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Monday, 14 December 2020

Republic of the Union of Myanmar Announcement of National-Level Central Committee on Prevention, Control and Treatment of COVID-19

14th Waning of Tazaungmon, 1382 ME
(13 December 2020)

IT is announced that public statements, orders, notifications, and directives (excluding eased restrictions) of the Union-level organizations and the Union ministries effective until 15 December 2020 for protection, control and prevention of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) will be extended to 31 December 2020 as it is required to continue containment of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19).

State Counsellor delivers video statement, makes Myanmar's commitments to tackle climate change at Climate Ambition Summit

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, State Counsellor of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, delivered a video statement and made Myanmar's commitments to tackle climate change at the virtual Climate Ambition Summit held on 12 December 2020.

The Summit was convened by the United Nations, United Kingdom, and France, in partnership with Chile and Italy to mark the 5th Anniversary of the Paris Agreement.

In her statement, the State Counsellor announced Myanmar's intention to submit its Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) by the end of the year. The NDC, she added, aims to reduce over 243 million tonnes of CO₂ by increasing the share of renewable energy to 39% and reducing the net emission from the forestry sector by 25%. She also stated that Myanmar has targeted to reduce 105.2 million tCO₂e in energy sector and 123.6 million tCO₂e in forestry subsection respectively, and the Myanmar's National Adaption Plan for climate change is projected to be completed by 2024.

With regard to expansion of carbon sink, the State Counsellor



State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi delivers the video statement at the virtual Climate Ambition Summit on 12 December 2020. **PHOTO: MNA**

highlighted the national targets to increase the Protected Area Systems to cover 10% of total national land. In addition, she also stressed that Myanmar is committed to preserving 0.59 million hectares of Reserved Forests and engaging in management of 0.25 million hectares of plan-

tations in public and private land in line with the Myanmar Reforestation and Rehabilitation (2017-2027).

In terms of energy efficiency, the State Counsellor underlined Myanmar's objective to improve 7.8% in residential sector, 6.6% in the industrial sector, 4% in the

commercial sector and 1.36% in other sectors by 2030. She also informed of a programme that plans to distribute 5.1 million of fuel-efficient stoves to reduce a cumulative emission of approximately 5.99 million tCO₂e during 2021-2030 in Myanmar.

The United Nations Secre-

tary-General and seventy-five Heads of State and Government as well as high-level representatives from international organizations also delivered video statements at the Summit and made new commitments to tackle climate change and deliver on the Paris Agreement. —MNA

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“People are the key”

Education Ministry holds virtual meeting on National Education Strategic Plan (NESP) (2021-2030)

UNION Minister for Education Dr Myo Thein Gyi said that the country is investing more in the education sector, providing more training to teachers and giving high priority to ethnic areas in development of education.

The Union Minister made the remark at the virtual meeting to discuss matters related to drafting the National Education Strategic Plan (NESP) (2021-2030) via videoconferencing on 13 December.

The virtual meeting was participated by Union Minister Dr Myo Thein Gyi, Deputy Minister U Win Maw Tun, Rectors’ Committee Chairperson Dr Zaw Wai Soe, Permanent Secretary, Directors General and Deputy Directors General of the Ministry of Education, Rectors and senior officials from universities, heads of Education Degree College, Government Technological College, Government Technical Institute and Government Technological High School and senior education officials from States and Regions.

During the meeting, the Union Minister said that his ministry is working together with all stakeholders to implement a quality education system. He continued that at the present time, 21st-century-technologies, such as “Automation,



Union Minister Dr Myo Thein Gyi participates in the virtual meeting on drafting of the National Education Strategic Plan 2021-2030 on 13 December 2020. **PHOTO: MNA**

Artificial Intelligence, Robotics, Cloud Computing, Big Data, and Internet of Things”, are developing very fast. He said that the labour market has rapidly changed and competition for job opportunities has intensified, so workers need higher skills. It is important for all stakeholders to work together to create an education system that can respond to the challenges of the 21st Century, he added.

The Union Minister said

that in the traditional education system, which uses examination-oriented approaches, the majority of students only memorize lessons, and they are usually assessed only by examinations.

The Union Minister also pointed out that it is important to embrace the “New Normal Education System”.

He said that all schools must have quality assurance and be accountable. He continued that suggestions from

all stakeholders are needed for continuous implementation of a quality education system, and criticism must be encouraged to enhance the education sector.

The Union Minister said that in drafting the National Education Strategic Plan (2021-2030), it must be done not only with the opinions of the Ministry and the experts but also with the collective strength of all stakeholders.

In the 2019-2020 Academic

Year, Myanmar’s education system began using assessments measuring students’ ability in critical thinking and problem solving, according to the Union Minister. He said that Myanmar achieved encouraging progress in Southeast Asia – Primary Learning Metrics (SEA PLM). From 2016 to 2020, high school students of Myanmar competed in the International Mathematical Olympiad, and achieved 6 Honorary Mentions.

The National Qualification Framework is also being implemented by the National Accreditation and Quality Assurance Committee (NAQAC), according to the Union Minister.

He said that the Ministry will help universities to provide more diploma courses, more bachelor degree courses, and more master degree courses, which will meet local requirements. He said that Research and Quality Assurance and Accreditation must be encouraged in the universities.

Participants including the Permanent Secretary and Directors General of the Ministry of Education discussed matters related to drafting the National Education Strategic Plan (NESP) (2021-2030) via videoconferencing. —MNA

(Translated by Maung Maung Swe)

95 Myanmar citizens abroad arrive back home by relief flight



Myanmar returnees are seen at the Yangon International Airport on 13 December 2020. **PHOTO: MNA**

A total of 95 Myanmar citizens who were stranded in foreign countries because of the suspension of commercial flights returned home by relief flight yesterday.

The Myanmar embassies in Washington and Seoul jointly organized the relief flight of Myanmar Airways International to repatriate the 95 Myanmar nationals – 60 from the United States, 2 from Australia, 1 from Japan, and 32 from the Republic of Korea. The flight landed at the Yangon International Airport in the evening.

The Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population, the Ministry of Health and Sports and the Yangon Region government provided them with proper medical tests and 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 concerned to bring back citizens stranded abroad due to the suspension of international commercial flights, in accordance with the guidance of the National-Level Central Committee on Prevention, Control and Treatment of COVID-19.

Until now a total of ninth relief flights were arranged to repatriate the Myanmar citizens from the United States via Incheon International Airport.—MNA

(Translated by Kyaw Zin Tun)

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 72nd Anniversary of Independence Day.)



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

Seminar on copyright, technology organized virtually



Union Minister Dr Pe Myint participates in the Copyright and Technology Webinar: Episode 2 on 13 December 2020. PHOTO: MNA

COMMITTEE on Formation of Collective Management Organization of Literary Copyright held the Copyright and Technology Webinar: Episode 2 yesterday.

Union Minister for Information Dr Pe Myint and the ministry's departmental officials, chairperson, deputy chairpersons and members of the Committee on Formation of Collective Management Organization of Literary Copyright,

and interested persons participated in the online seminar.

Speaking at the event, the Union Minister said there were many copyrights issues to be discussed, and they are wide.

There were literary copyright problems in the past, and changing technology trends will likely create more problems, he added.

As the web conferencing would focus on the ways of solving the literary copyrights

problems with the use of technology, the discussion would result in broadening knowledge that can spark new ideas and new visions, and do's and don'ts of literary copyright. The Union Minister also expressed his hope that participants in the online seminar are assumed to write more valuable matters for the readers during the COVID-19 stay-at-home period.

Chairman of the Committee on Formation of Collective

Management Organization of Literary Copyright Saya Chit Oo Nyo made greeting remarks, followed by the playing of video clip about copyright.

Vice-Chairman 1 of the Committee U Myint Tun discussed the topic entitled "Changing Publishing Industry Trends in the Digital Age and Copyright Issues" and Vice-Chairman 2 U Thaung Su Nyein discussed "Protection of Literary and Artistic Works

Copyrights and the Role of Technology".

A panel discussion on literary and artistic works copyrights was also held. The Committee's Vice Chair 2 U Thaung Su Nyein moderated the discussion participated in by the Committee's members U Zaw Min Oo and Writer Lun Htar Htar. The discussion's panelists replied to the questions raised by the attendees.—MNA (Translated by Kyaw Zin Tun)

COVID-19 Call Centre opens daily

In efforts to speed up the prevention, containment and treatment of the COVID-19 disease, the call centre (phone number 2019) is established by four communications operators and the Blue Ocean Company with the coordination of the Medical Research Department of the Health and Sports Ministry and Post and Telecommunications Department from 9 am to 5 pm daily at the Medical Research Department in Yangon.

Over 43 staff from the Medical Research Department and 17 volunteers from the Myanmar Medical Association totally 60 workers have been working at the centre since 8th April.—MNA

People should not become careless like this that the vaccines would soon be available



At this time, some countries have already begun using vaccines. That is to say that in some countries, they have declared that they will begin using vaccines on a large scale beginning this week. Some have already started using vaccines on a trial basis. Therefore, in our country, we have made plans to use the vaccines as soon as the situation is favourable as quickly as possible, once we get the vaccines. However, for the people to benefit fully from the effects of the vaccine, they need to be extremely careful at this moment. The reason why we have to say this is because I am feeling anxious that some might become careless thinking that the vaccines would soon be available. People should not become careless like this.

(Excerpt from State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's report on COVID-19 containment measures, on 8 December 2020)

Ministry of Electricity & Energy organizes anniversary event

THE Ministry of Electricity and Energy organized an event to mark its anniversary at the ministry in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday in accordance with the health guidelines set by the Ministry of Health and Sports.

Union Minister for Electricity and Energy U Win Khaing, Deputy Ministers U Khin Maung Win and Dr Tun Naing, Permanent Secretary U Than Zaw, departmental officials, outstanding staff, students who passed with distinctions, company officials, and invited guests participated in the event via videoconferencing.

At the event, the Union Minister said that on the auspicious day awards would be presented to the outstanding staff, townships and companies, awards and scholarships would be provided for the sons and daughters of the staff, and E&E Day Care Centre would



Union Minister for Electricity and Energy U Win Khaing inspects the scale models of construction projects at the ministry's anniversary event in Nay Pyi Taw on 13 December 2020. **PHOTO: MNA**

be opened for the children of the staff.

The Ministry of Electricity and the Ministry of Energy were combined as the Ministry of Electricity and Energy during

the incumbent government, and 34 per cent of the country was electrified from the National Grid. Electricity will be provided to the citizens and ethnic nationals countrywide who are

far from the National Grid via decentralization system, via solar energy, mini hydropower plants, and diesel energy electricity plants.

The ministry also distribut-

ed electricity to the far areas in the country – Buthidaung and Maungtau in Rakhine State, Myawady and Kya-in-Seikgyi in Kayin State, Mawleik in Sagaing Region, Matupi in Chin State, and Kengtong and Mongpyin in eastern Shan State.

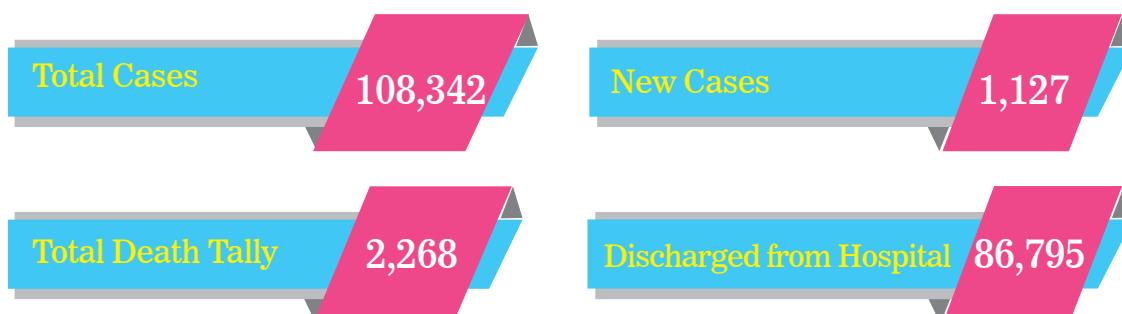
Construction of a 180-mile power line on Mawlamyine-Ye-Dawei road and power projects was underway to transport electricity to Ye and Dawei in Taninthayi Region.

He urged the government employees and company staff to join hands in hands on the projects. A display room relating to the electricity and energy to mark the completion of 50 per cent electricity consumption nationwide from the National Grid, and E&E Day Care Centre for the children of the staff were also opened during the anniversary event. —MNA (Translated by Kyaw Zin Tun)

1,127 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 13 December, total figure rises to 108,342

MYANMAR'S COVID-19 positive cases rose to 108,342 after 1,127 new cases were reported on 13 December according to the Ministry of Health and Sports. Among these 108,342 confirmed cases, 2,268 died, 86,795 have been discharged from hospitals.—MNA

Updated at 8 pm, 13 December 2020



Daily death toll until 8 pm 13-12-2020

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Ministry of Health and Sports

MEODA to adopt new policy to import quality edible oil

IN a bid to improve local edible oil production and import safe and quality oil from overseas, Myanmar Edible Oil Dealers' Association (MEODA) will lay down policies on import standard specifications, the association affirmed on the 28th annual meeting held virtually on 12 December.

The association will raise awareness of edible oil and coordinate with the related organization to eradicate the illegal imports of edible oil, which has no guarantee for health.

We must exert concerted efforts to import the quality edible oil from abroad in fulfilling the local consumption requirements, Dr Than Myint, Union Minister for Commerce delivered a message at the virtual event.

The domestic consumption of edible oil is estimated at 1 million tonnes per year. The local cooking oil production is just about 400,000 tonnes. Approxi-



Union Minister for Commerce Dr Than Myint participates in the 28th Annual Meeting of Myanmar Edible Oil Dealers' Association via videoconference on 12 December 2020 . PHOTO: MYINT MAUNG



mately 600,000-700,000 tonnes of cooking oil are imported yearly to meet the self-sufficiency in the domestic market. Therefore, safe and quality oil import is a must, the Union Minister urged.

To boost local production, the related institutions, including governmental organizations, will work together on it. The government stored

oil reserves to avoid the price hikes, said U San Lin, president of Myanmar Edible Oil Dealers' Association.

Myanmar Edible Oil Dealers' Association and the affiliated associations are cooperating in quality oil import. To ensure the self-sufficiency during the COVID-19 pandemic, the government purchased over 12,000 tonnes of palm oil for reserves,

and they have been distributed to the oil tanks in the respective regions and states, the association stated. To ensure the adequate supply in the local market, Myanmar has been importing the quality palm oil from Malaysia and Indonesia, said U San Lin.

The annual virtual meeting was attended by Union Minister Dr Than Myint for Commerce,

deputy minister and officials, Yangon Region Chief Minister U Phyto Min Thein and officials concerned and officials from Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Myanmar Edible Oil Dealers' Association and the affiliated associations. — Myint Maung

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

Value of fisheries export slumps by \$20 mln in past two months



Workers are seen in a shrimp processing plant in Kawthoung. PHOTO: AYE THAN

THE value of Myanmar's fisheries exports in the past two months dropped by US\$20.7 million compared with a year-ago period on account of the border trade restrictions by the neighbouring countries China and Thailand amid the COVID-19 crisis.

Myanmar exported \$146.849 million worth fishery products to the external market between 1 October and 27 November of the current financial year 2020-2021. The figures plunged from \$167.549 million registered in the corresponding period of last FY, the Ministry of Commerce's data showed.

Myanmar's fisheries export

slightly declined over the past two months, owing to the pandemic-induced restrictions in the border trade. The export will undoubtedly grow if the trade route is open, said an exporter from the Muse border.

Myanmar Fisheries Federation (MFF) targets to earn over US\$1 billion from fisheries exports in the current financial year started from 1 October 2020, said U Win Kyaing, general secretary of MFF.

Myanmar sends fish and fishery products to external market through air, sea and land border.

Myanmar exported 670,000 tonnes of fishery products to

45 countries in the past 2019-2020FY ended 30 September, generating an estimated income of \$850 million despite the difficulties triggered by the COVID-19 crisis. The figure reflected an increase of over \$120 million registered in the 2018-2019FY, MRF's data indicated.

"We saw a remarkable increase in fishery exports last FY amid the COVID-19 impacts. MFF is endeavouring to fulfil the requirements of the market. Resources are limited for wild-caught fish exports as we look forward to long-term interest. In the farming sector, we balance between demand and supply. We will expand the market in the post-coronavirus era, and the market will undoubtedly grow. The sector also helps develop the rural community and create jobs for residents. Additionally, government coordination and guidance play a vital role in the development of the sector. As this sector also helped inject the economy of the country amid the COVID-19 impacts, we like to request the government to prioritize the sector as well," U Win Kyaing told MRTV in the second week of October.

Myanmar exports fisheries products, such as fish, prawns, and crabs, to over 40 countries, including China, Saudi Arabia,

the US, Japan, Singapore, Thailand, and countries in the European Union.

The MFF is making concerted efforts to increase fishery export earnings by developing fish farming lakes which meet international standards and adopting advanced fishing techniques.

The foreign market requires suppliers to obtain Hazard Analysis, and Critical Control Points (HACCP) and Good Aquaculture Practices (GAAP) certificates to ensure food safety.

Fishery products must be sourced only from hatcheries that are compliant with GAAP to meet international market standards. The MFF is working with fish farmers, processors, and the Fisheries Department under the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, and Irrigation to develop the GAAP system.

Processors can screen fishery products for food safety at ISO-accredited laboratories under the Fisheries Department.

There are 480,000 acres of fish and prawn breeding farms across the country and more than 130 cold-storage facilities in Myanmar. And 28 of them have been given the green light to export to EU countries.

Myanmar exported 340,000 tonnes of fishery products worth

\$530 million in the 2013-2014FY, 330,000 tonnes worth \$480 million in the 2014-2015FY, 360,000 tonnes worth \$500 million in the 2015-2016FY, 430,000 tonnes worth \$600 million in the 2016-2017FY, 560,000 tonnes worth \$700 million in the 2017-2018FY, and over 580,000 tonnes in the 2018-2019FY, the Ministry of Commerce's data showed.

The federation has asked the government to tackle problems faced in the export of farm-raised fish and prawns through G2G pacts and ensure smooth freight movement between countries to bolster exports, according to the MFF.

Myanmar's economy is more dependent on the agricultural sector to a large extent. Also, the fisheries sector contributes a lot to the national gross domestic product (GDP). More than 3.5 million people are relying on the industry. Its fishery production, including shrimps and saltwater and freshwater fish, is far better than the regional countries. If the government can boost processing technology, it will contribute to the country's economy and earn more income for those stakeholders in the supply chain, Yangon Region Fisheries Department stated. — Ko Htet

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

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CHIEF EDITORAungthu Ya
aungthuya@gnlm.com.mm**DEPUTY CHIEF EDITOR**Aye Min Soe
dce@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com**SENIOR EDITORIAL CONSULTANT**

Kyaw Myaing

EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Aung Khin

LOCAL & INTERNATIONAL NEWS**EDITORS**Ye Htut Tin
editor1@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com
Aung Htein
Tun Tun Naing
intlnews@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com**SENIOR TRANSLATOR**

Zaw Htet Oo

TRANSLATORSHay Mar Tin Win, Ei Myat Mon,
Kyaw Zin Lin, Kyaw Zin Tun**REPORTER**Nyein Nyein Ei,
reporter1@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com**PHOTOGRAPHER**Kyaw Zeya Win @ Phoe Khwar
Kyaw Zeya**COMPUTER TEAM**Thein Ngwe, Zaw Zaw Aung,
Kay Khaing Win,
Sanda Hnin, Zu Zin Hnin,
Thein Htwe, Nyi Lin Thu**EDITORIAL SECTION**(+95) (01)8604529,
Fax - (+95) (01) 8604305**CIRCULATION & DISTRIBUTION**San Lwin, (+95) (01) 8604532,
Hotline - 09 974424114**ADVERTISING & MARKETING**(+95) (01) 8604530,
Hotline - 09 974424848
marketing@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com
subscription@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

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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.

Bayintnaung Commodity Depot to reopen on 15 December for pulses trade

Yangon Region Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Bayintnaung commodity depot) will resume its trading on 15 December to ease the trading during harvest time of beans and effectuate the development of the market, said a statement released by the depot on 10 December.

The depot was temporarily halted owing to the coronavirus impacts. It will reopen between 11 am and 2 pm starting from 15 December to keep the market alive.

The members of depots must strictly adhere to the health guidelines on the COVID-19 issued by the Ministry of Health and Sports. They must maintain social distanc-



(FILES) Workers bag beans at a commodity depot in the Bayintnaung Wholesale Market in Yangon. **PHOTO: PHOE KHWAR**

ing (staying six feet apart from each other), taking temperature, wearing the mask and wash and sanitize the hands to engage in trading.

The harvest season of

pulses is drawing nearer. The reopening of the depot is aimed for the growth of the market amid the COVID-19 crisis, said a member of the depot.

On 12 December, the black bean was worth K1,018,000 per tonne for fair and average quality, while the beans of Special Quality fetched K1,163,000 per tonne.

The pigeon pea was valued K805,000 per tonne, the depot's market data indicated.

Those who fail to abide by the health guidelines, for instance wearing a mask under your chin, will be charged K5,000, the depot announced. — GNLM

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

US dollar gains to 3-month high on vaccine optimism

US dollar against kyat has recently risen to a three-month high of K1,375 in the local forex market as the vaccine optimism grew.

Additionally, the resumption of domestic flights and auto import licence grants caused the dollar appreciation, said a money exchanger sharing his opinion.

A dollar exchange rate stood around K1,300 in September-end. It gained to K1,375 on 12 December.

The local forex market

saw upticks of dollar value beginning from early December. The causes of dollar appreciations against kyat have many reasons including high imports of COVID-19 related medical device, a slump in exports, dollar gains in the international market, auto import permit grant to the government personnel and high demand of dollar in local forex market," a market observer shared his opinion.

The Central Bank of Myanmar (CBM) set Weight-

ed-average (WA) Market Exchange Rate at K1,348.5 on 11 December. The CBM always observes the market and try to govern the market volatility and support the state's foreign exchange reserves, the CBM stated on 24 July.

This year, the exchange rate moved in the range of K1,465-1,493 in January, K1,436-1,465 in February, K1,320-1,445 in March, K1,395-1,440 in April, K1,406-1,426 in May, K1,385-1,412 in June, K1,367-1,410 in July, K1,335-

1,390 in August, K1,310-1,355 in September, K1,282-1,315 in October and K1,302-1,330 in November.

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

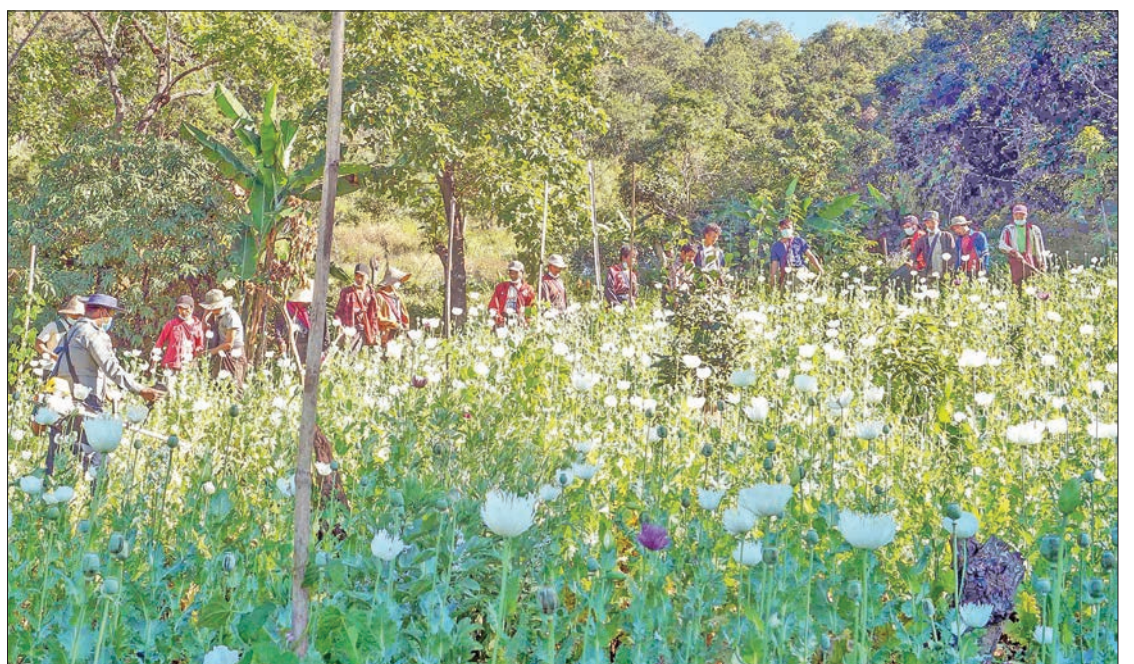
On 20 September 2018, the dollar exchange rate hit an all-time high of K1,650 in the local currency market. — Ko Khant (Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

Police destroy poppy fields in Hsihseng and Mongphyat townships

POLICE Force in Southern Shan State destroyed 10 acres of 2 feet high still-fruiting poppy fields planted about 1 mile south of Tangyan village in Hsihseng Township, Pa-O Self-Administered Zone in Southern Shan State on 12 December 2020.

The poppy fields in Hsihseng Township have been destroyed since 25 September and there are a total of 142 acres destroyed as of 12 December, according to the Hsihseng Township Police Force.

Similarly, Police Force in Eastern Shan State destroyed two acres of 2.5 feet high still-fruiting poppy fields planted near Bufer Village in Mongphyat Township and another two acres near Nantwohtaung Village in the same township,



Authorities destroy poppy plants in Hsihseng Township, Southern Shan State on 12 December 2020. **PHOTO: KHUN YE HTWE (HSIHSENG)**

Tachilek District in Eastern Shan State on 12 December 2020. — Khun Ye Htwe (Hsihseng), Than Tun Aye (IPRD)

(Translated by Ei Phyu Phyu Aung)

FRANCE

Theatres, cinemas bid to overturn virus closure

FRENCH theatres, cinemas and other venues said on Saturday they would go to court to force the government to allow them reopen, as the country emerges from partial virus lockdown on Tuesday.

The government announced on Thursday it would lift the six-week-long partial lockdown on December 15 and impose a nighttime curfew instead.

But in a severe blow for the cultural sector, it said that museums, theatres, concert venues and cinemas would remain closed for three more weeks.

Nicolas Dubourg, president of a union representing 400 venues, said he would seek an urgent hearing on the matter at the Council of State, France's highest administrative court.

"Our lawyers are busy compiling all the arguments," he



People attend the screening of the Lars von Trier's film *Dancer in the Dark* on 26 July, 2020 in Boulogne-Billancourt, France. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

told AFP. The government's announcement forced venues into last-minute postponements of year-end productions and shows

on which they had been relying to recoup some of their Covid-induced losses. Singers, actors and theatre directors have accused

the government of "double standards", arguing that socially distanced cultural events are less of a threat than packed shops that

have been allowed reopen in the run-up to Christmas.

"We are appalled and disgusted," said Marc-Olivier Seb-bag, head of the National Federation of French Cinemas.

Museum managers also expressed dismay over the prolonged shutdown, arguing that exhibitions were highly unlikely to be packed given the near-total absence of tourists during the pandemic. The vice-president of the foundation that runs the Chateau de Chantilly north of Paris, Christophe Tardieu, described the extended closure as a "staggering blow" for his site.

"Commerce seems preferable to culture," he remarked.

Bars and restaurants will also remain closed until January as France combats a second wave of coronavirus infections.

SOURCE: AFP

THE 11-DAY EXHIBITION

Baghdad Int'l Book Fair held in Iraq amid COVID-19 pandemic

THE Iraqi capital Baghdad hosts the 47th session of the Baghdad International Book Fair with strict measures to protect visitors amid the coronavirus pandemic.

The 11-day exhibition kicked

off on Dec. 9 with the participation of more than 300 publishers from 21 countries, bringing around one million books.

Ahmed Khazal, a member of the exhibition organizing com-

mittee, told Xinhua that the exhibition hosts dozens of artistic, cultural, and media events, including folk dancing, singing, and poetry, in addition to seminars on a variety of topics.

As the exhibition attracted a large number of Iraqis, the organizers imposed several measures to prevent the spread of coronavirus, including providing masks at the entrances of the halls, and urging the visitors to maintain social distancing.

In an attempt to reflect the spirit of the traditional al-Mutanabi Street -- the historic center of Baghdad's bookselling industry, the exhibition organizers made the street between the fair's five main halls as an outdoor market for al-Mutanabi's bookstores with Iraqi coffee and tea.

SOURCE: Xinhua



Iraqi customers attend the Baghdad International Book Exhibition on March 29, 2018, the first held after the defeat of the militant group Islamic State (IS). PHOTO: XINHUA/KHALIL DAWOOD/FILE

New Zealand launches nationwide TV campaign to prevent COVID-19

NEW ZEALAND launched its nationwide TV campaign on Sunday to keep COVID-19 at bay, urging the public to stay vigilant and keep good hygiene practices during the summer holiday season.

COVID-19 Response Minister Chris Hipkins launched the "Make Summer Unstoppable"

campaign TV ads during a cricket match between the New Zealand national team Blackcaps and the West Indies at Wellington's Basin Reserve. Christmas and the holiday season is a time of the year when New Zealand people get together socially more often with more large-scale events and

bigger numbers in nationwide traveling. "Whether it's days at the cricket, at the beach or at the backyard barbeque with family and friends, we all want to be able to enjoy this summer without the interruption of COVID-19," said Hipkins.

SOURCE: Xinhua

STUDENT EXCHANGE

US risks losing appeal to Chinese students due to visa restrictions, surging pandemic: senior diplomat

THE United States risks losing its position as the top choice of destination for overseas study and research for Chinese students and scholars due to its visa restrictions and surging COVID-19 pandemic in the country, a senior Chinese diplomat has said.

"Student exchange is the most active part of China-US educational cooperation. However, the current situation has made studying in the US much less attractive, at least in the near future, especially for STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) majors," said Yang Xinyu, minister counselor for educational affairs at the Chinese Embassy in the United States.

"The pandemic has made most in-person exchanges im-

possible... Besides the fact that in the past few months federal policy has changed to make international students nervous, Chinese students and scholars are also facing more challenges and feeling unwelcome or even threatened," said Yang in a recent conversation with Julia Chang Bloch, president of US-China Education Trust, a Washington D.C.-based non-profit organization, and former US ambassador to Nepal. US President Donald Trump's administration has issued tougher immigration policies for international students, in particular, special scrutiny and restrictions for Chinese students, who made up one third of over 1 million international students in the United States before the pandemic.

SOURCE: Xinhua



People sit in a spaced-out dining area at Boston University, Boston, Massachusetts, the United States, on Sept. 4, 2020. PHOTO: WU TONGYANGZI/XINHUA

Awareness, supporting livelihood of local fishermen key to saving endangered dolphins

With eight Ayeyawady dolphins deaths have been recorded so far this year, the year 2020 has seen higher number of the deaths of the endangered species in compared to previous years which saw three to four deaths.

According to reports, dolphins are killed in accidental catches and illegal battery-shock fishing in the Ayeyawady River every year.

During the Ayeyawady Dolphin conservation project beginning on 1st September, 2020, the authorities arrested four fishermen for conducting the electrofishing in the river and seized 21 fishing boats with equipment for the illegal fishing.

Several baby dolphins spotted last year have brought an encouraging sign to conservationists that the endangered species are still breeding in the river.

prison sentence and a Ks300,000 fine.

A survey conducted in February this year had shown over 70 dolphins between Mandalay and Bhamo, and 24 of them were recorded between Mandalay and Kyaukmyaung.

The first scientific survey on dolphins in Myanmar conducted in 2012 found their habitat to be in a 400 km stretch of river between Bhamo and Mingun. There is now roughly a minimum of 60 dolphins left in the Irrawaddy River source of the unique human-dolphin cooperative fishing phenomenon and dolphin-watching ecotourism.

Several baby dolphins spotted last year have brought an encouraging sign to conservationists that the endangered species are still breeding in the river.

However, recent arrest of fishermen, illegal electrofishing equipments and boats in the conservation area in the Ayeyawady River, has reflected that local communities do not understand much about the fisheries law and relevant rules. Or, it is questionable that they are doing this illegal fishing for making ends meet under threat of prison?

To bring the endangered species back from extinction and to increase the existing fishing population in our country, we should taken a dual approach: educating people about the ban on electrofishing and the penalties for violators, and to promote their livelihoods by creating proper job opportunities for them.

The Recreation Centre of Yangon University

By Dr.Saw Mra Aung

THE Recreation Centre, which acquires a better reputation as RC in the university atmosphere, is one of the badges of Yangon University like the Convocation Hall, the Thit-poke tree, etc. It sits on a patch of land covering two and a half acres at the corner of Adhipadhi Road (Chancellor Road) and Judson Road, embowered in shady perennial trees. It is surrounded by the Judson Church and the Panlong Hall to the west, the Arts Hall to the north, the Yangon University Library and the Universities' Central Library to the east and residences of professors to the south. It is an ostentatious, sprawling post-independence two-storeyed building with a roofed entrance-way open to Adhipadhi Road.

The origin of the Recreation Centre dates back to the mid of the 1950s. By that time, Yangon University saw its hey-day and both the teachers and the students were enthusiastically engaged in lectures and research in the university campus all day long. So, some teachers came up with an idea that it would be more relaxing for them and their students, if there was a recreation centre in the campus, where they could take rest and recreation after their day-long lectures and research. All the teachers gave their consent to that idea. Therefore, the Cultural and Social Sub-committee of Yangon University headed by U Myo Min and Dr. Daw Thin Kyi put up to the university authorities a proposal of building a recreation centre in the university campus. Vice Chancellor U Bo Gyi confirmed it. In June, 1956, Yangon University sought donation from the Asian Foundation to be able to push ahead with the construction project of the recreation centre. Thus the Asian Foundation donated a total



The Recreation Centre, which acquires a better reputation as RC in the university atmosphere, is one of the badges of Yangon University like the Convocation Hall, the Thit-poke tree, etc. PHOTO: KYAW ZEYA

of over 8 lakh kyats to Yangon University in 1958.

For the speedy implementation of the construction project, a supervisory committee was, at the advice of the then Rector Dr. Htin Aung, formed. It was chaired by U Po Tha. The members were Dr. Tha Hla (Geology Professor), Dr. Ko Ko Lay (Botany Professor), U Myo Min (English Professor), Mr. Willaim Paul (Economics Professor), Dr. Hla Thwin (Psychology Professor), Dr. Maung Maung Kha (Physics Professor), U Ba Thoke (Maths Professor), U Ba Hli, U Yu Khin (Head of the Students' Affairs Department), U Hla Aung (Registrar) and Mr. James Dolton (Asian Foundation).

After they had met together for 31 times, the decision to build the Recreation Centre at

The origin of the Recreation Centre dates back to the mid of the 1950s. By that time, Yangon University saw its hey-day and both the teachers and the students were enthusiastically engaged in lectures and research in the university campus all day long.

the present site was made. The design and lay-out were drawn by an American architect in league with Sithu U Tin. The contractors were U Khin Zaw and U Gyi Tin. The steel works were done by Electro-mechanical Wat Co.Ltd,

the wood works by Aung Myanmar Co.Ltd. Lighting by Maung Soe Nyunt Brothers Co.Ltd etc.

This two-storeyed building has a total floor-area of 59,000 square feet. It is in the Myanmar-cum-modern style, adapted

students as a place where they can walk leisurely and chat with one another, having tea and snacks ordered from the tea shops and restaurant downstairs and enjoying coolness provided by shady trees bending over the roof. The tea-shops and restaurants are crammed with teachers, students, their guests, old students and administrative staff from sun-rise to sun-set. Especially, stationary and photo-copier shops are packed with the teachers and post graduate students who are writing their theses and dissertations day in, day out. The music and dance rooms are always vibrant with melodies of music and sweet voices of the students who practice singing and dancing. In short, the Recreation Centre turns out to be a veritable hive of activity, humming with conversation of teachers and students and echoing with their laughers, shuffling steps and sweet songs.

In conclusion, many colonial and post-independence buildings, facilities and amenities are hacked out of the huddles of various species of trees growing over the sprawl of the campus of Yangon University, which bears different figurative names such as ဝဲတော်တော် (The Grove of Gangaw Trees), မြေညှိသာ (The Pleasant Emerald-green Island), နံသာကျွန်း (The Island of Fragrant Woods), ဝန်းလှတော (The Grove of Beautiful Flowers), etc. All these buildings have been serving their duties to their maximum capacities right from their inception up to today. The Recreation Centre has also served its duty of offering rest and recreation to the teachers and students for over sixty years. Therefore, we should hail it as an important land-mark on the estate of Yangon University on its centennial occasion.

OPERATION WARP SPEED (OWS)

Americans will receive Pfizer vaccine from Monday: official

Pfizer's coronavirus vaccine is set to reach across US hospitals on Monday even as the country hits 16 million cases of the virus.

Americans will start receiving the Pfizer-BioNTech Covid-19 vaccine on Monday, the official in charge of the distribution operation said Saturday. General Gus Perna told reporters the first doses will be shipped Sunday and that starting Monday morning, "We are operationally 100% confident that we will get the vaccines to the American people." "Expect 145 sites across all the states to receive vaccine on

Monday, another 425 sites on Tuesday. And the final 66 sites on Wednesday, which will complete the initial delivery of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine," he said.

The first push will vaccinate about three million people. Federal health authorities have recommended that health care workers and nursing home residents be at the front of the line, but the decisions will be left to states.

The US became the sixth country to green light the Pfizer vaccine on Friday night. It has been shown to be 95 percent effective in preventing Covid-19 infection compared to a placebo. But the FDA has advised people who have severe allergies to ingredients in the drug to avoid getting immunized for the time being. SOURCE: AFP



Myanmar Daily Weather Report

(Issued at 7:00 pm Sunday 13 December 2020)

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

FORECAST VALID UNTIL AFTERNOON OF THE 14 December 2020: Light rain are likely to be isolated in Upper Sagaing and Taninthayi regions and Kachin state. Degree of certainty is (60%). Weather will be partly cloudy in Chin and Mon states 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 isolated light rain in Taninthayi Region.

FORECAST FOR NAYPYITAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 14 December 2020: Fair weather.

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 14 December 2020: Generally fair weather.

FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 14 December 2020: Fair weather.

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**NEWS
IN BRIEF**

ITALY OVERTAKES UK

Italy has Europe's worst virus death toll

ITALY on Saturday became the European country with the highest pandemic toll, its new total of 64,036 deaths overtaking Britain, according to an AFP tally. The Italian health ministry said that 649 people had succumbed to the virus in the previous 24 hours and that 19,903 new cases had been diagnosed. Worldwide, the United States has reported the highest number of Covid-19 deaths, with 295,539, followed by Brazil, India and Mexico. According to the AFP tally for Europe, Italy overtook Britain, which has reported 64,026 deaths and is followed by France with 57,567 and Spain with 47,624.

SOURCE: AFP

SURGING CASES

S. Korea's daily coronavirus cases exceed 1,000 for 1st time

THE number of daily coronavirus infections in South Korea exceeded 1,000 for the first time on Saturday, health authorities said, as the government considers implementing tougher social distancing measures.

A total of 1,030 new cases of new coronavirus were recorded, the highest since the first case was recorded last January and surpassing the previous record of 950 cases set on Friday. President Moon Jae In, at an emergency session of an interagency meeting on virus response, said the country now faces its "biggest-ever" coronavirus crisis and vowed all-out efforts to contain the spread of infections. The government has been strengthening epidemic prevention measures in the Seoul metropolitan area since the end of November when the arrival of the "third wave" began in earnest, but outbreaks have continued to occur frequently. Moon warned that if the increase in infections cannot be controlled, he would have to consider raising the social distancing guidelines to the highest level, which could have a significant effect on the economy.

SOURCE: Kyodo

THE START OF THE MASS VACCINATION CAMPAIGN

US set for mass vaccinations as world virus deaths top 1.6 million



Pfizer vaccines from Belgium are unloaded at Chicago's O'Hare International Airport in early December. PHOTO: UNITED AIRLINES/AFP

THE US green-lit the Pfizer-BioNTech Covid-19 vaccine late Friday, paving the way for millions of vulnerable people to receive their shots in the world's hardest-hit country.

The Pfizer-BioNTech Covid-19 vaccine was to begin leaving the company's Michigan factory on Sunday, ready to be injected into the arms of millions of the most vulnerable Americans as

the global death toll topped 1.6 million. Doses will be shipped out in boxes containing dry ice that are capable of staying at -70 degrees Celsius (-94 degrees Fahrenheit), the frigid temperature needed to preserve the drug. General Gus Perna, who is overseeing the massive logistical operation as part of the government's Operation Warp Speed, likened the moment to D-Day, a turning point of World War II.

"I am absolutely 100 percent confident that we are going to distribute safely, this precious commodity, this vaccine, needed to defeat the enemy Covid," he told reporters. The imminent start of the mass vaccination campaign in the world's hardest-hit country came as Germany announced a partial lockdown

from Wednesday with non-essential shops and schools to close in a bid to halt an "exponential growth" in coronavirus infections.

The restrictions will apply until January 10, with companies also urged to allow employees to work from home or offer extended company holidays, under the new measures agreed by Chancellor Angela Merkel with regional leaders of Germany's 16 states on Sunday. Germany last week recorded new daily death tolls reaching close to 600 and as disease control agency RKI reported that the infections trend has taken a worrying turn.

Italy meanwhile overtook Britain as the European nation with the highest coronavirus death toll. SOURCE: AFP

COVID CHRISTMAS LOCKDOWN

Non-essential shops, schools to close in Germany

Shops selling non-essential goods, hair-salons and schools in Germany will close from Wednesday, Chancellor Angela Merkel said, to halt an "exponential growth" in new coronavirus infections in Europe's biggest economy.

The partial lockdown will apply until January 10th, with companies also urged to allow employees to work from home or offer extended company holidays, under the new measures agreed by Merkel with regional leaders of Germany's 16 states on Sunday.

Alcohol sales would be banned in public places, essentially outlawing the business of

mulled wine stands, which have proved popular in the days running up to Christmas.

The sale of fireworks will also be banned ahead of New Year's Eve, while care homes will be mandated to carry out coronavirus tests. Germans are urged to limit their social contacts to another household, with a maximum of five people excluding children under 14 meeting at each time. From Christmas Eve to Boxing Day, the contacts would be eased to allow gatherings with another four people excluding children, but who should be limited to close relatives or partners.

SOURCE: AFP



The Boulevard Berlin mall in Berlin on December 11, 2020: PHOTO: ODD ANDERSEN/AFP

THIRD WAVE

Swiss hospital doctors call for more restrictions



For weeks now, the novel coronavirus has been mercilessly lashing Switzerland, and in particular its French-speaking region, where hospitals are rapidly becoming overwhelmed. PHOTO: AFP

MANAGEMENT of five Swiss hospitals have urged the country's health minister to impose more stringent measures as soon as possible, according to media reports.

The directors of the university hospitals of Zurich, Bern, Basel, Lausanne and Geneva said that operations are being postponed to cope with the influx of Covid-19 patients. They are calling in part for a full lockdown, as well as a ban on skiing this winter.

Over 4,000 operations have been put on hold since October, according to the SonntagsZeitung. Currently, about 5,000 cases are reported every day.

Roughly 1.3% of the population has been infected in the last 28 days.

SOURCE: AFP

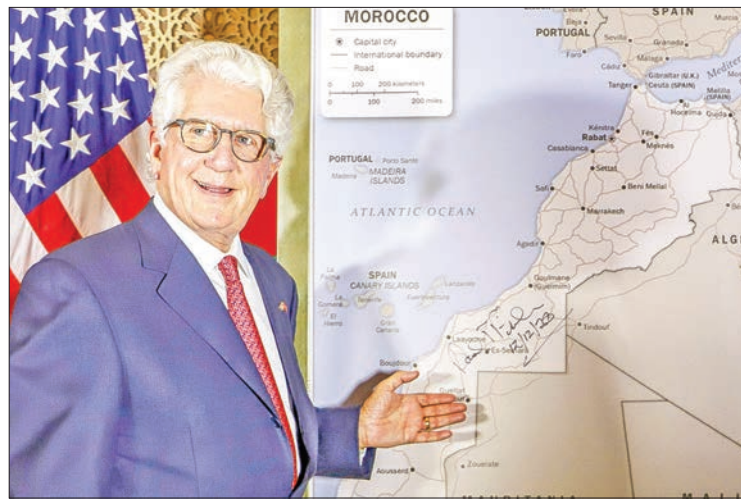
A "NEW OFFICIAL" MAP OF MOROCCO

US adopts map of Morocco that includes disputed Western Sahara

THE United States on Saturday adopted a "new official" map of Morocco that includes the disputed territory of Western Sahara, the U.S. ambassador to Rabat said. "This map is a tangible representation of President Trump's bold proclamation two days ago, recognizing Morocco's sovereignty over Western Sahara," Ambassador David Fischer said according to a statement seen by Agence France-Presse (AFP). He then signed the "new official U.S. government map of the kingdom of Morocco" at a ceremony at the U.S. Embassy in the capital Rabat. The map will be

presented to Morocco's King Mohammed VI, he added. Western Sahara is a disputed and divided former Spanish colony, mostly under Morocco's control, where tensions with the Polisario Front have simmered since the 1970s. The Algerian-backed movement holds a fifth of Western Sahara and has campaigned for a vote on self-determination through decades of war and deadlock.

Morocco on Thursday became the fourth Arab state this year – after the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain and Sudan – to announce it had agreed to normalize relations with Israel.



David T. Fischer, U.S. ambassador to the Kingdom of Morocco, stands in front of a U.S. State Department-authorized map of Morocco recognizing the internationally disputed territory Western Sahara as a part of the North African kingdom, in the capital Rabat, Morocco, Dec. 12, 2020. **PHOTO: AFP**

With barely a month left in office, U.S. President Donald Trump fulfilled a decades-old goal of Morocco's by backing its sovereignty in Western Sahara. The move was part of the outgoing American

leader's diplomatic push to bring Israel and Arab states together. He announced Thursday that Morocco was now the fourth Arab state this year to recognize Israel. **SOURCE: AFP**

NEWS IN BRIEF

LAST-MINUTE MOVES

Breaking norms, Jared Kushner scores late-term wins for Israel

THE United Arab Emirates is getting top-of-the-line fighter jets. Morocco is winning recognition for decades-old territorial claims. And Sudan is coming off the US terrorism blacklist.

The Arab nations are suddenly achieving long-sought goals after agreeing to normalize ties with Israel, in a last-minute triumph for the unorthodox diplomacy of outgoing President Donald Trump's son-in-law, Jared Kushner.

Widely mocked for more than three years as a boyish lightweight, who was best known for his famous wife, troubled property deals and his father's stint in prison, Kushner is scoring historic breakthroughs lauded by Trump's base with four Arab nations since September joining the so-called Abraham Accords with Israel.

"President Trump took a contrarian approach," Kushner told reporters Thursday as he announced the latest deal, with Morocco, saying that the Arab-Israeli conflict "has been held back for so long by old thinking and by stalled process." Veterans of Middle East diplomacy agree that Kushner moved nimbly after the United Arab Emirates first signalled its willingness to recognize Israel.

"He had the authority; he was smart enough to develop personalized relations. I think he clearly deserves some credit for taking advantage of what the landscape showed was possible," said Dennis Ross, who served as Bill Clinton's Middle East envoy.

Kushner, a family friend of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, broke decades of US norms on Middle East peacemaking by barely making a pretense of being evenhanded with the Palestinians. Trump recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital and, in a long-delayed Middle East plan unveiled in January 2020, gave the US blessing if Netanyahu wanted to annex much of the West Bank.

SOURCE: AFP

BREXIT TRADE TALKS

UK and EU ditch deadline and pursue Brexit talks

BRITAIN'S Prime Minister Boris Johnson and EU chief Ursula von der Leyen agreed Sunday to push on with post-Brexit trade talks despite the passing of a self-imposed deadline.

The pair had said they would decide whether or not an agreement was possible by the end of the weekend but after a cross-Channel crisis call agreed to "go the extra mile".

"We had a useful phone call this morning. We discussed the major unresolved topics," von der Leyen said in a brief televised statement that was also issued jointly by UK officials.



Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson and EU chief Ursula von der Leyen agreed Sunday to push on with post-Brexit trade talks despite the passing of a self-imposed deadline. **PHOTO: AFP**

"Our negotiating teams have been working day and night over recent days."

The EU's Michel Barnier

and Britain's David Frost held talks late on Saturday and early on Sunday and will continue to negotiate in Brussels. "And despite the exhaustion after almost a year of negotiations, despite the fact that deadlines have been missed over and over we think it is responsible at this point to go the extra mile," the leaders said.

"We have accordingly mandated our negotiators to continue the talks and to see whether an agreement can even at this late stage be reached."

Sunday was the latest in a string of supposedly hard deadlines for the talks but tension is

rising with just 19 days left until Britain leaves the EU single market.

On Saturday, Britain took the dramatic step of announcing that naval vessels will patrol its waters from January 1 to exclude European crews from the fishing grounds they have shared, in some cases for centuries.

Brussels' tone has been less bellicose, and von der Leyen has made it clear that the EU will respect UK sovereignty after the post-Brexit transition period, but neither side is yet ready to compromise on core principles.

SOURCE: AFP

A WORLD-FAMOUS LANDMARK

Ukraine seeks World Heritage status for Chernobyl zone

A soft snow fell as a clutch of visitors equipped with a Geiger counter wandered through the ghostly Ukrainian town of Pripyat, fro-

zen in time since the world's worst nuclear accident in 1986. More than three decades after the Chernobyl nuclear disaster

forced thousands to evacuate, there is an influx of visitors to the area that has spurred officials to seek official status from UNES-

CO. "The Chernobyl zone is already a world famous landmark," guide Maksym Polivko told AFP during a tour on a recent frosty day. "But today this area has no official status," the 38-year-old said of the exclusion zone where flourishing wildlife is taking over deserted Soviet-era tower blocks, shops and official buildings. That could be set to change under the government initiative to have the area included on the UNESCO heritage list alongside landmarks like India's Taj Mahal or Stonehenge in England. Officials hope recognition from the UN's culture agency will boost the site as a tourist attraction and in turn bolster efforts to preserve ageing buildings nearby.

SOURCE: AFP



Charred trees loom over a grave at the cemetery near Rozsokha inside the Chernobyl exclusion zone following the worst fire since the 1986 nuclear disaster. **PHOTO: AFP**

REVENUE STRUGGLES

Ailing newspapers abandon newsrooms as pandemic deepens woes

THE buzzing newsroom has long been the lifeblood of American newspapers. But in recent months the buzz has become virtual as the pandemic deepens the industry crisis and forces journalists to work remotely.

In recent months, established dailies such as the New York Daily News, Miami Herald and Baltimore Sun have joined other news outlets abandoning their headquarters, amid pandemic workplace restrictions that had already left them empty.

Tribune Publishing, owner of the Baltimore daily and others, has acknowledged it is re-evaluating its real estate needs as it struggles with a difficult environment, with lower print circulation, falling advertising revenues and increased costs for health and safety.

But many journalists say the loss of the newsroom has changed the nature of their work and worry that newspapers may not re-establish newsrooms

even after the pandemic.

"A newsroom is a lot more collaborative than a lot of other workspaces are," said Emily Brindley, a reporter at the Tribune-owned Hartford (Connecticut) Courant, which shut its newsroom this month.

"I definitely think that it's going to have an effect on the product," added Brindley, an organizer of the Courant Guild, which represents journalists. "I do feel that there will be some intangible effects."

One of Brindley's colleagues in Hartford, Daniela Altimari, said she believes the pandemic "proved that we could all work from home and still put out a newspaper," making it unlikely the newsroom will reopen. She fears for the quality of the work.

"Newsrooms are factories for ideas in a way. There's a lot of chance encounters," Altimari said. "You get ideas by talking to colleagues. Those chance encounters can really lead to better work."



The New York Daily News has joined other newspapers in abandoning their newsrooms and headquarters amid a deepening crisis for the industry during the pandemic. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

Victor Pickard, a professor who follows the sector for the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg School for Communication, said the pandemic "is certainly accelerating and exacerbating the journalism crisis, but this crisis predated the pandemic by years."

He said large newspaper chains such as McClatchy and Tribune "are seizing this opportunity to cut costs, as they

often do in order to maximize profits," while adding that at the moment "they're not very profitable these days."

The move out of the newsroom follows a long crisis for the sector that has seen consolidation by major chains, the closing of many smaller papers, and hedge funds buying newspapers only to slash costs and squeeze out as much profit as possible.

SOURCE: AFP

CONTROVERSIAL CLERIC

Indonesia arrests firebrand Islamist cleric over virus rule breaches

A firebrand Indonesian Muslim cleric was arrested Sunday for allegedly breaching coronavirus restrictions after he held a series of sermons with tens of thousands of followers.

Rizieq Shihab's arrest came just days after Jakarta police shot dead six followers of his hardline Islamist group in a highway shootout.

Shihab will be detained for 20 days to prevent him from fleeing and destroying evidence, police said.

"Another reason for the detention is for him not to repeat the offence," National Police spokesman Argo Yuwono said Sunday. If found guilty, he could face up to six years behind bars for breaching coronavirus rules. Shihab was welcomed by tens of thousands of followers at Jakarta airport on his return from exile last month, in violation of a Covid-19 ban on gatherings. As dozens who attended that gathering subsequently tested positive for the coronavirus, police summoned Shihab several times for questioning.

Indonesia has reported more than 600,000 coronavirus infections and over 18,500 deaths, with authorities imposing nationwide restrictions to curb the spread of the disease.

Despite those restrictions, Shihab held sermons, a celebration of the birthday of Islam's Prophet Mohammed, and his daughter's wedding -- all of which were attended by thousands of people.

SOURCE: AFP

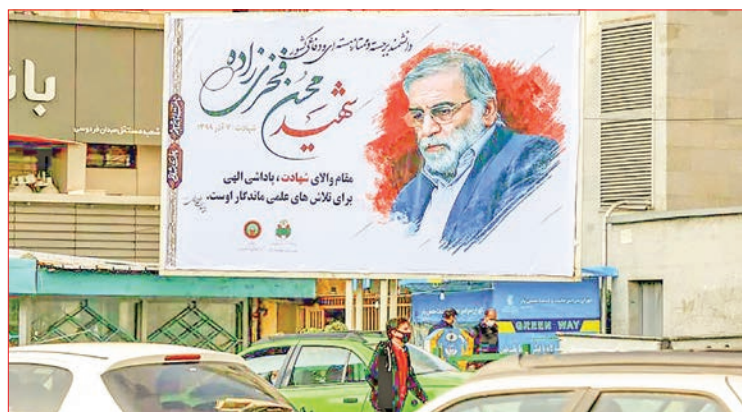
THE FIRST CLASS ORDER OF NASR ("VICTORY" IN PERSIAN)

Iran's Khamenei awards military medal to slain nuclear scientist

IRAN'S supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei on Sunday posthumously awarded a prestigious military decoration to top nuclear scientist Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, who was assassinated last month, state television reported.

Fakhrizadeh was killed on a major road outside Tehran in late November in a bomb and gun attack that the Islamic republic has blamed on its arch foe Israel.

The broadcaster said the first class Order of Nasr ("Victory" in Persian), bearing Khamenei's signature, was handed to the scientist's family by the



Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei on Sunday posthumously awarded a prestigious military decoration to top nuclear scientist Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, who was assassinated last month. PHOTO: AFP

armed forces chief of staff Major General Mohammad Bagheri.

"This is a decoration meant for dear ones who defend the

Islamic revolution and Iran's territorial integrity and independence," Bagheri said.

He added that it is the high-

est medal awarded in recognition of logistics contribution and support of the troops.

After Fakhrizadeh's death, Defence Minister Amir Hatami referred to him as his deputy minister and head of the ministry's Organization of Defensive Innovation and Research (SPND), focusing on the field of "nuclear defence."

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu alleged in 2018 that Fakhrizadeh was the head of a secret nuclear weapons programme, the existence of which the Islamic republic has always denied.

SOURCE: AFP

ANGRY OVER SALARIES

Workers riot at India iPhone factory over 'exploitation' claims

AUTHORITIES vowed to crack down on workers who went on a violent rampage at a Taiwanese-run iPhone factory in southern India over allegations of unpaid wages and exploitation, with 100 people arrested so far.

The workers rioted Saturday at Wistron Infocomm Manufacturing's facility on the outskirts of Bangalore, India's IT hub, with videos of the violence showing glass panels smashed with rods and cars flipped on their side.

CCTV cameras, fans and lights were torn down, while a car was set on fire, footage shared on social

media showed. Local media reported workers saying they had not been paid for up to four months and were being forced to do extra shifts.

"The situation is under control now. We have formed special teams to investigate the incident," local police told AFP on Sunday, adding no-one was injured.

The deputy chief minister of Karnataka state, C.N. Ashwathnarayan, called the violence "wanton" and said his government would ensure that the situation is "resolved expeditiously".

SOURCE: AFP



Private security personnel guard the entrance of the factory. PHOTO: AFP

FEDERAL RESERVE

Fed may convey optimism on US economy despite stimulus deadlock

AFTER a year in which the Federal Reserve pushed out unprecedented lending to support the economy while pleading for government stimulus that never came, central bankers could show early signs of optimism next week.

The policy-setting Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) will open its final meeting of 2020 on Tuesday, capping a year that saw the world's largest economy contract massively due to Covid-19, and Joe Biden oust President Donald Trump in the November presidential



Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell can't make Congress agree on stimulus, but he can reassure markets that the central bank will be there for them. PHOTO: POOL/AFP/FILE

The Fed and its chair Jerome Powell likely will, as usual, steer clear of making any political statement, but experts say they likely will up-

date their view on how the economy will fare in 2021 as vaccines against the virus are rolled out.

However, the outlook is not entirely clear.

"This is actually a

pretty difficult FOMC to analyze," Steven Englander of Standard Chartered Bank said. "Picking up the pieces is going to be more complicated and will kind of look more complicated in six months than it does now."

Looming over the meeting is continued failure of Congress to pass another spending package to help the economy recover from the Covid-19 downturn -- something Powell and other central bankers have gently but persistently urged them to do for months.

SOURCE: AFP

EFFICIENT USE OF NATURAL GAS

China's natural gas consumption rises in first 10 months

CHINA'S natural gas consumption rose steadily year on year in the first 10 months amid efforts to achieve green development, data from the country's top economic planner showed.

Apparent consumption of natural gas increased 5 percent year on year to 257.73 billion cubic meters in the January-October period, according to the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC).

October alone saw an 11.4-percent jump year on year in natural gas consumption, reaching 26.78 billion cubic meters, NDRC data showed.

China has been promoting the efficient, large-scale use of natural gas in sectors including industrial fuel, power generation and transportation.

SOURCE: Xinhua

SANDY WILDERNESS

Libya 4WD road warriors on bumpy ride to revive tourism

A road trip through Libya's desert would long have sounded like a holiday in hell but, two months into a ceasefire, adventurous travellers are exploring the Sahara by four-wheel drive.

Foreigners are still staying clear of the country after a decade of war -- but some 1,000 Libyans recently set off in a pioneering convoy of 300 all-terrain vehicles through the sandy wilderness.

Hopeful that the October truce will hold, they

sought to rediscover the natural beauty of a country that boasts sweeping desert vistas, hidden oas-

is towns, ancient Greek and Roman ruins, and a Mediterranean coastline.

SOURCE: AFP



Libyans take part in a 4x4 tourism trip through the desert. PHOTO: AFP

Transferring Distributor for Registered Products

Distribution of following pesticides registered by Asiatic Agricultural Industries Pte Ltd (Singapore) is transferring from Asiatic Agricultural Industries Pte Ltd (Myanmar Branch) to JJ-Pun Trading Co., Ltd Any objection regarding to this transfer can notify at Co Secretary, Myanmar Pesticide Registration Board, West Gyogone, Insein Township within two weeks.

No	Product Name	A.I	Type of Reg	Registration Number
1	ABLE MAX	Cypermethrin 25% w/w EC	Provisional	P 2018 - 4466
2	ARMOUR 200SC	Imidacloprid 200g/l SC	Provisional	P 2018 - 4478
3	MALANON 95SULV	Malathion 950g/l TG ULV	Full	F 2014 - 939
4	PROTECT TOTAL	Azamethiphos 1%GB	Full	F 2019 - 1879
5	QUEST MC	Lambda-cyhalothrin 25g/L MC	Provisional	2015 - 2782
6	ROBAN	Bromadiolone 0.05g/Kg Wax Block	Provisional	2015 - 2781
7	SAFEGUARD 500EC	Permethrin 500g/L EC	Full	F 2019 - 1883
8	SHIELD 50SC	Fipronil 50g/l SC	Provisional	P 2018 - 4220
9	SNIPER CG	Fipronil 0.05% w/w CG	Provisional	P 2018 - 4465
10	SPAR 1% SG	Temephos 1%SG	Full	F 2017 - 1459
11	VIC 80 SC	Bifenthrin 80g/L SC	Provisional	2015 - 2786
12	VISTA 10EC	Bifenthrin 100g/l EC	Provisional	P 2018 - 4464

Asiatic Agricultural Industries Pte Ltd (Myanmar Branch), Room 209, Rangoun Business Center, No.97, West Shwe Gon Daing Road. Tele : 09-5145328

Invitation for Bids

The Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Ministry of Electricity and Energy
National Electrification Project

Credit No 5727-MM

Date: 14th December 2020

Contract Title: Supply of Goods and Installation for River Crossings of Distribution Lines

Reference No: MOEE-NEP-P2/C1-W12/2020

1. The Republic of the Union of Myanmar has received financing from the World Bank toward the cost of the National Electrification Project, and intends to apply part of the proceeds toward payments under the contract for Supply of Goods and Installation for River Crossings Distribution Lines.

2. The Ministry of Electricity and Energy now invites sealed bids from eligible bidders for Supply of Goods and Installation for River Crossings of Distribution Lines.

The number and identification of lots comprising this bidding process is:

Lot 1: Ayeyarwady Region

Lot 2: Shan (North), Shan (South), Shan (East), Magway, Mandalay and Sagaing

Lot 3: Bago (West), Bago (East), Mon and Rakhine State

3. Bidding will be conducted through the National Competitive Bidding procedures as specified in the World Bank's *Guidelines: Procurement of Goods, Works and Non-Consulting Services under IBRD Loans and IDA Credits & Grants by World Bank Borrowers* ("Procurement Guidelines"), and is open to all eligible bidders as defined in the Procurement Guidelines. In addition, please refer to paragraphs 1.6 and 1.7 setting forth the World Bank's policy on conflict of interest.

4. Interested eligible bidders may obtain further information from Project Management Office (National Electrification Project), Project Manager and nep.pmooee@gmail.com and inspect the bidding documents during office hours [10:00 to 16:00 hours] at the address given below.

5. A complete set of bidding documents in English may be obtained free of charge by interested eligible bidders upon the submission of a written application to the address below. The Bidding Documents will be issued through email only.

6. Bids must be delivered to the address below on or before 28th January 2021. Electronic bidding will not be permitted. Late bids will be rejected. Bids will be publicly opened in the presence of the bidders' designated representatives and anyone who choose to attend at the address below.

7. All bids must be accompanied by "Bid-Security"

8. The address (es) referred to above is (are):

Attention: Project Manager
Project Management Office
(National Electrification Project)
Office Building No.53,
Ministry of Electricity and Energy

City: Nay Pyi Taw

Country: The Republic of the Union of Myanmar

Zip Code: 15011

Telephone: +95 67 3431176

Facsimile number: +95 67 3431176

Electronic mail address: nep.pmooee@gmail.com

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V SINAR BANDA VOY. NO. (206 N/S)

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V SINAR BANDA VOY. NO. (206 N/S) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 14-12-2020 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.

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Shwe Myintzu Ye Lae Pagoda is one of the famous pagodas in Kachin State.



Indawgyi Lake and **Shwe Myintzu Ye Lae Pagoda**

By Thiha Lu Lin
(THIHA, THE TRAVELLER)
TRANSLATED BY EI PHYU
PHYU AUNG

THE full moon day of Tazaungmon is usually full of pagoda festivals with balloons and candle lights following the traditions. However, this year, everything is quiet, so is the Indawgyi Shwe Myintzu Pagoda Festival. When I was about to go to Indawgyi, I was actually scared as I am afraid of deep water. I heard the news as well. But when I got there, I was relieved to see the pilgrims on the motorboats crossing around. Although it is relatively easy to reach near the pagoda market by car in the afternoon, it isn't easy to do so in the evening.

We got out of the car at the entrance of the market and went to the boat dock while looking around food stalls, souvenir shops and the shops selling flowers and donation items. The boat fare is 2,000 kyats per person. You can only ride a motorboat when the tide is high. When I went, I did not see seagulls. At times, it's pleasant to see the birds flock to the boat and beg for food. At low tide, roads appear and are often viewed as human and spiritual roads as well as called sand roads. It is also known that it is visible during the full moon festival and disappears after the festival. Garbage is also clean on



2000 kyats for the boat fare

its own. The path of human is now paved with concrete and can be used day and night for traffic. I am not sure if the course of deity can't be walked on or not since it was during the high tide when I got there.

How do we get there?

Most came down from Myitkyina. Some came up from Katha. Most came for pilgrimage after Mohnyin. I went from Myitkyina. It takes about 3 hours by car. People from Katha often come after the pilgrimage to Zalontaung Pagoda.

Indawgyi Lake

Indawgyi Lake, home to the Shwe Myintzu Yele Pagoda, is

the largest natural lake in Myanmar and is 14 miles long and 7 miles wide. It is more noticeable from the top of Mount Hoha. The locals are proud of the fact that the water is always clean and free of garbage.

Shan people mostly live around Indawgyi lake. They are the Shan Reds called Tai Lyan. Therefore, Shan drum sound with Shan songs and Shan dances are the most heard and seen during the festival in Kachin State.

Indawgyi Wildlife Sanctuary has also been established around Indawgyi Lake. Therefore, bird watching enthusiasts especially visit this area. One of the unique features of Indawgyi Lake is the Shwe Myintzu Pagoda in the cen-



The pagoda is 50 feet tall and 39 feet 10 inches wide

tre of the lake. Most of the visitors come here to pay homage to the pagoda.

Shwe Myintzu Ye Lae Pagoda

I see that the history of Shwe Myintzu Pagoda and Indawgyi Lake is a mixture of science and

ow who heard this, and she went from house to house to deliver the message, but no one believed her.

When the widow moved to the highlands with her family and relatives, seven days later, heavy rains fell, and the town disappeared. The widow who

He smiled when he saw the pagoda where the Buddha stood and where the sacred relics were located. According to this preordainment, it came to the time of Sayadaw U Nyi Thu, a well-known Alchemist. He was asked by the people living near the lake for help with Labit and Lataung crocodiles as people did not dare to cross the boat or to take a bath in the lake because they were afraid of the crocodiles and the Indawgyi Lord. Thus, they asked Sayadaw U Nyi Thu for help to apologize to Indawgyi Lord to keep the crocodiles. Monk U Nyi Thu apologized to Indawgyi Lord and took a boat and three small stones. He went to Indawgyi Lake with the wish to build pagoda although he was disturbed by a heavy storm. He wished to guide him with the place to make the pagoda.

It is said that there was a sandbank near the place where the Shwe Myintzu pagoda will be built, and a giant sea creature blocked the boat from going there. With a cane on the sand, he was able to drop three small

the golden box, which became known as Shwe Myintzu.

In the past, the relics were located above, but the pagoda's shrine has been upgraded, which makes it lower when the tide is down, so women are not allowed to enter the pagoda.

Locals are very wary of heavy rain and people falling in the lake when women go up to the pagoda. There is a separate room for women to pay homage from there. It is said that a floating ring road is planned to construct soon.

The Shwe Myintzu Pagoda is said to be 50 feet tall, and the base is 39 feet 10 inches. You will also see 152 small pagodas built. Many people pay to visit the pagoda whether they know the history of the pagoda or for the regional knowledge. The pagoda festival is also a lot of fun for both locals and visitors.

Best time to visit

It is quite alive during Ta Paung La Pagoda Festival (around March), Thadingyut and Tazaungmon Full Moon Days. Since I visited on the full moon

- shore every night
- 7. water flow to the different direction three times per year
- 8. Rivers are not allowed to flow cleanly into the lake
- 9. Every year, from the month of Tazaungmon to the month of Pyatho, the fish in the lake die.

In addition to nine unique things, the water leaks out and is flowing upwards in reverse. Plants that grow in the lake also change and disappear every ten years.

Where to stay?

There are good hostels in Indawgyi for pagoda festivals. Most of the time, they build and rent for the festival season. There are very few well-built ones. I stayed at Htay Metta Advanced Guest House. Typically, there were a few simple rooms, but luckily there were only two VIP rooms so that I could have one. There was also an air-conditioned room with an attached bathroom included with the refrigerator (mini bar).

In a place where water is scarce, it was impressive. Since restaurants are offering Chinese



Start of the market stall



Photo spots during the visit to Indawgyi

mythology, depending on each person's belief.

Due to the practice of erasing years of the era in the calendar by ancient Burmese kings, historians often try to relate some historical facts. In any case, it is no longer a matter of arguing that only a little history is accepted.

Shwe Myintzu Ye Lae Pagoda is one of the famous pagodas in Kachin State.

When Uttara Htarni Si Khan, a town inhabited by Taman people who spend their time indulging in sensual pleasures, had been decided to be flooded by the Dragon Council, the Dragon Prince came to the land. He announced to leave the town in 7 days. But there was only one wid-

escaped was also the founder of the Widow Pagoda and is often visited when visiting the area. That is the legendary history of how Indawgyi Lake came to be.

History of Shwe Myintzu Pagoda is that once upon a time, when Gautama Buddha ascended to the region, he saw a hermit at the foot of a mountain. The hermit remained silent. Buddha stopped at the top of the mountain (called Elephant Head Mountain). He looked at the ground and looked upset then smiled again when Ananda asked him why he said that the hermit he had just seen would later become the ruler of the lake that would be here and that the living beings would perish for many years.

stones on top of the sand. Then, the sea creature also disappeared, and the heavy rain was calm and pleasant. It is believed that the Lord of Indawgyi had placed the crocodiles under the Golden Mountain forever. It is said that the Shwe Myintzu Pagoda was formed at the place where alchemist U Nyi Thu dropped the three stones.

It was the monk U Thar Aye (U Thar Bit) who made this Shwe Myintzu pagoda stand out. It is said to have been built in 1230 ME. The pagoda is also said to have a shrine with the five Noble relics brought from the Shwedagon Pagoda. The shrine was placed on a boat in a gold box, so it was named Mazutha after

day, I saw the practice of launching balloons.

9 Wonders of Indawgyi

- 1. Eight miles long and 4 miles wide (16 miles x 8 miles - the widest width at the highest tide).
- 2. The water is clean and clear
- 3. There is no big sea creature in the lake, although it is large and spacious (assumed that it was possibly controlled by Lord Indawgyi).
- 4. In the lake, if a person falls, he or she is brought to the shore without any fish-eating or defects
- 5. Gold can be mined near the lake
- 6. Garbage is brought back to

and Myanmar foods, it is also convenient for food. Because it is a family-style, the hostel is as warm as your family. You can spend the night there and visit Shwe Myintzu Ye Lae Pagoda in Indawgyi.

Indawgyi actually has many other places to visit besides Shwe Myintzu Pagoda. This is only about the Shwe Myintzu Pagoda, so I won't mention other things to see. If you have time, you should visit for two nights. I appreciate the help of Sayar Nay Lin for providing a reference for the history of the pagoda and the lake.

If you have the opportunity, I would like to say that it is a place worth visiting.





Paul Pogba insists he is committed to Manchester United despite comments from his agent. **PHOTO: AFP/MICHAEL REGAN**

‘1,000% involved’: Pogba insists he is committed to Man. United

LONDON—Paul Pogba claimed he remains fully committed to Manchester United despite his agent stating he is “unhappy” at Old Trafford and looking for a move in January.

Pogba was recalled to Ole Gunnar Solskjaer’s starting line-up for Saturday’s (Dec 12) uninspired 0-0 draw with Manchester City in the Premier League.

The French World Cup winner had started on the bench as United crashed out of the Champions League at the group stage with defeat to RB Leipzig on Tuesday.

Just a day before the game, Pogba’s outspoken agent Mino Raiola told Italian newspaper *Tuttosport* his client had to “change teams”.

The 27-year-old rejoined United for a then world record £89 million (US\$118 million) in 2016, but has failed to make the desired impact as the Red Devils have not challenged to win either the Premier League or the Champions League.

“I’ve always fought and will always fight for @manchesterunited, my teammates and the fans,” Pogba posted on Instagram.—AFP ■

After defeat at Everton, Frank Lampard rubbishes Chelsea’s chances of winning title

LONDON—Frank Lampard rubbished his side’s chances of winning the Premier League this season after missing out on the chance to move back top of the table with a 1-0 defeat at Everton in front of 2,000 fans at Goodison Park on Saturday.

A run of 17 games without defeat after splashing £220 million (\$291 million) in the transfer market had seen Chelsea talked up as serious title contenders to the likes of Liverpool, Tottenham and Manchester City.

However, Lampard claimed his side have to still be considered young pretenders after they failed to muster a response to Gylfi Sigurdsson’s 22nd minute penalty.

“Some people who are

saying ‘we’re going to win the league, we’ve got the best squad in the league’, it’s ridiculous stuff,” said Lampard.

“When you talk about the best squads, you have to look at the teams that have won it in the last two, three or four years. Their squads are full of strikers and wingers that score 30 or 40 goals a season, midfield players that have won multiple league titles all over the place.

“We have some but we have young players and as a squad we’re not there. It’s very quickly gone from we were nowhere near good enough after the games against West Brom and Southampton to we’re title favourites.—AFP ■

JFA invites ASEAN women players to join 2021 WE League

THE Japan Football Association (JFA) has officially welcomed the ASEAN Football Federation (AFF) to invite women players from the ASEAN region, including Myanmar, to play in 2021 WE (Women’s Empowerment) League of Japan.

The JFA invitation was discussed at the ASEAN Football Federation Organizing Committee meeting this week, and the member countries have agreed to participate in the tourney. The next AFF Council meeting will decide which women players will be eligible for the upcoming Japanese competition.

The WE League, which will be launched for the first time next year, will feature between six and ten football teams with outstanding players across Asia.

The WE League, a highest-level professional league for the Japanese women’s football, is a step up from the current Japanese Women’s League (Nadeshiko League), according to an



Myanmar women’s player San Thaw Thaw (No 9) carries the ball against the Japanese players during a previous AFC U-19 Women’s Championship in Chonburi, Thailand on 28 October 2019. **PHOTO: MFF**

official statement from the Japan Football Association.

Star footballers from the ASEAN region, mostly young and promising players from Myanmar will be an excellent opportunity to join the Japanese League.

FIFA has also increased the 2023 Women’s World Cup to 32

teams, with eight teams participating from the Asian region. Thus, the Myanmar women’s team can hope more to qualify for the first round of the Women’s World Cup after winning the upcoming Asian Cup, according to the Myanmar Football Federation.—Lynn Thit (Tgi)

Joshua knocks out Pulev to set up potential Fury fight



Knockout: Anthony Joshua (right) knocked out Bulgaria’s Kubrat Pulev (left) to retain his three world heavyweight titles on Dec 12 UK time. **PHOTO: AFP**

LONDON—Anthony Joshua said he wants to unify all four world heavyweight boxing titles in an all-British clash with Tyson Fury after a dominant ninth round knockout of Bulgaria’s Kubrat Pulev at London’s Wembley Arena on Saturday (Dec 12).

In front of 1,000 fans, with attendance limited due to coronavirus restrictions, Joshua ensured there was no repeat of a shock defeat in his first clash with Andy Ruiz Jr in 2019 as the 39-year-old

Pulev was swatted aside.

Attention will now turn to the possibility of a much-anticipated clash with World Boxing Council (WBC) champion Fury in 2021.

“I’m up for anything. Who wants to see Anthony Joshua box Tyson Fury in 2021?” Joshua asked the crowd to a chorus of cheers.

“I started this game in 2013 and I’ve been chasing the belts ever since.

“Whoever has got the belt, I

would love to compete with them. If that is Tyson Fury then let it be Tyson Fury.”

Pulev had lost just once previously in his career to Wladimir Klitschko in 2014, but was outclassed by Joshua, who could have had victory wrapped up within three rounds.

Twice Pulev was given a count by the referee in round three after he was left flailing on the ropes by an explosive burst of punches from Joshua.—AFP ■