

NATIONAL

Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker inaugurates Paletwa Bridge in Kayin State

PAGE-5

NATIONAL

Union Minister U Kyaw Tin delivers statement at 13<sup>th</sup> Bali Democracy Forum via Video Link

PAGE-5

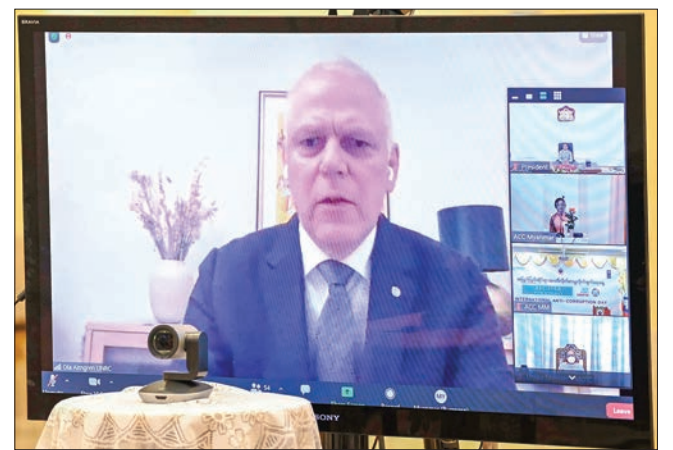
# THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

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Friday, 11 December 2020

## President U Win Myint makes speech at International Anti-Corruption Day 2020 virtual event



UN Resident Coordinator to Myanmar Mr Ola Almgren.



UNDP Deputy Resident Representative Ms Dawn Del Rio.

President U Win Myint delivered a speech at the virtual event to mark the International Anti-Corruption Day 2020 yesterday morning.

The event was joined by Pyidaungsu Hluttaw and Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker U T Khun Myat, Union Chief Justice U Htun Htun Oo, the Auditor-General of the Union, chief ministers of region/state governments, deputy ministers who are the steering committee members for drafting National-Level Strategy on Anti-Corruption, Deputy Attorney-General and depart-

mental officials, the chairman of UMFCCI, and the members of supporting group for drafting the strategy, officials from UNDP, UNODC and USAID.

President U Win Myint made a speech at the event.

**(Speech of President U Win Myint is covered on page-3)**

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw and Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker U T Khun Myat made a speech.

(His speech is covered on page-4)

Union Chief of Justice U Htun Htun Oo delivered a speech.

(His speech is covered on page-4)

U San Win, the Acting-Chairman of Anti-Corruption Commission, explained the 85 per cent accomplishment of the Anti-Corruption Strategy Plan (2018-2021) in the past three years, signing of Myanmar in the International Anti-Corruption Academy in late 2019 and signing of MoU with the Anti-Corruption Academy India.

Myanmar launched a pilot project to form anti-corruption groups at the 14 Union Ministries in 2018, and it has been expanded to 36 groups at the 22 Union Ministries and organizations.

Myanmar ranked first

among 17 Asian countries in the Global Corruption Barometer Asia 2020 released in November. This year's International Anti-Corruption Day theme is 'Recover with Integrity'.

The Acting-Chairman of ACC urged all the officials, people and stakeholders in various sectors to join hands with the commission to overcome all the challenges of Myanmar in economic and social sectors by promoting integrity in implementing the COVID-19 Economic Relief Plan of the country.

The message of UN Secre-

tary-General to the occasion was read by UN Resident Coordinator to Myanmar Mr Ola Almgren, followed by an explanation of UNDP Deputy Resident Representative Ms Dawn Del Rio about activities against corruption and the video message of UNODC Executive Director by UNODC Country Manager Mr Benedikt Hofmann.

The event was concluded by screening a video of the International Anti-Corruption Day 2020.—MNA

(Translated by Aung Khin)

INSIDE TODAY

**NATIONAL**  
MoE discusses progress in drafting education strategic plan 2021-2030  
**PAGE-6**

**NATIONAL**  
SSB officials join 37<sup>th</sup> ASSA Board Meeting  
**PAGE-6**

**LOCAL NEWS**  
Farmers opt to grow kidney beans in Sagaing  
**PAGE-10**



**BUSINESS**  
Local price of black beans keeps plummeting amid lack of demand from India  
**PAGE-11**



## “People are the key”



### MoFA official signs book of condolences for deceased former French President

U Aung Myint, Director-General from the Strategic Studies and Training Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, signed the book of condolences for the demise of former French President Mr Valery Giscard d'Estaing at the Em-

bassy of France in Yangon yesterday. The third President of France, who took office from 1974 to 1981, died aged 94.—MNA

(Translated by Kyaw Zin Tun)

Director-General from the Strategic Studies and Training Department U Aung Myint signs the book of condolences for the demise of former French President Mr Valery Giscard d'Estaing at the Embassy of France in Yangon on 10 December 2020.

PHOTO: MNA

## Myanmar, India to boost cooperation in drug control

THE fifth Director-General Level Bilateral Meeting between Myanmar and India on Drug Control Cooperation was held virtually yesterday.

Myanmar delegation led by Police Brig-Gen Win Naing, Joint Secretary of Central Committee for Drug Abuse Control and Commander of Drug Enforcement Division, Myanmar, and Indian delegation led by Mr Rakesh Asthana, Director-General, Narcotics Control Bureau, participated

in the meeting via videoconferencing.

At the event, Police Brig-Gen Win Naing said that the meeting on drug control cooperation was held virtually because of the pandemic.

Drug dealers, taking the pandemic as an opportunity, were doing more drug production and trafficking, and opium cultivation and opium production became a major problem for the region, he said.

He added that stimulant

tablets and ICE methamphetamine problems became worsen with wider drug market and involvement of cross-border organized criminals in the trafficking.

Suggestions for the future and good experiences of Myanmar's CCDAC and India's NCB will help overcome problems facing, he added saying that Myanmar is ready for cooperation with world countries, regional organizations and international organizations on the

fight against drug trafficking.

He also urged the delegates of the two countries to openly discuss the matters relating to drug control for the benefits of the two nations.

Leader of the Indian delegation Mr Rakesh Asthana made remarks at the meeting.

The meeting discussed bilateral drug control cooperation, implementation of decisions made in fourth meeting, bilateral cooperation on illegal opium trafficking, illegal trad-

ing of amphetamines, capacity building training for drug control members of Myanmar Police Force, and control of illicit drug trafficking routes.

They also detailed about monitoring of opium fields via satellites, exchange of information if the nationals of the two countries are arrested, and location and date for the sixth meeting on drug control cooperation.—MNA

(Translated by Kyaw Zin Tun)



Myanmar and India hold fifth Director-General Level Bilateral Meeting on Drug Control Cooperation via videoconferencing on 10 December 2020. PHOTO: MNA

## Myanmar nationals brought back home from Japan by relief flight

THE relief flight of All Nippon Airways, organized by the Myanmar Embassy in Tokyo, Japan, landed at Yangon International Airport bringing 157 Myanmar nationals back home yesterday.

The Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population, the Ministry of Health and Sports and the Yangon Region government arranged 7-day quarantine at specific places or designated hotels, followed by the 7-day home quarantine.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been working with Myanmar embassies in foreign countries and local ministries to bring back Myanmar citizens stranded abroad in accordance with the guidance of the National-Level Central Committee on Prevention, Control and Treatment of COVID-19, and it has organized 15 relief flights from Japan to date.—MNA

(Translated by Khine Thazin Han)

Myanmar returnees are seen at the Yangon International Airport on 10 December 2020. PHOTO: MNA



## Strive for development with united strength

All our ethnic national brothers and sisters need to strive with united strength based on national unity for the success of the peace process, for overcoming the various steps of the democratic transition process, for democracy to take firm root and for it to develop, progress and endure.

*(Extract from the Message of Greetings sent by President U Win Myint on 4 January 2020 on the occasion of the 72<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary of Independence Day.)*



Landscape of Bagan Cultural Heritage Zone. PHOTO: TUN TUN THEIN

## President U Win Myint - speech on International Anti-Corruption Day

I WISH to send good wishes and blessings for auspiciousness to the speaker of the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, speakers of the Pyithu Hluttaw and the Amyotha Hluttaw, Union Chief Justice, Union Ministers, Chairman of the Nay Pyi Taw Council, Chairman of the Anti-Corruption Commission, Chief Ministers of states and regions, secretary and members of the Anti-Corruption Commission, responsible officers of UNODC and UNDP, and invited guests who are attending this virtual celebration ceremony on the auspicious occasion of International Anti-Corruption Day which falls on 9 December 2020.

Just as convention members have been celebrating the International Anti-Corruption Day celebrations in the global community, Myanmar has been celebrating this day with pomp and ceremony since 2017. However this year because of the COVID-19 pandemic, a physical ceremony could not be held; that is the reason why we are celebrating this event virtually.

In our efforts to build a Democratic Federal Union we have exerted strenuous efforts with strong political will to eradicate corruption to promote the three pillars namely the executive, the legislative and judicial pillars characterized by transparency, integrity, fairness and the rule of law. Because we have carried out our anti-corruption efforts well, Myanmar has been given the number one ranking out of 17 Asian countries in the Global Corruption Barometer ASIA-2020 by Transparency International.

The impact of corruption is immense and widespread. It has a debilitating and destructive effect on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's); it gives rise to poverty and inequality; it lowers the efficiency and capability of the government and private sectors; it causes the loss of infrastructures; it also causes the rise of unjust economic and political systems, climate change and loss of biodiversity, violations of human rights and armed conflicts. That is why corruption



is a huge challenge which governments all over the world need to tackle with effectiveness.

We are working to eradicate corruption, which can have a damaging effect on the development, stability and peace of the country from all aspects, with impartiality in accordance with the law. In addition, we are establishing anti-corruption units in Union ministries and organizations under the public education and corruption eradication programmes. Furthermore, we may also see programmes for the promotion of integrity among the people.

The government has fulfilled the infrastructural requirement of the commission by opening a new international standard building in Nay Pyi Taw on 5 August 2020. More local offices of the commission have been opened in Mawlamyine Township of Mon State and Taunggyi Township of Shan State during this year for conducting anti-corruption works more effectively in closer proximity with the people in regions and states.

In today's globalization era, corruption is not only the concern of a single country, but also a transnational crime

that has impacts on societies and economic systems. To prevent and control this problem, agreements have been made among the countries and regional organizations. Especially, Myanmar joined the International Anti-Corruption Academy as the 79th member country in 2019.

For the emergence of a corruption-free society, it is necessary to investigate and combat the prevailing corrupt processes; furthermore, necessary preparations and administrative measures should be taken to eradicate corruption in the future.

It is important to remove all the root causes of corruption. This process will include to amend the complicated law, rules, orders, directives and regulations which favour law enforcement officers and legal provisions which cannot be understood by ordinary people. These processes should be included in the national anti-corruption strategy.

In addition to having a strong political will to combat corruption, as a culture which opposes corruption wins acceptance and as the people begin to practice this culture, it would be possible to enjoy

benefits in areas such as public administration, systematic management of public finances, fairness, taking responsibility, equality before the law, and ability to uphold and protect integrity.

The Anti-Corruption Commission has formed a steering committee and supporting work committees to adopt the national level anti-corruption strategy for long-term effective and all-inclusive fight against corruption in accordance with responsible persons from the administrative, legislative and judicial pillars, local and foreign businesspersons, civil society organizations, news and media organizations and international organizations.

Fighting against corruption is the removal of one of the biggest major obstacles to the economic development of a country. The importance of anti-corruption is mentioned under Goal 16 of the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Goals; in the MSDP - 2018-2030 (Myanmar Sustainable Development Plan), Strategy 1.4 under Pillar (I) Peace and Stability states 'good governance, improving performance of organizations, and improving the efficiency of administrative decision making at all levels'. Efforts are thus being made to instill good practices among the public service personnel, and civil service organizations, to work in the interest of the country with increased efficiency and correct procedures free from corruption.

This year's theme for the International Anti-Corruption Day is 'Recover with Integrity' which is appropriate during the time of the pandemic outbreak. I would like to strongly urge all responsible personnel from the three pillars - administrative, legislative and judiciary pillars and all the people to confront and overcome the economic and social difficulties and challenges of COVID-19 with integrity and free from corruption in unity, continued cooperation and increased efforts.

Thank you all.

*(Translated by Kyaw Myaing, Aung Khin)*

## Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker U T Khun Myat's speech at ceremony marking International Anti-Corruption Day

**M**ay all of you-- the President, Union-level officials, government departmental heads, diplomats, officials from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and other international organizations, NGOs working for anti-corruption, and guests who participate in today's ceremony marking the International Anti-Corruption Day-- have good health and prosperity.

Despite the Covid-19 pandemic, Myanmar, like other convention member countries, is proud to be able to celebrate International Anti-Corruption Day via online. While we are working hard to develop our country into a stable, peaceful, and modern Democratic Federal Union, while we are conducting national reform by using collaborative citizens-based approaches, it is also important to resolve the problem of corruption, which has been entrenched for many years. So,



Pyidaungsu Hluttaw approved the Anti-Corruption Law on 7 August 2013, and approved the formation of an Anti-Corruption Commission on 25 February 2014.

For the fourth time, Hluttaw could approve laws amending the Anti-Corruption Law to make anti-corruption works more effective and more widespread. Because of the laws, the commission can take punitive actions against both bribe-takers and bribe-givers. The laws can protect public

funds, initiate business ethics to prevent corruptions in public and private businesses, help arrange anti-corruption lessons starting from the primary education level, and pave the way for the implementation of a long-term strategic plan to fight corruption throughout Myanmar.

The Anti-Corruption Commission submitted its annual reports to the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, where MPs made discussions in order to inform the public about anti-corruption

activities. MPs are cooperating to the best of their ability in the anti-corruption actions. Corruption is a fundamental problem that can destroy many countries today. In the fight against corruption, many people mistakenly think that taking bribes is the only form of corruption. In fact, there are four types of Agati: Chanda, dosa, moha, and bhaya.

On behalf of the legislative pillar, I would like to acknowledge the commission's efforts to raise awareness on anti-corruption, to prevent corruption and to take actions against those who committed corruption. Union-level and regional level government organizations need to constantly review relevant policies, laws, by-laws, regulations and procedures, and Corruption Risk Assessment (CRA) should be effectively conducted by all levels of officials.

By working together in combatting corruption, we can create a corruption-free culture and a society governed

by the rule of law. Sixteen out of the 17 Agenda for Sustainable Development of the UN (2030) highlighted the importance of anti-corruption.

For the sustainable development of our country, all people of Myanmar must participate in basic anti-corruption activities such as making the societies peaceful and all-inclusive, bringing about justice and promoting accountability and transparency at every level.

In conclusion, starting from this ceremony marking the International Anti-Corruption Day (2020), in accordance with the Myanmar Anti-Corruption Commission's motto "Eliminate Corruption to Create a Peaceful Country", we would like to call upon public servants, civil servants, businesses, civil society organizations, media and all the people of Myanmar to collaboratively work to eradicate corruption and build a corruption-free society for the peaceful development of the motherland. *(Translated by Maung Maung Swe)*

## Union Chief Justice U Htun Htun Oo' speech at ceremony marking International Anti-Corruption Day

**I**wish all of the participants who attend the International Anti-Corruption Day ceremony today, including the President, the Speaker of the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, Union Ministers, Attorney-General of the Union, Auditor-General of the Union, Region/State Chief Ministers, Anti-Corruption Commission acting Chairperson and members, government officials, UN Resident Coordinator for Myanmar, UNDP and UNODC officials, NGOs working for anti-corruption, representatives from the private sector and civil society, happy and wealthy.

The three integral parts of the sovereignty of the country are Legislative power, Executive power, and Judicial power, and courts and judges have the judicial authority. Only if courts and judges are able to resolve the cases of the citizens in a fair manner in accordance with the laws without being involved in corruption, they will earn the trust of the citizens.

Only if the judiciary is fair, impartial and independent, the

principles of the judiciary will be upheld, and the rule of law will be achieved in the society. Only if the judiciary in the country is strong and proper, the citizens will be able to enjoy the fundamental rights such as justice, freedom and equality.

In accordance with the Supreme Court of the Union's theme "Towards Progressive Justice for All", we aim to provide high-quality justice to all and promote public trust and the rule of law. We are carrying out our judicial duties with the aim of securing the rule of law, achieving community peace, making the judiciary more trustable, handling cases promptly in accordance with the laws, and enhancing the dignity of the courts.

To increase public trust in the judiciary and to maintain the dignity of the judiciary, the judges, both individually and collectively, must adhere to judicial ethics such as equality, diligence, impartiality, honesty, and integrity. All judicial bodies, law officers and lawyers also need to respect the code



of ethics. Then, with the support of all stakeholders in the judiciary, public trust, the rule of law and development will be achieved.

Only if the rule of law prevails in the country in full swing, the values such as justice, freedom and equality will be maintained. In a democratic society, the judiciary has important duties for the prevalence of the rule of law, and effectively protect fundamental rights and human rights of the citizens. So, the judiciary must be independent, fair and

accountable, and we need to make it clear that we are doing so.

We issued annual judicial reports with the aim of making the judicial process more transparent and accountable, increasing the capacity of the courts, and informing the public about the reform of the judiciary. So, not only those involved in the judiciary but also the general public can understand the judicial processes. That shows the judicial sector is accountable.

In performing judicial

duties, judicial officials need to be independent, fair, honest and diligent. They need to ensure quality and maintain dignity. Things that will sustain a country's judiciary are independence of the court, judges' integrity, and impartiality and effectiveness of court processes that the general public can trust. Corruption undermines the freedom of the judiciary, impartiality and integrity. Corruption also undermines public trust in the judiciary as a whole.

Timely implementation of court proceedings, accuracy, fairness, impartiality, and being free from corruption are essential in order to improve the judiciary. So, in conclusion, I would like to urge the judges, courts, judicial bodies, law officers, lawyers, the general public and media to collaboratively work in a balanced manner in order to maintain the integrity of the judiciary, establish an impartial, corruption-free and trustable judicial system.

*(Translated by Maung Maung Swe)*

## The virus can spread to others

Everybody should consider it. We have frequently reminded that 65 per cent of positive cases do not show symptoms; and that, they might feel well. Most of these persons are middle-age persons with good health conditions without showing any symptoms. However, the virus can spread to others. The infected persons might have any underlying disease and poor health conditions. Moreover, it is needed to have constant vigilance because these elderly persons are also vulnerable to the infection and could suffer life-threatening complications.

*(Excerpt from State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's report on COVID-19 containment measures, on 5 December 2020)*



## Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker inaugurates Paletwa Bridge in Kayin State

AMYOTHA Hluttaw Speaker Mahn Win Khaing Than attended the opening ceremony of Paletwa Bridge in Pyaungtho Village-tract in Bawgali Town, Thandaunggyi Township, Hpa-an District in Kayin State yesterday.

Kayin State Chief Minister Daw Nann Khin Htwe Myint made remarks at the event, and Director of Shwe Swan Inn Company U Zaw Win explained about the construction of the bridge.

Director U Zaw Win presented the documents relating to the road segment of 4.5 miles on Thandaung-Paletwa road section to Deputy Engineer in Chief of Bridge Department of the Ministry of Construction U Tun Lin. A resident expressed words of thanks.

The Amyotha Hluttaw



Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker Mahn Win Khaing Than and officials inspect the Paletwa Bridge in Kayin State walking across the bridge at the bridge opening ceremony on 10 December. **PHOTO: MNA**

Speaker and the Chief Minister unveiled the bridge's stone plaque.

The Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker, the Chief Minister, State Electricity and Energy Minister U Soe Hlaing, Thandaunggyi Township Pyithu Hluttaw MP U Saw Victor Clyde, and in-charge

of Shwe Swan Inn Company U Win Maung cut the ceremonial ribbon to open the bridge, have group photos taken, and inspected the bridge.

Transportation between Thauungdaunggyi and Bawgali towns in the past was only by waterways. Completion of the bridge will help the socio-economic development of the locals by smoothing the flow of commodities and easing the transport difficulties of the people in Bawgali Town and its 82 villages of 15 village-tracts.

The two-lane reinforced concrete bridge was jointly constructed by Shwe Swan Inn Company and Asia World Foundation and is 798 feet long, 30 feet wide, and 123 feet in height. —Township (IPRD) *(Translated by Kyaw Zin Tun)*

## Union Minister U Kyaw Tin delivers statement at 13<sup>th</sup> Bali Democracy Forum via Video Link

UNION MINISTER for International Cooperation U Kyaw Tin participated in the Ministerial Session of the 13th Bali Democracy Forum held in Bali, Indonesia on 10 December 2020, and delivered a statement via video-link. At the forum, Ms Retno L.P. Marsudi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, delivered an inaugural speech and the Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO) and Secretary-General of the United Nations also delivered remarks via video-link at the opening session of the Forum.

In his statement, the Union Minister expressed his appreciation to the Government of Indonesia for organizing the Forum to promote democracy and inclusive development amidst the most challenging time of the COVID-19 pandemic. Stressing the need for global cooperation

in the fight against the pandemic, he stated that the current health crisis offered an opportunity for the revitalization of multilateralism. The threat of the pandemic on democracy, he added, is attributable partly to the fact that the COVID-19 control measures curtail the right and freedom of individuals, reverse progress on poverty and widen inequality. The Union Minister also underscored the importance of political leadership and people's participation in defeating the pandemic, and stated that according to Myanmar's experience "four Ps", i.e. political leadership, preventive measures, peoples' participation and partnership could yield tangible results in the fight against the pandemic.

Furthermore, the Union Minister also shared Myanmar's experiences in successfully holding the 2020 general elections during



Union Minister U Kyaw Tin. **PHOTO: MNA**

the pandemic by adopting strict measures and health guidelines for the voting process and by providing COVID-19 protection equipment to voters to ensure public health safety. He stated that the 2020 general elections is a testament to the people's continued faith in and strong desire for democracy in Myanmar; and it set

another milestone in the history of Myanmar's democratization process.

The Union Minister emphasized the need for the Forum to further promote democratic principles, to support countries striving for democracy by assisting them to overcome their challenges, and to redouble efforts

to foster democracy, peace and prosperity in the region.

The Bali Democracy Forum (BDF) was initiated by Indonesia in 2008 to create a progressive democratic architecture in the Asia-Pacific region. This year's 13th Bali Democracy Forum (13th BDF) was convened under the theme of "Democracy and the COVID-19 Pandemic" and in the Ministerial Session, Union Minister U Kyaw Tin, ASEAN Secretary General, Vice-President for Democracy and Demography of European Commission, and Foreign Ministers from Jordan, Ecuador, Spain, New Zealand, the Philippines, Thailand, Qatar, Sri Lanka, Australia and the Republic of Korea delivered video statements, and altogether 84 delegations from 75 countries and 9 international organizations participated in the Forum.—MNA

# MoE discusses progress in drafting education strategic plan 2021-2030

THE Ministry of Education organized a virtual meeting on National Education Strategic Plan 2021-2030 yesterday.

Union Minister for Education Dr Myo Thein Gyi, Deputy Minister U Win Maw Tun, the Permanent Secretary, the Directors-General, the Deputy Directors-General, and those who are from private education sector participated in the meeting.

At the event, the Union Minister said that the government was making more investments in education and supporting technologies and infrastructure buildings, prioritizing the least-developed regions.

The ministry is undertaking the works focusing on promoting safe, healthy, and quality learning opportunities for the students. The NESP 2021-2030 was drawn up to raise the students' IQ and EQ levels, to meet 21st-century skills that lead to



Union Minister Dr Myo Thein Gyi participates in the meeting on National Education Strategic Plan 2021-2030 via videoconferencing on 10 December 2020. PHOTO: MNA

world decent human being spirit, cooperation, responsibility, accountability and creativity and to learn with high technologies.

Results frameworks were included in the strategic plan, and analysis will be made to meet short-term, middle-term

and long-term indexes, he said stressing the importance of cooperation from students, teachers, parents and guardians including ethnic parents and nationals.

He added that it is important to increase life-long learn-

ing opportunities in accordance with national education framework in the reform of education to get very high skills.

Only quality education and very high skills will guarantee employment. The teaching of private schools should include

theories, practical and job internships, he said.

Training of teachers are being organized not only for the teachers of government schools but also for the teachers of private schools, he said calling for the implementation of credit transfer system so that students can easily join international schools and cooperation on implementation of the works that lead to quality education.

Permanent Secretary of the ministry, Director-General of Basic Education Department, Director-General of Department of Technical, Vocational Education and Training, and Director-General of Higher Education made discussion about the National Education Strategic Plan 2021-2030, followed by the discussions of the attendees.—MNA

(Translated by Kyaw Zin Tun)

## SSB officials join 37<sup>th</sup> ASSA Board Meeting

MYANAMAR delegation led by Director-General of Social Security Board virtually joined the 37th ASEAN Social Security Association (ASSA) Board Meeting hosted by Cambodia on 9 December.

During the meeting, Director-General for National Social Security Fund (NSSF) Mr Ouk Samvithyea of Cambodia, Managing Director for Employee Trust Fund (ETF) Mr Haji Omar bin Mohd. Dali of Brunei Darussalam and Chairman for NSSF Governing Body Dr Ith Samheng, Minister of Labour and Vocational Training of Cambodia respectively made an opening speech.

The leaders held Recognition Award given ceremony and Myanmar Social Security Board won "Continuous



Officials from Social Security Board of Myanmar participate in the 37<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Social Security Association (ASSA) Board Meeting via videoconference on 9 December 2020. PHOTO: MNA

Improvement Recognition Award" with the topic of "The preparation and attempting of

SSB, Myanmar for Continuous Improvement". Then, the ASSA Good

Practices Session was held and PowerPoint presentation under the topic "Coverage

Expansion and Progress of NSSF", was made by Cambodia, while "Implementation of Health Insurance for Workers in Informal Economy" by the Philippines, "Efficiency Communications" by Thailand, "Portability of Social Security Benefits for Migrant Workers" by the Philippines, "Implementation of Pension Scheme for Private Sector" by Viet Nam and "Gig Workers through Platform Providers" by Malaysia.

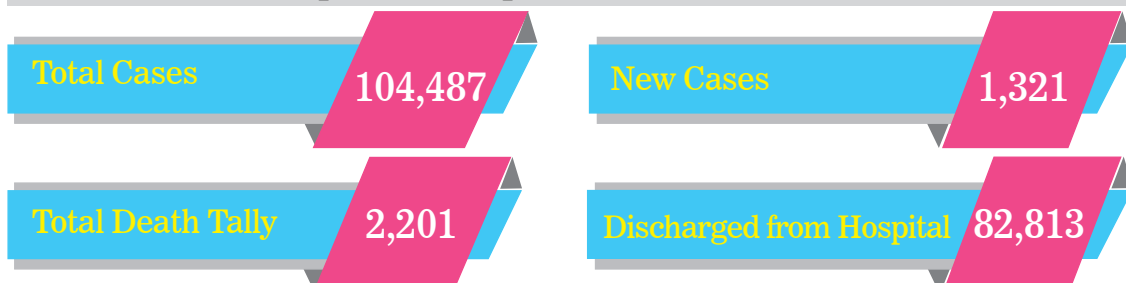
The Plenary Session of the meeting was held and ASS Secretary-General of Cambodia NSSF and Director of NSSF's Policy Division Mr Heng Sophannarith made closing remarks.—MNA

(Translated by Khine Thazin Han)

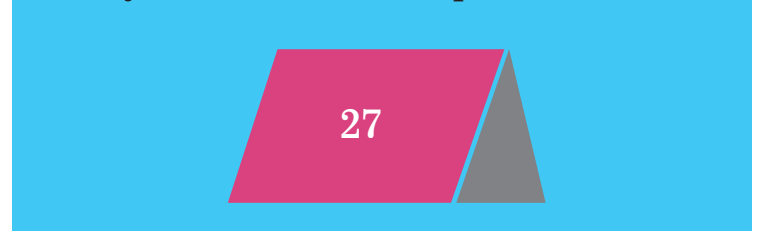
## 1,321 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 10 December, total figure rises to 104,487

MYANMAR'S COVID-19 positive cases rose to 104,487 after 1,321 new cases were reported on 10 December according to the Ministry of Health and Sports. Among these 104,487 confirmed cases, 2,201 died, 82,813 have been discharged from hospitals.—MNA

Updated at 8 pm, 10 December 2020



Daily death toll until 8 pm 10-12-2020



Ministry of Health and Sports

# 72<sup>nd</sup> International Human Rights Day organized in virtual format

A ceremony to mark the 72<sup>nd</sup> International Human Rights Day was held virtually yesterday morning.

Chairman of Myanmar National Human Rights Commission U Hla Myint read the President's message.

Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Dr Win Myat Aye and the Chairman of Commission delivered speeches at the event.

After presenting an animation jointly created by the MNHRC and the Good Neighbour International (GNI), Mrs Dawn Del Rio, on behalf of UNDP Resident Representative (Myanmar) of UNDP and

U Aung Myo Min, the Executive Director of Equality Myanmar, delivered commemorative remarks on occasion.

Prizes were also awarded to the winners in the contests of poems and articles about the event.

Awards were given to the winners in the short film contests organized by the MNHRC and the Alliance Myanmar.

The ceremony was concluded after the staff members of commission sang the song titled 'Human Rights for All', composed by Di Ra Mo, which was initially sung by vocalists Aung Htet and Jewel.—MNA  
(Translated by Aung Khin)



First prize winner of Human Rights Short Film Contest 2020 (R) is awarded during the 72<sup>nd</sup> International Human Rights Day on 10 December 2020. PHOTO: MNA

# Mongla special region (4) donates cash assistance to Peace Commission



Chairman of Peace Commission Dr Tin Myo Win (centre right) receives the donation handed over by Representative for the Mongla Special Region (4) U Kyaw Kyaw (centre left) in Yangon on 10 December 2020. PHOTO: MNA

MONGLA Special Region (4) donated K100 million to the Peace Commission to be used in the COVID-19 treatment, yesterday morning in the National Reconciliation and Peace Centre in Yangon.

At the donation ceremony, Chairman of the Peace Commission Dr Tin Myo Win said Myanmar has the third-highest COVID-19 cases in Southeast Asia, and it is the time for every citizen to take responsibility for the treatment and containment of the disease. He added the donation by the Mongla Special Region (4) is the necessary help during the crisis and helping to fight against the disease is also the act of peacemaking by the Commission.

Representative for the Mongla Special Region (4) U Kyaw Kyaw handed over the donation to the Chairman of the Commission and received the certificate of honour.

The ceremony was also attended by the officials from the Peace Commission and the Ministry of Health and Sports.

The Peace Commission has donated a total of 19,320 of PPE level-2 surgical gowns, 109,500 surgical masks, 36 sets of powered air-purifying respirator and K162 million cash assistance to the public hospitals and military hospitals in Kayin State, Rakhine State, Nay Pyi Taw and Yangon Region. The Commission will continue to donate the COVID-19 devices to the Yangon General Hospital, North Okkalapa General Hospital, Waibergi Hospital, Muslim Free Hospital, No (1) Military General Hospital, Military Orthopaedic Specialist Hospital and General Hospital in Nay Pyi Taw.—Ye Khaung Nyunt

(Translated by Ei Phyu Phyu Aung)

# MAWFA, Nay Oke Foundation donate COVID-19 medical supplies for hospitals

THE Myanmar ASEAN Women's Friendship Association and the Nay Oke Foundation handed over COVID-19 medical supplies at the office of Public Health Department for the public hospitals in north district of Yangon Region yesterday.

Spouses of Myanmar ambassadors to ASEAN countries, led by Daw Khin Aye Ye who is the wife of director-general from the Strategic Studies Training Department under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs presented a total of 1,400 sets of PPE level 2(A), 50 sets of PPE, 100 bottles of 500 cc hand sanitizer, 1,000 isolation gowns, 7 oxygen cylinder, 5,000 masks and 20 quar-

antine essential kits from MAWFA, and Dr Pyone Mo Ei, the executive member of Nay Oke Foundation, handed over 1,000 KN95 masks, 24 bottles of 500 cc hand sanitizer, 1 bottle of 18 kg disinfectant solution for each hospital in the public hospitals.

After the donation ceremony, they provided the medical supplies at the public hospital in Dagon Myothit (North & South).

The medical supplies will be shared to the public hospitals in Pale, Hmawbi, Taikkyi, Htantabin, Hlegu and Shwepyitha townships.—MNA

(Translated by Aung Khin)



Myanmar ASEAN Women's Friendship Association and the Nay Oke Foundation donate COVID-19 medical supplies for hospitals on 10 December 2020. PHOTO: MNA

# Closing loopholes in laws key to defeating corruption

**D**UE to the action taken against corrupt civil servants, the public is increasingly more aware of the dangers of corruption.

Thanks to the efforts, our country topped in 17 countries in Asia in the list of achievements in fighting corruption in Transparency International's Global Corruption Barometer Asia 2020.

From bribes to the use of personal connections, from vote-buying to extortion, corruption takes many forms in Asia, said Transparency International in its report.

With strong political will, the Union Government has committed to combating money laundering and countering financing of terrorism full-swing.

To defeat the corruption in our country, we must close the loopholes and make clear the ambiguous regulations. This task must be included in the National-level Anti-Corruption Strategy. Only, then can we deter corruption and hold accountable officials who breach the public's trust and impede efforts to effectively prosecute bribery.

The consequences from corruption and bribery can threaten the millennium development goals of the United Nations and can cause violations of human rights and armed conflicts.

Besides, corruption and bribery reduce income and government revenues; they increase costs, thereby undermining fair competition; distort policy, and allow priorities to be determined by personal interests; breed disloyalty in public institutions; divert resources from where they are needed the most; reduce productivity, thereby demotivating those who receive unfair rewards; and, destroy cultures at all levels.

Generally, we understand that the root causes of a crime include poverty and lack of knowledge. However, we should all note that the involvement of corrupt governmental employees has made the horrendous crimes such as human trafficking and transnational crime worse.

The government has enforced strict rules for the authorities, and to ensure that those who have power do not misuse their positions and rights for their own interests. The government has taken a balanced approach in the fight against corruption, and is also trying to take serious action against those found committing malpractices.

Protecting the integrity of governance mechanisms is critical to ensuring that corruption doesn't undermine democracy.

Hence, those who have the power or authority need to be free of corruption in order to earn the respect and trust of the people. They are urged to follow the rules and regulations and ensure the safety of the whole of society, in accordance with the law.

To defeat the corruption in our country, we must close the loopholes and make clear the ambiguous regulations.

## THE CONTINUITY OF UNFPA'S LIVE-SAVING SUPPORT FOR THE AFFECTED WOMEN AND GIRLS IN MYANMAR

# Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation provides USD 4,350,000 to UNFPA Women and Girls First Programme Phase II

**M**R Giacomo Solari, Deputy Head of Mission and Head of Cooperation of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)/ Embassy of Switzerland and Mr. Ramanathan Balakrishnan, UNFPA Representative for Myanmar signed yesterday (10 December) a contribution agreement for a grant of USD 4,350,000. This funding is to support UNFPA's Women and Girls First Programme - Phase II (2020 - 2022) and enables UNFPA to expand the programme into southern Shan State.



Mr Giacomo Solari, Deputy Head of Mission and Head of Cooperation of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) Embassy of Switzerland.



Mr Ramanathan Balakrishnan, UNFPA Representative for Myanmar.

Women and girls of childbearing age in Myanmar carry extraordinary burdens as armed conflict and displacement compounds deep poverty and gender discrimination. At least 77 per cent of the internally displaced people are women and children, and many of these live in camps for internally displaced people in Kachin, Kayin,

Rakhine and Shan States. Women and girls have specific needs that are often ignored, especially during a crisis. Women and girls often lack access to basic sexual and reproductive health care. Without assistance by midwives or access to contraceptives, women and girls are at increased risk of unsafe sex, unwanted pregnancy and unsafe delivery, and at higher

risk of infection by HIV and other sexually transmitted infections. In addition, women in hard to reach areas and IDP camps have virtually no access to protection, security, justice and other services related to gender-based violence (GBV).

**Women and Girls First Programme**  
For these reasons, the deliv-

ery of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) as well as GBV services, including mental health and psychosocial support services, to conflict affected and hard-to-reach communities is a key feature of UNFPA's Women and Girls First Programme. The programme is a commitment to prevent and respond to violence perpetrated against women and girls in Myanmar, and to realize their sexual and reproductive health rights. The programme is currently being implemented in Rakhine, Kachin, Kayin, Kayah, Mon and northern Shan States. The funding from SDC allows UNFPA to expand the programme to southern Shan State. SDC contributed to up-scale Women and Girls First programme in southern Shan State and to support local women and youth organizations including Ethnic Health Organizations (EHOs) on protection issues.

has disrupted access to life-saving SRHR, GBV and MHPSS services needed for women, girls and young people in Myanmar, and acutely so in conflict affected areas. The funding from SDC enables the continuity of UNFPA's live-saving support for the affected women and girls in Myanmar and helps accelerate the delivery of essential SRH and GBV services by both government and ethnic health service providers, mobilizing local civil society organizations and young people. Women and Girls First Programme is benefiting women, girls, young people including women and girls with disability, LGBTQIA+ and marginalized groups in Kachin, Kayin, Rakhine and Shan States," said Mr Ramanathan Balakrishnan, UNFPA Representative for Myanmar.

casation of the 16 days campaign to abolish Violence Against Women, SDC is proud to enter into this new partnership with UNFPA to strengthen SRHR, GBV and MHPSS services and improve access for the most vulnerable women and girls in southern Shan State". UNFPA, United Nations sexual and reproductive health agency, continues to deliver critical and life-saving GBV, MHPSS and SRHR services for the most vulnerable women and girls through 33 Women and Girls Centres and over 24 mobile and static clinics in Rakhine, Kachin, Kayah, Kayin, Mon and Shan States. UNFPA's Women and Girls First Programme is funded by Australia, the EU, Finland, Germany, Italy, Sweden and Switzerland.

**Campaign to abolish Violence Against Women**  
Mr Giacomo Solari, SDC Head of Cooperation said, "On the oc-

**SOURCE: UNFPA Myanmar/Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) Myanmar**

## COVID-19 VACCINE COUNTRY READINESS AND DELIVERY

# Ready immunization systems to deliver safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines

By Dr Poonam Khetrapal Singh, Regional Director, WHO South-East Asia Region.

**I**MMUNIZATION saves lives and promotes life-long health and well-being. It is among the most powerful public health and development interventions that exist. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 response, the WHO South-East Asia Region has made urgent and sustained efforts to maintain immunization as part of a broader commitment to ensure that all people can continue to access essential health services amid the pandemic.



Member State progress has been strong and steady. Despite initial disruptions in March through May, most routine and supplementary immunization activities in the Region have been revived and maintained. Millions of children have continued to receive life-saving protection against a range of vaccine-preventable diseases, from diphtheria, pertussis and tetanus, to rotavirus and rubella. Not a single vaccine stock-out has occurred. Amid enhanced physical distancing and infection prevention and control protocols, programme managers, health workers and volunteers from across the Re-

gion have shown tremendous resolve. They deserve our highest praise.

Throughout the COVID-19 response, recovery and beyond, WHO will continue to support Member States and the Region to remain polio-free, to sustain maternal and neonatal tetanus elimination, and to accelerate progress towards measles and rubella elimination by 2023. To achieve this and more, it is essential that countries identify remaining immunization gaps and rapidly implement catch-up campaigns. But as together we continue to strengthen all aspects of the response, we must not only reinforce and build the capacity of immunization systems, but also

ready them to meet our next challenge: to equitably and efficiently deploy vaccines against COVID-19.

Almost all countries in the Region plan to procure a first tranche of vaccines from the WHO-supported COVAX Facility, the vaccine pillar of the Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator. For the allocation framework to be effective, and for at least 2 billion doses to be delivered to all participating countries globally by the end of next year, immediate and sustained increases in international and global funding are required. Rapid advances in research and development on vaccines against COVID-19 have seen more than a handful of vaccines reach phase 3 trials, and some have already gone for emergency use authorization, or are likely to do so very soon. Anticipation is building.

As and when vaccines are found to be safe and effective, countries will need to activate detailed plans to efficiently deploy the initial tranches of COVID-19 vaccines to cover up to 20% of the most vulnerable of their populations, and to carry out coordinated and equitable deployments thereafter. WHO will continue to provide Member States its full support to help finalize such plans, with a focus on several key areas.

First, defining priority groups for vaccination. The WHO Strategic Advisory Group of Experts on immunization has in recent months published critical guidance that considers priority groups for vaccination based on different epidemiologic settings and vaccine supply scenarios.

Informed by the guidance, countries must make evidence-based, context-specific decisions, accounting for the risk-profile of different groups based on age, underlying health and comorbidities, and socio-demographic risks, among other factors. Across all settings, and whatever the supply scenario, it is imperative that frontline health personnel are provided first access.

Second, enhancing service delivery, communication and vaccine demand. Across the Region, countries must identify platforms to deliver vaccines to target populations, while also strengthening infection prevention and control protocols.

But of increasingly urgent need is the development and roll-out of comprehensive plans to identify and train an adequate number of health workers and volunteers to administer the vaccine. Crucially, communities must continue to be engaged, listened to and provided high-quality, scientifically sound information, which will in turn drive vaccine demand.

Third, strengthening vaccine cold chain and logistics. Even to reach an initial 20% coverage, countries may have to increase cold chain capacity, which will require additional resources. Logistics working groups will need clear terms of reference and standard operating procedures, not only to coordinate the deployment of vaccines, but also to source and deliver ancillary products. To address these and other challenges, WHO will continue to work with international and global partners to mobilize the financial, material and technical resources required.

Complacency must not set in. Although vaccine manufacturing has already started, reaching sufficient availability will take time. In a crisis such as this there are no silver bullets. Today, tomorrow, and for many more months to come, we must continue to implement the basic public health measures that we know work, and which have defined our "new normal". Wash your hands. Wear a mask. Maintain physical distance and avoid the three Cs – crowded places, close-contact settings, and confined and enclosed spaces.

Almost a year since COVID-19 emerged, we have cause for optimism. Countries in the Region are to be commended for beginning immunization planning as early as July, for carrying out vaccine readiness assessments, and for continuing to act in solidarity and with recognition that vaccines are a global public good. Now is the time to firm up and finalize such plans, for the equitable and efficient protection of vulnerable populations, and for the health and well-being of all.

**SOURCE: WHO South-East Asia Region**

## MYANMAR GAZETTE

# Head of service organization appointed

The President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has appointed U Sai Tun Nyo, Deputy Permanent Secretary (Deputy Director-General) of the Union Minister's Office of the Ministry of Border Affairs, as Director-General of the same office on probation from the date he assumes charge of his duties.

# U Sein Oo presents Credentials to President of Nepal

Nay Pyi Taw Dec-11

U Sein Oo, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar to Nepal, presented his Credentials to Her Excellency Mrs Bidya Devi Bhandari, President of Nepal on 3 December 2020 in Kathmandu.—MNA



## Myanmar Daily Weather Report

(Issued at 7:00 pm Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> December, 2020)

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

**FORECAST VALID UNTIL AFTERNOON OF THE 11<sup>th</sup> December, 2020:** Weather will be partly cloudy in Upper Sagaing, Taninthayi Regions and Kachin State and generally fair in the remaining Regions and States.

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

**OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS:** Likelihood of slight decrease of night temperatures in Nay Pyi Taw, Lower Sagaing, Mandalay, Magway, Bago, Yangon, Ayeyawady Regions and Shan, Chin States.

**FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 11<sup>th</sup> December, 2020:** Fair weather.

**FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 11<sup>th</sup> December, 2020:** Generally fair weather.

**FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 11<sup>th</sup> December, 2020:** Fair weather.

**Trade Mark Ads**  
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Due to limitation of space we are only able to publish "Letter to the Editor" that do not exceed 500 words. Should you submit a text longer than 500 words please be aware that your letter will be edited.

## Myanmar property market shows uptick in price reduction

By Nyein Nyein

Some people are selling their property below market value amid second wave of coronavirus in Myanmar, said U Than Oo, the vice-chair of Myanmar Real Estate Service Association. "When we see Myanmar's commercial city Yangon, there is a significant rise in the real estate deal. The condominium market is also pretty good," he said.

People eye properties in South Dagon, North Dagon, Dagon Seikkan, Shwepyitha and Shwepaukkan townships. The property market has become alive and well. However, the price is declining, he explained.

The rental rates in the property market are also dropping, and the market remains cool, he added. "The rental market shows a downward trend from houses to condominiums. The

price of the commercial property market is also plunging. As 80 per cent of foreign expatriates working in Myanmar went back to their home countries, the rental market for condominium sharply plummeted," the MRESA vice-chair affirmed.

During the early outbreak of COVID-19 (April-mid May), 95 per cent of property market halted. In June and July, some people rushed to sell their prop-

erties, causing market manipulation. Shortly after that, the market has recovered in Dagon Myothit (South), Dagon Myothit (North) and Dagon Myothit (Seikkan) townships with lower prices than the market value. The market was sluggish in August during the coronavirus resurgence in Myanmar. The property market raised its head in October and November.

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

## Farmers opt to grow kidney beans in Sagaing

LOCAL people from Phaung Pyin Township are growing kidney beans more widely than other winter crops as they expect higher price this season, according to the local bean growers.

"Last year, the bean traders bought the kidney beans for K32,000 per basket in the kidney bean harvest season. But, the bean is sold for K28,000 or K30,000 per viss in the high yield season. The local growers can make a good profit when the bean can be harvested 25 baskets per acre. If the kidney beans could be produced highly, it can harvest from 25 and 40 baskets per acre. During the past years, the Kidney beans can yield not even 15 baskets per acre when the production dropped because of the bad weather condition. This year, we have grown the kidney beans rather late because of the flooding in the cultivation season. But, the local people grow the



Kidney beans are widely cultivated in Phaungpyin Township, Mawlaik District in Sagaing Region.

PHOTO: KO TUN (PHAUNG PYIN)

kidney beans which give a high yield in a short period," said U Myint Thein, a local bean grower.

This year, the local grower rented the big tractors instead of the cattle and manual tractors for timely planting. The cultivation cost is also high. The growing of

the kidney bean costs K310,000 per acre including ploughing, seeds, planting costs, input and plant maintenance costs and harvesting cost, he added.

The local farmers from Phaung Pyin township grow mainly the kind of bean species

such as groundnut, hyacinth bean, black bean and other edible oil crops like sesame and sunflower. The local farmers also grow garlic on a commercial scale and a few onions.

— Ko Tun (Phaung Pyin)  
(Translated by Hay Mar)

## JICA provides Cobas SARS-CoV-2 Reagents to National Health Laboratory

THE Japan International Cooperation Agency handed over the Cobas SARS-CoV-2 Reagents equivalent to 178,000 USD to NHL yesterday as the support for early diagnosis and care for the Myanmar people who are affected by the pandemic.

JICA has been assisting the Ministry of Health and Sports in its response to COVID-19 from the early days of COVID-19 outbreak in the country, JICA provided a consignment of medical equipment such as probe, Primer and Testing kit but also medical equipment and consumable such as PPE, medical face mask, Nitrile exam gloves, infrared thermometer and so on as the support for health workers including doctors, nurses and lab staff in April 2020 and June 2020 respectively.



JICA hands over Cobas SARS-CoV-2 Reagents to National Health Laboratory in Yangon on 10 December. PHOTO: SUPPLIED

Recently, in the end of October and early in November 2020, JICA provided viral nucleic acid extraction kits necessary for real time PCR test, which worth total 836 million Kyats, for utilizing in NHL & all PHL COVID-19

Labs. Not only the equipment and consumable support, JICA, through Dr Shinsuke Miyano, JICA Expert for Infectious Disease Control and Laboratory Services, has also been providing technical assistance in

the area of infection prevention and control, and laboratory data management on COVID-19, at NHL, which enables the NHL lab technicians to concentrate on the manipulation of many respiratory samples at the lab. These data have been utilized for the decision of Ministry of Health and Sports for better strategy and practice to fight against COVID-19.

As further assistance including PCR kit for diagnosis in NHL and necessary equipment for National Blood Centre and hospitals are on the way to assist as the COVID-19 response action. Japan/JICA, as a long-standing partner of Myanmar, will continuously support Myanmar in fighting against COVID-19.—GNLM

# Myanmar mineral exports plunge by \$417 mln as of 27 November

THE value of Myanmar's mineral exports has drastically fallen to US\$205.09 million as of 27 November in the current financial year 2020-2021 since 1 October, reflecting a tremendous drop of \$417.04 million compared to a year-ago period, the Ministry of Commerce's data indicated.

The mineral exports hit \$622 million in the corresponding period of last FY.

The coronavirus resurgence led to the slump in mineral exports this FY, a trader said.

So far, excavation of over 1,250 mining blocks has been permitted on a manageable, small, medium, and large scale,

according to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation.

Due to the limited extraction of natural resources, exports of forest products and minerals had dropped significantly in the previous years. Permits for mining blocks were suspended in 2016, but after two years, Myanmar's mining sector has now been opened to local and foreign investors, according to the ministry.

Within two years of the implementation of the Myanmar Mines Law, the Mines Department has approved more than 140 out of 3,000 proposed mining

blocks, and many more blocks are to be granted the permit.

At present, evaluation teams in Kachin, Kayah, Shan, and Kayin states and Sagaing, Taninthayi, and Magway regions are screening mining applications, based on the opinions of the respective departments and the region and state governments.

The Myanmar Mines Law was enacted on 24 December 2015, but the law came into force when the rules were issued on 13 February 2018.

The ministry undertakes the screening process of the proposals for medium and large-scale

mining blocks. At the same time, regional and state governments are allowed to process applications for small-scale mining blocks.

Under the new regulations, foreign firms can invest in large blocks which cover up to 500,000 acres (about 202,000 hectares), while local firms can invest in all kinds of blocks. Investors can seek a permit to mine for minerals such as gold, copper, lead and tin. The licences cover prospecting, exploration, and production.

Myanmar's mineral exports have shown a marked increase in the previous FY2019-2020, touch-

ing \$1.87 billion, an increase of \$405.48 million compared with the year-ago period, according to data from the Ministry of Commerce.

In the corresponding period of the FY2018-2019, mineral exports were pegged at just \$1.465 billion.

Myanmar's mineral products constitute 10 per cent of overall exports. About 80 per cent of mineral products are shipped to external markets through sea trade, while 20 of them are sent to neighbouring countries through border trade channels. — Ko Htet

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

## Exporters require permission to drive fruit trucks on YGN-MDY highway

By Nyein Nyein

FRUIT commodity depots of the Muse 105th Mile trade zone requested the Ministry of Construction on 9 December to grant permission to drive the fruit trucks on Yangon-Mandalay highway.

Earlier, the trucks were allowed to drive on the Yangon-Mandalay highway from 5 October to 30 November. During the permission period, the watermelon and muskmelon from Yangon region, Bago region and Mon State were sent to Mandalay through the highway. It took a minimum of eight hours and a maximum of 15 hours. Additionally, it could save time. Besides rapid transportation, it could save the fuel oil costs and transport charges as well as fresh and more marketable fruits, according to the Muse 105th Mile trade zone fruit commodity depots.

Now, the above-mentioned 12-wheel trucks are not permitted to travel on the highway starting from 1 December because of the pandemic. The trucks are only allowed to travel through the old road by showing off the health certificates. It is taking longer miles, and thus it has an impact on the fruits' freshness and the price.

"We requested the authorities to grant permission to drive on the highway for fruit trucks. It would be better to get permission as quickly as possible. Other countries permit the trucks

to drive through highway. Because we pay the highway tax, we should have permission to drive on the highway. Soon after the outbreak of COVID-19, the trucks were allowed to drive on the highway till the end-November. Since then, the authorities have closed the highway for the trucks. Now, we are facing the delay. If we can drive on the highway, the farmers' goods will have a smooth export route and the transport will be faster. If we take a too long time on the road, the fruit quality will drop, and we could not get a good price. This could adversely affect the local growers," said U Sai Khin Maung, vice-chairman of fruit commodity depots at the Muse 105th Mile trade zone.

As of the end-November, around 60 fruit trucks were passing on Yangon-Mandalay highway daily. If we are granted the permission to drive on the highway, there will be about 100 or 120 trucks on the road daily, he added.

The Muse commodity depot will also request for granting the permission for the below 12-wheel trucks to drive carrying watermelon and muskmelon from Yangon, Ayeyawady, Mandalay and Bago regions and Mon state, to export them to China via border route on highway continuously, according to fruit commodity depots at the Muse 105th Mile trade zone.

(Translated by Hay Mar)

## Local black bean price dips as demand from India declines



A man carries a bean bag at a warehouse in Yangon. PHOTO: MIN HTET AUNG

By Nyein Nyein

THE price of black bean unceasingly plummeted in the local bean market for lack of the black bean demand from India, according to the data of Yangon Region Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Bayintnaung Commodity Depot).

The price of black bean hit K1,152,500 per tonne in the local market at the end of October because of good demand for the black bean from India. However, the black bean price dropped to K1,001,000 per tonne on 10 December, a decrease by over K150,000 per tonne.

On 1 October, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry of India has issued a

150,000-tonne import quota for black beans. The notification stated that India's companies would get import licence for an equivalent volume of bean import. The import deadline will be March-end, 2021.

Currently, there are around below 100,000 tonnes of a stockpile of black beans in the country, according to Myanmar Pulses, Beans and Sesame Seeds Merchants Association.

Although the stockpile of the black bean is not enough, it can meet the target of 150,000 tonnes import quota when the new black beans would be harvested, said U Min Ko Oo, the secretary of Myanmar Pulses, Beans and Sesame Seeds Mer-

chants Association.

Since 2017, India has been setting import quota for beans, including black beans and pigeon peas.

Myanmar has to export black beans and pigeon peas under a quota system and a limit period.

Consequently, there is no guarantee that we could get the prevailing market price next year; the market observers shared their opinions.

Following the no assurance of black beans and pigeon peas in the markets, the association suggested in the end-October that the local farmers should grow black-eyed beans more.

(Translated by Hay Mar)

ADVERTISING COOKIES

### France imposes 135 mln euros in fines on Google, Amazon

FRANCE'S CNIL data privacy watchdog said Thursday it had fined two Google units a total of 100 million euros and an Amazon subsidiary 35 million euros over advertising cookies.

The regulator said the fines were "for having placed advertising cookies on the computers of users ... without obtaining prior consent and without providing adequate information".

A cookie is a small piece of data stored on a user's computer browser that allows websites to identify users and remember their previous activity.

SOURCE: AFP

THE FIRST WITH AN ASEAN MEMBER COUNTRY

## UK signs Singapore trade deal as EU talks falter

BRITAIN on Thursday signed a free-trade deal with Singapore, giving it a key foothold in Asia as it seeks to forge its own path after leaving the European Union, while talks on a post-Brexit EU agreement stumble.

The deal largely mirrors an existing EU-Singapore pact, and will cover about 17 billion pounds (US\$22 billion) in bilateral trade.

It came as negotiations between Britain and the EU on a trade relationship following the end of this year's post-Brexit transition period teeter towards failure.

The deal removes tar-



Britain's International Trade Secretary Liz Truss (2nd L) and her counterpart Chan Chun Sing (2nd R) signed the free-trade deal in Singapore. PHOTO: SINGAPORE'S MINISTRY OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY/AFP

iffs and gives both countries access to each others' markets in services, as well as cuts non-tariff barriers in sectors ranging from

electronics to pharmaceutical products, Singapore's trade ministry said.

After the pact was signed, British Prime Min-

ister Boris Johnson hailed a "fantastic trade agreement with Singapore".

"This is an important part of our vision of the UK

trading with a network of dynamic nations across Asia-Pacific," he tweeted.

International Trade Secretary Liz Truss, in Singapore to sign the pact, praised the affluent financial hub of 5.7 million for its leadership in free trade.

"Now the United Kingdom is back as an independent trading nation, we are free to join this campaign," she said.

"Singapore is already the UK's largest trade and investment partner in ASEAN (the Association of Southeast Asian Nations), while the UK is Singapore's top investment destination in Europe."

SOURCE: AFP

DOMINANT POSITION

## Facebook antitrust suits seek to divest Instagram, WhatsApp

US federal and state antitrust enforcers filed suit against Facebook on Wednesday claiming the social media giant abused its dominant position and seeking to unwind its acquisitions of messaging services Instagram and WhatsApp.

Separate suits filed by the Federal Trade

Commission and a coalition of state officials called for the divestment of Instagram and WhatsApp, services which are part of the Facebook "family" of applications.

"Facebook's actions to entrench and maintain its monopoly deny consumers the benefits

of competition," said Ian Conner, director of the FTC's Bureau of Competition.

"Our aim is to roll back Facebook's anti-competitive conduct and restore competition so that innovation and free competition can thrive."

SOURCE: AFP

THE REPUBLIC OF THE UNION OF MYANMAR  
MINISTRY OF ELECTRICITY AND ENERGY  
MYANMA OIL AND GAS ENTERPRISE  
(INVITATION FOR OPEN TENDER)  
(24/2020-2021)

1. Open tenders are invited for supply of the following respective items in Myanmar Kyats.

Sr No.	Tender No.	Description	Remarks
(a)	DMP/L-206(20-21)	Spares for Directional Drill String and Rig Floor Accessories (5) Groups	Ks
(b)	DMP/L-207(20-21)	Spares for CAT-3406C Generating Set Engine (73) Items	Ks

2. The Open Tender forms including Description of Materials / Qty with details specifications and Tender Terms & Conditions can be available during office hours commencing from 11 December 2020 at the Finance Department, Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise, No. (44) Complex, Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar.

3. The interested Bidders should submit the **Technical Specifications with Original Bid Bond and Commercial Quotation in each separate sealed envelopes** on which to be addressed to the Managing Director, Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise and should reach in Tender Box of the Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise not later than 12:00 pm on 11 January 2021.

4. Tender Closing Date & Time – 11-1-2021, 12:00 pm

Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise  
Ph No. + 95 67 – 411206

CHANGING DISTRIBUTOR OF REGISTERED PESTICIDE

This is a notification of the change of distributor of below pesticides, registered by Bayer AG, under the Myanma Pesticide Registration Board, from JJ-PUN Trading Co., Ltd. to Y Agro Solution Co., Ltd. Any objection to this change can notify to Joint Secretary, Pesticide Registration Board, Plant Protection Division, West Gyogone, Insein, within 14 days.

Trade Name	Active Ingredient	Reg. Type	Reg. Number
Ronstar 250 EC	Oxadiazon 250g/l EC	Full	F2014-353
Ricestar 69 EC	Fenoxaprop-p-ethyl 69 g/l EC	Full	F2019-1977
Aliette 80 WG	Fosetyl-aluminium 80% WG	Full	F2015-853

Bayer Thai Co., Ltd. (Myanmar Branch)- PH : 01-8382710 (Ext. 40600)

INVITATION FOR TECHNICAL AND FINANCIAL PROPOSALS

Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation  
Department of Rural Development  
National Electrification Project  
Italian Soft Loan – F.ROT/AID 17/001/00

Assignment Title: Financial Auditing Firm of the Italian Contribution to NEP, Reference No: NEP-IT-CS1

The Republic of the Union of Myanmar has received the Soft Loan from the Government of Italy through the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation toward the cost of the National Electrification Project (NEP-IT), and intends to apply part of the proceeds for consulting services.

The Myanmar NEP Off-Grid Programme co-financed by the World Bank, the Government of Italy and Republic of the Union of Myanmar over 5 years shall electrify close to one million households and several thousand facilities and building using solar PV off-grid technologies, targeting the rural and remote regions of the country. The initial procurement in 2016, shall be one of the first large scale international procurements in Myanmar, and is intended to establish modalities for future NEP roll-out. WB Procurement Guidelines shall be followed for supply and installation of the solar equipment, and the disbursement of payments for the solar installations equipment shall be subject to corresponding supporting verification of the installations and quality of equipment and works, by an Inspection and Verification Consulting Firm. The Italian Soft Loan administered by Cassa Depositi e Prestiti S.p.A. (CDP) on behalf of Ministry of Economy and Finance of the Italian Republic will provide Euro 30,000,000 allocated mainly for supply and installation of Solar Home System through International Competitive Bidding process and Mini-Grid System through National Competitive Bidding process. The fund will be transferred to DRD who is the Implementing Agency for NEP-IT in four (4) installments with the estimated audit starting period from September 2020 – October 2024.

The Department of Rural Development invites technical and financial proposals from a primary internationally experienced Auditing Company or local branch entrusted by the Ministry of Planning and Finance of the Republic of Myanmar to audit financial reports and documents related to the Soft Loan and to issue four specific auditing reports, according to the actions detailed in the Project Document. The Company, according to the Myanmar Accountancy Council Law implemented by the Office of the Union Auditor-General, must be a registered firm under Myanmar Accountancy Council. Interested Consultants should provide information demonstrating that they have the required qualifications and relevant experience to perform the Services, according to the terms of reference, in their Proposals.

The attention of Interested Consultants is drawn to paragraph 1.9 of the World Bank's [Guidelines: Selection and Employment of Consultants under IBRD Loans and IDA Credits & Grants by World Bank Borrowers](#) dated January 2011 (revised July 2014) ("Consultant Guidelines"), setting forth the World Bank's policy on conflict of interest.

Consultant will be selected in accordance with the Least-Cost Selection (LCS) method set out in the above Consultant Guidelines.

Further information and request for electronic copy of Request for Proposals (including Terms of Reference) can be obtained through e-mail at the e-mail address below. Request for clarification by e-mail should be received by DRD no later than 15 days before the deadline for submission of proposals as below.

Proposals must be delivered to the address below on or before 10.00 a.m., January 25, 2021.

Department of Rural Development, Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation  
Attention: Dr. Soe Soe Ohn, Project Manager, Department of Rural Development, Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation.

Office No. 36, Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar. Tel/FAX : +95 673 418635, 418636

E-mail : [ksaung@gmail.com](mailto:ksaung@gmail.com), [dr.soesoeohn@gmail.com](mailto:dr.soesoeohn@gmail.com), [drdnep.procurement@gmail.com](mailto:drdnep.procurement@gmail.com).

Trade Mark Ads Call Thin Thin May,  
09251022355, 09974424848

TAX BREAKS

# Japan to keep tax cuts for home, car buyers to help virus-hit economy

Japan's ruling coalition approved a tax reform package for fiscal 2021 on Thursday, with planned extensions of tax breaks for home and car purchases to underpin the coronavirus pandemic-hit economy.

Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga's Liberal Demo-

cratic Party and its junior coalition partner Komeito also aim to encourage the private sector to work toward carbon reduction and digitalization with revisions to corporate taxation. The government is expected to approve tax reform plans for the fiscal

year from April based on the ruling party proposals and submit bills related to the package to the ordinary parliamentary session beginning in January.

If realized, the reform package will entail state tax cuts worth 50 billion yen (\$480 million) to 60 bil-

lion yen, Akira Amari, who heads the LDP's tax commission, said at a press conference, referring to "the unprecedented coronavirus disaster, which has caused damage to the economy".

"Before it's too late, we need to prepare now for

future challenges" such as digitalization and carbon reduction through the tax system, Amari added.

Among envisaged incentives for home buyers is an extension of a special tax cut measure for people with housing loans.

At present, those who

take out housing loans by the end of 2020 are eligible for a 13-year tax reduction, rather than the usual 10 years. The ruling parties propose that those who newly sign loan contracts by late 2022 would also receive such treatment.

SOURCE: Kyodo

## UK demands EU concessions ahead of 'moment of finality'

BRITAIN on Thursday said talks to secure a post-Brexit trade deal with the European Union will not go beyond this weekend unless there is "substantial movement" from Brussels in key areas.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson and European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen met in Brussels on Thursday, and gave themselves until Sunday to decide wheth-

er to keep talking. Asked if talks could be extended, Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab told BBC television: "I can't rule it out but I think we are rapidly approaching the point now where we need some finality.

"I think it's unlikely but I can't categorically exclude it and of course it depends on the progress made between now and then."

SOURCE: AFP

### CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V ISEACO GENESIS VOY. NO. (109N/S)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V ISEACO GENESIS VOY. NO. (109 N/S)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **11-12-2020** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **AWPT** where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

Phone No: **2301185**

Shipping Agency Department  
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

**M/S NEW GOLDEN SEA LINES**

### CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V ISEACO FORTUNE VOY. NO. (034 W)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V ISEACO FORTUNE VOY. NO. (034 W)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **11-12-2020** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **MIP/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:

**M/S NEW GOLDEN SEA LINES**

### CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V CHERRY VOY. NO. (013N/S)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V CHERRY VOY. NO. (013N/S)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **11-12-2020** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **AWPT** where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

Phone No: **2301185**

Shipping Agency Department  
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

**M/S INTER ASIA LINES**

### CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V IAL 001 VOY. NO. (086 N/S)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V IAL 001 VOY. NO. (086 N/S)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **11-12-2020** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **HPT** where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

Phone No: **2301185**

Shipping Agency Department  
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

**M/S INTER ASIA LINES**

### CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V SINAR SOLO VOY. NO. (925 N/S)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V SINAR SOLO VOY. NO. (925 N/S)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **11-12-2020** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **MITT/MIP** where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

Phone No: **2301185**

Shipping Agency Department  
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

**M/S SAMUDERA SHIPPING LINE**

### CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V OCEAN PROBE VOY. NO. (055N/S)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V OCEAN PROBE VOY. NO. (055N/S)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **11-12-2020** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **MIP** where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

Phone No: **2301185**

Shipping Agency Department  
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

**M/S CONTINENTAL SHIPPING LINE PTE LTD**

### CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V YM SUMMIT

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V YM SUMMIT VOY. NO. (-)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **11-12-2020** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **IBTT** 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 RK SHIPPING & TRADING PTE LTD**

### CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V BOX ENDEAVOUR VOY. NO. (049W/050E)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V BOX ENDEAVOUR VOY. NO. (049W/050E)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **11-12-2020** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **MITT/MIP** where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

Phone No: **2301185**

Shipping Agency Department  
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

**M/S SEALAND MAERSK ASIA PTE LTD**

## CHALLENGES OF VIRTUAL COMMUNICATIONS

## Japan, ASEAN to boost cybersecurity capabilities

THE defence ministers of Japan and ASEAN agreed Thursday to launch a project aimed at boosting their cybersecurity capabilities as the world has become more dependent on virtual communications since the outbreak of the novel coronavirus.

“Through this new project, we will improve connectivity among defence authorities and our incident-response capabilities in the cyberspace of Japan and ASEAN to deal with growing cybersecurity threats,” Japanese Defence Minister Nobuo Kishi told his counterparts in an online meeting, according to the Defence Ministry.

Under the programme, officials from members of the



Japanese Defence Minister Nobuo Kishi (Top L) and his ASEAN counterparts are pictured on a screen in Tokyo on Dec. 10, 2020. **PHOTO: JAPAN'S DEFENCE MINISTRY/KYODO**

Association of Southeast Asian Nations will participate in seminars to be held around once a

The first round of seminars focussing on practical training is expected to take place next year, the ministry said.

The project is based on the principle first endorsed by Japan and ASEAN in 2016 and revised last year aimed at bolstering multilateral defence cooperation. Japan has applied the concept to “support ASEAN centrality, unity and resilience” in cybersecurity, a ministry official said. The agreement on the new project was reached on the sidelines of a meeting of the defence ministers from the 10-member ASEAN and eight countries, including Japan, China and the United States.

*SOURCE: Kyodo*

## THE ASIAN DEVELOPMENT OUTLOOK 2020

## ADB sees 0.4% economic contraction in 2020 for “developing Asia”

THE Asian Development Bank said Thursday it projects a 0.4 per cent economic contraction for the developing and newly industrialized economies of Asia this year, slightly upgrading its September forecast.

The multilateral bank's latest supplement to the Asian Development Outlook 2020 attributed the improvement from its previously forecast 0.7 per cent contraction to the recovery in mobility in East Asia and elsewhere, and the speedy recovery in merchandise exports.

“The outlook for developing Asia is showing improvement. Growth projections have been upgraded for the People's Republic of China and India, the region's two largest economies,” Yasuyuki Sawada, chief economist of the Manila-based bank,



Southeast Asia, in contrast, will undergo a deeper contraction of 4.4 per cent as opposed to the previously expected 3.8 per cent. Employees work at a garment factory in the Sihanoukville Special Economic Zone in Cambodia in 2016. **PHOTO: XINHUA/FILE**

said, citing improving prospects thanks to the development of vaccines for COVID-19, the disease caused by the coronavirus.

China's economy is projected to grow 2.1 per cent, up from 1.8 per cent indicated in the ADB's September forecast.

The earlier forecast for 9 per cent negative growth for India, the second-largest economy in the region, has been eased to an 8 per cent contraction.

In terms of sub-regions, growth in East Asia, excluding Japan, will pick up from the previous forecast of 1.3 per cent to 1.6 per cent, driven by the faster-than-expected rebound in the Chinese economy.

Southeast Asia, in contrast, will undergo a deeper contraction of 4.4 per cent as opposed to the previously expected 3.8 per cent.

Meanwhile, growth expectations next year for developing Asia remain strong at 6.8 per cent, on optimism that downside risks caused by the coronavirus pandemic will subside.

*SOURCE: Kyodo*

## ROOM FOR DIPLOMACY

## Envoy wants N. Korea to engage in “serious diplomacy” with U.S.

U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Stephen Biegun expressed hope in Seoul on Thursday that North Korea will engage in “serious diplomacy” with the United States that could propel the two countries to move forward.

The remarks by the U.S. point man for North Korea came during his four-day visit to the South Korean capital, and likely his last in that capacity as Democratic President-elect Joe Biden

prepares to take office on Jan. 20.

In his speech at the Asan Institute for Policy Studies, a Seoul-based think tank, Biegun expressed disappointment over the stalled bilateral negotiations on North Korea's denuclearization, saying much opportunity was “squandered” by the North Korean side. But the diplomat said there is still room for diplomacy. “Pyongyang has some pivotal events coming up, in particu-

lar the Eighth Party Congress in January. We strongly encourage North Korea to use the time between now and then to set a path for the resumption of diplomacy.”

Biegun added, “We hope that North Korea and the United States can finally engage in the kind of serious diplomacy that requires sustained engagement and difficult tradeoffs, but has huge rewards.”

The denuclearization talks

between Washington and Pyongyang have stalemated since the two sides failed to reach an agreement during the second summit between their leaders in Vietnam in February 2019.

Biegun said the United States recognizes that North Korea needs to know its security is assured in order to give up its ballistic missiles and nuclear weapons.

*SOURCE: Kyodo*

## NEWS BRIEFS

Thai democracy protests seek UN help to repeal royal defamation law

THAI democracy activists rallied at the UN's Bangkok office Thursday and asked the body to pressure the kingdom into repealing royal defamation laws they say are being used to suppress their movement.

23 leaders are facing charges under the legislation for headlining demonstrations demanding reforms to the monarchy and more scrutiny of the royal family's financial arrangements. The kingdom's lese majeste laws shield the super wealthy King Maha Vajiralongkorn and the royal family from criticism, with anyone convicted facing between three to 15 years in prison. Among the several dozen activists at the UN office was Somyot Prueksakasemsuk, 59, who previously spent seven years in jail on a lese majeste conviction for publishing satire of a fictitious royal family.

*SOURCE: AFP*

Sri Lankans urged to minimize Christmas shopping over COVID-19

Sri Lankan health authorities on Thursday urged people to minimize shopping for the Christmas season as the country's total number of confirmed COVID-19 cases has surpassed the 30,000-mark.

The Health Ministry, in a set of new health guidelines released ahead of the festive season, said people must limit their shopping during the Christmas season, and that only one member of a family should go shopping to purchase necessary items.

The ministry further called on the public to avoid gatherings, saying Christmas should be celebrated among household members.

It required people to maintain social distance when queuing to buy things, and asked people to avoid kissing and to greet each other only when maintaining proper social distance.

*SOURCE: Xinhua*

TAX AFFAIRS

## Biden's son Hunter says under investigation for tax affairs

HUNTER Biden, the son of US President-elect Joe Biden and a frequent target of Republican attacks, said Wednesday he was under federal investigation about his taxes.

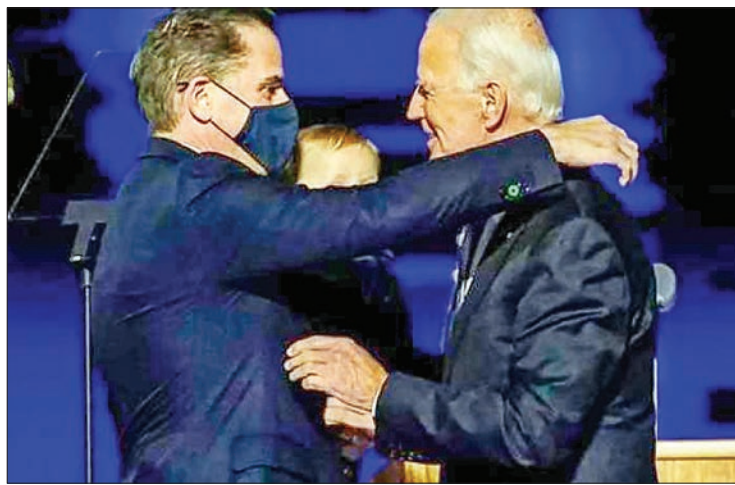
The revelation about the probe included no details, but it promises to rekindle Republican rage about the Biden family, including Hunter Biden's business dealings and the elder Biden's anti-corruption push in Ukraine when he was US vice-president.

It also presents a series of thorny issues during the president-elect's transition into the

White House in just over one month's time, including the possibility his son will still be under investigation by the US Department of Justice.

"I learned yesterday for the first time that the US Attorney's Office in Delaware advised my legal counsel, also yesterday, that they are investigating my tax affairs," Hunter Biden said in a statement released by his father's presidential transition team.

"I take this matter very seriously but I am confident that a professional and objective review of these matters will



US President-elect Joe Biden's son Hunter Biden (L) says he is facing a tax probe. PHOTO: ANDREW HARNIK POOL/AFP/FILE

demonstrate that I handled my affairs legally and appropriately, including with the benefit of professional tax advisors."

Hunter Biden, 50, is a lawyer who has founded consulting and investment firms, worked in private equity, and served on the board of various organizations including national railroad cor-

poration Amtrak.

Biden's second son Hunter was born in Wilmington, Delaware, where his father lives and the presidential transition operation is based. His brother Beau Biden, the former Delaware attorney-general, died of cancer in 2015.

SOURCE: AFP

SPECIAL TRIBUNAL FOR LEBANON

## Lebanon judge indicts PM, 3 ex-ministers over port blast: judicial source

THE lead investigator into a catastrophic August 4 explosion at Beirut port charged outgoing premier Hassan Diab and three ex-ministers with negligence Thursday, a judicial source said.

They are the first politicians to be indicted over the devastating blast that killed more than 200 people, disfigured the heart of the capital and ignited a wave of public anger against Lebanon's ruling elite.

The decision by judge Fadi Sawan came after the investigation confirmed that the suspects had received "several written notices warning them against postponing the disposal of ammonium nitrate fertilizer," which authorities say was behind the explosion, the source said. "They also did not take the necessary measures to avoid the devastating explosion and its enormous damage," added the source, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he is not authorized to speak on the issue.

The other officials charged are the former ministers of finance, Ali Hasan Khalil, public works, Yusef Fehianos, and transport, Ghazi Zaiter. SOURCE: AFP

DISPUTED TERRITORY

## In Baku, Erdogan hails Azerbaijan 'glorious' win over Armenia



Azerbaijan's army paraded captured military hardware during rehearsals for a military parade Thursday. PHOTO: AFP

TURKISH President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said on a visit to Azerbaijan Thursday that Baku's

struggle with Armenia was not over as he hailed his close ally's "glorious victory" in a bloody con-

flict with Yerevan.

Erdogan arrived in Baku to attend nationwide celebrations marking Azerbaijan's military triumph over Armenia in six weeks of fighting over the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region.

Turkey backed Azerbaijan during a conflict that erupted in late September and left more than 5,000 people dead.

Azerbaijan's win against Armenian separatists in Nagorno-Karabakh last month was an important geopolitical coup for Erdogan who has cemented Turkey's leading role as a powerbroker in the ex-Soviet Caucasus region the Kremlin considers its

sphere of influence.

Azerbaijan's army paraded military hardware and weapons seized from Armenia, and Turkish drones were also on full display. Hailing the parade, Turkish television announced that Turkish drones "turned the tide" of the Karabakh war.

"We are here today to... celebrate this glorious victory," Erdogan said during the parade in Baku, the culmination of festivities marking Azerbaijan's victory. "Azerbaijan's saving its lands from occupation does not mean that the struggle is over," he added.

SOURCE: AFP

THE WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME

## Nobel prize ceremonies forgo 'the magic' because of Covid

FORGET lavish banquets and glittering ceremonies attended by royals wearing tiaras: the 2020 Nobel Peace Prize will be presented to the World Food Programme (WFP) in more austere fashion online on Thursday because of Covid-19.

"This year has been difficult for us, as it has been for many others as well," the director of the Nobel Institute, Olav Njostad, told AFP on the eve of the ceremony.

"It's a shame that the laureate misses out on the usual magic but there's nothing we can

do about that." The Covid-19 pandemic has forced Nobel officials to scale back the traditional festivities to a bare minimum, both in Oslo where the Peace Prize is announced and presented, and in Stockholm, which is home to the prizes for medicine, physics, chemistry, literature and economics. As a result, WFP executive director David Beasley will be presented the Nobel gold medal and diploma at the organization's Rome headquarters in a ceremony broadcast online at 1 pm (1200 GMT). The WFP, founded in 1961, was honoured

with the prestigious award for its efforts "to prevent the use of hunger as a weapon of war and conflict", Nobel committee chairwoman Berit Reiss-Andersen said when she announced the winner on October 9.

The largest humanitarian organization fighting famine, the UN agency feeds tens of millions of people each year -- 97 million last year -- across all continents.

"Every one of the 690 million hungry people in the world today has the right to live peacefully and without hunger," the WFP wrote on Twitter this week.



AERIAL FOOD DROP: A Russian-made Ilyushin airlifter aircraft leased to the World Food Programme (WFP) makes a drop of food aid near a village in Ayod county, South Sudan. PHOTO: AFP

First time since 1976

The Nobels are traditionally presented on December 10, the anniversary of the 1896 death

of prize founder Alfred Nobel, a Swedish scientist and philanthropist.

SOURCE: AFP

## ONE Championship: Big Bang II event to be held tonight

ANOTHER event of the ONE Championship in this month named Big Bang II featuring bouts of world-class fighters: Japanese fighter Taiki Naito vs British fighter Jonathan Haggerty will be held at Singapore Indoor Stadium in Singapore on 11 December (tonight).

Tonight's fights will include colourful bouts including Muay

Thai, Kickboxing, and Mixed Martial Arts.

Fans across the globe can enjoy the event free via ONE Super Application, and ONE Championship YouTube channel, according to the ONE Championship organizers.

In the main card of the event or Flyweight Muay Thai fight, Japanese fighter Taiki Naito will

take on British fighter Jonathan Haggerty.

Next, in the Lightweight Kickboxing bout, Nieky Holzken of Netherlands will fight against Elliot Compton of New Zealand.

In the Featherweight Mixed Martial Arts fight, Tetsuya Yamada of Japan will face Kim Jae Woong of South Korea.

In the Heavyweight Kickboxing Fight, Errol Zimmerman of Netherlands will fight against Rade Opacic of Serbia.

In the Welterweight Mixed Martial Arts Fight, Agilan Thani of Malaysia will take on Tyler Mcguire of the United States.

Next, in the Bantamweight bout of Mixed Martial Arts, Ali Motamed of Iran will fight with Chen Rui of China.

The ONE: Big Bang II event will begin at 8:30 pm of Singapore Standard Time and fans also need to check local listings for the global broadcast, the event organizers stated on the ONE Championship official page. The first two fights will also be streamed live on ONE Facebook page, officials added.—Lynn Thit (Tgi) ■



PHOTO: ONE CHAMPIONSHIP

## Tiger feat: Island Muay Thai gym is factory for UFC champions

HONG KONG—Lightweight contender Rafael Fiziev steps into the cage in Las Vegas this weekend hoping to be the latest fighter to begin a journey to UFC glory from a production line of MMA champions on an island in Thailand.

Tiger Muay Thai gym on the southern resort island of Phuket was, before the coronavirus pandemic, attracting fighters from all over the globe lured by world-class training, an idyllic tropical beach lifestyle and a growing reputation. It has produced a string of fighters progressing into the Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC), the globe's biggest mixed martial arts (MMA) promotion, with several going on to become world champions.

"Before lockdown we were seeing many fighters from Tiger Muay Thai sign with the UFC. It was like a wave," said Fiziev, who is from Kyrgyzstan and has an MMA record of eight wins



UFC lightweight prospect Rafael Fiziev trains at Tiger Muay Thai in Phuket with coach George Hickman. PHOTO: HIP PANAKOM SANTAYANON/AFP

with just one defeat. "The lockdown has kept people away but our fighters are winning and the wave will come again." MMA was one of the first sports to restart after the pandemic shutdown, with UFC staging events in bio-secure bubbles since May and Asia's One Championship welcoming back limited crowds in Singapore since the end of

October. Though quarantine and travel restrictions have hit international fighters hard, the success of UFC champions who use Tiger Muay Thai for pre-fight camps, such as bantamweight Petr Yan of Russia and Kyrgyzstan's fearsome flyweight Valentina Shevchenko, is continuing to inspire the next generation.—AFP ■



Karim Benzema's brace sent Real Madrid into the last 16 of the Champions League. PHOTO: AFP

## Real Madrid, Atletico into Champions League last 16 as PSG win suspended game

PARIS—Karim Benzema sent Real Madrid through to the last 16 of the Champions League on Wednesday alongside their rivals Atletico, while Neymar scored a hat-trick as Paris Saint-Germain beat Istanbul Basaksehir in a match that had been delayed for 24 hours over a racism row.

Real are Europe's most decorated club with 13 European Cups but they needed to beat Borussia Moenchengladbach in Madrid to be sure of making it through the group stage of the Champions League for a 24th straight year.

Benzema was their hero, easing the pressure on coach Zinedine Zidane with two fine back-post headers in the first half securing a 2-0 win in a game played behind closed doors at the Alfredo di Stefano Stadium.

"Each match is a final and I think that if we always play how we did today, no team can hurt us," warned Benzema, who has played in four Champions League final wins with Real in the last seven seasons.—AFP ■

## Golf: Zhang Jienalin to become first woman to compete in men's China Open

SHANGHAI—Zhang Jienalin will make history this week when she becomes the first female golfer to compete in the 26-year history of the Volvo China Open.

The tournament in Shenzhen usually has European Tour status and is for men only but the coronavirus and consequent travel restrictions sees it tweaked this year into a domestic event.

The 24-year-old Zhang, who is ranked 484th in the world, won her first title in the recent mixed-field Hangzhou International Championships.

On that occasion, women were competing from forward tees but in southern China, she will tee it up on the same length course as her male rivals.—AFP ■



The 24-year-old Zhang won her first title in the recent mixed-field Hangzhou International Championships. PHOTO: AFP/MISSION HILLS