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Sunday, 20 December 2020

Myanmar relief flights bring citizens back home from foreign countries



Myanmar returnees queue for immigration clearance at the Yangon International Airport on 19 December 2020. PHOTO: MNA

MYANMAR Embassy in Singapore organized the relief flight for 130 citizens who wanted to come back from the city state. They arrived at Yangon International Airport by the Myanmar National Airlines (MNA) yesterday evening.

Moreover, the Myanmar Embassy in Seoul, the Republic

of Korea and JSM International Company organized the relief flight of MNA to bring back 137 Myanmar seamen – 114 from the ROK, 9 from Japan, 12 from Brazil and 2 from China — via Incheon International Airport, and they landed in Yangon in the same evening.

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 is cooperating with the relevant ministries, shipping

companies and organizations for the repatriation of Myanmar citizens, who are stranded in foreign countries, in accordance with the instructions from National-Level Central Committee on Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19).—MNA

(Translated by TTN)

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“People are the key”

MoHS, MWSF jointly organize “Healthy and Happy Life in the New Normal Era” online seminar

THE Ministry of Health and Sports and Myanmar Women’s Sports Federation jointly held “Healthy and Happy Life in the New Normal Era” online seminar yesterday.

Union Minister Dr Myint Htwe, Deputy Minister Dr Mya Lay Sen, Director-General for Sports and Physical Education Department U Myo Hlaing, Deputy Directors-General U Tun Myint Oo, U Kyaw San and U Kyaw Oo, Chair for Myanmar Women’s Sports Federation Daw Khin Lay, Vice-Chair Daw Yi Yi Win, Head for Myanmar Women’s Sports Team (Kayin) Sub-committee Dr Thi Thi Win, Dr Ye Tint Lwin, Director for Sports and Physical Education Department (Sagaing) U Kyaw Min Than and other officials of relevant departments joined the seminar.

The Union Minister discussed suitable strategies for sector-wise development amid COVID-19 pandemic, proper action plans of ministry in respective sectors, efforts of Myanmar Women’s Sports Federation in physical activities for public



Union Minister Dr Myint Htwe joins Healthy and Happy Life in the New Normal Era online seminar on 19 December 2020. PHOTO: MNA

health and suggestions how to conduct sports events or competition in the post-COVID-19 period.

He also highlighted the benefits of physical exercises, fitness dance programmes of Myanmar Women’s Sports Federation in each region and state under “Exercise is Medicine (EIM)”

programme and participation of the public in physical exercise programmes especially in COVID-19 outbreak.

He briefed the plan of ministry to publish a book regarding the benefits of doing exercises in short- and long-term and then made a pledge to keep providing the Myanmar Women’s Sports

Federation in their activities.

Deputy Minister Dr Mya Lay Sein, in her capacity as Patron of Myanmar Women’s Sports Federation discussed the performance of federation especially for women, expectant mothers and female athletes, plans to adopt New Normal Life-style and exercises to help boost the

immune system, especially in COVID-19 outbreak.

She also explained the EIM programme which is being implemented by UN, WHO and IOC in addition to the Ministry of Health and Sports and Myanmar Women’s Sports Federation, the participation of people living any parts of Myanmar in holding sports events and new normal life-styles in New Normal Life Era.

Then, Chair of Myanmar Women’s Sports Federation Daw Khin Lay reported on missions, visions and performance of federation before COVID-19 outbreak and currently conducting action plans and other officials coordinated the discussion.

Deputy Minister also recommended cooperation with the Ministry of Information in conducting public awareness programmes, an online sports event for all children at any age and plans for the children with disabilities to join the competitions. —MNA

(Translated by Khine Thazin Han)

MoSWRR discusses implementation of National Standard Action Plan on Readmission, Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Trafficked Persons

MINISTRY of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement held a coordination meeting on the implementation of the National Standard Action Plan on Readmission, Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Trafficked Persons, through videoconferencing in Nay Pyi Taw.

During the meeting, Union Minister Dr Win Myat Aye said that regular employment became difficult to get during the COVID-19 crisis and the increasing use of the internet may increase the number of victims of human trafficking through scams on the internet in the country, and it is important to note that the victims include not only young women and girls but also men.

He added the forming of the Central Body for the Suppression of Trafficking in Persons for the effective implementation of the provisions of Trafficking in Persons Law.

The Ministry has been cooperating with working groups and related departments, social organizations and United Nations’ agencies and INGOs and putting efforts to complete the work in the annual action plan of the Five-Year Anti-Trafficking Plan drawn up by the Central Body for the Suppression of Trafficking in Persons.

In addition, the implementation of the process includes the forming of National Standard Action Plan on Readmission, Repatriation to Parents and Family Reunification of the Trafficked Persons.

The Union Minister urged to suggest the advantages and disadvantages of existing projects and on future activities and policies in order to bring the best benefits and provide consistent services in accordance with the National Standard Actin Plan. He said the successful implementation of readmission, rein-



Union Minister Dr Win Myat Aye joins a meeting on the implementation of the National Standard Action Plan on Readmission, Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Trafficked Persons, through videoconferencing on 19 December 2020. PHOTO: MNA

tegration and rehabilitation of victims of trafficking would have an impact on the prevention of human trafficking and public awareness of the legal and litigation process will help reduce and eliminate human trafficking.

He also added the importance of the role of communi-

ty-based anti-trafficking bodies such as ward and village administrators, auxiliary fire brigade, Red Cross Members, Women’s Committee and relevant local police force in anti-trafficking in persons because of their closeness to the public.

After the discussion of the

attendees, the Union Minister said to carry out widespread and effective educating to the public as anti-human trafficking and rehabilitation activities are one of the State Government’s priorities, and he called for the cooperation between community-based anti-trafficking bodies, officials from the Social Welfare and Rehabilitation Departments and public to be able to effectively implement the National Standard Action Plan on Readmission, Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Trafficked Persons.

The online meeting was also attended by Deputy Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement U Soe Aung, the Permanent Secretary, the Directors-General, officials and Ministers for Security and Border Affairs from the respective states, regions and Nay Pyi Taw Council.—MNA

(Translated by Ei Phyu Phyu Aung)

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

Vice-President's wife, MoRAC Minister attend Christmas ceremony, giving thanks to God online

THE Myanmar Evangelical Christian Alliance (MECA) held a pre-Christmas ceremony to give thanks to God in Yangon in accordance with COVID-19 health guidelines yesterday.

Dr Shwe Hluan, wife of Vice-President U Henry Van Thio, and Union Minister for Religious Affairs and Culture Thura U Aung Ko made greeting speeches via videoconferencing.

Deputy Minister for MoRAC and officials, the priests and the invited guests also attended the ceremony.

During the ceremony, Treasurer of MECA Rev. Thein Tan Tun read the bible while Rev. NC Thwang Tha Thang and Worship Team delivered Christmas sermons.

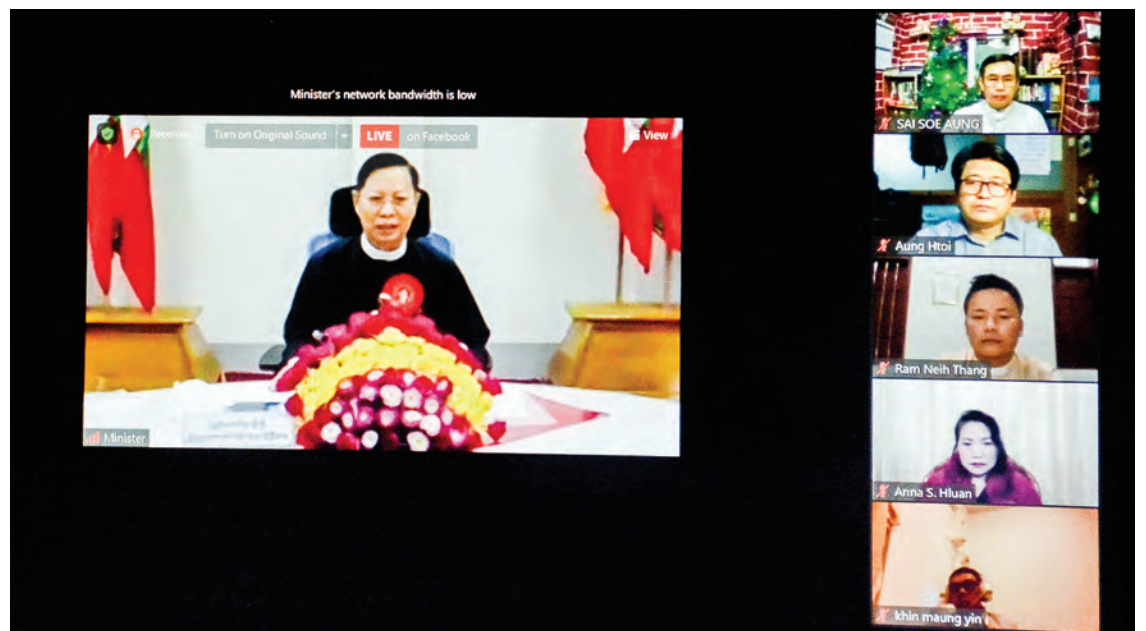
Union Minister Thura U Aung Ko extended greetings and appraised the birth of Jesus

Christ.

He then sent out good wishes to the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and the people.

He also highlighted the sympathy and good attitudes among each other to establish a peaceful society, concerted efforts of relevant departments under the leadership of the State Counsellor to achieve peace for the stability and development of the Union, efforts of religious leaders and participations of Christian religious leaders and Christians in such activities.

He extended his heartiest best wishes for the Christians like during this Christmas occasion, may all you receive all blessings from God, may all you be free from COVID-19 pandemic and serve the duties for your religion and may all you be loyal to the country and serve the good sake



Union Minister Thura U Aung Ko speaks to the pre-Christmas Ceremony giving thanks to God in Yangon via videoconferencing on 19 December 2020. PHOTO: MNA

of country as good citizens.

Dr Shwe Hluan, wife of Vice-President U Henry Van Thio, made a greeting speech

via videoconferencing, and the guests sang Christmas song, prayed for the country and MECA, preached the Christmas

sermons and expressed words of thanks according to the orders of event.—MNA (Translated by Khine Thazin Han)

989 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 19 December, total figure rises to 115,187

MYANMAR'S COVID-19 positive cases rose to 115,187 after 989 new cases were reported on 19 December according to the Ministry of Health and Sports. Among these 115,187 confirmed cases, 2,424 died, 94,118 have been discharged from hospitals.—MNA

Updated at 8 pm, 19 December 2020

Total Cases

115,187

New Cases

989

Total Death Tally

2,424

Discharged from Hospital

94,118

Daily death toll until 8 pm 19-12-2020

26

Ministry of Health and Sports

Our economic engine to start moving again ...

What I wish to say is that we might have to carry out vaccination programmes in places where economic recovery has been achieved, if we find this to be necessary. The reason is that it is extremely important for our economic engine to start moving again. At this time, in places where economic activity can be resumed, what I wish to say is that in places where COVID containment efforts have been successful, we might be able to provide vaccines earlier. This is a possibility. We will do these things in a fair manner. Everyone will get the vaccine. However, when will we get the vaccines and who will be given priority, these things will be done in accordance with the needs of the country; it also depends on our ability to cope with these tasks. These will have to be decided.

(Excerpt from State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's report on COVID-19 containment measures, on 12 December 2020)



MoI Minister discusses future direction of Myanmar film industry

UNION MINISTER for Information Dr Pe Myint spoke about the future direction of Myanmar film industry at the Digital Platforms and Future Direction of Myanmar's Film Industry Webinar yesterday.

Committee on Establishment of Myanmar Digital Media Association organized the virtual seminar participated in by Union Minister for Information Dr Pe Myint, the ministry's departmental officials, the committee's chairman U Thaung Su Nyein, deputy chairpersons U Ko Ko (RIT) and Daw Nang Clyar Win and committee members, panelists, media persons and invited guests.

Speaking at the meeting, the Union Minister said that the industries impacted by coronavirus included the film industry that covers from shooting to production and from producers to consumers, saying that the matters relating to the change and direction of the film industry would be discussed.

He added that changing trends of digital technology has impacted all industries, including the film industry, especially the media industry.

There are two major



Union Minister Dr Pe Myint participates in the virtual seminar on digital platforms and future direction of Myanmar's film industry on 19 December 2020. **PHOTO: MNA**

changes – one caused by changing technology and another caused by coronavirus pandemic. Despite challenges and difficulties being experienced, they can be transformed into opportunities, he said.

He further said that the answer to the question “what is the future direction of the film industry?” was a digital trend.

It is important to think about the whole industry from scriptwriting to film screening, he added, saying that the film industry in Myanmar would be fast changed into digitalization because of coronavirus.

Chairman of the Commit-

tee on Establishment of Myanmar Digital Media Association U Thaung Su Nyein made greeting remarks.

Chairman of the Myanmar Motion Picture Organization U Nyi Nyi Tun Lwin made remarks, and member of the administration board of the Film Development Centre (Yangon) Daw Swe Zin Htike discussed the title “Beyond the transformation into OTT platform (Over-the-top) from DTT (Digital Terrestrial Television).”

A panel discussion titled “Digital Platforms and Future Direction of Myanmar's Film Industry” was held.

Secretary of the Commit-

tee on Establishment of Myanmar Digital Media Association U Min Swe Hlaing moderated the panel discussion participated in by panellists singer and actor Sai Sai Kham Leng, actor and director Ko Pauk (U Aung Min Naing), Red Radiance Company Executive Director U Myo Min and ABC Content solutions CEO U Win Khine.

The panel discussion talked about the effective use of online platforms for Myanmar's film industry development.

Sai Sai Kham Leng shared the experiences of using digital platforms in meeting with fans,

and production for the traditional platform after thinking about the differences between normal platforms and digital platforms in making contents.

Actor and director Ko Pauk discussed the achievements in creating contents via Facebook and TikTok platforms and shared experiences on production opportunities of using digital platforms.

Red Radiance Company Director U Myo Min talked about data security for creating contents via digital platforms, development of digital cinema and digital technology awareness programmes and the importance of learning.

ABC Content solutions CEO U Win Khine spoke about the strengths and weaknesses of online streaming movies and film piracy and legal actions against piracy.

Acting Director-General of Information and Public Relations Department U Aye Kywe, Myanma Radio and Television Director-General U Ye Naing and Committee on Establishment of Myanmar Digital Media Association Vice-Chair U Ko Ko (RIT) 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](tel: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

Early yield black beans cause price hike

THE early yielding black beans from Madaya region have caused a price hike in Mandalay market for 2021 variety bean season, according to the Mandalay bean merchants.

“The black beans have been entering the market beginning from 1 December. The quality and production of black beans are also acceptable. Besides, the early produced black beans hit a price of K95,000 per bag (one bag contains three baskets) this year, up from K80,000 per pack compared to that of the same period in last year,” said U Soe Win Myint (Soe Win Myint brokerage) from Mandalay.

“Black bean is Myanmar’s export item, and the sale of the black bean is heavily reliant upon India. That’s the reason why the price of black bean in Myanmar

depends upon the movement of India bean market. India has been restricting the purchase of Myanmar’s black bean since 2018. At that time, the local pulses growers faced the declining price of black bean -- K40,000 per bag. However, the local growers are now happy with a hiking price of black bean -- K125,000 per pack this year,” he explained.

“Now, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry of India has issued a 150,000-tonne import quota for black bean for those who have export licences in Myanmar. These licenced exporters have a chance to export until March 2021,” he added.

Although China has been buying Myanmar’s black bean for the past four years, the Chinese bean traders stopped buying black bean when the black



Beans and pulses are displayed at a shop in Mandalay during the coronavirus outbreak in Myanmar. PHOTO: MIN HTET AUNG

bean price mounted.

The black bean started growing in August in the middle region of Myanmar and is

highly harvested in January. The bean also yields a lot in February and March in the lower areas of Myanmar such as Ayeyawady,

Yangon and Bago regions. — Min Htet Aung (Sub-Man Printing House)

(Translated by Hay Mar)

Now Available

THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

ROK President pays state visit to Myanmar
State Counsellor holds talks with ROK President



THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

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Bamboo plywood mat factory to be built in Myanmar

A plan is underway to build a bamboo plywood mat factory near Nay Pyi Taw in the middle region of Myanmar to enable export of them to foreign markets, said a resident of Myanmar who has experience in bamboo plywood mat factory in Manipur, India.

“In Myanmar, we could get natural products easily. We will bring the machines from India and set them up in Myanmar.

We will set up the factory with our own technology and our own capital investment.

Now, an entrepreneur from Shan State is manufacturing the mats for over 20 years in Manipur, India. He bought the mats from the local weavers to glue them together.

Then, he exported bamboo plywood mats to Laos, Viet Nam, Thailand, Japan, America and South Korea. We are still choosing the name of the factory because it is a made-in-Myanmar product. We will establish the factory with an initial investment of K500 million and start the business when the pandemic

can be controlled. There are eight bamboo associations in Myanmar, and they are giving us a helping hand,” said U Kyaw Kyaw Moe, an officer in charge of the Myanmar factory.

The bamboo mats from Myanmar factory will be exported to Laos, Viet Nam, Thailand, Japan, America and South Korea and the factory will give 20-year guarantee for their bamboo plywood mat products. — Thant Zin Win

(Translated by Hay Mar)

Areca nut price keeps decreasing

THE areca nut price continued to drop because Myanmar has not exported it yet to India, according to the areca nut merchants.

“The areca nuts are exported mostly to India via Tamu land border. Now, we haven’t shipped it yet to India, and the traders are holding over 400 or 500 tonnes of areca nuts. Some of the traders have stocked around thousand tonnes of nuts. Although we have domestic demand for areca nut, the price will be rising when the trader can export it to foreign counties, said an areca nut trader from Mon State.

Now, the areca nuts are ex-

ported not only via border route but also sea route to Australia and Malaysia.

The areca nuts are usually picked up in October. The price of earlier yielding areca nuts is only K4,000 per viss, a decrease by K2,000 per viss compared to that of the same period of last year.

“We have stock of last year areca nuts. The traders are still buying the areca nuts from the growers to make sure non disrupted relation. The traders don’t want to stock them for a long time and thus are selling them for K4,000 per viss. Previously, Myanmar exported over

50 truckloads of areca nuts to India via Tamu border area. But these days, the trade of areca nut is postponed because of the pandemic. Before the second wave of COVID-19 started, only a few tons of nuts were exported to India,” said an areca nut trader from Tamu.

The areca nuts are grown mostly in Ye Phyu township in Taninthayi region. The nuts are usually picked up from October to February.

Myanmar exported the areca nuts to India via Tamu and Rekhawda land border checkpoints. —Aye Chan Moe (Translated by Hay Mar)

Correction

Please read “Boeing 737-800 NG, Embraer 190, ATR-72 600 Series” instead of “Boeing 737-800 NG Embraer 1901 ATR-72 G00 Series,” in the news story “MNA offers free date change on domestic flight tickets bought in past” on page-5 of 19 December Issue of the Global New Light of Myanmar.

Myanmar National Airlines

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MoNREC minister inspects forest plantations, elephant sanctuary in Ngalaik Camp, Nay Pyi Taw

Union Minister U Ohn Win inspects the forest plantations in Nay Pyi Taw Council Area on 19 December 2020. **PHOTO: MNA**

UNION Minister for Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation U Ohn Win inspected 50 acres of Manjan-

shar wood plantation, 200 acres of ecological supplementation wood plantations established in the 2019 and 2020 rainy season

with the donation of the Myanmar Gems and Jewellery Entrepreneurs Association, in Ngalaik Camp in Nay Pyi Taw Council

Area, yesterday.

During the inspection tour, the Union Minister provided guidance on irrigation water supply and maintenance for the dry season and instruction to discuss and submit in detail the availability of workers for plant maintenance and plantation establishment during the COVID-19 crisis, species of trees to be planted, plantation form and irrigation water supply for the 100 acres of ecological supplementation wood plantations to be established in 2021.

The Union Minister and party also visited Ngalaik Sakhantha Elephant Camp and Elephant Museum. They inspected the road to be constructed through the forest, tropical pine plantations, construction of forest walkways, temporary shelters and cable-stayed bridges constructions and instructed necessary arrangements for safety at the construction site and at the public area. —MNA

(Translated by Ei Phyu Phyu Aung)

MoE minister holds meeting with businesspersons, private schools on drafting of NESP 2021-2030

THE Ministry of Education organized an online seminar on the drafting of National Education Strategic Plan (2021-2030) together with the Patrons and Chairmen of Max Myanmar Holdings Co.Ltd and Ayeyawady Bank, Loi Hein Group of Companies, CB Bank, KBZ Bank, Shwe Taung Group of Companies and Myanmar Private Schools Federation yesterday.

Union Minister Dr Myo Thein Gyi discussed the importance of collective strength in education reforms from 2016 to date, Trends Shaping Education 2019, OECD, the economic trend in Globalization and Gravity of Economic Power depending on the geography of the country.

He also explained the globalization and democracy like the inequality in wealth, stronger mobilities while more than 3 billion out of 7.5 billion of world people use airlines, public participation, rights for minority groups and priority for rural areas and taxes.

He also highlighted the

Union Minister Dr Myo Thein Gyi joins the meeting on drafting National Education Strategic Plan 2021-2030 via videoconferencing on 19 December 2020. **PHOTO: MNA**

security affairs regarding health security, cybersecurity, national-level security, and recommended the need for climate changes and healthcare programmes for ageing people and retired men. He then stressed the use of online in developing modern culture as it creates flexible work, modern family, green mobility, active fathers in caring the children like mothers.

He also expressed the impacts of COVID-19 especially on education sectors in addition to the health and business sectors when the schools were closed, implementation of quality education based on the NESP (2016-2021) and plans to equally carry out hard skills and soft skills for the students.

The Union Minister said that as the multi-nationalities country, the priorities are given

to ethnic areas in education reform as well as underdeveloped areas and people who need mental and physical need.

He also added the importance of digital learning although it cannot substitute the Face-to-Face Teaching Learning; the importance of private cooperation in providing technology and infrastructure; the implementation of Learning Objectives, Learning Outcomes and Learning Competencies to get 21st-century competencies and qualities.

He said the cooperation between parents, teachers and students is not yet strong in Myanmar according to South-East Asia Primary Learning Matric and the participation of parents and private sectors is very important to implement the quality education practically.

The attendees also discussed the draft of NESP (2021-2023) and gave suggestion on reforming the education. —MNA (Translated by Khine Thazin Han and Ei Phyu Phyu Aung)

APRIL 2021 DEBUT

Oscars museum delayed again as pandemic grips Los Angeles

THE long-awaited opening of Los Angeles' Oscars museum was postponed again Friday due to the pandemic, with officials saying its scheduled April debut would be "irresponsible" as the city grapples with record coronavirus cases.

The Academy Museum of Motion Pictures, dedicated to the magic of movies and set to host iconic Hollywood treasures from Judy Garland's "Wizard of Oz" ruby slippers to Dracula's cape, has been beset by delays.

It had been set to finally open April 30, the week after the Academy's flagship event -- the Oscars -- but will now welcome visitors from September 30.

President Bill Kramer said in a statement that the museum was "ready and eager to wel-

come visitors in the spring," but "with the current surge of Covid-19, it would be irresponsible to maintain an April opening."

"We know a new day is coming for us all, and when it does, the Academy Museum will be ready to offer our visitors the remarkable experience we have all been wanting."

California has emerged as the latest epicentre in the US Covid-19 outbreak, reporting more than 52,000 new cases Wednesday.

Even as vaccinations began this week, intensive care units have run out of beds at multiple hospitals across southern California.

Los Angeles health officials estimate about one in 80 county residents are currently infected.



The museum's orb-like structure -- designed by Renzo Piano "as if it were floating" to symbolize "the fantasy and magic of the movies" -- is connected by sky bridges to a converted department store housing galleries. **PHOTO: AFP**

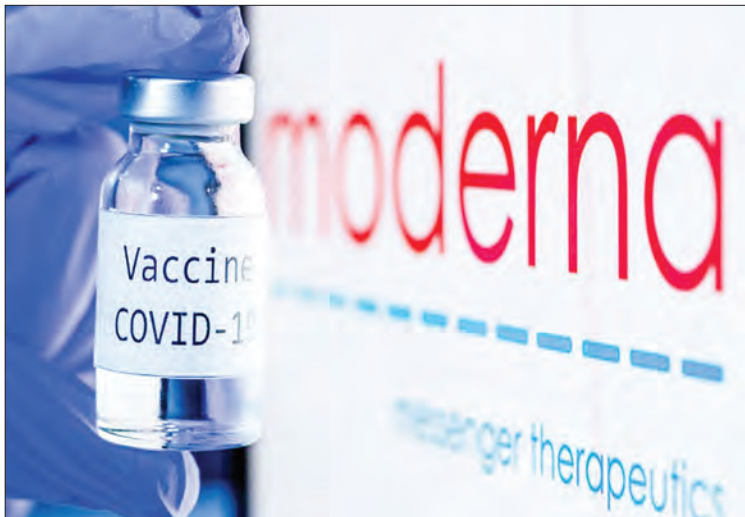
All indoor Los Angeles museums are closed due to Covid restrictions, with a regional

"stay-at-home" order in effect until at least December 28.

SOURCE: AFP

WINTER SURGE

US authorizes Moderna as second Covid-19 vaccine



The United States on Friday authorized Moderna's Covid-19 vaccine for emergency use, as the country grapples with a brutal winter surge that is killing over 2,500 people a day. **PHOTO: AFP**

THE United States on Friday authorized Moderna's Covid-19 vaccine for emergency use, as the country grapples with a brutal winter surge that is killing over 2,500 people a day. The US is the first nation to authorize the two-dose regimen, now the second vaccine to be deployed in a Western country after one developed by Pfizer and BioNTech. "With the availability of two vaccines now for the prevention of Covid-19, the FDA has taken another crucial step in the fight against this global pandemic," Food and Drug Administration (FDA) chief Stephen Hahn said.

President Donald Trump -- who has frequently taken credit for the fast pace of vaccine development -- tweeted: "Congratulations, the Moderna vaccine is now available!" Joe Biden, who defeated Trump in November's presidential elections and is due to take office in January, hailed the news as "another milestone" in the fight against the virus.

But he also warned of "the immense challenges ahead, including scaling up manufacturing, distribution, and the monumental task of vaccinating hundreds of millions of Americans." **SOURCE: AFP**

A MASSIVE SPIKE IN THE NUMBERS

India's coronavirus cases surpass 10 million

INDIA said Saturday that the number of its coronavirus cases has exceeded 10 million, becoming the second country to see its cases reach that figure after the United States.

The gap between the two countries has been widening, however, with India seeing between 20,000 and 40,000 cases daily this month, a much slower pace of increase after a mid-September peak of between 90,000 and 100,000 cases.

India now has 10,004,599 confirmed cases, after recording 25,152 cases over the last 24-hour period, according to the Ministry of Health and



Passengers wait for a train following the resumption of metro services after a five-month shutdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic at a station in Hyderabad, India. **PHOTO: AFP**

Family Welfare.

The United States, in con-

trast, has over 16.4 million cases with 201,468 daily cas-

es reported Thursday alone, according to the World Health Organization.

In terms of coronavirus-related deaths, India, with a population of over 1.3 billion, has the third most at 145,136, after the United States with over 300,000 deaths and Brazil with more than 180,000.

Emergency-use authorization has currently been sought from the Drugs Controller-General of India for three COVID-19 vaccines, including one developed by U.S. pharmaceutical giant Pfizer Inc. and an indigenous one by Bharat Biotech International Ltd. **SOURCE: Kyodo**

NEWS IN BRIEFS

ANTIBODIES AGAINST THE VIRUS

Babies of women with COVID-19 have antibodies: Singapore researchers

FIVE babies born to women in Singapore who were diagnosed with COVID-19 during their pregnancies were found to have antibodies against the virus, researchers from three public hospitals who conducted a study said Friday.

But the researchers were not sure if the babies have developed immunity against the virus, they told reporters.

The small-scale study, which has just been published in the journal *Annals of the Academy of Medicine, Singapore*, found no evidence of actual transmission of the virus from mother to baby.

SOURCE: Kyodo

REGIONAL TRAVEL BAN

Italy under new restrictions over Christmas and New Year

ITALY, one of the countries worst hit by Covid-19, will be placed under new restrictions over the Christmas and New Year periods, Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte announced late Friday.

Under the new measures, shops, bars and restaurants will be closed and travel between regions will be banned, and in theory only one daily outside trip per household will be permitted.

Religious celebrations will be allowed until 10:00 pm.

"Our experts fear that the infection curve will increase during the Christmas period," Conte said. The prime minister conceded that the authorities had neither the means nor the will to monitor compliance with containment measures, but he asked Italians to respect a new limit of people hosting two adult guests at home. Food shops, hairdressing salons, pharmacies, tobacconists and laundries as well as bookstores will, however, remain open.

SOURCE: AFP

Will Industry 4.0 become a remedy for the Myanmar economy?

SOUTHEAST Asian countries have focused on the fourth industrial revolution or Industry 4.0. The network of connectivity between machines and the other manufacturing line is the key factor in this technological evolution.

While ASEAN countries have experienced economic growth in recent years, the region was expected to be one of the largest economies by 2050. In leading to this target, the digital transformation is seen as a significant factor in its growth.

Like other ASEAN member countries, Myanmar should focus on visions and policies to integrate technologies such as Internet-of-Things (IoT) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) into the country.

Experts estimated that Industry 4.0 technology could help increase annual economic gains up to between US\$216 and 627 billion by 2025.

As Industry 4.0 largely relates to computer-assisted manufacturing technology and smart technology, products could be manufactured on a massive scale. On the other side, computerized machines will replace human workforces. However, the capacity of workforces must be developed to be able to work with the innovative technologies.

No country could turn a blind eye to this trend as it has great benefits to the world. Industry 4.0 will feature lower energy requirements at the factories; this trend will lower the amount of energy used by factories as more countries have opted for more sustainable energy sources.

Industry 4.0 will come together with the technology of the Internet of Things (IoT) with smart devices that will rely on wireless signals to transmit information about everyday tasks.

Improvements in Artificial Intelligence (AI) would be experienced in the Industry 4.0 age as this technology is essential for improving the quality of responses to demands for new products in the future.

Many changes will surely be seen in the manufacturing industry, thanks to Industry 4.0 as it can incorporate digital registration and machine learning for effective and efficient production processes.

All the global countries, including ASEAN members, are making economic strategies for the post-COVID-19 crisis. Myanmar also should not deviate from the focus of Industry 4.0 that could become a tool to leapfrog and overtake other developing countries.

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A RACE WE MUST FINISH TOGETHER

COVID-19: Avoid 'nationalistic footrace' in choosing vaccines

WHO ANNOUNCED ON FRIDAY THAT NEARLY TWO BILLION DOSES OF CURRENT AND CANDIDATE COVID-19 VACCINES HAVE BEEN SECURED THROUGH THE COVAX FACILITY, A GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP WORKING TO ENSURE EQUITABLE ACCESS FOR ALL COUNTRIES.

AS GOVERNMENTS move to secure COVID-19 vaccines for their populations, choosing these treatments should not be viewed as "some kind of nationalistic footrace", with some countries winning and others losing, a senior official with the World Health Organization (WHO) told journalists on Friday.

Dr Mike Ryan, Director of Emergencies, was responding to a question about public concern over governments deciding to acquire certain vaccines over others.

He warned against comparing national approaches in a competitive fashion, while calling for patience, tolerance and solidarity.

Nationalistic footrace

"I don't think we should be seeing this as a game of winners and losers right now. We're at the beginning", said Dr Ryan, speaking during the regular WHO press briefing from Geneva.

"I think it could be very destructive for us all to turn this into some kind of nationalistic footrace to who does what. We all have to get there together. We simply have to finish this race in a line together.



Britain is training healthcare workers to administer the Covid-19 vaccine after it became the first country to approve one for public use. PHOTO: AFP

And someone getting there first doesn't necessarily help everybody else."

Dr Ryan explained that vaccines can have properties that make them more suitable for particular settings, which can in-

fluence government decision-making.

"They have been looking at prices, the profile of the product, the production capacity of the product, and their access to it because of that", he said.

More vaccines coming on-stream

WHO announced on Friday that nearly two billion doses of current and candidate COVID-19 vaccines have been secured through the COVAX Facility, a global part-

nership working to ensure equitable access for all countries.

While existing COVID-19 vaccines are limited and costly, many more are under development, including groundbreaking jabs that combine treatment for influenza or measles.

WHO Chief Scientist Dr Soumya Swaminathan said the UN agency wants to support as many candidates as possible to go through clinical trials.

"Ideally, one would like to see a vaccine that's a single dose, that can be stored at room temperature, that gives long lasting protection, that's safe, effective, and is also manufactured easily and can be scaled and is affordable", she said.

Dr Katherine O'Brien, Director of Immunizations, Vaccines and Biologicals, added that having a variety of vaccines is important, stating "because of the supply situation, most countries are likely going to have to use more than one product."

Clear and stringent criteria WHO has established for vaccines to come to market, including benchmarks for efficacy, safety and quality, which also align

with the standards of regulatory agencies across the world.

Senior Advisor Dr Bruce Aylward underscored that a candidate will only be endorsed once criteria are met.

"The general public should have great confidence in products that have been looked at by stringent regulatory authorities and the WHO process because it goes through all of those measures systematically: the efficacy, the safety, the quality of the product, but also the programmatic suitability to make sure these are something that is going to suit the circumstances in which these are going to be used", he said.

With the criteria clear, it is up to regulatory agencies and countries to decide on which vaccines would be suitable for their populations, said Dr Swaminathan.

"And they make decisions based on benefits and risks, because when you're in a pandemic there is obviously an urgency and a need to get vaccines out to people. And therefore, one has to weigh the benefits and the risks at a particular time," she said.

SOURCE: UN News

WILD RUE: EFFICIENT MEDICINE FROM ILLNESSES - TURKMENISTAN

Leader of 'virus-free' Turkmenistan champions herbal defence

AYNA Garayeva, a school teacher in the capital of authoritarian and secretive Turk-

menistan, began taking extra sanitary measures in her classroom when the government is-

sued new guidelines in August.

As well as standard coronavirus precautions like temperature checks for students, she started fumigating her classroom with the smoke of a herb beloved by the ex-Soviet country's leader.

"We are following the instructions as they are laid out," 42-year-old Garayeva told AFP.

In tightly controlled Turkmenistan, which still insists it has no virus cases, the pandemic has led to a boom in a herb whose Turkmen name translates as "medicine for a hundred illnesses".

Wild rue -- known locally as yuzerlik -- has for millennia been popular in North Africa, the

Middle East and Central Asia as a panacea for sickness and ill fortune. But in Turkmenistan, strongman leader and ex-dentist Gurbanguly Berdymukhamedov has gone a step further.

In March, he ordered wild rue burning on a "systematic level", trumpeting the bacteria and infection-killing qualities of its faintly intoxicating smoke.

At the same time, authorities continued to hold ostentatious mass events and deter citizens from wearing masks.

Since the diktat, the cost of a wild rue bundle has grown five-fold to five manats (\$1.43).

In neighbouring Uzbekistan, top sanitary doctor Bakhrom Al-

matov cautioned the herb has "no direct effect" on viruses, despite having healthy properties.

"After use, many people start sneezing. When they sneeze, the body expels dust that has fallen into it," Almatov told local media.

Locking down with zero cases

The World Health Organization declined to comment on wild rue specifically, but said traditional medicine in many countries "is often an important health resource with many applications".

Berdymukhamedov joins the leader of Madagascar, who gained notoriety for promoting a

scientifically unproven herbal virus remedy at home and abroad.

Herbal remedies have been widely used during the pandemic in countries with struggling public health systems, like Yemen and Sierra Leone.

Yet Berdymukhamedov's approach to the pandemic changed after the WHO visited in July.

The delegation stopped short of dismissing his boast that that country had zero cases, a claim now only shared by North Korea and a handful of island states.

But it recommended that Turkmenistan adopt measures as if the virus "were already circulating".

SOURCE: AFP



Turkmen women wearing traditional dress demonstrate how to fumigate a house with the smoke of burning wild rue. PHOTO: AFP

73rd Independence Day Anniversary (2021)

National Objectives

1. All Union nationals to protect and strive with "collective strength" for Non-disintegration of the Union, Non-disintegration of National Unity, and Perpetuation of National Sovereignty.
2. All citizens to be able to enjoy on the same level - social equality, economic equality, political equality, equality as citizens, equal opportunity, and equality before the law.
3. To strive towards the amendment of the Constitution for the emergence of a genuine Democratic Federal Union.
4. To build a modern developed Democratic Federal Union by nurturing Union spirit for the perpetuation of the Union.
5. The government, together with the people to confront with collective strength the challenges faced by the entire people with increased momentum for all-round development of the country.

Myanmar Daily Weather Report

(Issued at 7:00 pm Saturday 19 December 2020)

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

FORECAST VALID UNTIL AFTERNOON OF THE 20 December 2020: Light rain are likely to be isolated in Taninthayi Region. Degree of certainty is (60%). Weather will be partly cloudy in Upper Sagaing, Bago, Yangon and Ayeyawady regions and Kachin, Shan, Chin, Rakhine, Kayah, Kayin 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 (4-7) feet off and along Myanmar Coasts.

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT: Generally fair in the whole country.

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 20 December 2020: Fair weather.

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 20 December 2020: Generally fair weather.

FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 20 December 2020: Fair weather.

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THE STORM-BATTERED ARCHIPELAGO

Two dead, hundreds flee floods in Philippine storm

At least two people were killed and hundreds forced to flee their inundated homes in the Philippines as torrential rain triggered flooding and landslides in the storm-battered archipelago, officials said Saturday.

Huge waves smashed into a coastal village on Lapu-Lapu island in the central province of Cebu on Friday night, wiping out dozens of houses and leaving around 290 people homeless, Mayor Junard Chan said on Facebook.

Photos posted online by the mayor showed piles of wood and bamboo near the few houses still standing after the region was drenched by heavy rain.

Rescuers retrieved the bodies of two elderly women who were killed when a landslide hit an area of Mahaplag town before dawn in the nearby province of Leyte, police officer Racquel Hernandez said.

A boy was also pulled from the rubble of his home and treat-



People push a half-submerged tricycle through a flooded street in Agusan del Sur province in Mindanao. **PHOTO: ERWIN MASCARINAS/AFP**

ed for his injuries, Hernandez told AFP. About 1,500 people were forced to leave their homes on the major southern island of Mindanao as floodwaters en-

gulfed 13 villages, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council said.

The Philippines is hit by an average of 20 storms and

typhoons every year, which typically wipe out harvests, homes and infrastructure in already impoverished areas.

SOURCE: AFP

NO CASUALTIES

Five rockets fired at US air base in Afghanistan

A major US air base north of Kabul was targeted in a rocket attack on Saturday but there were no casualties or damage to the airfield, NATO and Afghan officials said.

Five rockets were fired at Bagram Airfield in Parwan province at 6:00 am, said Waheeda Shahkar, spokeswoman for the provincial governor.

She said 12 rockets were mounted on a vehicle and five of them were fired at the base, while police defused the other seven.

A NATO official also confirmed the rocket attack.

"Rockets were fired toward Bagram Airfield this morning. Initial reporting is there were no casualties and the airfield was not damaged," the official said.



US air base in Afghanistan. **PHOTO: AFP**

No group has immediately claimed responsibility for the attack, and the Taliban denied any involvement.

The jihadist Daesh group previously claimed responsibility

for a similar rocket attack on the base in April.

In recent months, IS has claimed several assaults in Kabul, including two rocket attacks that struck several residential

areas in the capital, causing fatalities.

The group also claimed brutal attacks on two separate educational centers in Kabul that left dozens of people, mostly students, dead.

Saturday's rocket attack targeting the airfield came a day after 15 children were killed when an explosives-laden motorbike blew up near a religious gathering in the eastern province of Ghazni.

Afghan officials blamed the Taliban for the blast.

Violence has surged in Afghanistan in recent months despite the government and the Taliban launching peace talks to end the country's grinding war.

SOURCE: AFP

Mali lost in transition as army expands its role after coup

HOPES that soldiers behind Mali's coup would swiftly restore civilian rule and tackle jihadism and ethnic violence are fading fast as the army expands its role.

Many in the large Sahel country hailed the August 18 putsch as the precursor of a

"new Mali" — a nation that would emerge stronger and more stable, its institutions better placed to confront the country's many ills. Young army officers toppled president Ibrahim Boubacar Keita after weeks of protests sparked largely by his failures to roll back

a jihadist insurgency and root out perceived corruption.

Threatened by international sanctions, the junta handed power to a caretaker institution which is supposed to last for up to 18 months until elections are held. But disenchantment at the

slow pace of reforms is growing, fuelled by anger that figures with army links dominate the body.

Political parties, swiftly ousted from the decision-making process, have almost unanimously denounced the methods of the military. —AFP

NEWS IN BRIEFS

Turkish hospital fire kills 9 Covid-19 patients

At least nine coronavirus patients died on Saturday after an oxygen tank explosion triggered a fire at a hospital in southeastern Turkey, the health ministry said.

The blaze in an intensive care ward of the hospital in Gaziantep broke out when a tank on an artificial respirator exploded.

"We are profoundly saddened by this tragedy," Turkish Health Minister Fahrettin Koca said before a planned visit to the hospital. All the victims were patients who had been hospitalized with the coronavirus. Other patients affected by the fire were transferred to other hospitals. Turkey has recorded more than 1.9 million cases of Covid-19 and more than 17,600 deaths since the pandemic began a year ago.

SOURCE: AFP

Tensions in Armenia as thousands mourn Karabakh victims

ARMENIAN Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan on Saturday led thousands in a march in memory of those killed in a six-week war with Azerbaijan as the Caucasus country began three days of mourning.

Pashinyan has been under huge pressure from the opposition to step down after nearly 3,000 Armenians were killed in the clashes with Azerbaijan over the breakaway region of Nagorno-Karabakh. As Armenia began its period of mourning for the Karabakh war, the opposition kept up pressure on Pashinyan to resign over the handling of the conflict and what they say is a humiliating peace deal with Azerbaijan.

Accompanied by top officials, Pashinyan led a thousands-strong procession to a memorial complex in the capital Yerevan where victims of the conflict are buried.

"The entire nation has been through and is going through a nightmare," Pashinyan said in a video address ahead of the memorial march.

SOURCE: AFP

CONSULATE IN THE CITY OF VLADIVOSTOK

US planning to close last consulates in Russia: report

DONALD TRUMP'S outgoing administration is planning to close the two remaining US consulates in Russia, media reports said Friday, as President-elect Joe Biden prepares to take office amid high tensions with Moscow.

The US will close its consulate in the far eastern city of Vladivostok and suspend operations at its post in Yekaterinburg, CNN reported, citing a December 10 letter sent to Congress from the State Department.

The move comes in "response to ongoing staffing challenges for the US Mission in Russia in the wake of the 2017 Russian-imposed personnel cap on the US Mission and the resultant impasse with Russia

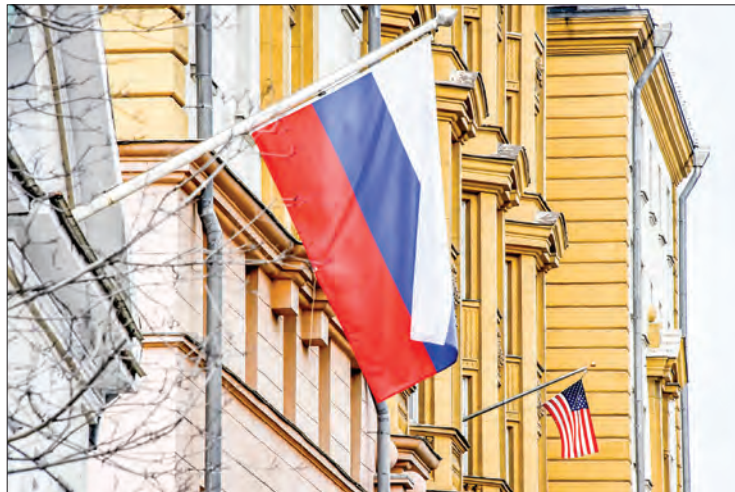
over diplomatic visas", the report said, citing the letter.

Ten diplomats assigned to the consulates will reportedly be relocated to the US embassy in Moscow, while 33 local staff will lose their jobs.

"No action related to the Russian consulates in the United States is planned," CNN cited the letter as saying.

The closures would leave the embassy in Moscow as the United States' last diplomatic mission in Russia. In March 2018 Moscow ordered the closure of the US consulate in St Petersburg amid a diplomatic spat sparked by the poisoning of Sergei Skripal on UK soil.

It was unclear whether



Relations between Russia and the United States have soured as President-elect Joe Biden prepares to take office. PHOTO: VASILY MAXIMOV AFP/FILE

the closures would happen before January 20, when President-elect Biden takes office.

AFP reached out to the

State Department for comment on the report, but did not receive a response.

SOURCE: AFP

RIGGED VOTING

US imposes sanctions on Venezuela election firm

THE United States on Friday imposed sanctions on a biometrics company that assisted voting in Venezuela's parliamentary elections, which President Donald Trump's administration says were rigged.

Ex-Cle C.A., the Venezuelan subsidiary of a company by a similar name in Argentina, has "millions of dollars of contracts" with President Nicolas Maduro's government, which Washington and most Western and Latin American nations consider illegitimate, US officials said.

In a who's who of US adversaries, the Treasury Department said Ex-Cle C.A. bought thousands of voting machines from China, flew them into Venezuela through Iran and paid via the



A poll worker waits for voters in Caracas on December 6, 2020 for parliamentary elections boycotted by the opposition and widely criticized internationally. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

Russian financial system.

Maduro's reliance on Ex-Cle C.A. and Chinese company CEIEC "to rig the electoral processes should leave no doubt

that the December 6 legislative elections were fraudulent and do not reflect the will of the Venezuelan people," Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said.

US officials did not assert cheating in the tabulation of the votes, but a number of international observers said the polls were unfair, with Maduro in control of a new electoral council.

The opposition boycotted the vote and lost control of the National Assembly, the only branch of government not in Maduro's control.

The Venezuelan president slammed the US sanctions.

Pompeo imposed "stupid sanctions like the idiot that he is, as he is on his way out, against the company and the businessmen who manufactured the machines so that the people of Venezuela could vote," Maduro said.

SOURCE: AFP

ARMED GROUP ATTACKS

Peacekeepers deploy in C. Africa as UN chief calls for calm

UN peacekeepers have deployed in the west of Central African Republic following surprise attacks by powerful armed groups involved in "a deliberate attempt to disrupt" upcoming elections in one of the world's poorest and most troubled nations.

The UN mission to the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) said it deployed forces on Friday following an offensive by the 3R, Patriotic Movement for Central Africa (MPC) and "anti-Balaka" militias.

"The mission emphasises that these coordinated attacks in well-identified areas involve

a deliberate attempt to disrupt the elections," said the mission, which has 11,500 peacekeepers in the country.

The militias have accused President Faustin Archange Touadera of seeking to fix the planned legislative and presidential elections -- due to take place on December 27 -- and have warned of a violent response.

According to humanitarian and UN sources, armed groups have seized several localities along routes serving the capital Bangui, which is now threatened by a blockade.

SOURCE: AFP



The UN mission to Central African Republic has 11,500 peacekeepers in one of the world's poorest and most troubled nations. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

NEWS IN BRIEFS

MARITIME DISASTER

Sweden seeks new probe of Estonia ferry wreck after 25 years

SWEDEN said Friday it would seek to lift a ban on inspections of the wreck of the Estonia ferry, which sank in the Baltic Sea in 1994 with the loss of 852 lives in one of the worst maritime disasters of the 20th century.

The Swedish Accident Investigation Authority has made a request to amend a law banning dives in order to allow a re-examination the wreck after a documentary presented evidence of a previously unknown hole in the hull.

In 1997, investigators concluded the disaster was caused by the bow door of the ship being wrenched open in heavy seas, allowing water to gush into the car deck.

Survivors and relatives of those killed have fought for over two decades for a fuller investigation, with some claiming that the opening of the bow visor would not have caused the vessel to sink as quickly as it did.

SOURCE: AFP

JUSTICE

Attack in front of former Charlie Hebdo locals: 4 Pakistanis indicted

FRENCH authorities have charged and detained four Pakistanis suspected of links to a meat cleaver attack by a compatriot outside the former offices of the Charlie Hebdo weekly that wounded two people, the national counter-terrorism prosecutor's office said Friday. The four male suspects, aged 17 to 21, were in contact with the attacker, said a source familiar with the case.

They are suspected of being aware of the attacker's plot and inciting him to carry it out, according to another judicial source close to the investigation.

Three of them were charged on Friday with taking part in a terrorist conspiracy and placed in pre-trial detention. The fourth had already been charged on Wednesday.

SOURCE: AFP

TECHNOLOGY EXPORTS

Defence Ministry to team up with Keidanren to promote arms exports



Defence Minister Nobuo Kishi (2nd from L, front) speaks at a meeting with executives of the Japan Business Federation in Tokyo on Dec. 17, 2020. **PHOTO: KYODO**

THE Defence Ministry and the Japan Business Federation have agreed to step up cooperation in promoting defence equipment and technology exports.

Under the initiative with the federation, better known as Keidanren, the ministry will collaborate with trading

houses and manufacturers in grasping market demand so they can broaden business opportunities with foreign governments based on their strategic interests, ministry officials said. The move comes as China advances military build-ups, raises defense spending and increases assertiveness in

the Indo-Pacific region.

In a meeting Thursday with Keidanren officials, Defence Minister Nobuo Kishi said China intends to expand military capabilities through joint efforts by the civil and military sectors.

“It would be impossible (for Japan) to maintain and

strengthen our defence capabilities without cooperation from Keidanren,” Kishi said. Along with making full use of expertise and know-how of the government and the private sectors, the envisioned public-private arms sales partnership involves a plan to allow the defence industry to employ findings and technologies developed by government institutions, venture companies and other entities, according to the officials. An internet portal site to be launched will contribute to a seamless flow of information between the public and private sectors, they said. In August, Mitsubishi Electric Corp. struck a \$100 million deal on advanced air surveillance radar with the Philippines, in Japan’s first export of a complete defense product since then Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s government in 2014 eased a decades-old self-imposed ban on arms exports.

SOURCE: Kyodo

RELIEF PACKAGE

At Covid deal impasse, US Congress agrees stopgap to avert shutdown

US lawmakers struggling to reach a critical pandemic relief and federal spending deal struck a last-minute agreement Friday to avert a midnight shutdown of the government and extend negotiations through the weekend. Congressional leaders are frantically trying to resolve sticking points in a roughly \$900 billion measure aimed at providing emergency relief for millions of Americans on the verge of losing key benefits. Because the pandemic relief plan is tied to passage of a separate \$1.4 trillion federal spending package, the impasse threatened to temporarily shut down the government – a scenario not unheard of in politically divided Washing-

ton, but disastrous given the worsening economy and record daily death tolls from Covid-19. On the brink of a shutdown, the House of Representatives voted 320 to 60 late Friday to extend funding for federal agencies through Sunday to allow negotiators to finish their stimulus package.

The Senate quickly passed the measure by voice vote, and President Donald Trump signed the bill hours before the midnight deadline. Talks on the relief package appear stuck, in part, over a Republican proposal to limit the Federal Reserve’s ability to provide credit for businesses and other institutions. “We are hopeful that they will reach agreement



US Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, Republican of Kentucky, walks to the Senate Floor at the US Capitol in Washington, DC on December 18, 2020. **PHOTO: AFP**

in the near future,” number two House Democrat Steny Hoyer said. “They have not reached one

yet. There are still some significant issues outstanding.”

SOURCE: AFP

20-MONTH SERVICE BREAK

United Airlines to resume Boeing 737 MAX flights in February

UNITED Airlines became the latest carrier to announce a timeframe to fly the Boeing 737 MAX again, saying Friday the jet would resume flights in February. The plane, which was out of service for 20 months following two fatal crashes, will re-enter United’s schedule on February 11, with service from Denver and Houston. The move comes on the heels of the Federal Aviation Administration’s (FAA) November decision to permit the jet to fly again following upgrades to its software and new protocols on pilot training.

United said there was still additional work to do on its jets before they can return to service

with the carrier. The two 737 MAX crashes, in Ethiopia and Indonesia, claimed 346 lives and led to its worldwide grounding.

“Nothing is more important to United than the safety of our customers and employees,” a United spokesman said. “United’s MAX fleet won’t return to service until we have completed more than 1,000 hours of work on every aircraft, including FAA-mandated changes to the flight software, additional pilot training, multiple test flights and meticulous technical analysis to ensure the planes are ready to fly.”

SOURCE: AFP



United Airlines became the latest carrier to announce new flights on the Boeing 737 MAX following a flight earlier this month by Brazilian airline Gol. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

NEWS IN BRIEF

BIG QUARTER

Strong China sales boost Nike results, shares rise

NIKE scored a big jump in China sales in the second quarter and reported better-than-expected results on Friday, following a coronavirus hit earlier in the year. After suffering declines in revenues in the last two quarters, Nike reported an increase in sales in the quarter ending November 30 as it has bolstered direct selling efforts to consumers in the wake of upheaval in the retail industry. The sports giant said more than 90 per cent of company-owned stores are now open, with some at reduced hours. However, the company continues to experience declines in customer traffic in many regions due to Covid-19, Nike said. *SOURCE: AFP*

“TECHNICAL TALKS”

Post-Brexit talks grind on as fish spat threatens deal

EU and UK negotiators held “technical talks” in Brussels on Saturday with no sign of them breaking an impasse over post-Brexit fishing rights in time to save a trade deal. Sources on both sides said fishing is now the main obstacle to any pact that could be in place on January 1 to prevent a sudden return to tariffs that would deal an economic jolt on both sides of the Channel. “It remains very blocked,” one EU diplomat told AFP. One EU diplomat said Barnier had proposed EU fishermen giving up nearly a quarter of the value of the fish they catch in UK waters. Britain is understood to be holding out for getting back much more than half. *SOURCE: AFP*

UNDER THE NEW RULES

China introduces security review rules for foreign investors

FOREIGN investors in Chinese industries from defence to tech will from next year face an extra layer of scrutiny to ensure their activities do not undermine national security, the country's top economic planner said Saturday.

Under the new rules, overseas investment in Chinese industries related to the military will automatically

be reviewed.

But forays into agriculture, energy, transport, internet and financial services will only face a review if they involve the acquisition of 50 per cent of a Chinese company, or will significantly affect the business.

Investors in those cases must submit to a govern-

ment review determining whether their moves "affect national security", according to the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), which did not specify what activities would be seen as having such an effect.

SOURCE: AFP

FEDERAL RESERVE

Fed tweaks banking restrictions to allow some buybacks, dividends

THE Federal Reserve on Friday eased rules on major US banks meant to protect the financial system during the Covid-19 pandemic, allowing share buybacks and dividends to resume in certain circumstances.

The central bank this year ordered 34 major US banks to suspend share buybacks in the last two quarters of 2020 and to limit dividend payments.

However on Friday the Fed modified its regulations, saying for the January-March period of next year, "both dividends and share repurchases will



The second Federal Reserve stress test of 2020 found that the banking system remained resilient but uncertainty lingers. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

be limited to an amount based on income over the past year."

Firms not earning income won't be able to pay dividends or make share repurchases, the central

bank said.

Shortly after the announcement, JPMorgan Chase said it would repurchase \$30 billion in shares starting in the first quarter.

SOURCE: AFP

SPECIFIC PROCUREMENT NOTICE
PROCUREMENT OF CONSTRUCTION, CIVIL WORKS

THE REPUBLIC OF THE UNION OF MYANMAR
THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WELFARE UNDER THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL WELFARE, RELIEF AND RESETTLEMENT
MCCT4N -MATERNAL AND CHILD CASH TRANSFER FOR IMPROVED NUTRITION PROJECT

Project No.:164129

Contract Title: (250'x75'x24') 2S RC Office Building, Union Office (37500 Sft including water, electricity, toilet, portico)

Reference No.: CW-2.1.1-(1 in Union)

The Republic of the Union of Myanmar has received financing from the International Development Association (IDA) toward the cost of the Maternal and Child Cash Transfer for Improved Nutrition Project (MCCT4NP). The Department of Social Welfare (DSW) under the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement, in its role as Implementing Agency (IA) of the MCCT4N Project, intends to apply part of the proceeds toward payments under the contract for the procurement of Construction, Civil Works.

The Department of Social Welfare (DSW) now invites sealed bids from eligible bidders for the following construction, civil works (1) in Nay Pyi Taw Council:

CW-2.1.1-(1 in Union): (250'x75'x24') 2S RC Office Building, Union Office (37500) Sft including water, electricity, toilet, portico)

The works are scheduled to start on 10 February 2021 with an estimated completed period of 30th September 2021.

Bids will be evaluated as a bid, taking into account discounts offered. The contract will be awarded to the Bidder offering the lowest evaluated cost to the Employer for this bid, subject to the selected Bidder meeting the required qualification criteria for this bid as the case may be.

Bidding will be conducted through the National Competitive Bidding procedures as specified in "the World Bank's Procurement Regulations for IPF Borrowers of World Bank dated July 1, 2016, revised November 2017, and August 2018 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.

Interested eligible bidders may obtain further information from the Department of Social Welfare (DSW), U Aung Kyaw Moe, Deputy Director General, (socialwelfare.mm@gmail.com) (socialprotection.dsw.gov@gmail.com) and inspect the bidding documents during office hours Monday to Friday from 10:00 to 17:00 Hrs at the address given below.

A complete set of electronic bidding documents in English Language may be obtained free of charge by interested eligible bidders by simple e-mail request to the address below. No printed bidding documents will be made available or sent by DSW.

Interested Bidders that obtained the bidding documents will be invited to attend a Pre-Bid Meeting including an Information Session on the Bidding Documents and Templates on Monday 28 December 2020 10:00 am.

Bids must be delivered to the address below on or before Thursday 7 January 2021 10:00 am Myanmar time. 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 on Thursday 7 January 2021 immediately after the bid submission.

Bid must be accompanied by a Bid Security or a Cash Deposit with a reputable Bank in Myanmar, licensed by and under the supervision of the Central Bank of Myanmar for this activity.

The address referred to above is:

Department of Social Welfare (DSW)
Attn: U Aung Kyaw Moe, Deputy Director General
Union Office, Office No (23), Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement,
Nay Pyi Taw, Republic of the Union of Myanmar.
For Detailed information please contact:
U Aung Kyaw Moe 067 404583 (office telephone) 067 404583 (office fax)
e-mail: socialwelfare.mm@gmail.com and socialprotection.dsw.gov@gmail.com

Notice Inviting Objection To Change of Distributor

FMC Corporation USA holds the provisional registration of the following pesticide granted by the Pesticide Registration Board of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar on 2 Feb 2018 and 9 May 2019.

No.	Current Product Name	Active Ingredient Name	Registration Number
1	Ammate®	Indoxacarb 150 g/l EC	P2017-3341
2	Coragen™ Insect Control	Chlorantraniliprole 18.4 % w/w SC	P2018-4114

Notice is hereby given that the official distributor of FMC Corporation for above pesticides are changing to Y Agro Solution Co., Ltd. from JJ-Pun Trading Co., Ltd., invites objections to Co-Secretary, Pesticide Registration Board, Plant Protection Division, Department of Agriculture, Yangon from all parties within a period of fourteen (14) days from the publication of this notice, with copies of such documents and other proofs in support of their objections. If no objections are received within the period prescribed above, parties mentioned above shall proceed with the completion of formalities recorded with the Pesticide Registration Board.

Y Agro Solution Co., Ltd.

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V GREEN ACE VOY. NO. (049S)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V GREEN ACE VOY. NO. (049S)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **20-12-2020** 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.

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V MATHU BHUM VOY. NO. (269W)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V MATHU BHUM VOY. NO. (269W)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **20-12-2020** 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 REGIONAL CONTAINER LINES

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V SHAHR E KORD VOY. NO. (SCY1088E)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V SHAHR E KORD VOY. NO. (SCY1088E)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **20-12-2020** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **MITT** where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

Phone No: 2301185

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

M/S LAND & SEA LOGISTICS

Preparing students for an unpredictable tomorrow, today



IN THE world today, change is one of the few things that is certain. With the rapid evolution of technology, science, and globalization, it is not enough for our students to cope with uncertainty, but to embrace, adapt and thrive in the evolving 21st Century environment. To empower students to be prepared for the future, Yangon American International School has adopted

the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme (IB PYP) into its modern curriculum framework. The IB PYP was introduced in 1997 and is geared for elementary school students from 3 to 12 years old. IB PYP is taught at nearly 1,800 schools in more than 100 countries around the world. Many different kinds of schools teach the IB PYP, including public, private, and international schools. Yangon American will be the first international school in Myanmar to be accredited as an IB PYP institution.

“By the time our elementary school students graduate from college, they will be competing for jobs that do not even exist today,” said Mr

Robert Crutchfield, Yangon American Head of School, adding, “With the IB PYP programme, we teach our students to develop critical thinking and inquiry skills that will enable them to be ready to learn new skills and succeed in a world where change is rapidly evolving in many fields such as Artificial Intelligence and the environment.”

The IB Primary Years Programme is the first of the four IB programmes and was designed to ease the transition for students into the IB Middle Years Programme. The programme aims to promote inquiry and foster the development of the whole child through a unique “trans disciplinary framework,” meaning that children learn in terms of issues and

themes rather than categorically defined subjects.

The IB PYP is a unique approach to learning that offers many benefits to primary school students. For example, the IB PYP encourages children to think independently and take responsibility for their actions and learning. Students are taught the basic concepts of the IB learner profile to help them develop positive, open-minded attitudes toward a variety of topics, skills, and issues.

The programme’s “inquiry-led approach” allows students to be active participants in their learning by asking questions, exploring ideas, and sharing knowledge with their peers. The classroom is a dynamic atmosphere that encourages students to make discoveries and choose what they would like to study.

The IB PYP also emphasizes “international-mindedness,” or becoming more culturally aware and empathetic toward others. This is where the key element of “attitudes” comes into play: students learn how to interact appropriately and openly with others from a variety of backgrounds, cultures, and languages.

“The IB PYP programme helps our students expand their knowledge of the subjects that they are studying as well as learn to look at various issues and problems through different perspectives,” said Mr Crutchfield, adding, “Our students are developing skills that they can take with them throughout their lives” .

Yangon American International School



2C2P partners with KBZPay to expand digital payments network in Myanmar

2C2P's online payment systems will be linked with KBZPay to further develop the evolving digital payments landscape in Myanmar, and to bring benefits to people and businesses in the country

2C2P, Southeast Asia's leading payments platform, and KBZPay, the leading mobile wallet in Myanmar, have established a partnership to expand the digital payments network in Myanmar. The partnership will bring together 2C2P's online payment systems and KBZPay's mobile wallet technology to open up new possibilities for people in Myanmar to transact with global and local businesses. In addition, the partnership will connect 2C2P's partners and merchants with KBZPay's fast-growing customer base, driving new payment efficiencies and convenience.

Aside from performing convenient and secure mobile transactions to pay for goods and services, make bill payments and manage everyday finances, this partnership will empower KBZPay's 6.7 million customers in Myanmar to use their mobile wallets to transact with 2C2P's extensive global and international merchants from today. These merchants include tech giants, online marketplaces, retailers as well as Myanmar-based companies.

Payments made by KBZPay users to 2C2P merchants are verified using 2C2P's back-end systems which ensure a seamless payment experience for both customer and merchant. 2C2P will serve as payment facilitator on such transactions, enabling KBZPay customers to make payments to 2C2P merchants even though they are not onboarded to the KBZPay network.

The partnership and service expansion with KBZPay is another big step for 2C2P in its mission to simplify the payments processes for global enterprises in a complex regional payments landscape.

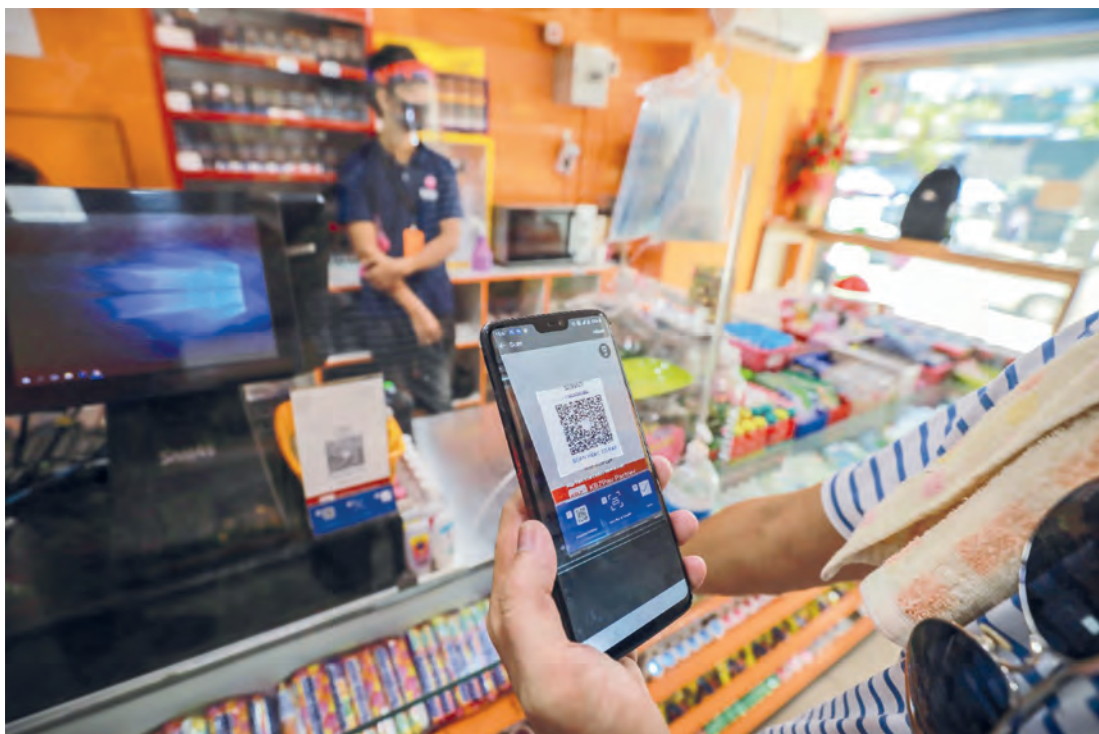
"Myanmar currently houses one of the fastest-growing and hyper-connected popula-

tions of young people in Southeast Asia, and we know that they are increasingly looking for more tech-savvy digital payment options," said Pyay Nyein, Country Head of 2C2P Myanmar. "As part of our broader expansion this year, we are delighted to partner with KBZPay to enable our comprehensive network of partners and merchants to meet this growing demand for contactless, online and mobile payments."

Since 2018, KBZPay has enabled a more connected, and safer way of life through digital payments while giving many people across Myanmar access to essential financial and digital services for the first time. KBZPay connects its customers with more than 290,000 agents and merchants nationwide and has to date facilitated transactions valued at more than MMK15.6 trillion (USD11.2 billion).

"As KBZPay continues to define the new payments landscape in the country, we will expand our ecosystem so as to link more people with their loved ones as well as with agents, service providers, e-commerce and retail platforms, government services and other organizations. Our partnership with 2C2P reflects our joint vision to accelerate mobile transactions in the country by harnessing the latest payment technologies," said Mr Chong Ho Yoon, Head of KBZPay.

The partnership between 2C2P and KBZPay is timely as Myanmar's shift towards a mobile-first digital society is accelerated amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has prompted businesses to rethink efficient ways to handle transactions, and spurred consumer demand for secure, digital payment solutions as their preferred way to manage their everyday finances. — GNLM



Useful Information

JAPANESE CUISINE

AJISHIN

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

ANAIMO

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

BIKKURA SUSHI & SASHIMI JAPANESE RESTAURANT

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

BUSHIDO

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

CHO JAPANESE DINNING & BAR

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

DINNING FUKUROU

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

EDOZUSHI

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

(3) YAKINIKU FUKAGAWA

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

FUJINOBO

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

FURUSATO

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

GEKKO

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

HIMARI MYANMAR

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

HOKKAIDO JAPANESE RESTAURANT

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

HOT POT KING and Hot pot and BBQ Buffet Restaurant

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

Hot Pot City 8 Miles

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

101 Hot Pot & Sushi

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

Get Directions

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

Little Sheep Hot Pot Myanmar

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

HOTEL

BELMOND GOVERNOR'S RESIDENCE

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

CHATRIUM

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

CHERRY HILLS HOTEL

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

HOTLE 51

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

HOTEL KAN KAW

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

HOTLE SIDNEY

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

INYA LAKE HOTEL

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

LOTTEE HOTLES AND SERVICED APARTMENTS YANGON

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

MERCURE HOTEL

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

NOVOTEL YANGON MAX

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

PAN PACIFIC YANGON

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

PARK ROYAL

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

PULLMAN YANGON CENTREPOINT

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

ROSE GARDEN HOTEL

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

SAVOY HOTEL

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

SEDONA HOTEL

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

SULE SHANGRI-LA

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

SUMMIT PARKVIEW HOTEL

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

SUPER HOTEL

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

Myanmar Women's League scheduled to hold in 2021

THE Myanmar National League is scheduled to hold the Women's League from April to July 2021, according to the football authorities.

The Myanmar National League discussed the issues about the women's league at a league committee meeting this month, and officials have originally scheduled to hold the Women's League in 2020, but it was moved to next year amidst the COVID-19 outbreak in Myanmar.

Football authorities will make a final decision about the league at another MNL meeting in early January.

The Myanmar Football Federation (MFF) created the very first version of the Women's League in 2016.

The Women's League has been held three times, with Myawaddy FC winning twice and the Sports Science team winning once. Eight teams competed in the previous seasons, and Myawady FC won twice in a row in the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 seasons. Next, Sports Science Team won the championship trophy in 2018-2019 season.

"Some clubs will resign for the upcoming season, but some new ones will be added. The Women's League will be played by seven or eight teams. There are two rounds to be set in the upcoming tournament", Myanmar National League officials said.—Shine Htet Zaw (Translated by Kyaw Zin Lin)



The Women's League is becoming popular in Myanmar thanks to the support of Myanmar Football Federation. PHOTO: BHONE THAW

Better together? Latest Qatar World Cup stadium launches



Qatar's Al-Rayyan Venue which will host World Cup 2022 matches and opened its doors with a domestic cup final. PHOTO: AFP

AL-RAYYAN, Qatar— Qatar inaugurated its latest stadium on Friday (Dec 18) for the 2022 World Cup with a half-capacity 20,000-strong crowd who had all tested for the coronavirus or antibodies beforehand but social distancing was minimal.

The launch of the Al-Rayyan Venue, 24km west of the capital Doha, marks one of the largest sports gatherings anywhere in the world since the start of the pandemic.

In New Zealand, more than 20,000 fans attended the Super Rugby Aotearoa six days after the country declared itself Covid-free. Similar numbers are attending some National Football League games in the US despite surging infections and deaths.

Fans were able to apply for tickets to Friday's event if they either tested positive for virus antibodies, or tested negative for COVID-19 at accredited clinics in the days before the opening.

Organizers said 10,000 seats would be reserved for each category.

The 40,000-seat ground, which will host seven matches during Qatar 2022 up to and including the round of 16 stage, hosted the domestic Emir Cup final as its inaugural match.

Favourites Al-Sadd, coached by former Barcelona and Spain player Xavi Hernandez, took on minnows Al-Arabi in front of an audience that included the country's ruler, Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani and FIFA boss Gianni Infantino.—AFP ■

Sydney to Hobart yacht race cancelled for first time in 76 years

SYDNEY—Australia's gruelling Sydney to Hobart yacht race was called off for the first time in 76 years on Saturday because of an escalating coronavirus outbreak, organizers said. The often brutal 628-nautical mile (1,163-kilometre) bluewater classic was due to start on Boxing Day, but with parts of Sydney locked down after a new cluster of Covid-19 cases, it was cancelled.

"We are bitterly disappointed to cancel the race this year especially considering the plans and preparations we had put in place to have a Covid safe race," said Cruising Yacht Club of Australia (CYCA) commodore Noel Cornish.

“We were so well prepared to run the race and we're only six days from the start. This is the first time in 76 years that the race will not be conducted.”

The decision to pull the plug came the same day authorities in Hobart announced plans to impose a 14-day quarantine requirement on all travellers from Sydney. It came as a cluster of new coronavirus cases on the city's northern beaches grew to 38 and residents were ordered to stay at home until at least midnight on Wednesday except for essential reasons.—AFP ■

“We are bitterly disappointed to cancel the race this year especially considering the plans and preparations we had put in place to have a Covid safe race,” said Cruising Yacht Club of Australia (CYCA) commodore Noel Cornish.

Golovkin batters Szeremeta to win by seventh round stoppage

MIAMI—Gennady Golovkin made boxing history Friday by knocking down Kamil Szeremeta four times en route to a seventh round TKO over the overmatched Polish challenger to retain his IBF world middleweight title. The 38-year-old Golovkin floored the soft-punching Szeremeta in the first, second, fourth and seventh rounds in a one-sided fight to surpass Bernard Hopkins for the most ever defences at 160 pounds with 21.

"It was a lot of fun," said Golovkin of Kazakhstan. "I come back. I told you I would come back af-



Gennady Golovkin lands a crushing blow to the chin of Kamil Szeremeta in their IBF middleweight title bout at the Hard Rock Hotel in Hollywood, Florida. PHOTO: AFP

ter Canelo (Alvarez) fight.

"I felt very comfortable because I worked hard. I had a lot of time to prepare and I am very proud of my team."

Szeremeta survived

the seventh round but the referee stopped the fight between rounds in the behind-closed-doors contest at the Seminole Hard Rock Hotel and Casino in Hollywood, Florida.—AFP ■