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Announcement of Union Election Commission 29 May 2021

1. Regarding the Multiparty General Election held on 8 November 2020, the Union Election Commission has inspected the voter lists and the casting of votes of Khamti, Homalin, Leshi, Lahe, Nanyun, Mawlaik and Phaungpyin townships of Sagaing Region.
2. According to the inspection, the previous election commission released 401,918 eligible voters in these seven townships of Sagaing Region. The list of the Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population in November 2020 showed 321,347 eligible voters who had turned 18. The voter lists mentioned that there were 51,461 citizens, associate citizens, naturalized citizens, and non-identity voters, 8,840 persons repeated on the voter lists more than three times and 48,932 persons repeated on the voter lists two times.

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Magway Region to develop new eco-tourism site near Shwesettaw area

A new eco-tourism destination will be developed within the Shwesettaw area in Minbu Township, according to the Magway Region Directorate of Hotels and Tourism Department.

Under the management of the Magway Region Administration Council and with the suggestion of the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, the project will be implemented on the 60-acre large area on the right side of Hlay Tin bridge situated on the Minbu-Shwesettaw road.

The tour site will include hotels, motels and resorts in order to provide accommodation for tourists all year round and exhibitions about renowned persons and famous places of Magway Region feeding information about tour sites, distances and local products. Only about the 2-mile stretch from the upper Settaw Yar, Mann Chaung elephant camp, where travellers can also visit golden deer and star tortoises.



The eco-tourism site will be only about 4,000 feet away from the upper Settaw Yar. It will include viewpoints, park, playground and gym, as well as trekking and cycling trails.

“In developing this eco-tourism site, Shwesettaw

area will be developed, employment opportunities for locals increased and so will the tourism service and language skills. This aims to increase the income of villages from tourism,” said the Magway Region in charge of Directorate of Hotels and Tourism.

People will also be able to make a day trip to the famous Nat Lake area with its lush vegetation and cool mountain climate, which is only a 20-mile drive away from the tour site.

—Kay Tar/GNLM

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Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Administration Council Nine Objectives

1. Political affairs

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

2. Economic affairs

- (a) To enhance production based on agriculture and livestock through modern techniques and strengthen all-round development in other sectors of the economy.

- (b) To develop a stable market economy and promote international investment in order to enhance the economic development of the entire National people.
- (c) To promote and support local businesses to create employment opportunities and increase domestic production.

3. Social affairs

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

Five-Point Road Map of the State Administration Council

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

State Administration Council Press Release

Re-invitation to Myanmar citizens who reside in various regions for many reasons

1. Some student youths, State service personnel and citizens, with worries, have evaded to areas of EAOs and foreign countries due to the incitements and intimidation of NLD members, extremist followers, unlawful associations and terrorist groups such as CRPH and NUG, stimulation of CDM, and persons and organizations at home and abroad not wishing to restore peace and stability of the State since Tatmadaw assumed the State responsibilities on 1 February 2021.
2. They are further worried about the dictatorship statement and speeches of unlawful association and terrorist group CRPH and NUG, and some relevant persons. As they face no security guarantee and difficulties in socio-economic life in those areas, they wish to return to their native lands.
3. **The State Administration Council will specifically ease restrictions for service personnel, intellectuals and intelligentsia, and persons from various arenas and citizens who, with worries, absconded from the country except for persons who committed murders, robberies, setting fires, mine explosions and intentional attacks on security troops, those who crowded to attack public service personnel and some people, those who destroyed government and private-owned buildings and those who are highly involved in the CDM activities by providing monetary assistance and other means.**
4. As those who evade their native areas are also citizens, the State Administration Council will arrange their returns from the evaded areas to various parts of Myanmar.
5. As such, the information was released that if those who evaded to various areas, except for persons who committed any kinds of crime, wish to return to their native lands in Myanmar of their own accord due to multiple worries, the citizens abroad can contact nearby ward, village, township and district administration bodies and relevant embassies, military attaché offices and consulates in accord with the easing restrictions under the law.

*Information Team
State Administration Council*

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40 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 29 May, total figure rises to 143,526

MYANMAR'S COVID-19 positive cases rose to **143,526** after **40 new cases** were reported on 29 May 2021 according to the Ministry of Health and Sports. Among these confirmed cases, **132,297** have been discharged from hospitals. —MNA

It is necessary to control too much consumption of edible oils, monosodium glutamate, narcotic drugs, liquor and cigarette

SYSTEMATIC supervision must be performed to check the edible oil, whether it is refined oil or not with the aim of ensuring the people consume the healthy edible oils with quality guarantee. As Myanmar's expectant lifespan is 67.42 years, it is the lowest among the neighbouring countries. As such, it is necessary to control too much consumption of edible oils, monosodium glutamate, narcotic drugs, liquor and cigarette, harming the health conditions with a conscience. Efforts must be made for the standardization of Myanmar people's lifespan in the world with the arrangements to supply nutritious foodstuffs at fair prices, and health awareness should be raised for the people to have a healthy lifestyle.

(Excerpt from the speech to the Management Committee meeting made by the Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Administration Council Chairman Senior General Min Aung Hlaing on 11 May 2021)

Union Minister U Aung Naing Oo inspects investment activities in Magway Region



UNION Minister for Investment and Foreign Economic Relations, Vice-Chairman of the Myanmar Investment Commission U Aung Naing Oo visited the Paragon Myay Latt Thar Co. Ltd., and inspected the processing of value-added sesame products, green mung bean and groundnut for export, in Sa Taing Kan Village-Tract, Magway Township, Magway Region in the morning of 29 May 2021.

While in Paragon Myay Latt Thar Co. Ltd., Company Director U Kaung Khant Zin presented the current business operation and future investment programme. The Union Minister provided the necessary assistance to increase the production of value-added sesame products to promote export.

After that, the Union Minister visited the cattle farm of Good Brother Co. Ltd. at Ye Pyae Village, Myothit Township of Magway Region. U Myo Myint Tun, the farm manager, presented the current investment activities of the farm and the company's export promotion plan for the mid and long term. After hearing the report, the Union Minister informed the government's investment facilitation and promotion activities and encouraged the company to increase the cattle farm investment and urged to make contract cattle farming with local farmers. During his inspection tour, the Union Minister coordinated and facilitated the requirements of the investors.—MNA

Night market to be built in Magway

MAGWAY Region Development Committee will build a night market on the river-side road starting from the first week of June in Magway, according to U Htin Aung, Director of the MRDC.

The night market will be 96-metre-long from the "We Love Magway" place on the Magway river-side road, and a 12-metre concrete floor will be built on the river bank.

"After building the concrete floor, the night market included necessary businesses will be made on it. It also aims to increase employment opportunities and income for locals through the night mar-

ket, he said.

U Hla Myint, a resident, said, "We can enjoy the beauty of the river with the family and enjoy local products and foods in one place. It will be a popular destination for tourists from other areas."

The night market will have about 50 stalls, including food stalls and shops selling local products and souvenirs. There will also be a parking lot and a restroom beside the Kyaut Tha park connected to the night market. The construction project is expected to complete in the current FY.—Kay Tar/GNLM





Union Minister U Chitt Naing meets Information Ministry employees

UNION Minister for Information U Chitt Naing met staff members of IPRD and other staff of MRTV Retransmission Station in Toungoo, Bago, Thayawady and Pyay districts of Bago Region on 28 and 29 May.

During his visit, the Union

minister gave necessary instructions to take care of mental and physical health, keep honest, serve the duties with goodwill and practise obtaining helpful ability in the working field. He then provided cash assistance and food aids to the staff members.—MNA

Union Minister for Information U Chitt Naing meets staff members of Thayawady District IPRD of Bago Region.

Tatmadaw provides treatments to over 225,000 outpatients

TATMADAW keeps providing healthcare services for the patients at the military hospitals and temporary treatment hospitals in the townships of regions and states.

The Tatmadaw medical teams comprising Tatmadaw doctors, specialists, medical assistants, and nurses have been giving medical treatments to the people in order to solve their difficulties in healthcare services.

A total of 225,833 outpatients and 67,896 inpatients reached these hospitals from 5 February to date.

Senior medical experts,

medics, medical assistants and nurses have conducted 10,547 major operations and 5,395 minor operations.

The senior doctors gave intensive treatment the severe cases.

These hospitals managed the birth of 13,271 babies to date. Of those, 5,401 cases are done in the caesarean section and 7,870 cases in standard delivery.

In addition to providing medical care to patients in need of hospitalization, Tatmadaw is making arrangements for the well-being of hospitalized patients. — MNA

Yangon workers' hospital reaccepts inpatients except for major surgery cases



Worker's Hospital (Yangon). PHOTO: MIN HTET

THE Yangon Workers' Hospital, under the Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population, has planned to reaccept inpatients except for major surgery cases starting from 24 May, according to an official from the hospital.

The hospital currently provides regular healthcare services with medical specialists and assistant doctors. However, the operation room can accept only outpatients. Major surgery and obstetric patients cannot be admitted to the hospital yet.

Acting Hospital Superintendent Daw Yu Yu Tin said, "Plans are underway to provide all kinds of healthcare services.

Efforts are made to resume the hospital's regular operation for providing services to patients as possible as we can."

The hospital temporarily closed for inpatients on 8 February. Now, chronic patients, kidney disease patients are being treated every day, and medicines are continuously provided to those treated by specialists at public hospitals.

The hospital is being operated with 54 per cent of medical staff, including assistant doctors, specialists and 60 per cent of officers.

The hospital outpatient department provides medical

treatments for eyes and general ailments on Monday, Wednesday and Friday; ears, nose and throat diseases on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday; bone and spinal diseases on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday.

The medicines are also supplied from 9 am to 4 pm on working days.

The Workers' Hospital (Yangon) was established in 1964, earlier than the workers' hospitals in Mandalay and Htantabin, and standing as a public hospital for industrial workers and civil servants with 250 beds. — Maung Sein Lwin (Myanma Alinn)/GNLM

Public information

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

Phone numbers: 01 830 1975, 01 830 2175

Yangon Region Administration Council

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More black beans, pigeon peas to be grown as prices likely to rise higher until next year

ACCORDING to the bean traders, the farmers should grow more black beans and pigeon peas because the prices of beans are likely to rise higher continuously till the next year because of high demand from India.

“Next year, we should cultivate more black beans and pigeon peas. These beans need to have fewer inputs and pesticide. Now, these black beans and pigeon peas are likely to fetch a good price until next year. India has also demanded an import bean quota of 400,000 tonnes. At present, the country has around 250,000 tonnes of bean stocks. There will be a high bean demand in advance until the following year. So, the bean price is expected to rise next year. The price will be much higher than this year.

That is why farmers are urged to give priority to grow more black beans and pigeon peas,” Vice-Chair U Chone of the



After harvesting paddy, the black beans are grown in October, November and December. The black beans are grown chiefly in Bago and Ayeyawady Regions. The upper parts of Mandalay and Magway regions also grow a few acres of black bean. The pigeon peas are also cultivated across the country and produced mainly in central Myanmar.

Mandalay Commodity Depot elaborated.

After harvesting paddy, the black beans are grown in

October, November and December. The black beans are grown chiefly in Bago and Ayeyawady regions. The upper

parts of Mandalay and Magway regions also grow a few acres of black bean. The pigeon peas are also cultivated across the

country and produced mainly in central Myanmar.

“The prices of black beans and pigeon peas are dependent upon the demand of India. In 2017-2018FY, India produced sufficient beans for their country. Thus, the price of Myanmar bean dropped to K97,000 from K120,000 in 2015. Since 2017, we are now seeing the lowest price of Myanmar bean. A bean bag containing three baskets was sold for K25,000 or 30,000. Last year, climate change in India destroyed their pulses plantations. Therefore, India is buying Myanmar beans, especially the black beans and pigeon peas,” he added.

On 28 May, the prevailing price of black bean is ranging K100,000-K130,000 per 60 visses while the pigeon peas are pricing around K86,000-K95,000 per 60 visses, according to the Mandalay Commodity Depot. — Tin Lin Htet/GNLM

Fruit traders transfer money via bus terminal due to bank withdrawal restriction



Now, the banks have restricted the withdrawal of cash. Thus, the traders build a strong relationship with the passenger bus drivers and send the money through them.

GENERAL Secretary U Kyaw Soe Naing of the Myanmar Mango Market and Technology Development said that fruit traders transfer money to money withdrawal restriction from the bank.

Earlier, the banks were convenient to deposit and withdraw money. Now, the banks have restricted the withdrawal of cash. Thus, the traders build a strong relationship with the passenger bus drivers and send the money through them, he added.

“This year, we face a financial crisis. The banks do not allow the clients to transfer the money. So, we are sending the money through passenger buses. If we want to transfer the money, we cannot use the bank anymore, and we have to transfer money via the bus station, said U Kyaw Soe Naing.

Further, more than thousands of mango loaded trucks are stranded in the Kyin San Kyawt checkpoint on the Myanmar-China border. As a result, the quality of Myanmar

mangoes exported to China is declining, and the prices are also dropping dramatically.

“Previously, if we sent the fruits today, the fruits were ready to sell tomorrow. It is an only one day trip. Now, it takes four or five days on the way to the checkpoint. We are selling the fruits which need to be fresh,” he elaborated.

The export of Seintalone mango to China has plummeted as China has closed some checkpoints because of COVID-19. Their inspection of the products is taking a longer time than previously.

Last year, Seintalone mangoes fetched around 120 Yuans-130 Yuans per 16 kg basket.

But this year, the price of Seintalone mangoes dropped down to under 100 Yuans per 16 kg basket.

Currently, Myanmar has been exporting around 10 or 15 mango loaded trucks to China daily.

Those mangoes are from Sagaing and Katha townships, according to the association. — NN/GNLM

Announcement of Union Election Commission

FROM PAGE-1

3. Findings in respective townships were as follows:

Findings on Township-wise voter lists

Sr	Township	Total polling station	Township sub-commission	List from Immigration department	Those involved in voting list without citizenship scrutiny cards	Those involved in voter list more than three times holding one CSC	Those involved in voter list more than two times holding one CSC
1	Khamti	34	31,384	20,194	2,840	168	2,948
2	Homalin	183	167,703	121,406	29,455	1,600	17,158
3	Leshi	55	10,919	9,262	307	70	1,108
4	Lahe	105	33,713	30,995	2,211	2,126	8,904
5	Nanyun	82	31,744	30,205	882	4,230	7,898
6	Mawlaik	52	40,348	36,764	2,085	291	4,244
7	Phaungpyin	86	86,107	72,566	13,681	355	6,672
	Total	597	401,918	321,347	51,461	8,840	48,932

4. The Union Election Commission has inspected the withdrawal/receipt/use/remaining of ballot papers used for Pyithu Hluttaw Election of Khamti, Homalin, Leshi, Lahe, Nanyun, Mawlaik and Phaungpyin townships of Sagaing Region together with the respective township election sub-commission, head of police force, Immigration and Population and administrators in accordance with Section 53 of the Hluttaw Election Law.

5. According to the inspection, a total of 597 polling stations in these seven townships took out 453,870 ballots and used 296,432 ballots. It left 150,536 ballots instead of 157,438 ballots. The difference was 13,775 ballots and it found 6,873 extra ballots. The extra/shortage ballots were found at respective polling stations. Findings in respective townships were as follows:

Findings on ballot papers for Pyithu Hluttaw Election in each township

Sr	Township	Total polling station	Withdrawal	Used	Exact remaining	Remaining on the ground	Difference	
							Missing	Extra
1	Khamti	34	34,373	22,230	12,143	11,454	729	40
2	Homalin	183	179,347	116,163	63,184	59,219	7,822	3,857
3	Leshi	55	14,668	9,220	5,448	5,300	1,036	888
4	Lahe	105	41,823	27,976	13,847	12,309	1,722	184
5	Nanyun	82	38,666	24,836	13,830	13,203	703	76
6	Mawlaik	52	46,390	31,175	15,215	15,218	195	198
7	Phaungpyin	86	98,603	64,832	13,771	33,833	1,568	1,630
	Total	597	453,870	296,432	157,438	150,536	13,775	6,873

6. According to the inspections on voter lists of these seven townships of Sagaing Region, the numbers of eligible voters are more 80,571 than the voter lists according to the lists of citizens, associate citizens, naturalized citizens who had turned 18 in November 2020 of the Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population and Hluttaw Election Law Section 6 (a).

7. There are 51,461 non-identity voters. Moreover, Hluttaw Election Rules 15 (c) in Chapter VI, "Preparation of Voting Roll", stated, "Whoever has the right to vote in any constituency shall not be included in the voting roll of any constituency other than that of the constituency concerned at the same time." But, there were 8,840 persons repeated on the voter lists more than three times and 48,932 persons repeated on the voter lists two times in these seven townships of Sagaing Region.

8. The village-tract election sub-commission did not report about 9 additional voters in Form (1) of No (1) polling station of Man Sein Village-tract of Homalin Township to the township election sub-commission and they filled the names with handwriting and granted ballots with the signatures of village-tract election sub-commission chairman in place of signatures or left hand thumb fingerprints of these 9 voters.

9. The village-tract election sub-commission did not report about 5 additional voters in Form (1) of No (1) polling station of Hteinkin Village-tract of Homalin Township to the township election sub-commission and the voters cast their votes.

10. Moreover, they granted ballot papers just with a mark without registering the signs or left hand thumb fingerprint of voters in Form (1) at No (1) polling station of Poke Tho Village-tract of Homalin.

11. They granted ballot papers just with a mark without registering the signs or left hand thumb fingerprint of voters in Form (1) at No (1) and (2) polling stations in Phun Thayet village-tract and No (3) polling station in Ma Thaw Yi village-tract of Leshi Township.

12. The used ballot receipts and unused ballots of No (2) polling station in Kone Lan village-tract, No (2) polling station in Khar Lal village-tract and Lan Nout village-tract were not contained in the ballot bags for Pyithu Hluttaw, Amyotha Hluttaw and Region Hluttaw. Although the inspection team contacted the respective secretary of sub-commission and poll heads, it failed.

13. They granted the ballots just with a mark without any signatures or fingerprints of voters in Form (1) of No (1), (2), (3) and (4) polling stations of Kar Yaw Nauk Nyo village-tract of Lahe Township, No (1) polling station of Htan Nauk Kone village-tract, No (3) polling station of Dhammalar village-tract, No (1), (2) and (3) polling stations of Ant Paw village-tract, No (3) polling station of Yan Kyein village-tract, La Kyan village-tract polling station, Htan Par Khway village-tract polling station, No (3) polling station of Kyauk Kal village-tract and No (2) polling station of Kyun Khaung village-tract.

14. It found 27 used ballot receipts used in Ngain Maung village-tract polling station of Nanyun Township without the names of voters, voting no, polling station no, names of ward/village-tracts and signatures of voters.

15. The used ballot receipts and unused ballots of No (3) polling station in Kyone Yan Note Nyo village-tract of Nanyun Township were not contained in the ballot bags for Pyithu Hluttaw, Amyotha Hluttaw and Region Hluttaw. Although the inspection team contacted the respective secretary of sub-commission and poll heads, it failed.

16. Moreover, They granted the ballots just with a mark without any signatures or fingerprints of voters in Form (1) of Done Hee, Myoma, Mite and Htan Yone Ward polling station of Nanyun Township, No (2) polling station of Chamma Kauk Chanyi village-tract, No (1) polling station of Ke San Sar Lin village-tract, No (2) polling station of Ke San Laung Kyan village-tract, Lun Nuu village-tract polling station, Kar Yaw Kone Shwe village-tract, No (1) polling station of Naung Yan village-tract, No (2) polling station of Par Kyat village-tract, Ha Chun Sar village-tract polling station and Sun Ka Sun Khaw village-tract polling station.

17. Findings in these seven townships of Sagaing Region were as follows:

(a) There were 298,414 voters and they used 296,432 ballots out of all withdrawals, which was 1,982 less than the numbers of voters.

(b) It found 13,775 missing ballots in withdrawals and used ballots.

(c) It found 6,873 extra ballots at some polling stations.

(d) Some ward/village-tract election sub-commissions did not report to the respective township sub-commissions and filled the lists of additional voters in Form (1) with handwriting.

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Announcement of Union Election Commission

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- (e) The signatures of ward/village-tract sub-commission chairman and secretary were not found on every page of Forms (1) according to the respective Hluttaw Election Rules 15 (a).
 - (f) Names of the voters, voter list number, polling station number, ward/village-tract names and voters' signs were not filled in ballot receipts used in some polling stations in casting votes.
 - (g) Some ward/village-tract election commissions failed to return the ballot receipts and extra ballots in accordance with the law and so the ballots were found missing.
 - (h) The non-identity voters were on the voter lists and the voters cast votes just with the certificates without any national identity cards.
 - (i) They conducted measures that violate the law when they started collecting advance ballot.
 - (j) They released the COVID-19 related instructions, which were not conformity with the law, to collect voter lists and advance votes when the election drew near.
18. It found voting frauds in of Khamti, Homalin, Leshi, Lahe, Nanyun, Mawlaik and Phaungpyin townships of Sagaing Region. The excess/shortage ballots were found in the inspection. They failed to follow the stipulations of the Hluttaw Election Law and Rules.

Union Election Commission

Four men charged for making arson attacks in Bago Region



THE insurgents set fire to the township administration office of No (7) ward in Aye Mya Thar Yar village-tract of the Okpo Township of Bago Region. The damages were announced on 28 May.

After investigation, secu-

rity forces arrested four suspects: Tin Nyunt, former ward administrator of Aye Mya Thar Yar village-tract, who lives in No (1) Ward, NLD supporter Win Maung, and Chit Htike Thu and Aung Zin Htet from No (1) Ward.

The four suspects, including Tin Nyunt, a former administrator, will face legal actions for committing arson attacks to affect the administrative machinery of the State and intimidate the public.—MNA

13 suspects arrested with arms used in riots in Kyimyindine

THE security forces detained three men, including Kyaw Thura (aka) Phoe Shwe Chaw from No (13) ward of Hline Township, for taking photos of berry gates on strand road, in front of the Myawady edible oil tank in Zay Kalay Ward of Kyimyindine Township of Yangon Region from a Light Truck on 27 May.

According to the words of Kyaw Thura (aka) Phoe Shwe Chaw, the police raided "Mya" Ice Factory in Dhamma Thuka Kyaung street in No (13) Ward of Hline Township and arrested ten factory workers, including Sa



Myo Gyi (aka) Tar Wai with other materials used in riots.

The 13 detainees, including

Kyaw Thura (aka) Phoe Shwe Chaw, will face legal actions under the law. — MNA

Explosives seized in Sagaing Region

THE police seized explosives in Dabayin Township of the Sagaing Region.

Police found explosives, including 31 handmade bombs about 50 ft from an unoccupied house of Zaw Tun from No (1)

Ward of Saing Pyin in Taw Lal village of Dabayin Township on 28 May.

The officials will investigate to take action against associates in making explosives according to the law. — MNA



Terrorists attack cargo ship, police station in Kachin, Kayah states



THE armed terrorists attacked a cargo ship and security outposts in Kachin and Kayah states.

As the Padauk vessel that carries foodstuffs from Shwegu to Bhamo of Kachin State, on 28 May, arrived near Naung Mo village of Shwegu township, terrorists opened fire at the ship from the

right side of the Ayeyawady River. None of the security members and crewmen was injured during a 10-minute clash.

Similarly, terrorists attacked the Dimawhso Myoma Police Station of Kayah State with heavy and small weapons. No one was injured in the attack.—MNA

The Third Month of the State Administration Council Government

By Kanaung

CONTINUED FROM YESTERDAY

Economy and Investment

In the third month, the State Administration Council stepped up efforts to facilitate the smooth operations of businesses and industries after the long disruption due to COVID-19. On 1 April 2021, efforts were made to speed up the operations of factories in the Myotha Industrial Zone in the Mandalay Region. The Ministry of Investment and Foreign Trade is working on procedural reforms to make it easier to set up new projects and expand businesses.

A ten-day Gems, Jade and Pearls Emporium conducted in kyats was successfully held at Mani Yadanar Jade Hall in Nay Pyi Taw from 1 to 10 April. On the first day of the sales, the State Administration Council Chairman viewed the Emporium, which was held following COVID-19 health rules and social distancing methods. Despite the situation, the Emporium achieved its objectives of boosting the local gem, jade, and pearls trade. A total of 317 pearl lots were sold for K1,427.26 million, 1,955 jade lots for K31,595.79 million and 52 lots of gems for K525.8 million.

The Ministry of Investment and Foreign Economic Relations is leading efforts to promote and improve services for existing investors, examine the barriers for investors, resolve these in line with the law, and facilitate and enhance the role of the One Stop Service (OSS) Office in the Yangon Region Office to ensure its smooth operation. Since Yangon Region is the most heavily invested region, the Yangon Region Investment Committee will be closely monitoring investment activities in accordance with the law, review the case delays in issuing permits, and facilitate submissions to the Myanmar Investment Commission. The OSS members of Yangon Region daily solve difficulties related to trade, investment, money transfer and salary payment.

Trade flows are stepping up despite the impact of COVID-19 and attempts to undermine the State economy. The Working Committee on Facilitation of Trade and Goods Ensuring the swift Flow of Trade and Goods addresses problems such as trade flow barriers. The records of the Committee show that between 22 February and 8 April 2021, a total of 78,603 containers — 38,254



containers of imported goods and 40,349 containers of exported products — were processed successfully. Some 239,043 tonnes of octane, 304,022 tonnes of diesel and 115,993 tonnes of palm oil were unloaded at the jetties. For border trade sectors, the Muse trade zone earned more than \$298 million between 22 February and 8 April 2021, while the Myawady trade zone achieved more than \$249 million.

The Myanmar Central Bank Chairman and officials from the Myanmar Banks Association met on 9 April. They sought solutions to ensure the smooth functioning of banks and overcome current challenges, such as reduced public confidence in the banking sector and difficulties related to cash liquidity for the public and for businesses. New measures are being put in place to resolve these challenges, including mobile and internet banking services.

Food and agriculture

During an inspection tour of the Thilawa Multi-Purpose Farming Zone on 30 April, the State Administration Council Chairman highlighted the importance of food quality and safety, as well as the necessity to develop high-quality varieties of paddy through research.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation is leading a project for development of the farming sector with the use of modern techniques. The use of such techniques also requires technical assistance for the farmers. There are also plans to extend livestock breeding diploma courses. The Ministry is encouraging the import and distribution of agricultural inputs with high quality and low cost before the planting season in 2021. Myanmar has many potentials and oppor-

Three hundred billion kyats have been earmarked for purchasing medicines for public hospitals, and health workers who were in the CDM were repeatedly invited to return to work. On the other hand, government doctors that force CDM on others and incite staff to shut down public hospitals (expelling patients in the process) have been prosecuted and blacklisted.

tunities to import and distribute seeds, pesticides, and fertilizer. The registration and certificates for export-import of agricultural inputs can now be easily applied online through the Myanmar Agricultural Inputs Registration System (MAIRS).

The Ministry is also taking measures to ensure that agricultural land is not misused and that agricultural lands are not affected by economic zones and housing. Businesses that support the agricultural sector in screening land use rights will be prioritized. Other concerns being addressed by the Ministry include food and nutrition security, employment opportunities in agriculture, and livestock breeding, and relief plans for businesses badly hit by COVID-19.

Health and sports

On 9 April 2021, the COVID-19-related stay-at-home restrictions were lifted from some townships of Yangon, Mandalay and Bago regions. The COVID-19 Vaccination Fund Management Sub-Committee released public statements on 12, 23, and 29 April, with full transparency on the status of funding and donations. The temporary suspension of international commercial flights to Myanmar has been extended to 31 May, given continuing concerns about the COVID-19 pandemic. The government has implemented awareness-raising programmes on the COVID-19 third wave and on the need to maintain disease prevention measures, given the high rate of

infection in neighbouring countries.

The Ministry of Health has been administering COVID-19 vaccination programmes since 27 January 2021. As of 21 April, a total of 1.54 million people had been administered the first dose of the vaccine, and some 340,000 had been administered the second dose. In addition, the Ministry has been providing COVID-19 vaccination to the staff and their families of foreign embassies in Yangon since 5 April.

On 4 April 2021, the Eastern Regional Military Command Tatmadaw Hospital provided COVID-19 testing and quarantine services for the migrant workers who were repatriated to Kayin and Mon states through the border areas. On 5 April 2021, medical corps from the Triangle Regional Military Command provided medical and refresher courses to the members of the United Wa State Army and their families in Wanhone hospital in Monghsat Township, Eastern Shan State. Forty-six ethnic people benefited from the Medical Course, and 24 benefited from the Medical Refresher Course.

The Ministry of Health and Sports is planning to resume operations in public hospitals in the townships of Yangon, Mandalay, and Nay Pyi Taw. Some hospitals in townships have re-opened but still do not have adequate staff due to civil disobedience by public doctors and nurses. Three hundred billion kyats have been earmarked for purchasing medicines for public hospitals, and health workers who were in the CDM were repeatedly invited to return to work. On the other hand, government doctors that force CDM on others and incite staff to shut down public hospitals (expelling patients in the process) have been prosecuted and blacklisted. Private hospitals and clinics that have allowed such doctors to practice on their premises, de-



spite several warnings from the government, have been banned.

Sports competitions are being planned at the region- and state level. A coordination meeting on sports competition and construction was held on 26 April 2021. Football matches for men under 21 and women under 25 years of age will be held first. Region- and state-level competitions in wushu and futsal are planned for August and September 2021.

Reopening of schools and universities

Since the closure of schools and universities leads to learning losses and affects not only the students, but also their parents and ultimately the State, the government's policy was to reopen schools and universities as soon as feasible.

The coordination meeting on expanding business degree and law degree courses in universities was held on 26 April. The Chairman of the State Administration Council Senior General Min Aung Hlaing addressed the meeting. He mentioned the need to produce more graduates in law and emphasized the necessity for young people to gain the right education, real knowledge and relevant skills. Ten out of Myanmar's 24 development zones (each zone containing at least one arts and science university, one technical university, and one computer science university) of

be kept open until 15 May. The application deadline for doctoral and postgraduate applications at universities under the Ministry of Education was initially set for 6 April 2021, but the deadline was re-set to 12 April before the Thingyan festival. Universities, degree colleges, and colleges under the Department of Higher Education will start reopening by offering final year courses and master's degree courses from 5 May for the 2019-2020 academic year.

Religious activities

On 4 April 2021, a ceremony was held to mark the arrival in Nay Pyi Taw of the first part of the Maravizara seated Buddha image from Simikhon port. The Buddha image will be carved and assembled in Nay Pyi Taw to be

come the world's highest marble Buddha image with a height of 81 feet. On 19 April 2021, the seventh ceremony to convey the parts of Maravizara Buddha image and throne to Nay Pyi Taw took place in Simikhon Village of Myingyan Township in Mandalay Region.

Transport and communications

The Inland Water Transport under the Ministry of Transport and Communications is re-launching inland shipping services. Myanma Railways has launched the Yangon-Nay Pyi Taw-Yangon passenger trains and the Yangon-Mandalay, Yangon-Mawlamyine and Yangon-Pyay train services. On 7 April, a new Airbus A320-214 XY-ALR arrived in Myanmar; pur-

chased by the commercial airlines Myanmar Airways International. Under instructions by the Yangon Region Administration Council, highway buses were resumed, and 627 buses operating along 37 Yangon City Bus (YBS) lines provided services during the Thingyan festival period.

Plans are underway to develop the travel and tour sector in Kengtung and Tachilek districts in Shan State. Efforts will be made to create itineraries that offer pilgrimages to places of worship and traditional cultures. There are plans to develop domestic tourism in cultural and scenic places in eastern Shan State, with care taken to protect and promote cultural heritage sites and national parks such as the Loi Mwe National Park.

ities to enhance the long-term development, peace and stability of regions and states, including operations to ensure security and the rule of law, and combat illegal activities such as drug trafficking.

The State Administration Council's Information Team held weekly media briefings through videoconferences, which were attended by local and international news agencies. With full transparency, the concerned officials clarified issues such as the ASEAN Leaders Meeting, the prosecution of civil servants for their incitement of others to join the civil disobedience movement, the breach of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement by the Kachin Independence Army who attacked Tatmadaw military bases, the attacks by insurgents



fer law courses, while efforts are being made to offer these courses to another ten zones.

Announcements were made in April to facilitate the reopening of the country's educational facilities. All teachers, academic and management staff under the Ministry of Education were informed to return to work by 3 May. Applications for postgraduate studies and diploma courses for medical science and doctoral programmes of medical and related universities under the Ministry of Health and Sports would

As with preceding months, April—the third month in office of the new Government—was filled with activities to advance towards these national goals. The way forward is still challenging, but with discipline, goodwill and competence, much progress can be made.

Literature, news, and information

On 1 April 2021, the Ministry of Information awarded the Sarpay Beikman awards for 2019, with a total of 29 awards for 13 genres of literature. The Ministry of Information has been engaged in the development of Myanmar literature since 1969. It has been inviting writers who face constraints in having their works published and awarding deserving writers for their works. On 2 April, the Pakokku Literary Prize, Scholarship Prize and Pakokku U Ohn Pe Library Book Award for 2019 were awarded. Daw Kywe Kywe won the 2019 Pakokku U Ohn Pe Lifetime Achievement Award for Literature.

The State Administration Council's Information Team held its 4/2021 press conference on 9 April. The Team explained the ongoing work of the State Administration Council in the economic, health, national security and education spheres and the processes to provide citizenship scrutiny cards to every citizen including ethnic nationalities. The Team also presented activ-

against the regional command in Magway and Meiktila Townships, and the incitement of some media outlets using disinformation about the events of 24 April in Mindat Township.

From May 2021 towards national goals

The common goals of all the ethnic nationalities living in the country are peace and stability, and socio-economic development of the country. At present, the State Administration Council is paving the way to democracy and socio-economic progress. The Council's Five-Point Road Map and the Nine Objectives on political, economic, and social affairs provide the guiding framework to achieve these goals. As with preceding months, April—the third month in office of the new Government—was filled with activities to advance towards these national goals. The way forward is still challenging, but with discipline, goodwill and competence, much progress can be made.



Thoughts on the 1900th birth anniversary ...

FORM PAGE-9

Marcus' 'various hats' and being less innocent than the earlier philosopher Epicurus and later philosopher Spinoza

Marcus is not always praised (far less universally praised) as a philosopher, warrior and Emperor. As an Emperor and warrior (though by no means a despot), he almost certainly would have 'blood on his hands'. This would not have been the case with philosophers like, say, one of his predecessors, the ancient Greek philosopher Epicurus (341-270 Before the Current Era), who died 450 years before Marcus. Epicurus espoused a different philosophy (Epicureanism) from that of Marcus (Stoicism).

And it would be churlish

to state that the 17th-century Dutch philosopher Baruch Spinoza (24 November 1632-21 February 1677) was a persecutor of any person during his short life.

Alas, at least to some, Marcus, in terms of persecuting and causing the deaths directly or indirectly of his fellow humans, could or would not have been as innocent as either Epicurus or Spinoza. Both of these earlier and later philosophers have great admirers and also mainly in the past severe critics of their philosophies and their personal lives. Epicurus and Spinoza would not have authorized the killings or caused the killings, in war, or indeed during peacetime, which Marcus in his 'warrior hat' would or at least could have done so.

Sources mentioned that

during his reign, Marcus persecuted Christians. One contemporary Christian commentator apparently had stated that the day of Marcus' death was 'a great day for Christianity'.

Marcus disdaining fame and a query regarding full Myanmar translation of Meditations

In quite a few passages from his diary, thankfully preserved throughout all these centuries, the Emperor-warrior-philosopher expressed his (genuine) disdain for fame, including (his) posthumous fame.

Notwithstanding this disdain or equanimity about his fame, Marcus Aurelius' fame throughout the centuries is established. This is largely due to his *Meditations* which reflects his inner struggles, internal con-

versations and 'overhearing', including doubts, insights and his philosophical stoicism.

The *Meditations* have touched (in the non—theological sense of the words) many persons for a good part of a thousand years. Hence this commemoration and tribute of Marcus Aurelius' work *Meditations* on the 1900th anniversary of his birth.

(The writer is not aware of full translation into Burmese of Marcus' *Meditations*. If this has been done, he would be grateful if knowledgeable persons can inform him. The writer recalls that the veteran translator and politician, the late Sayagyi Thakin Ba Thaug mentioned *Meditations* in one of his writings in Burmese, but to the best of this writer's knowledge, Marcus'

philosophical diary has not been translated in full into Burmese.)

Dr Myint Zan, a retired Professor of Law, has endowed funds at one of his alma maters, the Australian National University (ANU), for the academic years 2018 to 2020, the Myint Zan Fellowship in Philosophy (for early career researchers) and in perpetuity, Myint Zan Prize in Philosophy of Science (for undergraduate philosophy majors) at the Department of Philosophy. Three inaugural Myint Zan Philosophy Fellowship recipients had visited the ANU Department of Philosophy for a few months in 2019 and 2020. The inaugural Myint Zan Philosophy of Science Prize has been awarded to an undergraduate philosophy student in February 2020.

APEC's GDP projected to grow 6.3% in 2021 as vaccines buoy optimism



The combined gross domestic product of the 21 member economies of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation is expected to grow 6.3 percent this year. PHOTO: APEC/KYODO

THE combined gross domestic product of the 21 member economies of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation is expected to grow 6.3 per cent this year, turning around from a 1.9 per cent decline in 2020 as they gradually reopen while COVID-19 vaccines fan optimism, an APEC report showed.

The organization's Policy Support Unit said GDP is pushed up by "pent-up demand unleashed following a year of subdued spending," but cited an "uneven recovery" largely due to "differences in vaccine access and availability" in the region.

The unit forecast the region's growth will persist in 2022 and 2023 but at a more moderate pace of 4.4 per cent and 3.4 per cent, respectively, according to the report. "The region continues to face significant uncertainties, largely linked to how the pandemic is evolving, while job losses due to the pandemic and expectations of higher inflation this year could surpass consumer spending," said Denis Hew, director of the unit. The report said the 1.9 per cent contraction last year was less than the 2.7 per cent decline projected a year ago as member economies, such as the Unit-

ed States, China and Japan, stepped up fiscal stimulus and monetary easing measures.

The report was issued ahead of an APEC trade ministers virtual meeting slated for June 5, where pandemic response through trade is expected to be on top of the agenda.

Ministers are likely to focus on ways to ensure open markets, enable the safe and efficient distribution of vaccines and steer the region toward economic recovery while reaffirming their commitment to the multilateral trading system, according to the APEC Secretariat. — Kyodo News ■

Hong Kong tycoons offer \$1 million flat to boost Covid jobs

HONG Kongers reluctant to get the coronavirus jab have been given a million-dollar reason to roll up their sleeves after property tycoons donated a brand new flat to a vaccine lottery.

Worth HK\$10.8 million (US\$1.4 million), the one-bedroom apartment will be the lucky draw's grand prize, the property developers announced Friday.

They will also offer 20 other prizes worth HK\$100,000 each.

Hong Kong is one of the few places in the world to have secured more than enough doses to inoculate all 7.5 million people. But rampant distrust of the government combined with a lack of urgency in a comparatively virus-free city -- has led to hesitancy and a dismally lagging inoculation drive.

Seeking to boost uptake, Sino Group, Ng Teng Fong Charitable Foundation and Chinese Estates Holdings said all Hong

Kong residents aged 18 and above who have received both doses of the Covid-19 vaccines will be eligible to register for the lucky draw until September 1.

Only permanent residents are eligible for the top prize of an apartment in the world's most unaffordable housing market.

"We hope to increase Hong Kong's vaccination rate through the lucky draw," Daryl Ng, the director of the foundation said in a statement. The groups said further details would be released at a later date.

The announcement came three days after the city's Chief Executive Carrie Lam rejected calls for the government to offer cash handouts to encourage inoculations. She suggested local businesses provide the incentives. "To offer cash or something physical to encourage vaccination shouldn't be done by the government," she said. — AFP ■



Hong Kong property developers are offering a chance to win an apartment in a lottery to boost the city's lagging vaccine rollout. PHOTO: AFP

Gazprom earnings recover after pandemic fall

RUSSIAN energy giant Gazprom said on Friday its earnings had recovered in the first quarter after last year's fall in demand and prices caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

The group reported a net profit of 447.26 billion rubles (€5bn) in the first three months of the year, compared to 135 billion rubles for all of 2020. Its sales between January and March were up more than 30 per cent year-on-year at 2.29 trillion rubles.

The global energy sector was hit hard by the onset of the coronavirus pandemic last year, with demand hammered as many countries shut down swathes of their economies in a bid to slow



The Nord Stream 2 pipeline between Russia and Germany, a key part of Moscow's export strategy for state energy giant Gazprom, aims to deliver Russian gas to Europe via the Baltic Sea. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

the spread of COVID-19.

Gas exports to Europe, from which Gazprom derives the bulk of its profits, were up more

than 25 per cent in the first quarter, with average prices in rubles also increasing by more than a third year-on-year.

In 2021 Gazprom expects to increase the volume of its gas imports to Europe by five per cent. — AFP ■

Boeing working with FAA as it halts 787 deliveries again

BOEING said Friday it was working to address questions about its 787 Dreamliner from US air safety regulators after again suspending new deliveries of the jet.

The questions concern the inspection method for new planes following production problems that led to an earlier pause in

deliveries. With approval from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Boeing had resumed deliveries of the widebody Dreamliner in March after a five-month halt.

"Boeing still needs to show that its proposed inspection method would meet FAA's federal safety regulations," the agency

said. "The FAA is waiting for additional data from Boeing before determining whether the company's solution meets safety regulations.

"Since the FAA has not approved Boeing's proposal, Boeing chose to temporarily stop deliveries to its customers."

A Boeing spokesper-

son said there was no impact on 787 planes already in service.

"We are working to provide the FAA with additional information concerning the analysis and documentation associated with the verification work on undelivered 787s," a Boeing spokesperson said. — AFP ■

Rolls-Royce drives up car luxury with 'Boat Tail'



With a rear resembling a yacht deck and opening up for alfresco dining, Rolls-Royce's Boat Tail's opulent design features also hand-crafted aluminium panels and Swiss timepieces. PHOTO: AFP

Rolls-Royce Motor Cars, which along with the wider luxury goods sector is recovering strongly from pandemic fallout, has launched a "Boat Tail" automobile -- tailor-made

for just three ultra-wealthy clients.

With a rear resembling a yacht deck and opening up for alfresco dining, the Boat Tail's opulent design features also

hand-crafted aluminium panels and Swiss timepieces.

Fashioned by Rolls' Coachbuild unit, the blue-painted car has been made for three clients who drove its design, according to Rolls-Royce Motor Cars chief executive Torsten Muller-Otvos.

"The client comes to us with an idea in mind, exactly what happened 100 years ago when clients commissioned the bodies they wanted to see," Muller-Otvos told AFP during the car's launch this week at the company's Goodwood headquarters near Chichester in southern England.

"It's not us defining what the car should look like, it really is as it was in the past, that the client defines what they want to see," he added.

Rolls-Royce Motor Cars, owned by German car giant BMW, revived the art of coachbuilding in 2017 with the Boat Tail's precursor "Sweptail".

Speculation about Sweptail costing some \$13 million was "pretty close", Muller-Otvos confirmed, while reports suggest Boat Tail could be twice the price.

"We are never talking about prices in agreement with our clients," he stressed. — AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Russian SolarWinds hackers renew cyberattacks: Microsoft

THE state-backed Russian group behind a massive hacking campaign revealed last year has re-emerged with a series of attacks on government agencies, think tanks, consultants and other organizations, Microsoft security researchers said.

A security update from Microsoft late Thursday said the group known as Nobelium has stepped up attacks, notably targeting government agencies involved in foreign policy as part of intelligence gathering efforts.

Microsoft said it detected a "sophisticated" and large-scale campaign that delivered phishing emails delivering malicious software and enabling the hackers to get protected data from victims.

"This wave of attacks targeted approximately 3,000 email accounts at more than 150 different organizations," Microsoft vice president Tom Burt said in a blog post.

The news comes a month after Washington imposed sanctions and expelled Russian diplomats in response to Moscow's involvement in the massive attacks last year on SolarWinds, a security software firm, election interference and other hostile activity. — AFP ■

Apple officially puts 1st data centre in China into operation: media

APPLE Inc. officially put its first data centre in China into operation this week, according to local media.

The data centre was built in southwestern China's Guizhou Province jointly with a Chinese company with a contracted investment of \$1 billion under a 2017 agreement with the provincial government, the state-run Xinhua News Agency said Thursday.

The centre, which started operating Tuesday, plans to offer iCloud services on the mainland, the report said, adding it is expected to further improve Chinese users' experience in terms of access speed and service reliability.

Fears are mounting, however, that Apple users in China might see their information leaked to the Communist-led government.

China in 2017 enforced a cybersecurity law amid concern that its authorities may compel foreign technology firms and governments to hand over locally stored data and encryption keys in the name of protecting security.

Guizhou has recently become the front-runner in China's big data industry, Xinhua said. — Kyodo News ■

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V TRANG AN 06 V.0221

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V TRANG AN 06 V.0221** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **30-5-2021** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **WILMAR** 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: **2301191/2301178**

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

M/S WILHELSEN SHIPS SERVICE(S) PTE LTD

Biden's proposed budget lifts ban on funding abortions

US President Joe Biden on Friday proposed a \$6 trillion budget that for first time in 45 years did not prohibit federal funds being used for abortion, as the Democrat leader fulfilled a campaign pledge.

The absence of the "Hyde amendment" in the proposed budget will be subject of bitter debate in Congress, where elected Republicans will seek to reintroduce it.

The amendment limits the use of federal funds to finance abortions through Medicaid in cases of rape, incest or when the mother's life is in danger. Medicaid is public health medical insurance intended for



Abortion rights activists rally in front of the Supreme Court in Washington, D.C., on May 21, 2019. PHOTO: AFP

poorer Americans.

Describing the amendment as "racist, sexist, deeply

unjust, and immensely unpopular," Alexis McGill Johnson, president of Planned Parent-

hood, welcomed the move.

"President Biden's budget, which proposes ending the Hyde Amendment, is a historic step in the fight for reproductive freedom," she said.

"For far too long, the Hyde Amendment has put the government in control of a personal health care decision for many people with low incomes."

The amendment was first introduced after *Roe v. Wade*, the 1973 Supreme Court ruling which authorized abortion as long as the fetus is not yet able to survive outside of the womb, which happens at 22 to 24 weeks. — AFP ■

French growth rebound fails to materialize in first quarter

A much-expected rebound of France's COVID-battered economy failed to materialize in the first quarter as key sectors remained sluggish after over a year of virus restrictions, official data showed on Friday.

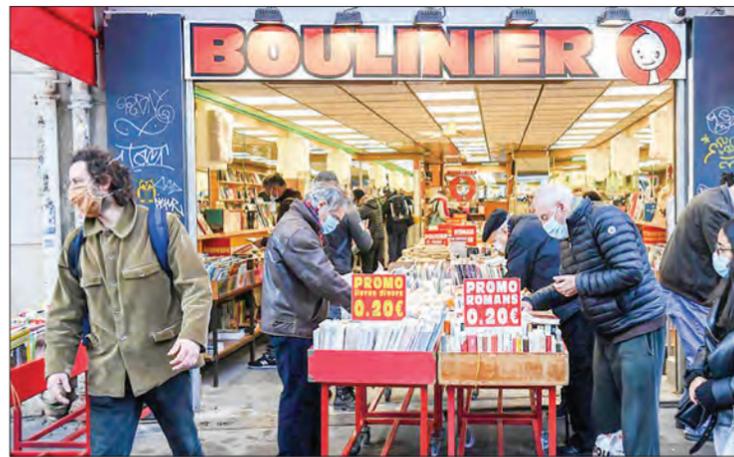
Gross domestic product contracted by 0.1 per cent in the first three months of the year, the Insee statistics agency said, in a sharp reversal of its previous estimate of 0.4 per cent growth.

French authorities began ordering business closures and travel bans in several regions in March – the tail end of the quarter – ahead of a third round of coronavirus restrictions

implemented in April to curb rising COVID cases. France has since entered a phased reopening of the country. The crucial construction sector, in particular, was slow to ramp up activity after a devastating year for the French economy which declined by more than eight per cent in 2020. The sector was "substantially less dynamic" than expected, Insee said. Investment, household spending and production also fell short. **'Keep cool'**

The French government was nevertheless quick to confirm its five per cent GDP growth objective for the full year 2021.

"This doesn't change our



Consumer spending declined 8.3% in April from March. PHOTO:AFP

target in any way," Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire told reporters, calling the first quarter slowdown "an automatic revision" linked to 2020 growth that he said had held up bet-

ter than thought. Calling on the country to "keep cool and not be disheartened by this or that number", Le Maire said that current indicators "are all pointing upwards". — AFP ■

Tourists scarce as travel bubbles fail to inflate



The travel bubble between Australia and New Zealand allowed families separated by Covid-enforced border closures to reunite. PHOTO: AFP

QUARANTINE-FREE travel bubbles were hailed as tourism's

"godsend" earlier this year, but cancellations and suspensions

have deflated hopes they will herald a return to pre-pandemic normality.

Perhaps the world's most high-profile bubble opened between Australia and New Zealand on April 19, leading to emotional scenes as families split when borders closed almost 400 days earlier were reunited.

Since then, New Zealand has ordered partial shutdowns on four occasions due to virus scares in Australian states, the most serious of which forced Melbourne into a snap lockdown this week.

A spike of Covid-19 cases in Taiwan burst its bubble with the

tiny Pacific nation of Palau last week, while Hong Kong and Singapore have been struggling to stand up a quarantine-free travel arrangement for six months.

Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison will take advantage of the trans-Tasman bubble this weekend, when he travels to New Zealand for the first time since the pandemic hit for talks with Kiwi counterpart Jacinda Ardern.

The pair will meet in the South Island mountain resort of Queenstown, where Ardern has vowed to show him the sights, including adventure activities and glacier-fed lakes. — AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

G-7 trade ministers call for rules on unfair subsidies, WTO reforms

TRADE ministers from the Group of Seven industrialized nations on Friday called for enhanced rules on industrial subsidies and reforms of the World Trade Organization to realize a free and fair trading system.

The ministers also agreed to support the WTO's efforts in expanding the global production and distribution of COVID-19 vaccines in the two-day online meeting that ended on Friday.

"We call for the start of negotiations to develop stronger international rules on market-distorting industrial subsidies and trade-distorting actions by state enterprises," the ministers said in a joint statement.

The statement was adopted in a veiled criticism of China, whose generous subsidies to local companies and infringement of the intellectual property rights of foreign companies have become a global issue of concern. — Kyodo News ■

Unemployment in Brazil hits record 14.7 pct in Q1

UNEMPLOYMENT in Brazil hit a record 14.7 per cent in the first quarter of this year, the government in Latin America's largest economy reported Thursday.

The rate in the same stretch of last year was 12.2 per cent as the economy began to be hit by the coronavirus pandemic, which has claimed more than 450,000 lives in Brazil.

The total number of job-seekers also set a record, at 14.8 million, said the national statistics institute, or IBGE.

The figures were in line with analysts' forecasts.

Brazil has been one of the countries hit hardest by Covid-19, with 215 deaths per 100,000 inhabitants – the highest rate in the Americas. Its economy contracted 4.1 per cent last year. — AFP ■

Russia looms large as NATO trains in neighbouring Estonia

IN a wooded corner of Estonia 120 kilometres (75 miles) from the Russian border, some 7,000 soldiers are taking part in a NATO battleground exercise.

With tanks and armoured personnel carriers on the move, minesweepers in action and the crackle of gunfire, it feels a lot like the real thing.

“The enemy is fighting with a lot of mines in very complex terrain, very wooded, very muddy,

and we are progressing slowly,” French Lieutenant Colonel Emmanuel Guillez said during the exercise.

Guillez is second in command of a British-led battalion that is helping to train a group of 3,000 young Estonian conscripts and reservists.

The Spring Storm exercise is taking place against a backdrop of renewed tensions between Russia and the West over several issues including Belarus and jailed Krem-

lin critic Alexei Navalny.

“The Russian Federation will not hesitate to use its military power against its neighbours to obtain its strategic objectives,” said Major General Indrek Sirel, deputy commander in chief of the Estonian army who is overseeing the exercise.

A part of the Soviet Union until 1991, Estonia has since joined the European Union and NATO and continues to harbour deep misgivings about Russia.— AFP ■

Obituary

Al-Hajah Nurul Nisa @ Daw San San Tint

B.Com (A.A), B.A

Age (67)

- Head of Department, Auditing Department, No. (1), Regional College
- The Islamic Centre of Myanmar
- Religions for Peace, Myanmar Women of Faith, Myanmar
- Beloved disciple of K.A.F.T.G Garana Sufi Tarigah Khalifah U Maung Maung Gyi

Beloved Granddaughter of [Sayar Gyi U Aung Kalay (Pyi)], beloved daughter of (Late U San Shwe) + Al-Hajjah Daw Kyi Kyi, beloved wife of Al-Haj Khalifah U Aye Lwin, beloved mother of Al-Haj Khalifah Dr. Nay Linn Aung, (Diabetologist, faculty, Mohawk Valley Health System) + Ma May Hnin Thu, Dr. Lwin Lwin Khine passed away peacefully for her return journey to the Merciful Allah, on 28th May 2021, at St. Luke Hospital, Utica, New York, USA at 4:34 pm.

She will be buried at the Bosnian Islamic cemetery, Utica on 29th May 2021, at 5pm. Please pray for her and all the departed souls.

Beloved Family

Internal probe clears UK PM over ‘wallpapergate’

BRITISH Prime Minister Boris Johnson acted “unwisely” over funding arrangements for a lavish makeover of his Downing Street flat, but was not guilty of any impropriety, his ethics advisor concluded Friday.

The finding by Christopher Geidt, the UK government’s newly appointed adviser on ministerial standards, does not entirely lift the cloud over the “wallpapergate” affair with several other probes still under way.

Geidt found that Johnson “knew nothing” about how the designer makeover of his private quarters was funded, noting the works had begun as he was critically ill with Covid-19 in early April 2020. The prime minister should have shown more curiosity later but believed that the putative charitable trust would take care of the invoices, Geidt said. Officials failed to brief Johnson that the proposed trust was proving hard to get off



Publishing an annual report on ministerial interests, the UK government’s newly appointed adviser on ministerial standards found that Johnson “knew nothing” about how the designer makeover of his private quarters was funded, noting the works had begun as he was critically ill with Covid-19 in early April 2020. PHOTO: AFP

It is also likely to fuel questions about why civil servants, at Johnson’s direction, were busy working on creating a White House-style trust to manage the Downing Street complex in the middle of the coronavirus pandemic last year. Publishing an annual report on ministerial interests,

the ground, he said, and the invoices were in fact settled by the Conservative Party and a wealthy party donor. “Given the level of the prime minister’s expectations for the trust to deliver on the objects he had set, this was a significant failing,” the advisor’s report said.— AFP ■

US targets Belarus with sanctions amid Western outcry over plane

THE United States on Friday announced punitive measures against Belarus targeting the regime of strongman President Alexander Lukashenko, who met with Russian leader Vladimir Putin amid a global outcry over the forced diversion of a European plane.

White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki called for “a credible international investigation into the events of May 23,” which she called “a direct affront to international norms.”

Belarus scrambled a military jet to divert a Ryanair plane and arrested 26-year-old opposition journalist and activist Roman Protasevich who was on-board, triggering a global outcry.

The White House announced it was working



During talks in Russia’s Black Sea resort of Sochi, Putin warmly greeted Lukashenko. PHOTO: SPUTNIK/AFP

with the European Union on a list of targeted sanctions against key members of Lukashenko’s regime.

Meanwhile, economic sanctions against nine Belarusian state-owned enterprises, reimposed by Washington in April

following a crackdown on pro-democracy protests, will come into effect on June 3.

Further US moves on Belarus could target “those that support corruption, the abuse of human rights, and attacks on de-

mocracy,” Psaki said. The White House also issued a “Do Not Travel” warning for Belarus to US citizens, and warned American passenger planes to “exercise extreme caution” if considering flying over Belarusian airspace.— AFP ■

Mali constitutional court declares Goita transitional president

MALI’S constitutional court on Friday named Colonel Assimi Goita, leader of the post-coup junta, as the country’s transitional president.

The judgement stipulated that Goita would “exercise the functions of transitional president to lead the transition process to its conclusion”, following

his seizure of power this week.

The constitutional court said it had made the decision due to the “vacancy in the presidency” following the resignation of caretaker president Bah Ndaw.

Soldiers detained Ndaw and prime minister Moctar Ouane on

Monday, before releasing them Thursday after they resigned.

But the twin arrests triggered a diplomatic uproar — and marked the second apparent coup within a year in the unstable country.

Ndaw and Ouane had led a transitional government tasked with steering

the return to civilian rule after a coup last August that toppled Mali’s elected president, Ibrahim Bou-bacar Keita.

Keita was forced out by young army officers, led by Goita, following mass protests over perceived corruption and his failure to quell a bloody jihadist insurgency.— AFP ■

Myanmar team to prepare for remaining World Cup Qualifiers

MYANMAR men's national football team will prepare for the two remaining qualifiers of the 2022 World Cup and the 2023 AFC Asian Cup, which will be played in June. The team will have almost two weeks to prepare as the qualifiers will be played on 11 and 15 June.

The remaining qualifiers are crucial for team Myanmar to advance to the following stages. In Group F, which includes Myanmar, Japan is guaranteed to win the group with 18 points from 6 matches with two games remaining. Tajikistan has 10 points from 6 matches, and Kyrgyzstan has seven points from five games. Next, Myanmar has scored 6 points in 6 games, and Mongolia has three points from seven games. There are five matches left in Group F.

On 7 June, Kyrgyzstan will take on Mongolia, and Japan will face Tajikistan. Myanmar will play against Kyrgyzstan on 11 June and Tajikistan on 15 June, respectively. Japan will also meet Kyrgyzstan on 15 June. With just six points from six games, Myanmar needs to win the next two games to secure a top position.

The second round qualifiers are being held in eight groups. A total of 12 teams will advance to the third round of the 2022 World Cup Qualifiers and 2023 Asian Cup qualification. The Myanmar national team has already played against the Japan team in Chiba, so the other two matches will be played in Osaka and will leave for Osaka in the coming days. — Ko Nyi Lay/ GNLM



Myanmar national football squad is training in Japan ahead of the remaining World Cup Qualifiers to be played in Osaka, Japan. **PHOTO: MFF**

ONE Full Blast Fight: Saemapetch beat Kulabdam with 1st Round KO

SAEMAPETCH Fairtex beat Kulabdam Sor. Jor. Piek Uthai in the main card or Bantamweight Muay Thai Fight of the ONE Championship event named One Full Blast at Singapore Indoor Stadium in Singapore on 28 May.

Both fighters are bantamweight Muay Thai division's top contenders, and they put their best efforts for their dignity.

Even at the 2:07 minute mark of round one, Saemapetch Fairtex defeats Kulabdam Sor. Jor. Piek Uthai via knockout.

Next, in the Flyweight bout, Xie Wei "The Hunter" beat Kantharaj Agasa "Kannadiga" via technical knockout at 5:00 minutes of round two.

In Welterweight Kickboxing, Miles Simson "The Punisher" defeats Santino Verbeek via



Saemapetch Fairtex celebrates the victory after beating Kulabdam via knockout at round one. **PHOTO: ONE CHAMPIONSHIP**

unanimous decision.

In the Featherweight fight, Edward Kelly "The Ferocious" defeats Ahmed Faress, "The Prince" via split decision.

In the Catchweight (57.7KG), Anthony Do defeats Liang Hui "The Little Monster" via submission (triangle choke) at 3:55 minutes of round two. —GNLM

Alaba signs for Real Madrid after leaving Bayern

AUSTRIAN defender David Alaba will join Real Madrid on a five-year contract after leaving Bayern Munich, the Spanish giants confirmed on Friday.

The announcement of the signing of the 28-year-old, who had also been linked with several English Premier League clubs, comes a day after Zinedine Zidane quit as Real coach.

"Real Madrid has reached

an agreement with David Alaba, who will be linked to the club for the next five seasons", Madrid said in a statement.

Alaba will be presented as a Real player after Euro 2020, the statement added.

The Austria international has been hugely successful at Bayern, having won two Champions League trophies and 10 league titles among other sil-

verware.

Alaba had said in February that he would leave Bayern when his contract expires at the end of the season after 13 years with the German club.

Alaba and Bayern were in talks about a new contract but the club said in November 2020 that the negotiations had broken down, reportedly over the player's salary.— AFP ■

Brentford, Swansea eye lucrative Premier League promotion

BRENTFORD and Swansea will slug it out for promotion to the Premier League on Saturday as they meet in a Championship play-off final worth an estimated £180 million (\$255 million).

The Wembley showdown is often called the richest match in world football given the vast rewards on offer to the winners once they reach the Premier League. After 74 years outside the English top-flight, unfashionable Brentford are within touching distance of an unexpected berth among the elite.

In contrast, Swansea are hoping to return to the Premier League after a three-year absence. It is Brentford's story that has captured the imagination of neutrals. After spending 59 out of 60 seasons in the third or fourth tiers before reaching the



Brentford and Swansea will slug it out for promotion to the Premier League on Saturday as they meet in a Championship play-off final worth an estimated £180 million (\$255 million). **PHOTO: AFP**

Championship in 2014, the Bees have risen well above their traditional status thanks to innovative owner Matthew Benham.

Benham has introduced an analytics-influenced approach overseen by two directors of football, ensuring the club make the

most of their resources, which are meagre in comparison with the Championship's wealthier teams. It has proved a successful

formula as Brentford unearthed gems such as Ollie Watkins, Said Benrahma and Neal Maupay.

Now it is dynamic striker Ivan Toney, scorer of 32 goals this season after arriving from Peterborough, who has taken Brentford to the brink of promotion in the first season in their new stadium.

It will be the west London club's second successive Championship play-off final after they lost to Fulham last season, having defeated Swansea in the semi-finals.

The Bees have failed to earn promotion in all nine of their play-off attempts in the Football League but this could be their year after they staged a thrilling fightback to beat Bournemouth 3-2 on aggregate in the semi-finals.— AFP ■