pandemic is straining health systems worldwide, according to the Myanmar Lethwei tourneys organizers.

Well-wishers donated cash and necessary food and goods to Lethwei clubs starting from last week for the ease of nutrition of lethwei fighters, coaches and families during the Coronavirus COVID-19 crisis period.

The Myanmar Lethwei officials stated that U Kyaw Min Khaing donated K500,000 while the family of The Glory of Nine Point Nine donated K200,000, and U Tha Dhou and Doung Ma Lay (Hlaing Tharyar) each donated K100,000, while Sayagyi Datana donated K70,000 and Daw Myint

Myint Kyaw donated K60,000 and U Soe Min donated K50,000 and U Ye Thura Aung and U Tin Maung Swe each donated K100,000.

Also necessary goods were supported last week with the supervision of Myanmar Lethwei competitions organizers U Datha.

Normally, this is the season of Myanmar traditional Lethwei competitions and the tourneys are popular to be held in Yangon, Mandalay and towns in Kayin State.

Currently all the Lethwei fighters were staying home and Lethwei stars and newcomers were also came back home from Pa An Tiger traditional Lethwei club, according to the Lethwei tourneys organizers.

—Lynn Thit (Tgi) ■

## Asian Cup 2027 hosting deadline extended over virus



Qatar won the last Asian Cup in 2019. **PHOTO: AFP**

HONG KONG (China)—The Asian Football Confederation extended the deadline for preliminary bids for the 2027 Asian Cup on Thursday after the coronavirus pandemic caused major problems for football administrations.

Expressions of interest will now be accepted until 30 June, three months after the original deadline of 31 March, the AFC said in a statement.

“The decision was taken in light of the current COVID-19 pandemic to allow member associations, many of whom have been affected by the global outbreak, sufficient time to meet their internal processes and timelines,” it said.

China will host the next Asian Cup in 2023 but Saudi Arabia, which has a growing portfolio of large-scale sports events, is the only country so

far to throw its hat in the ring for 2027.

Qualifying for the 2023 Asian Cup, like most other football worldwide, has been put on hold as countries batten down to stop the spread of the novel coronavirus.

Qatar, hosts of the next World Cup in 2022, won the 2019 Asian Cup where the tournament expanded from 16 to 24 teams.—AFP ■

## Jones to lead England at 2023 World Cup

TWICKENHAM (United Kingdom)—Eddie Jones has signed a two-year extension to his contract as England coach that will see him remain in charge of the side until the end of the 2023 World Cup in France, the Rugby Football Union announced Thursday.

The 60-year-old Australian took charge following hosts England's first-round exit at the 2015 World Cup.

His current deal expires in 2021 but talks have been ongoing about an extension since Jones guided England to last year's World Cup final in Japan, where they were beaten by South Africa. Jones's new contract means he is set to become England's longest-serving head coach, surpassing the eight-year stint of Clive Woodward – in charge of the team that won the 2003 World Cup final when they defeated an Australia side coached by Jones. “I never thought coming here four years ago I would be doing a second four years but the circumstances are right,” said Jones.

### 'Big ambition'

Jones added the challenge of making England the “best team in the world” by going one



New deal - England coach Eddie Jones. **PHOTO: AFP**

better than they did in Japan at the next World Cup had inspired him to remain in the post.

“I am excited about raising the standards again,” he said. “We have a great team. We set out four years ago to be the best team in the world and unfortunately we missed that by 80 minutes.

“Now we want to be the team that is remembered as being the greatest team the game has ever seen. It's a big ambition but I believe we are capable of doing it. “We have players with an enhanced reputation, we have a team that is expected to do well, so it's a great opportunity for us to keep moving forward.”—AFP ■