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Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Administration Council Nine Objectives

1. Political Objectives

- (a) Building of a Federal Democratic Union by fully and lawfully exercising a genuine disciplined multiparty democratic system;
- (b) Special consideration of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) to implement eternal peace in the whole country;
- (c) Practising the active, independent and non-aligned foreign policy and upholding the mutual co-existence principle.

2. Economic Objectives

- (a) Development of agricultural and livestock production as the base employing modernized methods and all-round development of other sectors of the economy as well;

- (b) To shape a stable market-oriented economic system by inviting foreign direct investments (FDIs) and developing the economy of the entire national peoples;
- (c) Creation of employment opportunities by encouraging domestic economic enterprises to produce State products.

3. Social Objectives

- (a) Uplift of dynamism of Union spirit as genuine patriotic spirit;
- (b) Preservation and safeguarding of cultural heritage and national characters by respecting the traditions and customs of all ethnic national peoples;
- (c) Uplift of health, fitness and education standards of the entire nation.

Promotion of production and export sector stressed to reduce trade deficits: Senior General



Chairman of the State Administration Council Senior General Min Aung Hlaing presides over the 1/2021 Economic Affairs Committee Meeting yesterday.

CHAIRMAN of the State Administration Council and Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing delivered a speech at the 1/2021 meeting of the Economic Affairs Committee yesterday.

At the meeting, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing discussed the importance of the national

economy as a driving force for the development of the country, the works of the economic affairs committee for this sector, collaborative efforts in the works, and promotion of the production and export sector to reduce trade deficits shown the figures of Ministry of Commerce and Ministry of Planning, Finance

and Industry.

He also held talks on sufficient human resources for the workforces, natural resources in the country with over 54 million population and conservation works for future generations, production of import-substituted items, more electricity generation to improve production sec-

tor, employment opportunities for the citizens who completed basic and higher educations, assistance for the employers and employees, guarantees and incentives for investors and collection of tax revenue from more taxpayers.

The Chairman of State Administration Council also in-

structed providing assistance to factories and industries, adopting policies by the relevant ministries for the better quality of products, the participation of nationals in the economic sector, the proper intention of the Economic Affairs Committee in making approvals for investments.

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State Administration Council
Order No (84/2021)

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Appointment and Duty Assignment of
Deputy Minister

The State Administration Council has appointed U Zaw Aye Maung as the Deputy Minister for Ethnic Affairs, as per Section 419 of the State Constitution.

By order

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

Republic of the Union of Myanmar
State Administration Council
Order No (85/2021)

12th Waxing Tabodwe 1382 ME
23 February 2021

Substitution of Sagaing Region
Administration Council member

U Tin Than Win is appointed as a member the Sagaing Region Administration Council to replace U Hla Han, as per Section 419 of the State Constitution.

By order

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

Findings on printing ballot papers used in General Election on 8 November 2020 (23 February 2021)

- The Union Election Commission has inspected printing ballot papers used in the General Election that took place on 8 November 2020, in making contract with the Ministry of Information. A total of 138,460,270 ballot tickets were initially printed on 1-9-2020, and more ballot papers were printed for 9 times due to the needs of region/state election sub-commissions, including Yangon Region Election Commission for two times on 7 November 2020 (one day ahead of election day).
- Numbers of ballot papers printed for the respective Hluttaw elections were as follow:

(a) Pyithu Hluttaw	44,169,344
(b) Amyotha Hluttaw	44,148,229
(c) Region/State Hluttaw	43,295,374
(d) Ethnic people Hluttaw	7,718,173
Total	139,331,120
- Initial printing and additional printing of ballot papers for respective areas were as follow:

Initial printing and additional printing of ballot papers for respective areas for 2020 General Election

Sr	Date	Region/State	Ballot Paper					Remark
			Pyithu	Amyotha	Region/State	Ethnics	Total	
1	1-9-2020	All regions and states	44,011,544	44,001,629	43,042,474	7,404,623	138,460,270	Initial Printing
2	13-10-2020	Kayah	1,250	1,750	1,750	-	4,750	Additional Printing
		Kayin	26,250	26,050	26,850	5,950	85,100	
		Mon	-	-	-	110,600	110,600	
		Rakhine	-	-	-	2,250	2,250	
		Kachin	37,450	37,650	46,600	137,200	258,900	
3	16-10-2020	Bago	18,800	13,700	34,400	-	66,900	Additional Printing
		Shan	-	-	4,850	-	4,850	
4	21-10-2020	Kayin	5,750	5,800	5,800	7,250	24,600	Additional Printing
		Shan	4,150	2,250	7,950	2,450	16,800	
		Mandalay	33,950	19,800	43,500	-	97,250	
		Kachin	13,800	12,850	17,150	9,350	53,150	
		Yangon	4,050	5,200	10,150	9,750	29,150	
		Taninthayi	7,500	7,500	9,450	-	24,450	
5	22-10-2020	Ayeyawady	2,550	12,500	14,500	10,300	39,850	Additional Printing
6	23-10-2020	Shan	750	-	1,600	-	2,350	Additional Printing
7	26-10-2020	Shan	550	550	550	450	2,100	Additional Printing
8	30-10-2020	Yangon	-	-	3,400	-	3,400	Additional Printing
9	7-11-2020	Yangon	1,000	1,000	22,900	12,500	37,400	Additional Printing
10	7-11-2020	Yangon	-	-	1,500	5,500	7,000	Additional Printing
		Total Addition	157,800	146,600	252,900	313,550	870,850	
		Total	44,169,344	44,148,229	43,295,374	7,718,173	139,331,120	

Five future programmes of State Administration Council

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

Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Administration Council

Order No (86/2021)

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23 February 2021

Substitution of Union Election Commission members

The State Administration Council has substituted the former members of the Union Election Commission with the following persons, as per Section 419 of the State Constitution:

1. U Aung Moe Myint (substituted for) U Thaug Tin
2. U Aung Lwin Oo (substituted for) U Kyauk

By order

Sd/

Aung Lin Dway
Lieutenant-General
Secretary

State Administration Council

Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Administration Council

Order No (87/2021)

12th Waxing Tabodwe 1382 ME

23 February 2021

Appointment and Duty Assignment of Deputy Ministers

The State Administration Council has appointed the following persons as the Deputy Ministers for Education, as per Section 419 of the State Constitution.

- (a) Dr Zaw Myint
- (b) U Zaw Win

By order

Sd/

Aung Lin Dway
Lieutenant-General
Secretary
State Administration Council

Union Minister for Foreign Affairs meets with Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Thailand via videoconference

U Wunna Maung Lwin, Union Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, held discussions with Mr Don Pramudwinai, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand, via videoconference from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Nay Pyi Taw at 2:00 pm on 23 February 2021.

During the discussion, U Wunna Maung Lwin, Union Minister for

Foreign Affairs, apprised the Thai Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of the recent developments in Myanmar. The two Ministers cordially exchanged views on matters pertaining to the promotion of the existing bilateral relations and expansion of cooperation, including trade and investment, the prevalence of peace and stability along the border, as well as the provision of necessary assistance



Union Minister U Wunna Maung Lwin holds online talks with Thai Deputy PM and FM Mr Don Pramudwinai on 23 February 2021.

to Myanmar migrant workers in Thailand to obtain legal status.

The two Ministers also dis-

cussed further intensifying collaboration in regional and multilateral arenas, particularly within the

ASEAN frameworks on the basis of ASEAN solidarity and unity.—MNA

Promotion of production and export sector stressed to reduce trade deficits: Senior General

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Union Minister U Win Shein, the secretary of the Economic Affairs Committee, reported on the formation of the committee and the discussions.

Union Ministers for the Ministry of Home Affairs, the Ministry of Planning, Finance

and Industry, the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation, the Ministry of Information, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation, the Ministry of Electricity and Energy, the Ministry of Commerce, the Ministry of Construction, and the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief

and Resettlement discussed matters related to the approvals of ministries, registrations, issuing orders, the appointment of members for Securities and Exchange Commission of Myanmar, providing cash awards, and signing MoUs and agreements.

Union Minister U Aung Naing Oo also reported on the

ongoing projects with foreign countries, MoUs and international assistance; Auditor-General of the Union Dr Kan Zaw about the work plans and reform processes; Union Minister U Khin Maung Yi about the compilation of copper and gems and organizing gems emporium.

In his concluding remark,

the Senior General discussed requirements for economic recovery from the impacts of COVID-19, proper time management, making appropriate reports without delay, collaboration among relevant departments and ministries through firm policies.—MNA

Never deviated from the multiparty democracy path

OFFICIALS who are responsible for the stability of the State, the rule of law, lives and property of the public are handling the ongoing problems with care; the State Administration Council have never deviated from the multiparty democracy path since it took the administrative power and measures are being taken in line with the 2008 State Constitution; the Council does not change politic, administrative, economic, social, peace and international relation policies of the country; the emerging situations have resulted from voter list fraud in the previous elections; the Council is working together with prominent persons from civil societies as it focused on the civilian administrative sector.

(Excerpt from the speech to the coordination meeting of the State Administration Council made by the Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Administration Council Chairman Senior General Min Aung Hlaing on 16 February 2021)

Ministries meet commercial attachés over trade promotion, new export items

THE Ministry of Commerce held a virtual meeting with Myanmar commercial attachés in foreign countries yesterday over bilateral trade promotion and new export items to overseas markets.

At the meeting, Union Minister for Commerce Dr Pwint San discussed the role of commercial attachés in expanding markets for export items, and their works would be viewed in accordance with the result-based methods.

Union Minister for Foreign Investment and Foreign Economic Relations U Aung Naing Oo talked about policies on the economic recovery of the country, inviting more foreign and local investments, and promotion

of economic cooperation with partner countries.

Union Minister for Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation U Tin Htut Oo remarked development of the agricultural sector which contributes 25 per cent of the country's GDP and creates employment opportunities in addition to food sufficiency of the country, development of agro-food system, more markets for beans, rice and marine products and working to sign sanitary and phytosanitary agreements with foreign countries.

The first-day meeting was participated by the Myanmar commercial attachés from the United States, South Africa,



MoC holds the virtual meeting with Myanmar Commercial attachés on trade promotion and new export items yesterday.

Brazil, Australia, Germany, Belgium, Thailand and India.

The second-day meeting on

24 February will be joined by the Republic of China (Beijing, Nan-ning, Hong Kong, Kunming),

Singapore, Japan, the Republic of Korea and Switzerland.—MNA

Myanmar nationals repatriated from Malaysia by navy vessels



Myanmar nationals, stranded in Malaysia for many years, are repatriated by Navy vessels.

CHAIRMAN of the State Administration Council Senior General Min Aung Hlaing once said the Myanmar nationals stranded in foreign countries for many years should return to the country and arrangements will be made to bring back those nationals as quickly as possible during the meeting of the Union Government held on 2 February.

Therefore, the three Myanmar navy vessels—Mottama, Thanlwin, Shin Phyu Shin—led by Brig-Gen Naing Min Kyaw left for Lumut Jetty of Malaysia on 15 February to repatriate Myanmar nationals stranded in Malaysia.

The three vessels arrived at Lumut Jetty of Malaysia on the morning of 21 February, and the Myanmar Embassy in Malaysia and Malaysian immigration authorities transferred a total of 1,086 Myanmar nationals. The ships left for the country on that evening.

The returnees got the certification of identification and completed COVID-19 tests. The officials also provided medical checks, clothes and other commodities.

The officials of the Myanmar Navy will provide the needed things for the returnees like a reunion with their family members, job opportunities, safety and healthcare services on the way. The navy ships carrying Myanmar nationals will arrive in Myanmar on 27 February.

Although it failed to bring back the Myanmar nationals stranded in Malaysia in former government term, the repatriation is successful now, it is learnt.—MNA

MoLIP discusses regular operation of factories in Yangon, wages for workers

THE Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population conducted a virtual meeting on facilitating the operations of factories and industries in Yangon Region and wages for the labourers in accordance with the law yesterday.

At the meeting, Union Minister U Myint Kyaing highlighted the COVID-19 pandemic that has left over 100,000 unemployment, incitement to factory workers to join CDM during this period and low production rates for the closure of factories while the workers face hardships as well as the employers.

He also stressed the need to pay salaries to those working in the factories in line with the law despite the hardships.

He then discussed the impacts of CDM on factories and

industries in Yangon, salary cuts against those who failed to work for some reasons, efforts to reduce threats to join CDM, and productivity in manufacturing sectors through good operations of factories.

Then, Yangon Region Administration Council Chairman U Hla Soe presented the operation works of factories and industries in 29 industrial zones of Yangon, labour shortage due to the threats of CDM campaigns, the workload of factories without CDM participants, connection with banks for salary payment of workers and further work plans to run the factories as usual.

The Secretary of UMFCCI Daw Khine Khine Nwe, employers and heads of respective industrial zones, also briefed their



Union Minister U Myint Kyaing joins the virtual meeting on regular operation of factories in Yangon and wages for workers on 23 February 2021.

needs and difficulties.

Then, the Union Minister

instructed to communicate with labour offices to solve the labour

issues if needed, and other necessary things. —MNA

Legal action taken against doctor in CDM while serving at private hospital

A woman living in Nyaunglebin village of Moe Nyo township of Bago Region got injuries in a motorcycle accident at about 10am on 12 February and did not receive any medical treatment at Pyay 500-bed General Hospital, which was closed.

Then, she went to Dr Kyaw Thura, who failed to work at General Hospital but worked at

a private hospital at 11 am on 13 February. It cost her K1.3 million to cut her right two fingers (ring finger and little finger) off due to the injuries. Then, Dr Kyaw Thura told her to make an operation again. She then transferred to No (6) Military Hospital (100-bed) as she could not afford the costs.

The military medics had to cut off her right middle finger

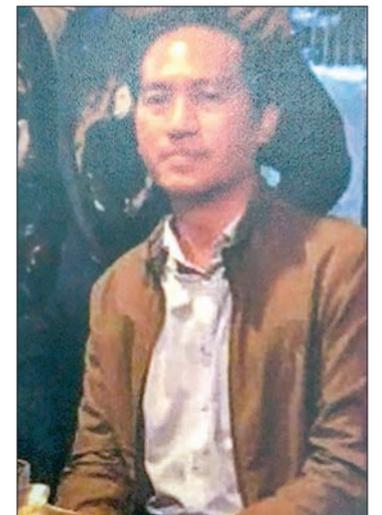
and index finger as she needed emergency operations.

Regarding this case, the woman reported to the Administration Council of Pyay that Dr Kyaw Thura asked her for money, and for joining CDM and illegally inciting others to join CDM and asking for money by breaking Civil Service Personnel Law. Police Captain Kyaw Aye Hlaing of Pyay

Township opened the case under Penal Code section 505(a).

The Myanmar Medical Council have also received the complaint about the doctor for his failure to perform his duties.—MNA

Dr Kyaw Thura (Sama-19903 - doctor's licence number) started taking duties on 8 June 2020.



Arrival/departure report system to be resumed at international airports

The arrival and departure card system will be resumed at the international airports, according to the report of Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population.

Foreigners and Myanmar citizens who arrived in or left from Myanmar need to fill the arrival and departure cards at the airports under this system.—MNA

Myanmar, Bangladesh hold battalion commander-level meeting

THE flag meeting of battalion commander level between Myanmar and Bangladesh border guards was held in Maungtau Township, Rakhine State, yesterday morning.

The meeting was attended by seven members of the Myanmar delegation led by Police Lt-Col Zaw Lin Aung and the 11 members of the Bangladeshi

delegation led by Lt-Col Mohammad Faisal Hasan Khan.

The meeting focused on preventing illegal entry/exit across the border, educating the people in the border areas, exchange of information and cooperation in preventing border crossings and maintaining peace and stability in the border areas.

A total of 24 Bangladeshi

nationals who have already been prosecuted in accordance with Myanmar's domestic law were transferred systematically to Bangladesh in accordance with Article 7, Section 2 of the Myanmar-Bangladesh border cooperation agreement. Among them, 22 people were illegal immigrants, 1 illegal money changer and 1 illegal shipper.—MNA

22 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 23 February, total figure rises to 141,783

Total Cases

141,783

New Cases

22

Total Death Tally

3,197

Discharged from Hospital

131,358

Updated at 8 pm, 23 February 2021

MYANMAR'S COVID-19 positive cases rose to 141,783 after 22 new cases were reported on 23 February 2021 according to the Ministry of Health and Sports. Among these confirmed cases, 3,197 died, 131,358 have been discharged from hospitals.—MNA

Ministry of Health and Sports

Dollar gaining in domestic forex market



The rate has reached above K1,400 starting from 4 February 2021. PHOTO: PHOE KHWAR

ACCORDING to the Central Bank of Myanmar, the US dollar value against Kyat keeps appreciating in the domestic forex market.

The dollar exchange rate stood at K1,335 in January-end. The rate has reached above K1,400 starting from 4 February 2021.

With the dollar value strengthening in the local forex market, a dollar was valued at K1,447 on 23 February. The exchange rate rose by K100 in recent days.

Consequently, the Central Bank of Myanmar sold 6.8 million dollars at an auction rate on 3 February to control the dollar exchange rate rise.

It is usual for the CBM to regulate the dollar volatility by

selling or purchasing dollar at an auction rate.

Similarly, the precious pure gold metal price stood at only K1,320,500 per tical (0.578 ounces, or 0.016 kilograms) in the domestic market during January-end. It then reached a new peak of K1,410,000 on 3 February.

Shortly after that, the price of gold slipped a bit. The market was opened at K1,390,000 per tical on 23 February.

Yangon Region Gold Entrepreneurs Association released a statement on 4 February that the association urged people and traders not to trust in rumours, control reckless gold trading over concerns, and use cash down payment system.

Last month, the dollar exchange rate touched the maxi-

mum of K1,345 and the minimum of K1,327.

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

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

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

Myanmar exports fall by \$886 mln as of 5 February

MYANMAR'S exports over the past four months of the current 2020-2021 financial year touched a low to US\$5.53 billion, reflecting a drastic drop of over \$886 million compared with a year-ago period of the previous FY, according to the data from the Ministry of Commerce.

During the corresponding period in the previous FY, exports stood at \$6.417 billion, according to the data released by the ministry.

The pandemic deals a severe blow to the manufacturing, mineral and other service sectors as it shut down the events. Additionally, people demand only staple food. The current political instability will worsen the external trade, pointed out the exporters.

The drop in exports of natural gas, gems and jewellery, and CMP garments contributes to the slump in exports, the ministry stated.

Both sea trade and border trade dropped amid the coronavirus impacts. The neighbouring countries tightened border security and limited the trading time to contain the spread of the virus. Pandemic-induced container shortage pushed up the freight rates to almost triple in Myanmar, causing delays for exporters.

Of the seven export groups, agricultural exports showed an increase of \$814.46

million against a year-ago period. At the same time, exports of other goods were also seen a small rise. Meanwhile, exports of livestock, forest products, minerals, fishery products and finished industrial goods declined.

Between 1 October and 5 February of the current FY, export values have registered at \$2.09 billion for agro products, \$15.85 million for livestock, \$331 million for fishery products, \$407 million for minerals, \$54 million for forest products, \$2.45 billion for manufactured goods, and \$176.57 million for other goods.

The country's export sector relies more on the agriculture and manufacturing sectors. At present, CMP garment exports drastically dropping since the western countries cancelled order following the COVID-19 impacts. The country's export sector is likely to extend its drop due to the current political climate, an exporter shared his opinion.

The Ministry of Commerce is focusing on export promotion and market diversification. Since 2011, the Ministry of Commerce has adhered to its reform policy. A series of moves to liberalize and open the economy have been introduced through policy development to improve the trade environment. — KH/GNLM

Companies registered via MyCO exceed 87,000 in two and half years: DICA

THE number of companies registered on the online registry system, MyCO, reached over 87,000 in the past two and half years, the statistics released by the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration (DICA) indicated.

The registration and re-registration of companies on the MyCO website commenced on 1 August 2018, in keeping with the Myanmar Companies Law 2017. 40,960 new companies and 46,377 existing companies have registered and re-registered on MyCO, bringing the total number of registered companies to 87,337 by December-end 2020.

Typically, over 1,000 new companies are registered every month.

DICA's statistics showed that 1,370 companies registered on MyCO in January 2021.

When the online registry was launched in August 2018, 1,816 new companies registered on MyCO. The figure stood at 2,218 in September 2018, 1,671 in October, 1,431 in November and 1,364 in December 2018.

In 2019, the figure stood at 1,733 in January 2019, 1,419 in February, 1,108 in March, and over 1,045 in April, 1,411 in May, 1,307 in June, 1,428 in July, 1,302 in August and 1,181 in September. The figures reached a fresh new peak of 2,059 in October 2019. Then, 1,615 new companies in November and 1,772 in December were recorded, data of the DICA showed.

Last year, the figures of registered companies stood at 1,415 in January, 1,298 in February and 1,015 in March, only 348 companies in April, 798 in May, 1,314 in June, 1,650 in July, 1,551 in August, 1,378 in September, 1,693 in October, 1,099 in November and 1,521 in December, as per statistics of the DICA.

At present, 100 per cent of the applicants are using the online registration platform, according to the DICA data.

Besides, all registered companies need to file annual returns (AR) on the MyCO registry system within two months of incorporation. At least once every year (not later than one month after the anniversary of the incorporation), according to Section 97 of

Myanmar Companies Law 2017.

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

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.

As per DICA's report, more than 16,000 companies were suspended as of September-end 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 notified that 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 position only after shelling out a fine of K50,000 for the AR fee, 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. — NN/GNLM

Local growers make good profit from watermelon cultivation in Gangaw

WITH the enormously growing of watermelon in Gangaw Township in the Magway region, the watermelon started yielding. They are sold back within the region and in the border area.

The watermelons are sold mostly in the Myanmar-India border checkpoint market and Kalay, Mawlaik townships in the upper Chindwin region. The local growers are making a good profit from watermelon cultivation because of high demand.

The residents from Hsar, Yaw and Laung Chay regions in the Gangaw district commonly cultivate season fruits such as watermelon, muskmelon, potato, tomato and cabbage. The cultivation of seasonal fruits is successful and sent to Haka township in Chin State and Tamu township in Myanmar-India border, Kalay and Mawlaik

townships in the upper Chindwin region.

The watermelons are selling well these days in some places such as Kalay, Chin mountain and the upper Chindwin region. So, the locals are having watermelon as season fruit at pagoda and school ceremony. Also, the elders and children from those regions are eating the watermelon as snacks.

The watermelons are cultivated beside the Mandalay-Gangaw-Kalay highway in Shwebo, Taungkinyan, Myautkhin Yan villages in Gangaw Township. Watermelons are priced at K700-K1,000 per piece, depending upon the size. However, the watermelon fetched around K1,200 for a small-size one and K2,500 for a big one in Kalay, Tamu, Mawlaik markets in the Myanmar-India border market. —Panthitsa (Kalay)/GNLM



The watermelons are cultivated beside the Mandalay-Gangaw-Kalay highway in Shwebo, Taungkinyan, Myautkhin Yan villages in Gangaw Township. PHOTO: PANTHITSA

Exports through Muse-Man Wein border rises in January

THE 24-hour service at Muse-Man Wein border checkpoint for ten days boosted the exports between Myanmar and China and cut the freight forwarding cost by half in January.

Exports through Muse-Man Wein post were valued at US\$229.834 million in December 2020. In contrast, the value rose to \$270.359 million in January 2021, showing an increase of \$40.5 million. Similarly, the figures showed an increase of \$10.243 million in imports as well.

Furthermore, the Muse-Man Wein checkpoint gave the go-ahead to over 15,600 trucks in January 2021.

Usually, Myanmar-China cross-border Man Wein was open for trading between 6 am and 10 pm, in line with COVID-19 health guidelines. Following a friendly negotiation between a team led by the Muse District Head and the People's Government of Ruili officials, trading hours through Muse-Man

Wein were extended to 24 hours between 5 and 14 January on a trial basis. As a result of this, exports remarkably soared in January.

Myanmar shipped sesame, peanut, green gram, minerals and onions to China via Muse. It imports cotton, fertilizer, mobile phone and telecommunication products, iron and steel products and machine and auto parts.

Additionally, the authorities concerned from both sides negotiated the extending trading hours in Kyinsankyawt and Pan Hseng (Kyukok) and the Hsinphyu crossings' reopening. At present, trading hours in the Kyinsankyawt checkpoint extended from 6 am to 8:30 pm. Furthermore, Pan Hseng (Kyukok) and Wan Ding border posts also gave the green light to fruit trucks under the driver substitution system.

The trade value through the Muse

border soared to US\$2.127 billion between 1 October and 12 February of the current financial year 2020-2021. According to the Ministry of Commerce, the figures reflected an increase of \$192.58 million compared to the corresponding period of the previous FY.

Muse is an important border in Myanmar and handles an enormous volume of trade. But at times, it has experienced a sharp drop in trade on account of China clamping down on illegal goods, resulting in a halt in the trade of agricultural products. Moreover, COVID-19 impacts slow the business last year.

Myanmar intended to reach a trade target of over \$5 billion through Muse for the last FY 2019-2020. However, only \$4.86 billion worth goods were traded. Border trade values at Muse stood at \$5.4 billion in the 2016-2017FY, \$5.8 billion in the 2017-2018FY and \$4.9 billion in the 2018-

2019FY, respectively, as per data of the Commerce's Ministry.

In a bid to contain the spread of coronavirus on the border, China banned border crossing. Shortly after that, about 50 drivers are allowed to pass the border under the driver substitution system. Those drivers are, however, tested every three days. As a result of this, China included them in the vaccination programme, covering 41 Myanmar truck drivers so far, said the vice-chair of Muse rice wholesale centre.

Myanmar exports agricultural products, including rice, beans and corns, and fishery products such as crab and prawn. Furthermore, Myanmar's natural gas export to China is also conducted through the Muse-Ruili border. The raw CMP materials, electrical appliance and consumer goods are imported into the country. —KK/GNLM



Wuntho cabbage growers suffer from falling prices despite successful cultivation

THE cabbage growers suffer from falling price even though the cultivation succeeds in Latpangyitaw, Magyigone and Kyaikkwin village-tracts in Wuntho township, Sagaing region, said U Khin Hlaing Win, a local cabbage grower from Thayet Aik village.

The locals are growing the cabbage using the water from Daung My and Nam Hlaing creeks.

"I have grown the cabbage around 20,000 plants annually. The cultivation costs of 20,000 plants are more than K500,000, including nursery plants, fertilizers and soil. The retail price of cabbage ranges

from K100 to K200 depending upon the size of the cabbage. Around 200 cabbages are sent daily to Kawlin by motorbike," he added.

"Last year, the people came to buy the cabbage at the plantations. Those cabbages are sold for K300 for the small ones and K600 for the big ones. This year, the cabbage fetched only K200 per piece. Therefore, the growers are suffering from the falling prices, earning less income. Now, the growers are expecting to have higher price for their cabbage," said Ko Tun Myint, a cabbage grower. —Myint Tun Min (Kawlin)/GNLM

The locals are growing the cabbage using the water from Daung My and Nam Hlaing creeks. PHOTO: MYINT TUN MIN

Creating plastic-free settlements

With high consumption of single-use products, including plastic bottles, straws, plates, cutlery and drink stirrers, and slash, our country is facing environmental, and health problem stemmed from plastic.

Plastic pours into our sea, rivers, creeks and drains. The flood of trash is killing fish, turtles, seals, coral and birds, and getting into the seafood people eat. If no action is taken over the coming decade, it stands to increase tenfold.

We need a plastic waste management system, and it is a step urgently needed from every town.

Myanmar is gifted with beautiful natural scenery, but careless littering has blemished that beauty with plastic. Not all people have been idle in the face of this issue. We have seen news of members of the public and organizations partnering up to clear back alleys of rubbish and transform them into recreational areas and volunteers clearing drains, sewage canals, parks, and other public properties of litter.

The problem is there are simply more people who are indifferent to littering and continue to practice it than those who care for environmental cleanliness. Thus, the efforts of the few are swiftly clouded by the carelessness of the majority, and our cities, villages, and settlements continue to be dominated by plastic waste.

To tackle the plastic waste issue in our country, public participation is paramount. We can implement a flawless waste management system, but if not everyone is adhering to it, then we won't see the results we wish for.

Our neighbours in Thailand and Bangladesh have put certain restrictions to reduce plastic production and are encouraging recycling to lower its impact on the natural environment. But plastic touches almost every aspect of our lives: from the bag we use to carry groceries to the covers we put our smartphones in. Only a small percentage of this plastic gets recycled, and the rest is still being dumped in nature.

There is only so much officials can do. It is up to businesses to be more accountable for plastic production and citizens to reduce their reliance on plastic. But, the most important thing everyone can do now is to stop littering and put garbage where it belongs — in the dustbin.



WHO slams rich states for hogging vaccines

Money donated to Covax is not being used because there are no vaccines to buy.

The World Health Organization on Monday blasted wealthy countries for not only hogging COVID vaccines but in doing so, hindering the pathway for poorer nations to get them too. WHO director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said some rich countries' direct deals with manufacturers had meant that previously-agreed vaccine allocations for poorer countries, via the Covax programme, were being reduced.

The UN health agency chief said the money was there to procure doses for some of the poorest countries, following fresh contributions from the United States, the European Union and Germany — but it was worthless if there was nothing to buy.

Tedros urged wealthy nations to start checking first as to whether their own deals with pharmaceutical companies were undermining Covax, which poorer countries are relying on as they await their first doses.

"Even if you have the money, if you cannot use the money to buy vaccines, having the money



Airport workers unload a shipment of vaccines in Budapest. PHOTO: AFP

doesn't mean anything," he told a virtual press conference with German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier.

'Respect the deals'
The ONE Campaign, a global organization co-founded by U2 singer Bono, said last week that members of the Group of Seven

top industrialised nations along with the rest of the EU plus Australia had collectively bought nearly 1.25 billion more doses than they needed to inoculate every member of their populations against COVID-19.

"Some high-income countries are actually approaching manufac-

turers to secure more vaccines, which is affecting the deals with Covax — and even the amount that was allocated for Covax was reduced because of this," Tedros said.

"We can only have vaccines delivered to the countries who are members of Covax if the high-

income countries cooperate in respecting the deals that Covax did." The first wave of Covax vaccines are to be shipped out between late February and the end of June.

Some 145 participating economies are set to receive 337.2 million doses — enough to vaccinate a little over three per cent of their combined populations.

Covax has said it hopes to raise the figure to up to 27 per cent in lower-income countries by the end of December.

'Increase the pie'
The world's biggest vaccine maker, India's Serum Institute, on Monday urged other countries to be "patient" about it supplying anti-coronavirus shots, saying it has been instructed to prioritize its home market.

Steinmeier said that although countries were focused on protecting their own citizens from coronavirus, it made sense for the wealthier nations speeding ahead in the vaccine race to ensure that people in poorer nations were jabbed at the same time.

"Governments are first and foremost — and understandably

so — committed to their respective publics," he said. However, "if we refuse to grant the necessary solidarity, we must not be surprised if other countries come in to fill this vacuum by delivering earlier what is required — and using that for their own purposes."

Tedros called for intellectual property rights on COVID-19 medical goods to be waived — a move that could facilitate greater knowledge-sharing and the rapid scale-up of production sites.

The idea, currently before the World Trade Organization, is staunchly opposed by pharmaceutical giants. Tedros also urged pharmaceutical companies that were not making their own COVID-19 vaccines to turn over their facilities to produce other companies' doses, as Sanofi has done for the Pfizer-BioNTech jab.

"If we increase the pie, then better opportunities to share it equitably too."

Steinmeier however said he did not think a waiver for patents or licensing "would be the right approach".

SOURCE: AFP

Half a million dead: a timeline of US Covid catastrophe

Unfathomable just one year ago, the United States on Monday passed the horrific marker of 500,000 dead from Covid-19.

Here is a look at the past 12 months and how the coronavirus came to exact such a devastating toll on America.

Early cases
On January 22, 2020, then-president Donald Trump describes the presence of the coronavirus in the US as "just one person coming in from China" and says his administration has the new disease "totally under control". Comments like these soon characterize Trump's dismissive view of the mounting crisis.

The first US death is announced February 29 in Seattle. It subsequently emerges two other patients had died in California earlier that month.

The outbreak spreads rapidly across the country, forcing state governors and local authorities across the country to impose lockdowns. By mid-March, the US is at a standstill, with schools closed and links to the rest of the world drastically reduced.

The economy soon collapses — and with it one of Trump's main arguments for re-election.

Amid repeated promises of a vaccine, Trump pushes far-fetched remedies and rushes to reopen the economy.

He leaves the actual management of the fightback to individual states, dooming any chance of a unified national response.

A mounting toll
On May 27, the US records

100,000 coronavirus deaths, barely a month after passing the 50,000-dead milestone.

The disease's early ravages center on New York state, but quickly appears nationwide.

On September 22, the US passes 200,000 deaths. By December 14, more than 300,000 have succumbed. Barely one month later — on January 19 — the number passes 400,000 victims in the United States.

Trump struggles
Even amid the soaring toll, Trump continues giving confusing and conflicting advice.

In early April, health authorities recommend masks be worn.

Trump immediately under-



Unfathomable just one year ago, the United States on Monday passed the horrific marker of 500,000 dead from Covid-19. PHOTO: AFP

cuts the message, insisting he himself would not wear one.

His reluctance helps politicize the facial coverings that

health experts say are a simple and vital step to slowing the virus's spread.

On August 13, Trump endorses

es masks, albeit half-heartedly and confusingly.

"Maybe they're great, and maybe they're just good. Maybe they're not so good," he says.

On October 2, Trump's staff say he and his wife Melania have contracted Covid-19.

After four days of emergency treatment, he leaves hospital October 5 — only to rip off his mask in front of White House cameras.

Vaccinations
On December 14, the first American receives a coronavirus vaccination.

On December 21, then-president-elect Joe Biden gets his first vaccine dose, appearing on live television to get the shot.

SOURCE: AFP



Myanmar Daily Weather Report

(Issued at 7:00 pm Saturday 23 February 2021)

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

FORECAST VALID UNTIL AFTERNOON OF THE 24 February 2021: Light rain or thundershowers are likely to be isolated in Kachin State. Degree of certainty is (60%). Weather will be generally fair in Naypyitaw, Lower Sagaing, Magway Regions and Rakhine, Kayin States and partly cloudy in the remaining Regions and States.

STATE OF THE SEA: Seas will be moderate in Myanmar waters. Wave height will be about (4-7) feet off and along Myanmar Coasts.

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Generally fair in the whole country.

FORECAST FOR NAYPYITAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 24 February 2021: Generally fair weather.

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 24 February 2021: Generally fair weather.

FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 24 February 2021: Generally fair weather.

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NEWS
IN BRIEFAfghanistan begins
Covid vaccine
campaign amid
surge in violence

AFGHANISTAN on Tuesday launched a Covid-19 vaccination campaign aimed at inoculating hundreds of thousands, as the war-weary nation reels from near-daily attacks by insurgents. Doctors, security personnel, and journalists were among the first volunteers to receive doses of AstraZeneca's Covid-19 vaccine, donated earlier this month by India. "Today, I congratulate the people of Afghanistan for the launch of the first stage of Covid-19 vaccine [drive] with 500,000 doses of vaccines. This is a big opportunity for the people of Afghanistan," said Afghan President Ashraf Ghani as the first jabs were administered. "We don't expect any miracles, but let's help this campaign to be implemented justly," the country's acting health minister Waheed Majroh added. Afghanistan is believed to have been hit hard by the Covid-19 pandemic in the last year, but limited testing and a ramshackle health care sector have hampered its ability to track the virus. — AFP ■

EasyJet bookings
soar as England
readies lockdown
exit

EASYJet shares rallied Tuesday on rocketing flight bookings for the British airline over the past week, given a boost by Prime Minister Boris Johnson's pledge to begin easing England's virus lockdown shortly.

Bookings soared 337 per cent by late Monday compared with a week earlier, EasyJet said after Johnson's announcement.

EasyJet shares rallied around five per cent on the London stock market -- and there were solid gains for European rivals.

Johnson's four-month roadmap to ease lockdown curbs by the northern hemisphere summer has also sparked hopes of easing restrictions elsewhere in Europe. —AFP ■

Austria bets on millions of tests to contain Covid-19



Austria, with a population of just under nine million, tested three million people last week alone. PHOTO: AFP

WHILE Austria has struggled to contain the second wave of the coronavirus pandemic, it is fast emerging as a world leader in testing as a way to reopen schools and businesses.

The small nation with a pop-

ulation of just under nine million tested three million people last week alone, with the mass-testing strategy forming a key plank for getting pupils back into the classroom.

Half of those three mil-

lion tests were administered in schools, where twice-weekly tests have been mandatory since in-person lessons restarted earlier this month. Only a tiny percentage of parents have refused to have their children tested un-

der the scheme -- and those children are not allowed to return to school. The other 1.5 million tests were carried out at more than 500 dedicated centres, around 900 pharmacies and roughly 1,000 companies.

"Our strategy is to have a high frequency of tests and to make them very easily accessible -- it's the only way to keep the pandemic in check," Katharina Reich, the health ministry's chief medical officer, told AFP.

A negative test result, no older than 48 hours, is now required at a range of locations -- from hair salons to elderly care homes, or ski resorts.

The seven-day average of daily tests is 24 per 1,000 in Austria, compared to 7.7 in Britain and just 1.77 in neighbouring Germany, according to the Our World In Data website. —AFP ■

New York City movie
theatres to reopen

MOVIE theaters in New York City will partially reopen next month, Governor Andrew Cuomo announced Monday, the latest easing of coronavirus restrictions in the Big Apple.

Cuomo said cinemas will be able to operate at 25 per cent capacity, or up to 50 people per screen, from March 5 -- almost exactly a year since they shut.

"Assigned seating, social distancing and other health precautions will be in place," Cuomo wrote on Twitter. Officials closed movie theatres on March 17 last year as Covid-19 began ravaging America's commercial capital, where the disease has now killed almost 29,000 people.

In a statement sent to AFP, AMC's CEO Adam Aron announced that the chain's 13 movie theatres in New York would reopen on March 5.

AMC is the biggest cinema chain in the United States.

But Andrew Elgart, who owns three independent movie theatres in New York, told AFP he probably would not reopen on March 5, although he is considering the possibility of doing so later.

He said it wasn't clear that reopening would be profitable under the current pandemic conditions. Cuomo has been gradually easing restrictions in New York City in recent weeks



New York cinemas will be able to operate for the first time in almost a year when they reopen with limited capacity in March. PHOTO: AFP

as positivity rates fall.

Limited indoor dining returned on February 12, with restaurants allowed to seat customers indoors at 25 per cent capacity. Large arenas, including sports stadiums, are able to reopen at 10 per cent capacity

this week.

The New York Knicks and the Brooklyn Nets are set to play in front of 2,000 fans at their respective home games at Madison Square Garden and the Barclays Center on Tuesday. —AFP ■

70 per cent vaccination rate aim for summer



Portuguese barber Elizio da Silva Gomes waits for customers at the Campos barber shop in Lisbon. PHOTO: AFP

PORTUGAL is aiming to have 70 per cent of its population vaccinated by some point over summer, Health Minister Marta Temido said Monday.

Temido's comments at a news conference came with the number of new cases in the country markedly declining after having suffered the world's worst rate of infection in January.

So far, some 294,000 people have received a first vaccine dose and 106,000 have been administered two doses.

National vaccine programme coordinator Henrique

Gouveia e Melo said herd immunity "should be achieved in August or early September" if "the forecasts on the availability of vaccines are confirmed".

The vaccination programme should accelerate "from the second quarter to reach the rate of 100,000 vaccines per day" compared to the current average of 22,000, he said.

After weeks as the country with the greatest number of infections in relation to its population, Portugal recorded the strongest decline last week with a 51-per cent drop in new cases to 2,100 per day. —AFP ■

Six EU countries warned over border restrictions



Letters sent on Monday to Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Hungary and Sweden, highlight a risk of “fragmentation and disruptions to free movement and to supply chains,” commission spokesman Christian Wigand told journalists. **PHOTO: AFP**

THE European Commission said Tuesday it has formally warned six EU countries that their virus-related border curbs could undermine free movement within

the bloc.

Letters sent on Monday to Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Hungary and Sweden, highlight a risk of “fragmentation

and disruptions to free movement and to supply chains,” commission spokesman Christian Wigand told journalists.

The EU executive is worried

the measures go beyond recommendations adopted four months ago seeking a “proportional” balance between slowing the spread of the coronavirus and maintaining movement.

It has given the countries until late next week to respond, failing which it could, theoretically, start proceedings for breach of EU laws. Germany, however, strongly rejected the idea that its strict restrictions on traffic from Austria’s Tyrol region and from the Czech Republic and Slovakia ran counter to EU rules.

“I reject the accusation that we have not complied with EU law,” German European Affairs Minister Michael Roth said in Brussels, where he was attending a meeting of EU counterparts.

He said Germany had made the “difficult” decision because of the fear of highly contagious coronavirus variants and because of

Germany’s position as “a transit country in the middle of the European Union”.

The commission’s letter to Germany, obtained by AFP, said Germany was not applying all the ban exemptions set out by the EU recommendations, and noted that the spread of variants in the Czech Republic and Slovakia was no worse than in some other EU countries.

It also took exception to German authorities requiring Covid-19 test results to be issued in English, German, French or Italian, saying results in Czech or Slovak should also be accepted.

The EU’s aim, the letter said, is “the preservation of the functioning of the Single Market during a volatile economic period, as well as the protection of family life during a time of significantly reduced social contacts outside the core family.” —AFP ■

NASA releases first audio from Mars, video of Perseverance landing

THE US space agency NASA on Monday released the first audio from Mars, a faint wind sound captured by the Perseverance rover.

NASA also released the first video of the landing of the rover on the Red Planet. A microphone did not work during the descent but the rover was able to capture audio once it landed on Mars. NASA engineers played a short audio clip of what they said was a wind gust on the surface.

The video clip, lasting three minutes and 25 seconds, showed the deployment of the parachute

and the rover’s touchdown on the surface of Mars in a cloud of dust.

“These are really amazing videos,” Michael Watkins, director of NASA’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory, said at a briefing for reporters. “This is the first time we’ve ever been able to capture an event like the landing on Mars.” Jessica Samuels, Perseverance’s surface mission manager, said the rover was operating as expected so far. “I am happy to report that Perseverance is healthy,” Samuels said. —AFP ■

Indian climate activist linked to Thunberg wins bail

AN Indian climate change activist was granted bail on Tuesday 10 days after being arrested for allegedly creating a “toolkit” to help the country’s farmer protests that was tweeted by Greta Thunberg.

The arrest of 22-year-old Disha Ravi on charges of sedition – which can carry a sentence of life imprisonment – sparked fierce criticism from activists and India’s opposition politicians. Police alleged that Ravi was a “key conspirator” in the formation of the toolkit, which was shared by Swedish climate activist Thunberg on social media. The toolkit offers basic advice on joining the protest on the ground and spells out how to show support on social media. Officers said the aim appeared to be to “create disharmony among various social, religious and cultural groups and encourage disaffection and ill-will” against the Indian government. Police also said Ravi and two oth-

ers had been in contact with a Canada-based organization that allegedly supported separatists from India’s Sikh minority.

According to the Indian Express newspaper, a Delhi court on Tuesday found no “palpable reason” to deny bail to Ravi, “considering the scanty and sketchy investigation”. The protest by thousands of farmers, many of them Sikhs, on the outskirts of New Delhi since late November against new agricultural laws has

emerged as a major challenge to Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The demonstrations have been mostly peaceful but turned violent on one day in late January when a tractor rally by farmers in Delhi became a rampage, leaving one person dead. The protest then took an international turn in early February when pop star Rihanna, Thunberg and the US vice president’s niece Meena Harris tweeted about the subject. —AFP ■



Disha Ravi has been hit with charges of sedition. **PHOTO: AFP**

Wife of Mexican drug lord ‘El Chapo’ arrested at US airport



Emma Coronel Aispuro faces one charge of conspiracy to traffic drugs for importation into the US. **PHOTO: AFP**

US authorities arrested the wife of jailed Mexican drug lord Joaquin “El Chapo” Guzman at an airport outside of Washington DC on narcotics smuggling charges, the Justice Department said.

Emma Coronel Aispuro, 31, faces one charge of conspiracy to traffic cocaine, methamphetamine, heroin and marijuana for importation into the United States, the department said.

She was arrested at Dulles International Airport.

Guzman was the leader of the Sinaloa Cartel, one of Mexico’s most notorious drug trafficking groups.

He ran an operation that delivered hundreds of tonnes of narcotics into the US and

was behind multiple murders of those who crossed him, according to court filings. He was extradited to the US in 2017 to stand trial, and was convicted and sentenced to life in prison two years later.

Ms Coronel, according to the Justice Department, took part in cartel activities and also allegedly assisted in two plots to help Guzman escape from Mexican prison, including the successful first one in 2015.

It was not previously known that US authorities intended to arrest her. A dual US-Mexico citizen and the mother of twins by Guzman, Ms Coronel appeared in court nearly every day of his three-month trial in New York. —AFP ■

Five dead in India vaccine plant fire

FIVE people died as a fire tore through a building in the world's biggest vaccine manufacturing hub in India Thursday, but the company insisted the production of drugs to counter the coronavirus pandemic would continue.

Rescue workers discovered five bodies in the under-construction building after the blaze at the Serum Institute of India was brought under control, media reports said, with officials in the western city of Pune confirming the toll.

A second, smaller blaze broke out in the same building late Thursday, local media reports said.

"Five people have died," city mayor Murlidhar Mohol told reporters.

TV channels showed thick clouds of grey smoke billowing from the sprawling site, which is responsible for producing mil-

lions of doses of the Covishield coronavirus vaccine, developed by AstraZeneca and Oxford University.

"It is not going to affect production of the COVID-19 vaccine," a Serum Institute source told AFP, adding the blaze was at a new facility being built on the 100-acre (40-hectare) campus.

"We are deeply saddened and offer our deepest condolences to the family members of the departed," the firm's CEO Adar Poonawalla tweeted, without offering further details.

The founder of Cyrus Poonawalla, Adar's father, said in a statement that the families of each of the five victims - who were reported to be contract labourers - would be given 2.5 million rupees (€28,400) in compensation.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi added he was "anguished by the loss of lives". —AFP ■

S.Africa's Zuma arms deal corruption case to be heard in May



Zuma is accused of taking a rakeoff from a 1999 arms deal with French giant Thales. **PHOTO: AFP**

SOUTH Africa's scandal-tainted former president Jacob Zuma and French arms dealer Thales, accused of graft in a case going back more than two decades, will go on trial in May, the High Court ruled Tuesday.

Zuma is facing 16 charges of fraud, graft and racketeering relating to the purchase of fighter jets, patrol boats and military equipment.

He allegedly took bribes of four million rand (\$270,000 or 224,000 euros) over a \$3.4-billion arms deal with French aerospace and defence giant Thales in 1999, when he was deputy president.

Judge Nkosinathi Chili at the High Court in Pietermaritzburg said the matter was certified as trial-ready and would be heard between May 17 and June

20, 2021.

Zuma was not present for the announcement.

The case was postponed last December, when Thales contested the racketeering charges linked to the arms deal.

But a court dismissed the challenge on January 22, a decision that Thales said it would not contest.

Both the state prosecution and defence attorneys had asked the pre-trial court for extra time.

They cited among other things Covid restrictions on international travel that could impede the availability of witnesses living abroad.

Zuma, 78, who was forced to step down in 2018 by the African National Congress (ANC) after nine years in power, is separately accused of enabling runaway looting of state assets during his tenure.

The judicial panel probing this alleged graft on Monday sought orders to jail Zuma for two years for defying a court order compelling him to testify. —AFP ■

Facebook to lift ban on Australia news after deal on media law

FACEBOOK moved to lift a contentious ban on Australian news Tuesday, after a last-gasp deal on landmark rules requiring tech giants to pay media companies.

Australia's Treasurer Josh Frydenberg announced a face-saving compromise, that will see Google and Facebook plunge tens of millions of dollars into the struggling local news sector.

The US digital firms will, for now, avoid being subjected to mandatory payments that could cost them vastly more and create what they see as an alarming global prescient.

"As a result of these changes, we can now work to further our investment in public interest journalism, and restore news on Facebook for Australians in the coming days," said Will Easton, managing director of Facebook Australia.

The social media firm sparked global outrage last week by blacking out news for its Australian users and inadvertently blocking a series of non-news Facebook pages linked to everything from cancer charities



Facebook moved to lift a contentious ban on Australian news Tuesday, after a last-gasp deal on landmark rules requiring tech giants to pay media companies. **PHOTO: AFP**

to emergency response services.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison had angrily accused Facebook of making a decision to "unfriend" Australia.

Commentators described the eleventh-hour deal -- which came as parliament looks set to pass the law this week -- as "a reasonable compromise".

"Everybody can walk away saying, well we got what we wanted," University of New South Wales business professor Rob Nicholls told AFP.

Just hours after the compromise was unveiled, Facebook announced its first proposed deal with an Australian media company, Seven West. The company is expected to launch a dedicated news product in Australia later this year.

Google has already brokered several deals worth millions of dollars with local media companies, including the two largest: Rupert Murdoch's News Corp. and Nine Entertainment. —AFP ■



The building where the fire broke out. **PHOTO: AFP**

Thousands protest in Georgia after opposition leader arrested

THOUSANDS of anti-government protesters rallied in Georgia on Tuesday after the arrest of an opposition leader, deepening a political crisis that erupted after disputed elections last year.

Hundreds of riot police used tear gas against Nika Melia's supporters who were camped out at his United National Movement party's headquarters in the capital Tbilisi before he was arrested in an overnight police raid and placed in pre-trial detention.

The move sparked swift condemnation from Western

diplomats, as fears mount over the ex-Soviet nation's fragile democracy.

Scores of Melia's supporters were also detained in the raid and the leader of the opposition Lelo party called for "a peaceful, unwavering struggle to defend Georgian democracy".

"Liberation of political prisoners and snap parliamentary elections are the only possible way out of the crisis," Mamuka Khazaradze said, speaking to journalists on behalf of all opposition leaders. —AFP ■

UK unemployment edges up to 5.1% on pandemic fallout

BRITAIN'S unemployment rate edged up to 5.1 per cent in the final quarter of 2020, official data showed on Tuesday, as coronavirus lockdowns slashed economic activity. The rate compared with 5.0 per cent in the three months to the end of November, which was a 4.5-year high, the Office for National Statistics said in a statement.

Analysts expect unemployment to surge when the UK government's furlough scheme paying the bulk of wages for millions of private-sector workers comes to a stop – as currently planned – at the end of April.

Finance minister Rishi Sunak on Tues-



Unemployed youths pose outside a job centre in the UK. PHOTO: AFP

day hinted at further employment support in the coming months as England begins to exit its third lockdown form early March. Details are expected to come in his annual budget next week.

“I know how incred-

ibly tough the past year has been for everyone and every job lost is a personal tragedy,” the chancellor of the exchequer said in a statement. “That’s why throughout the crisis, my focus has been on doing everything

we can to protect jobs and livelihoods.

“At the budget next week I will set out the next stage of our plan for jobs and the support we’ll provide through the remainder of the pandemic and our recovery.” —AFP

Asian markets mostly up but optimism tempered by inflation fear



Jerome Powell's congressional testimony will be closely followed for an idea of the Federal Reserve's view on rising Treasury yields. PHOTO: AFP

ASIAN markets mostly rose Tuesday, fuelled by growing hope that vaccine rollouts will allow the global economy to get back on track, but the optimism was tempered by niggling

worries that the recovery will fan inflation and interest rate hikes.

With governments picking up the pace in their coronavirus inoculation drives, and infection

and death rates slowing in most parts of the world, observers are predicting a surge in economic activity from the middle of the year as lockdowns are eased. Added to that is Joe US President Biden's huge growth-boosting spending programme, which is likely to be passed by Congress next month, on top of the Federal Reserve's pledge to keep monetary policy ultra-loose for as long as needed.

Monumental government and central bank support worth trillions of dollars has been a key driver of the surge

in world equities from their nadir almost a year ago when the coronavirus was rampaging across the planet.

But while the mood is increasingly good, investors are turning their focus to the impact of the reflation – a rally in prices as people go back to shops and restaurants or start going on holiday again.

Expectations that inflation will spike has seen US 10-year Treasury yields rally to a one-year high, and that has spooked investors who fear that means interest rates will go up in turn. —AFP ■

Vaccine hopes boost British pound

THE British pound continued a frantic two-month rise against the euro and the dollar, reaching new highs this week in a sign of traders' enthusiasm for the country's vaccination roll-out.

Just before Christmas, investors feared the country would leave

the European single market without a post-Brexit trade agreement.

At the same time, a deadly second wave and new, more transmissible coronavirus variants pushed infection rates up and saw the death toll soar. It currently stands at more than 120,000 – one

of the worst in the world.

But since December, the pound has gained more than five per cent against the euro and US dollar, making it a top performer among major currencies. The jump is due to the number of people vaccinated: according to the government, one

adult in three has already received a first dose, representing more than 17.5 million people. Another reason for optimism is Prime Minister Boris Johnson's publication on Monday of a “cautious but irreversible” roadmap to ease lockdown restrictions by July. —AFP ■

US sees progress against Nord Stream 2 amid calls for more action

THE United States said Monday it had seen progress from European companies moving out of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline from Russia to Germany, but critics urged stronger action. In a report required by Congress, the State Department named 18 mostly Western companies that would not be subject to sanctions, the State Department and lawmakers said. The companies made “good-faith efforts to wind down activities related to Nord Stream 2,” State Department spokesman Ned Price told reporters.

“This demonstrates that the legislative goals and our actions are having a good effect,” he said of bipartisan US opposition to the project dating back to former president Donald Trump's time. He publicly named just one firm that would be subject to US sanctions – Russian

tuna company KVT-Rus, which he said had been engaged in piping activities for Nord Stream 2. Biden has maintained criticism of Nord Stream 2, saying that it emboldens Russia and weakens leverage of vulnerable nations such as Ukraine. But the Biden administration has also pledged a more cooperative approach with European powers including Germany, which argues that the project is vital for its supply of energy despite concerns on Russia.

“When it comes to our allies and partners, it is fair to say that they would not be taken by surprise by any action we would take,” Price said. “We will continue to monitor activity that could lead to additional penalties including sanctions, but I think it would be wrong to think of sanctions as the only tool in our toolbox here.” —AFP ■



The United States said on Monday it had seen progress from European companies moving out of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline from Russia to Germany, but critics urged stronger action. PHOTO: AFP

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V YANTRA BHUM VOY. NO. (736W)

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V YANTRA BHUM VOY. NO. (736W) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 24-2-2021 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of MITT where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

Phone No: 2301185

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

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opment should be implemented regardless of current profit. Fairtrade system is of importance in a bid to keep abreast of trading partners of economically strong countries.

A country needs laying down modern economic policies to ensure sustainable development. The current government is undertaking the implementations laying down 12 economic policies on 29 July in 2016.

With regard to the economic philosophies and policies in European countries, the government followed the Laissez-faire philosophy described in the book on An Inquiry into Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations written by Adam Smith, a Scottish economist and used it as economic policies of most European countries.

Laissez-faire is an economic system in which transactions between private groups of people are free from or almost free from any form of economic in-

Let's be honest in providing products and services to help develop State

By Naing Oo (DOCA)
Translated by
Robert Tun Win

I had been present at a wedding reception of my late superior's son in Yangon over one and a half years ago, and he is currently a successful young small-scale businessman. He has a large scale of friends and can afford to hold a wedding reception on a grand scale at renowned hotels, but to everyone's surprise, he held a ceremony to offer meals to Buddhist monks marking his wedding while contributing funds to the construction of a concrete passageway measuring 120x20 feet in a monastery. He donated his money to the construction of the concrete passageway of the monastery instead of spending it on his grand wedding reception, and his wedding reception was held on a small scale. I paid respects to my late superior, who could teach his son to have good manners. During my visit to his working place, I saw a sentence inscribed in the teak traditional art style, writing "Honesty reputation ensures food sufficiency". In response to my question about why it was, he explained to me how

Consumer and household goods that do not meet international criteria are entering Myanmar in great numbers because self-interested businessmen manufactured and distributed the products that are inappropriate for commercial code of conducts.

poor his father was in childhood.

He continued to say that his father struck to honesty throughout his life as a Buddhist monk preached to him about the reputation that

should be valued whatever business he does, if so, it would bring about food sufficiency.

Myanmar serves as a good location between two big countries with high demand and plenty of opportunity for export according to its geographical features. But the current situations and opinions lead to a reverse direction.

Consumer and household goods that do not meet international criteria are entering Myanmar in great numbers because self-interested businessmen manufactured and distributed the products that are inappropriate for the commercial code of conducts. For that reason, the losses facing the buyers and the consumers are many.

The exporters from Myanmar have to send the products to foreign countries in line with their imposed rules. In fact, the entrepreneurs should import the consumer goods following the criteria imposed by the government. Only then the economy and trade must be balanced. Economic system designing sustainable devel-



interventionism such as regulation and subsidies. According to this philosophy, economic affairs can be performed openly and transparently among private organizations that are totally exempt from the law, by-law, rules and regulations,

special privileges, tax and cash assistance. According to this system, the government is responsible for carrying out three tasks only.

It is required to implement the rule of law, electricity, road and bridge, buildings, education and health. On the other hand, the entrepreneurs are independently given permission according to the oriented market economy regarding the matters relating to economy and trade. This means the government is unauthorized to interfere. Only then manufacturers, distributors, consumers and the government will be able to enjoy best interests, and these are of the essence. This economic system is based on the nature of human beings. With this notion, it is appropriate to the attitudes of the human beings of those days.

Human beings are naturally selfish and greed, having to struggle every day due to the seduction of selfishness, greed and desire. The government can seek the best interests and personalty for the human society allowing the people to do the tasks independently rather than trying to control selfishness, greed and desire.

It is understood that the consumers are those who are to decide to develop the State. Therefore, the entrepreneurs

In fact, the entrepreneurs should import the consumer goods following the criteria imposed by the government.

serve as barriers to making efforts to beat the opponents. It is also required to notice price, quality and productivity while competing with the opponents. A cost-effective way should be sought and unnecessary waste should be avoided, and modern machines should be used in order to save time and work. Meanwhile, there has been an increase in production in a short time, thereby bringing savings in labour wages, a rise in sale forces, much profit and

ity, and human resources. In fact, human resources and advanced technology are basic foundations to ensure a modern developed nation.

The independent action ensures many benefits to the government, helping promote trade activities, different job opportunities and revenues for the State. If a country receives much revenue, it will be able to spend more for the national development. If so, it will enlarge a network of roads and bridges, helping promote the standards of education and health.

The economists are concerned whether free trade activities had a negative effect on human society owing to the selfishness, greed and strong desire for the wealth of the entrepreneurs. There is no need to worry about this. Everyone, the entrepreneurs or the consumes, whoever they are, all are naturally selfish and greedy, but the consumers will never use unnatural products and services, instead, they will opt for other reliable ones. For that reason, the entrepreneurs will pay attention to the choice of the consumers only. The products and services have to focus on quality, standard, and safety for their sustainability.

However, discrimination, bias and favoritism of the officials can cause a low performance for the entrepreneurs, ignorance of consumer rights, misuse of resources and barrier to the national development, according to Laissez-faire philosophy.

Myanmar has a wealth of basic foundations to develop its all aspects, adopting a free and fair economic system with regard to the sectors of export, import and service. The entrepreneurs, who are involved in products and services, play a leading role in developing the country's economy, and they must be accountable and responsible for the products and the services. On the subject of the products and services, the consumers ought to check quality, safety, hygiene, guarantee and other necessary information. Now is the right time for the entrepreneurs to provide products and services in line with the criteria so as to penetrate not only into domestic market but also into international one.



Officials from the Department of Consumer Affairs inspecting unsafe food in a market in Dawei. PHOTO: DOCA

carrying out personal and household goods services well understand if they sell quality products at reasonable prices regardless of their selfishness and greed, they would be able to defeat their opponents.

Blind selfishness and greed

economic expansion.

At the same time, the consumers will be able to get access to consuming the products with perfect characteristics of safety, hygiene, quality and price. It can also help promote consumption standard, longev-

Useful Information

JAPANESE CUISINE

AJISHIN

No.192, Kabar Aye Pagoda Road, Myanmar Plaza, 4th Floor, Yankin Township, Yangon, Myanmar. Ph: 09-970890390, Time- 10:00 to 23:00 (Open Daily)

ANAIMO

No. 300, Mahabandula Park Street, Kyauktada Township, Yangon. Ph: 01-378022. Time- 11:30-14:00/ 17:30-22:00 (Saturday only evening and Sunday off)

BIKKURA SUSHI & SASHIMI JAPANESE RESTAURANT

No. 16, Natmank Road, Tamwe Township, Yangon. Ph: 09-799566917, 09-36714873. 10:30-22:30 (Open Daily)

BUSHIDO

No. 75/ AB Boyar Nyunt Street, Dagon Township, Yangon. Ph: 09-260031197/ 09-420231330. 10:00-22:00 (Sunday Off)

CHO JAPANESE DINNING & BAR

Level (1), Garden Wing, Beside Lobby Lounge. (Inside Sedona Hotel), Yangon Ph: 09-258322223/ 09-261322223. Lunch 11:30-14:30/ Tea Time 14:30-18:00/ Dinner 18:00-23:00 (Open Daily)

DINNING FUKUROU

No. 37, Kabar Pagoda Road, Inside of Inya Lake Hotel, Yangon. Ph: 09-260031197 09-420231330. 11:00-22:00 (Open Daily)

EDOZUSHI

A-1, Star City, Kyaik Khaik Pagoda Road, Thanlyin Township, Yangon. Ph: 056-23150-53/ 056-23313-318 (Ext-1183)/ 09-2560-75020. 11:00-21:00 (Open Daily)

(3) YAKINIKU FUKAGAWA

A-1, Star City, Kyaik Khaik Pagoda Road, Thanlyin Township, Yangon. Ph: 056-23150-53/ 056-23313-318 (Ext-1183)/ 09-2560-75020, 11:00-21:00 (Open Daily)

FUJINOBO

(Cherry Hill Hotel) No. 520/4 A, Kabar Aye Pagoda Road, Shwe Gone Daing, Bahan Township, Yangon. Ph: 09-450067052, 06:00-09:30/ 11:30-14:00/ 17:00-22:30 (Open Daily)

FURUSATO

No. 137, West Shwe Gone Daing, Bahan Township, Yangon. Ph: 01-556265/ 09-73081914. 11:00-14:00/ 17:00-22:00 (Open Daily)

GEKKO

535, Merchant Street, Kyauktada Township, 4th Quarter, Yangon. Ph: 01-386986, 09:00-23:00 (Open Daily)

HIMARI MYANMAR

Pearl Condo, Block D, Ground Floor, Units-G-10, Kabar Aye Pagoda Road, Bahan Township, Yangon. Ph: 09-775330494. 11:30-14:00/ 14:00-22:00 (Open Daily)

HOKKAIDO JAPANESE RESTAURANT

No. 24/ 26, Kabar Aye Pagoda Road, Golden Hill Tower(A), Bahan Township, Yangon. Ph: 09-250537315. 11:00-14:00/ 17:00-21:30 (Open Daily)

HOT POT KING and Hot pot and BBQ Buffet Restaurant

No - 26/27, Thitsar Road and Corner of Wai Za Yan Dar Road, South Okkalapa, Yangon. Tel - 09 777777 008, 09 09 777777 009, 09 777777 883.

Hot Pot City 8 Miles

No(33), Kyaik Wine Pagoda Road (7.34 km) 095 Yangon, Ph: 09 797 799111, 11:00-22:00 (Open Daily)

101 Hot Pot & Sushi

No.141, West Shwegondaing Road, Bahan T/s. near Yuzana Hotel. (1.78 km), 11201 Yangon.

Get Directions

Highlights info row image, Ph: 09 777 799101. 4:00 PM to 10:00 PM

Little Sheep Hot Pot Myanmar

14/14B Kanbawza Street Golden Valley (1) Bahan Township (1.71 km), Yangon. Ph: 09443399701, 09443399702, 11:00-23:00

HOTEL

BELMOND GOVERNOR'S RESIDENCE

No. 35, Taw Win Road, Dagon Township, Yangon. Ph: 01-229860 01-229861.

CHATRIUM

No. 40, Natmank Road, Tamwe Township, Yangon. Ph: 01-544500/ 01-544244.

CHERRY HILLS HOTEL

No. 520/4 A, Kabar Aye Pagoda Road, Shwegon Daing, Bahan Township, Yangon. Ph: 01-559722.

HOTLE 51

No. 154/ 156, 51st. Upper Pazundaung Township, Yangon. Ph: 01-200823/ 09-429918554.

HOTEL KAN KAW

No.93(A), Hnin Si Gone Road, Ahlone Township, Yangon. Ph: 01-228566/ 01-2301700/ 01-1221731.

HOTLE SIDNEY

No. 8L/Mindhama Road, Between Kyaik Wine Pagoda Road and Parami Road, Mayangone Township. Ph: 01-655770/ 01-9669600-02.

INYA LAKE HOTEL

No.37, Kabar Aye Pagoda Road, Yangon. Ph: 01-9662866/ 01-9662857-9.

LOTTEE HOTLES AND SERVICED APARTMENTS YANGON

No.82, Sin Phyu Shin Avenue, Pyay Road, 6 mile, Hlaing Township. Ph: 01-9351000.

MERCURE HOTEL

No.17, Kabar Aye Pagoda Road, Yankin Township, Yangon. Ph: 01- 650933.

NOVOTEL YANGON MAX

No.459, Pyay Road, Kamayut Township, Yangon. Ph: 01-2305858.

PAN PACIFIC YANGON

No. Corner of Bogvoke Aung San Road and Shwedagon Pagoda Road, Yangon, Ph: 01-9253810.

PARK ROYAL

No.33, Alan Pya Phaya Road, Dagon Township, Yangon, Ph: 01-250388.

PULLMAN YANGON CENTREPOINT

No.65, Corner of Sule Pagoda Road and Merchant Street. Ph: 01-382687.

ROSE GARDEN HOTEL

No.171, Upper Pasodan Road, Yangon. Ph: 01-371992/09263440500.

SAVOY HOTEL

No.129, Corner of Dhammazed Road and Inya Road, Yangon. Ph: 01-526289/ 01-526298/ 01-526305.

SEDONA HOTEL

No. 1, Kabar Aye Pagoda Road, Yankin Township, Yangon. Ph: 01-8605377.

SULE SHANGRI-LA

No. 223, Sule Pagoda Road, Kyauktada Township, Yangon. Ph: 01-242828.

SUMMIT PARKVIEW HOTEL

No. 350, Ahlone Road, Dagon Township, Yangon. Ph: 01-211888/ 01-211966.

SUPER HOTEL

No. 51/ D, Kabar Aye Pagoda Road, 10th Quarter, Mayangone Township, Yangon. Ph: 09-797109000/ 01-658210/ 01-658220.

Medvedev cracks top three as Karatsev soars 72 places

PARIS — Daniil Medvedev broke into the top three for the first time in Monday's ATP rankings, while Russian compatriot Aslan Karatsev shot up 72 places after his shock run to the Australian Open semifinals.

Medvedev finished runner-up at a Grand Slam for the second time as he was swept aside by top-ranked Novak Djokovic in Sunday's final in Melbourne, the Serb collecting his 18th major title.

Former US Open finalist Medvedev switched spots with Dominic Thiem, who slipped to fourth after he was demolished by Grigor Dimitrov in straight sets in the last 16.

Bulgarian Dimitrov returned to the top 20 but the



Medvedev finished runner-up at a Grand Slam for the second time. **PHOTO: AFP**

biggest move was Karatsev, a qualifier who became the first man in the Open era to reach the semi-finals of a major on a main draw debut.

Karatsev, 27, rose from 114th to 42nd after knocking out three seeds before his dream run was

ended by Djokovic in the last four.

The win reinforced Djokovic's status as world number one, guaranteeing he will mark his 311th week there as of March 8, surpassing Roger Federer's record of 310. —AFP ■

Spain looks to Real Madrid and Atletico to halt La Liga decline

MADRID — “Sign him up Florentino,” Real Madrid's fans wrote on Twitter before Zinedine Zidane was asked if he sent a message to the club's president Florentino Perez.

Kylian Mbappe had just destroyed Barcelona at Camp Nou and 24 hours later Erling Haaland did the same to Sevilla at the Ramon Sanchez Pizjuan.

By the time Real Sociedad trailed 4-0 on Thursday evening to Manchester United, the feel-

ing in Spain became clear: La Liga was in freefall.

Later that night, Granada beat Napoli and Villarreal saw off Salzburg in a competition it should be remembered that was only six months ago won by Sevilla, for the fourth time in seven years.

In fact, a Spanish team has won the Europa League seven times out of the last 11.

Three of those titles belong to Atletico Madrid, who take

on Chelsea in the Champions League on Tuesday, after knocking out the English champions Liverpool last season.

Real Madrid face Atalanta, hoping to prevent a third year without winning the tournament, after winning all of the previous three.

“Spanish teams are still strong, it's just a moment,” said Barcelona coach Ronald Koeman last week. “You can't draw conclusions.” —AFP ■

Ronaldo's Crotone double keeps Juve in title hunt



Juventus' Cristiano Ronaldo (C) shoots between Crotona's Luca Marrone (L) and Lisandro Magallan during the match at the Juventus stadium in Turin. **PHOTO: AFP**

TURIN — Cristiano Ronaldo kept Juventus within sight of the Serie A summit on Monday with a headed brace which helped the champions to a 3-0 win over bottom club Crotona.

Portugal forward Ronaldo

struck twice late in the first half to break the resistance of lowly Crotona and keep Juve eight points behind league leaders Inter Milan.

Weston McKennie made sure of the points midway

through the second half, lashing home when the ball broke to him after a corner.

Andear Pirlo's side climb to third with the win thanks also to Roma, who are a point back in fourth, only managing a goalless draw at Benevento on Sunday night.

They are also four points behind second-placed AC Milan who have lost three of their last five league matches, including Sunday's 3-0 derby thumping at the hands of Inter.

Juve, chasing their 10th straight league title, have a game in hand on both Milan clubs and play Inter in the penultimate round of league games in Turin.

Crotona meanwhile remain rooted to the bottom of the division thanks to their fifth defeat on the bounce. —AFP ■

Unseeded Rogers stuns third seed Konta in Adelaide

ADELAIDE — Unseeded American Shelby Rogers stunned third seed Johanna Konta with a display of raw power in the second round of the Adelaide International on Tuesday.

Rogers served superbly and was ruthless with her returns to see off the British star 6-2, 6-2 in just 76 minutes.

The 28-year-old Rogers has been in good form in Australia, reaching the fourth round of the Australian Open last week before falling to world number one Ash Barty.

She broke Konta's first service game and was never troubled after that, breaking the former world number four twice in each set to run out a comfortable winner.

“I started the match really well with a quick break and I just kept the momentum going,” Rogers said.

“I knew I had to bring my best game tonight for Jo be-

cause she's got an incredible game.

“She can pretty much serve you off the court when she wants to, so I was very happy with my return game tonight.”

There were no problems for the three other seeded players in action, all playing their first round matches.

Fifth seeded Pole Iga Swiatek, Petra Martic, the sixth seed from Croatia, and seventh ranked Yulia Putintseva all progressed.

French Open champion Swiatek beat American Madison Brengle 6-3, 6-4 and will now play Maddison Inglis in the second round after the Australian qualifier downed countrywoman Samantha Stosur.

Martic came back from losing the first set to Russia's Liudmila Samsonova to win 4-6, 6-0, 7-5, while wPutintseva beat Laura Siegemund in straight sets 6-4, 6-4. —AFP ■

UK virus roadmap offers hope for Premier League crowds



Wembley stadium is due to play host to the Euro 2020 semi-finals and final. **PHOTO: AFP**

LONDON — Fans could be back in English stadiums for the final weekend of the Premier League season and there are hopes the Euro 2020 final will be played at a full Wembley under plans announced on Monday.

Under a four-step roadmap to ease the coronavirus lockdown announced by British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, elite sport will continue behind closed doors

until May 17 at the earliest.

But if there are no setbacks, crowds of up to 10,000 or 25 per cent of seated capacity, whichever is lower, will be allowed to return.

The Premier League season is due to finish on May 23. Other than a small number of matches played in front of 2,000 spectators late last year, the entire 2020/21 season has been played behind closed doors. —AFP ■