

**NATIONAL**

NSSA introduces 2<sup>nd</sup> phase of its web portal

PAGE-3

**NATIONAL**

20<sup>th</sup> research conference marks centenary of Yangon University

PAGE-4

# THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

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Tuesday, 22 December 2020

## Myanmar seamen brought back home from ROK by relief flight



Myanmar returnees are seen at the Yangon International Airport on 21 December 2020. PHOTO: MNA

**A** TOTAL of 135 Myanmar seamen who were stranded in the Republic of Korea due to the suspension of international flights arrived in Yangon yesterday.

They were brought back home by the relief flight of Myanmar National Airlines, organized by the Myanmar Embassy

in Seoul and the Myanmar Seafarers' Employment Services Federation.

The group of Myanmar seamen included 83 persons from the ROK, 1 from Russia, 4 from Japan, 14 from Panama, 4 from South Africa, 3 from China, 13 from Indonesia, 11 from Singapore, and 2 from the Netherlands.

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.

To bring back the Myanmar citizens who are stranded in

foreign countries by relief flights and chartered flights in accordance with the instructions from National-Level Central Committee on Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs cooperated with the relevant ministries, Myanmar embassies from respective countries and shipping companies.—MNA

### INSIDE TODAY

**NATIONAL**

MSWRR, Rakhine State government discuss resettlement of IDPs in Rakhine

PAGE-5

**NATIONAL**

Mangroves planted on 18 hectares in Kawhmu by AFoCO

PAGE-5

**LOCAL NEWS**

Mandalay to open Test & Care Ayeyawady Centre today

PAGE-6

**BUSINESS**

US dollar slides after CBM sells \$3 mln in local forex

PAGE-7

**BUSINESS**

Watermelon export prices plunge by 25pc per tonne



PAGE-7

## 848 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 21 December, total figure rises to 116,982

MYANMAR'S COVID-19 positive cases rose to **116,982** after **848** new cases were reported on 21 December according to the Ministry of Health and Sports. Among these **116,982** confirmed cases, **2,465** died, **96,685** have been discharged from hospitals.—MNA

Updated at 8 pm, 21 December 2020

Total Cases

116,982

New Cases

848

Total Death Tally

2,465

Discharged from Hospital

96,685

Daily death toll until 8 pm 21-12-2020

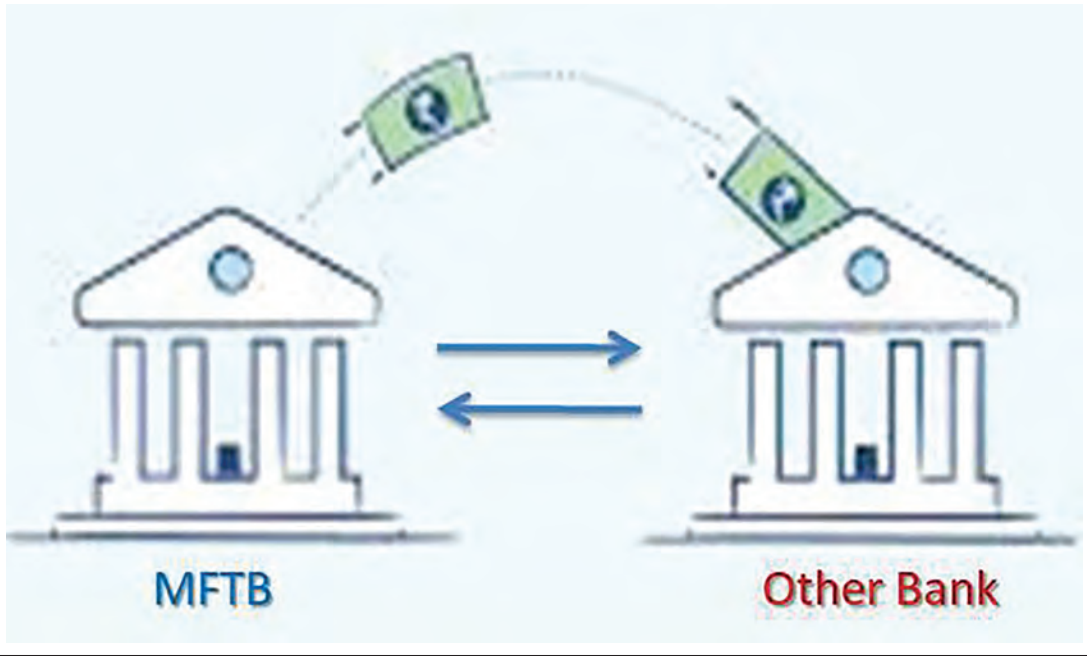
22

Ministry of Health and Sports

“People are the key”

Money transfer services in Myanmar Kyat available at CBM-NET 2

THE Myanma Foreign Trade Bank has been providing the real-time money transfer services such as cash-in and cash-out between the MFTB and other local banks in Myanmar Kyat at a reasonable fee on the Central Bank of Myanmar’s Financial Network System 2 (CBM-NET2) since 16-11-2020. —GNLM



Mandalay Region to develop Pyu Kan Village as tourist destination

U Zaw Myo Latt, Director of the Directorate of Hotels and Tourism of Mandalay Region, said that Pyu Kan Village in Tada-U Township will be developed as a tourist destination to attract more tourists to Mandalay Region in the post-COVID-19 period.

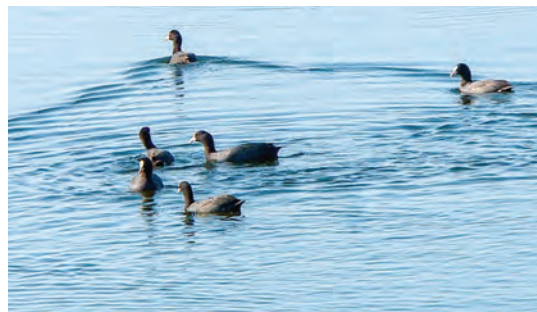
In developing Pyu Kan Village in Tada-U Township as a new tourist destination, trips for learning about the lives of the rural people, tours for relaxation, agricultural-based tourism, and bird watching tours to see migratory birds in Pyu Lake will be introduced to tourists.

“We are trying to revive the tourism businesses in the post-COVID-19 period. We are providing training for human resources development during the COVID-19 crisis, and COVID-19 related guidelines have been issued to ensure the safe operation of the tourism sector after the crisis. We have arranged in order for tourism-related organizations to follow these guidelines,” said U Zaw Myo Latt. “Our

department has been cooperating with associated organizations, including the Union of Myanmar Travel Association, Myanmar Tourism Guides Association and Myanmar Hotelier Association to identify new tourist destinations.

The world’s rarest and most endangered bird species including Mallards and Waterbirds, often comes to the Pyu Lake.—Min Htet Aung (Man Sub-Printing House)

(Translated by Maung Maung Swe)



MoHS announces 38 precursor chemicals

The Ministry of Health and Sports, in accordance with the UN Convention and the situations in Myanmar, has announced the following 38 items as precursor chemicals for more effective anti-drug measures.

- (1) Acetic anhydride
- (2) N – acetylanthranilic acid
- (3) Ephedrine
- (4) Ergometrine
- (5) Ergotamine
- (6) Isosafrole
- (7) Lysergic acid
- (8) 3,4-methylenedioxyphenyl -2-propanone
- (9) Norephedrine
- (10) 1-phenyl-2-propanone
- (11) Piperonal
- (12) Potassium permanganate
- (13) Pseudoephedrine
- (14) Safrole
- (15) Safrole rich oil
- (16) 4-anilino-N-phenethylpiperidine (ANPP)
- (17) N-phenethyl-4-piperidine (NPP)
- (18) Methylamine/ Methylamine Hydrochloride
- (19) Ammonium Chloride
- (20) Sodium Acetate
- (21) Lead Acetate
- (22) Tartaric Acid
- (23) Sodium Cyanide
- (24) Ammonium Nitrate
- (25) “3,4-MDP-2-P methyl glycidate” (“PMK glycidate”) (all stereoisomers)
- (26) “3,4-MDP-2-P methyl glycidic acid” (“PMK glycidic acid”) (all stereoisomers)
- (27) alpha-phenylacetoacetamide (APAA) (including its optical isomers)
- (28) Acetone
- (29) Anthranilic acid
- (30) Ethyl ether (or) Diethyl ether
- (31) Hydrochloric acid
- (32) Methyl ethyl ketone
- (33) Phenylacetic acid
- (34) Piperidine
- (35) Sulphuric acid
- (36) Toluene
- (37) Caffeine
- (38) Thionyl Chloride

Central Committee for Drug Abuse Control

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## Benefits from working together

If we want the whole country to develop, we need to combine all our human, financial and material resources and work strenuously together. Only then shall we benefit. It will be of no benefit if the Bamars, the Karens, the Shans, the Kachins and the Chins are divided, each going their own way. We will enjoy benefits only if we work together. And you will find that out only if you try it out.

(Extract from a speech delivered by General Aung San on 11 February 1947 in Panglong at a dinner with Sawbwas)



Shwe-Kyet-Yet and Shwe-Kyet-Kya Pagoda. PHOTO BY: THANT ZAW OO

# NSSA introduces 2<sup>nd</sup> phase of its web portal

THE National Skills Standards Authority explained the second phase processes of its web portal at the Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population through a videoconferencing yesterday.

The event was attended by Union Minister U Thein Swe, Deputy Minister U Myint Kyaing, the members of Accreditation and Assessment Committee, the Occupational Training Committee, the Occupational Skills Standards Sectorial Committee, chairpersons, committee members, partnered organizations, the chief assessors and experts from the Information Matrix Co., Ltd.

The Union Minister talked about the objectives of NSSA in drafting the web portal to provide information services to the stakeholders in the labour market.



Union Minister U Thein Swe participates in the virtual meeting on introducing 2nd phase of the web portal of National Skills Standards Authority on 21 December 2020. PHOTO: MNA

The web portal has been developing with the assistance of GIZ since 2019, and its first phase was launched in June 2020 to be able to share the occupational skills standards during the home-stay period in respective areas.

The MoLIP and the NSSA are putting emphasis on creating regular employment for the

labourers with poor educational background, the opportunity for lifelong learning and learning cycle, and changing trend of employment.

The ministry is working for the accomplishment of multi-sector skill training schools with the help of GIZ in Sittway Township of Rakhine State and Lashio Township of Shan State

in 2021.

The ministry and Swisscontact are conducting the rural livelihood training courses for the labours in Mon, Kayin and Taninthayi, and the information about these courses will be included in the second phase of NSSA Web portal.

The NSSA web portal is developed for information man-

agement, searching for the document, scrutinizing certificates, management of online applications, information services, data feeding about skill training and vocational training schools, maps, news and video clips.

The NSSA web portal phase 2 includes online application of NSSA's certificate, linking with test item database, downloading reports, implementation and maintenance, application, and using SMS to the officials for the next level certificate.

Daw Naing Yi Mar, Deputy Head of TVET Project from the GIZ, explained the future plans of NSSA Web Portal, followed by the reports of committee members and the experts from web portal developing company Information Matrix Co., Ltd on the implementation of respective processes.—MNA

(Translated by Aung Khin)

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## Please be very extremely vigilant, be very careful



If you wish to get back to the normal routine sooner, you need to be extremely vigilant. Please be very careful. I am not sure that people strictly follow my advice as I have frequently talked about it. At this time, because I have to remind again and again, I am not sure whether some people might even listen to me. However, allow me to remind you as there is a need to remind repeatedly. The rate of infection could be significantly reduced by wearing masks and washing hands. I'm not saying you will have 100 per cent safety. However, wearing masks and washing hands to kill germs could lower the infection rate. The best practice is to stay away from other people who are not family members. Vigilance is needed even at home because some family members have to go outside and come back. I have reminded that although the younger persons in good health conditions have lesser risks of this disease, the elderly groups and people who have underlying health problems are more vulnerable to the pandemic.

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

## 20<sup>th</sup> research conference marks centenary of Yangon University

THE opening ceremony of 20<sup>th</sup> Research Conference to mark the centenary of the University of Yangon was virtually held yesterday morning.

Union Minister Dr Myo Thein Gyi delivered an opening remark at the ceremony which was also attended by the president, the vice-presidents and members of Myanmar Academy of Arts and Science, the directors-general, rectors, professors, researchers and academic staff.

Those who submitted the papers to the Research Conference for the Centenary of the University of Yangon (RC-CUY2020) were 47 professors (5 per cent), 196 associate professors (22 per cent), 319 lecturers (37 per cent), 101 assistant lecturers (11 per cent), 35 tutors (41 per cent) and 164 others (19 per cent)—totally 862 persons.

The numbers of research papers in respective years were 307 in 2017, 455 in 2018, 999 in 2019 and 862 in 2020.

A total of 12,767 research papers have been published in local and foreign research



Union Minister Dr Myo Thein Gyi participates in the opening ceremony of 20<sup>th</sup> Research Conference to mark the centenary of the University of Yangon on 21 December 2020. **PHOTO: MNA**

journals from 2011 to 2016. The SCImago Journal Rank (SJR) indicated that Myanmar published 1,649 research papers from 1996 to 2015 and 2,140 research papers from 2016 to 2019.

The best awards for doctoral research paper in respective years were 9 out of 25 in 2017, 11 out of 34 in 2018, 9 out of 46

in 2019 and 10 out of 33 in 2020.

Except for Laos and Timor-Leste, other countries have possessed better quality and quantity in research. In contrast, ASEAN and BIMSTEC countries are strong in this issue due to a larger amount of investments in research and innovation.

The Union Minister urged for cooperation to conduct the best research for the country and the world. He added that the research is the lifeblood of universities, and it plays a crucial role in independent management at the universities.

He also advised for promoting automation technologies of

artificial intelligence (AI), Robotics, Big Data, Cloud computing and Internet of Things, the disciplinary relating to any academic subject, interdisciplinary, epistemic subjects, high-tech learning and high-touch learning and the blended learning.

The Union Minister also discussed the implementation of Schools and Industry Partnership-SIP, developing curriculum for ensuring the promotion of skills and capacity.

The National Accreditation and Quality Assurance Committee will perform as an external assessment group for quality assurance, while the National Education Strategic Plan (2021-2030) includes independent management in developing human resources.

The Union Minister called for the participation of the private sector in research and innovation sector for ensuring quality economic system, banking system, sustainable development and highest benefits in production and service sector.—MNA

*(Translated by Aung Khin)*

### 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 1924](tel:1924)) 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

## MSWRR, Rakhine State government discuss resettlement of IDPs in Rakhine

THE Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement organized a virtual meeting yesterday morning over the resettlement of IDPs in Kyauktalone IDP camp in Kyaukpyu Township in the Rakhine State and closure of the camp.

Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Dr Win Myat Aye, Rakhine State Chief Minister U Nyi Pu, Deputy Minister U Soe Aung, regional ministers, the Permanent Secretary, Directors-General, government officials and IDP camp officials participated in the virtual meeting.

During the meeting, Union Minister Dr Win Myat Aye said that the Union government is constantly striving for peace, stability and development in the Rakhine State. He continued that the Union Government and the regional government are cooperating with local civil society organizations and the general public in accordance with policies, laws and strategies in order to achieve sustainable development in the area.

The National-level Strategy on Resettlement of Internally Displaced Persons and Closure

of IDP Camps is a strategy for the entire country, according to the Union Minister, who said that the government is also cooperating with international experts for planning and implementation of the strategy.

Until now, a total of 4,686 IDPs from five camps — Ka Nyin Taw, Kyauk Ni Maw (Kaman), Ni Din, Min Tha Hpa and Taung Paw — in five townships in the Rakhine State have been resettled, and the camps have been closed.

The necessary plan has also been drawn up for the closure of the Kyauktalone IDP camp in Kyaukpyu Township. In January 2020, the Rakhine State organized a regional level committee in line with the National-level Strategy on Resettlement of Internally Displaced Persons and Closure of IDP Camps.

Speaking on providing support for IDPs during the COVID-19 crisis, the Union Minister said that since the COVID-19 pandemic has broken out, high priority was also given to IDPs in providing various assistance. He added that under the Maternal and Child Cash Transfer (MCCT) programme, additional sup-



Union Minister Dr Win Myat Aye joins the virtual meeting on resettlement of IDPs in Kyauktalone IDP camp in Kyaukpyu Township, Rakhine State on 21 December 2020. PHOTO: MNA

port was provided to pregnant mothers and the children under two years of age in IDP camps. Similarly, under the COVID-19 Economic Relief Plan (CERP), the Disaster Management Department provided K40,000 per household in IDP camps.

Rakhine State Chief Minister U Nyi Pu said that it is required to give high priority to the

wishes of the IDPs in working for closure of IDP Camps in the Rakhine State. He added that the resettlement and closure plans also need to be accepted by the local community, so several discussions have been organized.

Union Minister Dr Win Myat Aye said in his closing speech that regional development, the rule of law, and security must

also be given high priority in implementing the resettlement processes. He added that he looks forward to the successful resettlement of the IDPs and closure of the Kyauktalone IDP camp in line with the national-level strategy, through systematic and sustainable cooperation.—MNA (Translated by Maung Maung Swe)

## Mangroves planted on 18 hectares in Kawhmu by AFoCO

WITH the financial assistance from SK Innovation, Asian Forest Cooperation Organization (AFoCO) and Korea Association for UN Environment, planted about 45,000 mangroves in an area in Letkokkon, Kawhmu Township, recently.

Volunteers including local people, officials of the Forest Department and staff of the Overall Service Management totalling about 30 participated in planting mangroves on 18 hectares of the village.

The activity is a part of

close cooperation between AFoCo and Korea Association for UN Environment to help restore the natural wetland area in fighting against climate change in Myanmar.—GNLM

(Translated by Tun Tun Naing)



People pose for a group photo after planting mangroves under the Plant for the Planet Mangrove Restoration Project in Letkokkon, Kawhmu Township. PHOTO: SUPPLIED

## Myanmar repatriates 8 Thai citizens



Eight Thai citizens return home via Tachilek border town in eastern Shan State on 21 December 2020. PHOTO: MNA

MYANMAR officials sent 8 Thai citizens back to their own countries as they wanted to go back home from their works in Tachilek Township in eastern Shan State yesterday.

Three Thai men and five women were transferred to Thai authorities at the Myanmar-Thai border friendship bridge (2) after undertaking

medical tests.

They arrived in Tachilek before the outbreak of COVID-19 as the factory workers.

Thai authorities accepted their citizens and carried out COVID-19 tests by mobile medical equipment.—MNA

(Translated by Aung Khin)

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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.

## Mandalay to open Test & Care Ayeyawady Centre today

By Nyein Nyein

THE coronavirus testing is available at the Test & Care Ayeyawady Centre (Mandalay) starting from 22 December, the Ayeyawady Centre reported.

The centre will be open between 8 am and 12 pm and between 2 pm and 4 pm from 22 December for those residents suffering the COVID-19 symptoms (loss of smell) in Aungmyaythazan, Chanayethazan,

Mahaaungmye, Patheingyi, Chanmyathazi, Pyigyidagon and Amarapura townships.

Those who want to test at the centre must fill the information through URL > <https://bit.ly/37qg2My> in advance, and they will be informed of the confirmation of the appointment date and time for testing, QR code and patient ID through SMS.

Those who will be tested must come to the centre

through ambulance owned by philanthropic organizations in Mandalay district. Arrival by personal vehicle and motorcycle are restricted in the centre. Furthermore, Test & Care centre will not grant any transport permit in the region. Those having loss of smell, who tested negative, cannot come back to their home immediately, and they have to stay at quarantine camp and will have an examination for the second time in 48

hours. If they tested negative again, they could go back home. For those test positive, they will have to stay at the quarantine centre set by the Ministry of Health and Sports to receive treatment.

The Test & Care Ayeyawady Centre (Mandalay) will be available for those people who have a loss of smell to avoid unnecessary spreading in the centre, the centre notified. (Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

## Police arrest 5 persons for electrofishing in dolphin conservation area

THE police have arrested five people and seized 27 electrofishing boats and the electrical devices in the past three and half months of Ayeyawady Dolphin Conservation Plan.

The plan launched on 1 September 2020, and the patrol is daily conducted. On 15 December, the authorities arrested one person red-handed and seized six electrofishing boats and the related equipment. The electrofishing equipment was handed over to the related Fisheries Department. The detained persons on electrofishing have been prosecuted under the Freshwater Fisheries Law in Mandalay, said U Kyaw Hla Thein, officer-in-charge of Ayeyawady dolphin conservation under the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS-Myanmar).

To eradicate the illegal electrofishing, protect the endangered dolphins from illegal fishing and increase the dolphin population, the Ayeyawady



Five fishermen were arrested for electrofishing in the dolphin conservation area of Ayeyawady River. PHOTO: SUPPLIED

Dolphin Conservation Plan was carried out under the guidance of the Fisheries Department. A combined team comprising officials from the Fisheries Department and other related or-

ganizations are patrolling day and night around the dolphin conservation area, and the team seized 27 fishing vessels and electrofishing devices, along with five fishers.

The patrolling is daily carried out in the Ayeyawady dolphin conservation area of Htigyaing, Katha and Shwegu towns.—Aung Thura (Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

## Online course on fertilizer use, environment conservation to be conducted free in PyinOoLwin

An online course on fertilizer use and environmental conservation will be conducted free for the garden owners in PyinOoLwin Township of Mandalay Region.

U Okkar Kyaw, General Secretary of Mandalay Region Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said that their organization would run the course in coordination with the German Chambers of Industry and Commerce (IHK) and the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (UMFCCI). He also said, "The course



Mandalay Region Chamber of Commerce and Industry plans to conduct free online course on fertilizer use and environmental conservation in PyinOoLwin. PHOTO: SUPPLIED

will provide training on how to prevent poisoning while using agricultural chemicals. It will also train on dos and don'ts of chemicals used during the production time as the excess chemical residues in the crops would have caused problems in exports of produce."

Training will be given by German and local experts, and those who want to join the course can register at the MRCCI through phone number 02-406932 or email [MRCCIMDY@gmail.com](mailto:MRCCIMDY@gmail.com).—Min Htet Aung (Man Sub-printing House)

(Translated by Aung Khin)

## US dollar slides after CBM sells \$3 mln in local forex

By Nyein Nyein

THE US dollar against Kyat weakened to K1,350 within a week in the local forex market, following the Central Bank of Myanmar selling 3 million dollars, local forex market data indicated. When the dollar value was substantial in the local forex market, the Central Bank of Myanmar (CBM) started to sell 3 million dollars from the state's foreign exchange reserves at an auction rate on 14 December. A dollar exchange rate stood above K1,400 on 15 December 2020. The rate fell to K1,350 on 21 December, with a decrease of over K50 within a week.

"The dollar gain will benefit the exporters. Yet, it will hike up the local food prices. The currency intervention is required to steer the own currency value, U Than Lwin, senior consultant to Kanbawza Bank shared his opinion. "A too-strong or too-weak dollar

is not good for the economy. It is one of the responsibilities of the CBM to control the price. That is why the CBM practised the foreign exchange intervention," he elaborated.

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 K1,303-1,330 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. (Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

## Watermelon export prices plunge by 25pc per tonne

By Nyein Nyein

THE price of watermelon exported to China fell by 25 per cent per tonne, vice-chairman Sai Khin Maung of fruit depot at Muse 105<sup>th</sup> mile trade zone said.

A watermelon fetched over 7,000 Yuan per tonne in November-end, and the price now plummeted to 4,500 Yuan per tonne, he continued.

"Watermelon prices rose to 7,000 Yuan per tonne in the previous weeks. The prevailing maximum price stands at only 4,500 Yuan per tonne. Watermelon with good packaging is, however, priced at 6,000 Yuan. Nevertheless, the price sharply dropped by 25 per cent. I guess there will be no possible price rise as high as before," he shared his opinion.

At present, more than 200 trucks loaded watermelon daily enter the Muse zone, and they are continued to go to China, accord-



A truck is seen carrying watermelons.

PHOTO: KHWAR NYO

ing to Muse fruit depot.

However, about 500-600 trucks of watermelon were stuck in the zone due to the transport delay. They are prioritized to deliver the watermelons first.

"Among Myanmar-China border cross-

ings adjacent to Muse district, Mang Weing, Kyinsankyawt and Pansai (Kyukok) are open for trading. Nandaw and Manhero areas which were mostly crowded with people have been closed. Moreover, Hsinphyu checkpoint was

also shut down for goods trucks. As a result of this, the authorities concerned from both sides are negotiating the reopening of the Hsinphyu border," Sai Khin Maung explained.

"We have negotiated the entry/exit permit for the trucks at the Hsinphyu border. It will help smooth the trade," he affirmed.

During the last financial year, the COVID-19 impacts battered watermelon, and muskmelon exports and the growers and businesspersons suffered losses. Myanmar's watermelon will be harvested up to May 2021 in the watermelon producing regions and states except for Kayah and Chin states.

Myanmar yearly exports over 800,000 tonnes of watermelon and about 150,000 tonnes of muskmelons to China, Myanmar Watermelon and Muskmelon Producers and Exporters Association stated. (Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

# KMIC, travelling into the future in the same boat with Myanmar

Lee, Jung-wook, Managing Director of KMIC  
Ji, Dong-seon, Infrastructure Attache of Korea Embassy

ON 24 December, the groundbreaking ceremony of the Korea-Myanmar Industrial Complex (KMIC) will be held at Nyaung Hnit-Pin, Yangon in the presence of Chairman (Park, Bokyeong) of Korea Presidential Committee on New Southern Policy, Minister of MIFER, Chief Minister of Yangon Region and distinguished guests from various Myanmar agencies. KMIC is connected to the Yangon-Mandalay Expressway. It is just 25km from Yangon Airport and 40km from Yangon Port, providing excellent access to both domestic and international markets. KMIC will be created as an eco-friendly smart industrial complex differentiated from existing industrial complexes through the application of Korea's advanced technology and renewable energy. The 'Easy Service Centre' will handle all the investment procedures of tenant companies.

When KMIC begins oper-

ations, production inducement effect is projected at US\$6.4 billion and it will create over 520,000 jobs, greatly contributing to the regional and national economy. In addition, the construction of this industrial complex can be used as an opportunity to form a complementary cooperative relationship between the two countries' industrial fields and to expand the cooperative relationship to other areas. In particular, This project is expected to serve as a cooperative channel for Myanmar by housing 135 Korean companies to share Korea's economic growth experience and know-how.

The ASEAN region is changing from a low-cost production base to a huge consumer market as its middle class rapidly grows around 5% annually. In response to this, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (RCEP) was finalized on 15 November 2020. 10 ASEAN countries including Myanmar,

Korea, China and Japan participated. The world's largest FTA - accounting for 30% of the world's population, trade and production - was born. As the importance of ASEAN countries increases, nations around the world are focusing their interest on this region. Korea also established a 'New Southern Policy' in 2018 and is advancing its involvement in ASEAN. Over the past three years, Korea's trade with the region increased by 28% and tourism between the two increased by 50%. Thus, the amount of trade between Korea and ASEAN countries exceeded \$159.7 billion in 2018. In particular, Korea's cumulative investment in Viet Nam was \$67.7 billion (over \$59.3 billion more than Japan) and it ranked first among foreign investors at the end of 2019. Myanmar is one of the countries that has recently attracted attention as the world's attention has been drawn to ASEAN.

Myanmar's renowned historian THANT MYINT-U

describes Myanmar as 'Asia's Crossroads where China and India meet', which best demonstrates Myanmar's geopolitical position as Asia's a hub linking India, China and Southeast Asia. Through Myanmar a huge market of 4 billion people is easily accessible and yet anywhere can be reached by a four-hour flight from Myanmar. In order to reinforce such strategic cooperation with Myanmar, the Korean government also established a 'New Southern Policy Plus' strategy which includes infrastructure, health and education development in addition to the existing New Southern Policy.

Myanmar is the biggest country in the Indochina Peninsula. In the 1960s, it was the largest rice exporter in Asia. It became an oil-producing country in 1853, long before oil was discovered in the Middle East. It is also blessed with abundant natural resources. It was a political, economic and transportation hub and produced the

Asia's first UN Secretary General U Thant (1961-1971). It was also a soccer powerhouse in the early 70s, defeating Korea twice and winning three times at an international soccer tournament hosted by Korea. Now Myanmar is returning to the international arena after declaring its economic opening in 2011. It has freed itself from decades of self-isolation. Myanmar is a country that has many things in common with Korea, such as suffering from colonialism and struggling for democracy. Also, Myanmar's national development vision, MSDP (Myanmar Sustainable Development Plan), and South Korea's 'New Southern Policy' pursue the common values of people, peace and prosperity. As there is a saying in Myanmar, "If you ride in the same boat, you will have the same trip". With the groundbreaking ceremony of KMIC, Korea looks forward to travelling with Myanmar to a bright and prosperous future.

# Negotiation without obstinacy key to success of IDP camp closure programme

STEPS are being taken to shut down the IDP camps in the country in accordance with the tasks prescribed in the National Strategy for the closure of nationwide IDP camps and resettlement of IDPs.

The national strategy envisages that all displaced people at IDP camps return home safely and with dignity and rebuild their lives without depending on others.

While implementing the recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State, the Union Government is implementing its National Strategy for the Closure of internally displaced person (IDP) camps.

In Rakhine State, five IDP camps have been closed and about 4,686 IDPs from the camps have been resettled.

Now, plans are underway to close the Kyauktalone IDP Camp in Kyaukpadaung Township in line with the national strategy, paying heed to wishes of displaced persons in the camp.

The Union Government and the Rakhine State Government held negotiations with the IDPs for several times.

All stakeholders are obliged to negotiate with transparency to ensure that the IDPs do not become exploited by rumours. Meanwhile, those living in the IDP camps are urged not to be swayed by rumours so that the closure of the IDP camp would not be delayed.

thing – both sides have to come to a compromise. Negotiation with obstinacy is not helpful for both sides to reach a consensus.

The Union Government is committed to resettlement of IDPs in a manner that is consistent with the rules and regulations of the respective region and state governments. Also, choosing the sites for relocation and land management must be carried out in conformity with the law. All stakeholders are urged to understand the national strategy, policies and tasks with the IDPs, which is committed to ensuring that displaced people rebuild their lives with safety and dignity, without depending upon others.

We can not accomplish the closure IDP camp within a day. However, we are confident that we can achieve the goal through negotiations as we have faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person.

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# A brief look into the case studies in ELT during and post-COVID crisis

By Dr Zaw Tun

(Continued from yesterday) **Primary and High School level Teachers and online learning**

As the findings of a small-scale research suggest, COVID-19 crisis requires language teachers to spend more time and energy in lesson planning, e.g., PowerPoint Presentation. A freshly employed language teacher remarks: "We have to prepare a lot. Sometimes, the right picture must be hunted out to be shown on the screen to explain a point." Another experienced language teacher of a private high school, teaching writing in the interactive way, reported that though one period in online classes covers even a large number of students like over 400, the responses from his passive learners are very low (0.75 %) and that though individual attention can be checked, socialized language learning in online classes is a far way to go. On the other hand, one good point of online learning is that they could learn at home, feeling at ease in the favourable home setting. One teacher shared her experience: because each individual young learner has only virtual contact with his or her friends, if he is making too much noise, his voice has to be muted, which is one of the ways she has to resort to as part of the classroom management in the New Normal.

**Primary level students and online learning**

It was observed by a teacher teaching through online learning that children have no technophobia, and that they have learned solving technical problems through peer group cooperation. On the other hand, there were complaints

about online learning that takes place for long study hours with no break between the periods. The learners find themselves glued to the screen. To quote a 6 Grader's words in her essay:

I personally don't enjoy online classes, they make me feel dizzy, sleepy and make my legs hurt. Not just my legs, my spine and my eyes hurt. By looking and sitting in front of the screen for 8 hours my eyes hurt and my legs got weak. Once, I can't even walk, my legs hurt so much that it feels like a knife has stabbed my leg. Most of my classmates' eyes got super red and some of them didn't show up in online classes. As you may know, I'm a 6th grader and this is giving me depression. So think about it, if these online classes give 6th graders pain, of course the kindergarten kids will feel the pain too.

To make the things go worse, some parents are very ambitious in the sense that, as reported by a language teacher, they jam their kids' daily timetable not only with English classes but also with other online language classes like Chinese. One can imagine how the childhood of the digital generation is being spent with no time for play- games out in the open air. So both parents and teachers should seriously consider what psychological and behavioural problems of young learners could ensue from online learning.

**Case study of an international school in Mandalay**

Exposure to the target language is high; as a result, the performance of the young learners in English is brilliant, but the irony is the Myanmar young learners are so weak in the academic skills of the native language Myanmar that they have to take private tuition

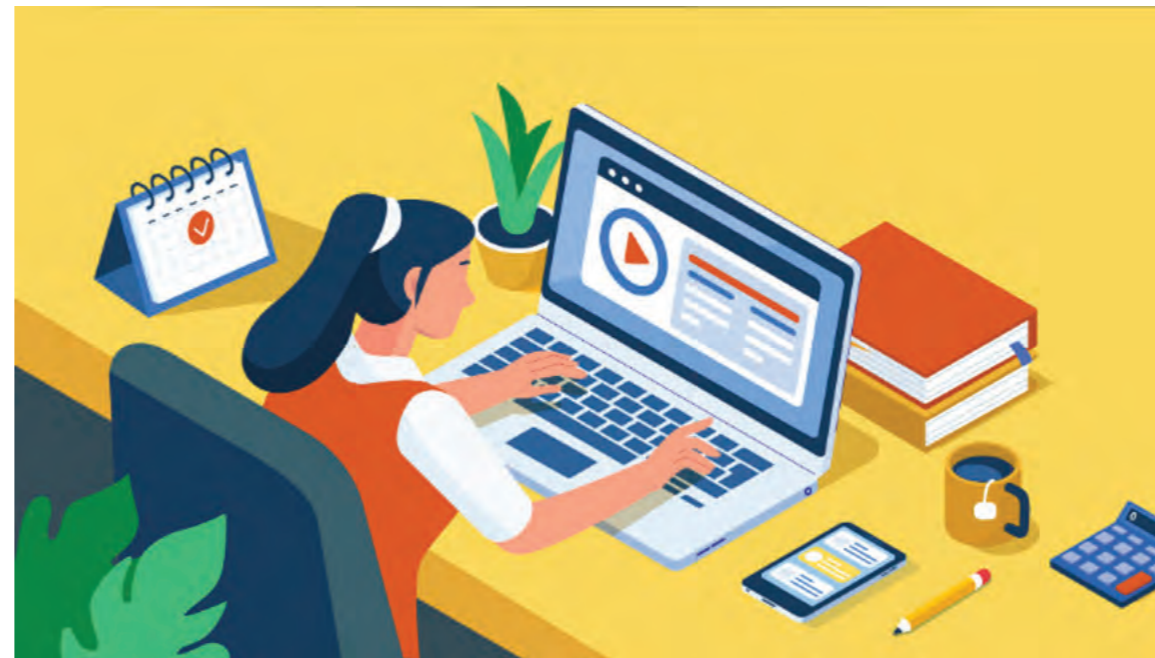


PHOTO: ONLINE-EDUCATION.

for Myanmar subject in off-class hours. In the post-COVID-19 crisis, the importance of the mother tongue should be re-considered. Respect to the Myanmar customs and culture, as well as the knowledge of the history of Myanmar, has been on decline. It is therefore suggested that during and post-COVID-19 crisis, ELT teachers need to overhaul the curriculum and syllabus, and introduce the balanced blending of the target language and the native language, customs and culture.

**Changes in the prescribed textbooks**

What the majority of teachers teach and how they teach are determined by textbooks (Akbari, 2008). Just a few weeks before the COVID-19 hit Myanmar, new English textbooks, as well as teacher trainings, were introduced to Grade 6, 7 and Grade 10.

We might take a brief look at the changes in the use of the textbooks prescribed in Myanmar over the last fifty years so that you'll

get an insight into what has been going on in the context of teaching English as a foreign language here in Myanmar in comparison with the changes in the rest of the world. The emphasis, as you'll see, has for some time been laid on reading and writing, especially on reading as the main language input in the teaching-learning process. For example, the former matriculation textbooks of the 1960s were Six Tales from Shakespeare, and Annapurna, in which the assessment was made on students' performance in producing chunks of writings; thereafter, in the 1970s, a prescribed English text prepared by Myanmar scholars, in which the focus was made on learning the morphology and the assessment took place in the MCQ test; and then, in the 1980s, with the suggestion of the Minister of Education U Kyaw Nyein, an abridged version of Wuthering Heights by Emily Bronte, which, paradoxically, imposed a great challenge both on the learners and the inexperienced English

teachers, who found themselves grappling with the new text. Then, in the 1990s, there came Selected Myanmar tales, (written by Dr Htin Aung and Ko) which was later replaced by a new English text, which includes a blending of passages of factual prose, a Myanmar folk tale, an English short story, travelogue and an inspiring biography of Helen Keller; and very recently, a new English text, focusing more on familiarizing the learners with the factual prose, reflecting the learning needs of tackling informative reading passages.

On the other hand, if compared with the coursebooks prescribed in the international schools, these textbooks have still been weak in textual enhancements, lacking colourful illustrations and attractive layout. It must also be pointed out that, though a few reforms have been made, because of the constraints of the text-bound assessment system, the majority of the matriculation teachers are exam-oriented in the delivery of the

content. In the post-COVID crisis, a survey should be made on the feedback of the language teachers related to the pandemic and a new syllabus design that fits in online learning should be taken into account in the prescribed textbooks. These are the points to consider in the aspect of teacher trainings in the post-COVID crisis.

In conclusion, COVID-19 crisis has affected both primary education and higher education levels of Myanmar. When faced with such unprecedented crisis like this, multi-task forces should be formed, and all stakeholders, trained in effective management skills, are responsible for considering the present and oncoming challenges and should cooperate and collaborate to sort out the possibilities for achieving positive outcomes.

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# EU ambassadors to meet on new coronavirus strain in UK

EU ambassadors will hold a crisis meeting in Brussels on Monday on travel restrictions to the UK after the emergence of a new coronavirus strain there suspected to be very infectious.

Several EU countries – Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy and the Netherlands – have announced the suspension of air links, and in some cases rail

and ferry links, with Britain.

In most cases, the bans were effective from midnight (2300 GMT) Sunday and were to last a day or two, as a precaution while the threat of the new strain was evaluated and a coordinated response was worked out.

An EU official said ambassadors from representatives from the 27 member states would meet

Monday under the bloc's integrated political crisis response mechanism designed to swiftly react to crises.

They would look at measures such as flights bans and the use of PCR coronavirus testing on travellers coming from Britain.

The meeting comes after British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said on Saturday that he was

imposing a severe lockdown on London and much of southeast England because of the new virus variant.

He said the variant could be up to 70 per cent more infectious, based on preliminary data showing it had become the prevalent strain in the capital and that case numbers were rising despite boosted restrictions.

He and government medical officials said there were no indications the new variant was any more deadly or immune to vaccines that are starting to be used.

The World Health Organization said it was analysing Britain's data to see if the runaway infection figures in Britain were the result of a more potent strain.

The coronavirus has changed

into many different variants as it has spread around the world as an expected result of interacting with different hosts with different biological responses.

But none has so far been proven to be more virulent than others or able to easily overcome the barriers – social distancing, face-masks and frequent hand-washing – currently recommended. —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 Monday 21 December, 2020)

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

**FORECAST VALID UNTIL AFTERNOON OF THE 22 December, 2020:** Light rain are likely to be isolated in (Southern and Eastern) Shan State. Degree of certainty is (60%). Weather will be generally fair in Nay Pyi Taw, Lower Sagaing and Magway Regions and partly cloudy in the remaining Regions and States.

**STATE OF THE SEA:** Strong easterly winds with moderate to rough seas are likely at times Gulf of Mottama, off and along Mon-Taninthayi Coasts. Surface wind speed in strong easterly winds may reach (30-35)m.p.h. Sea will be moderate elsewhere in Myanmar waters. Wave height will be about (5-8) feet in Gulf of Mottama, off and along Mon-Taninthayi Coasts and about (4-7) feet in Deltaic, off and along Rakhine Coast.

**OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT:** Slight decrease of night temperatures in Bago, Yangon, Ayeyawady, Taninthayi Regions and Kayah, Kayin, Mon States.

**FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 22 December, 2020:** Generally fair weather.

**FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 22 December, 2020:** Partly cloudy.

**FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 22 December, 2020:** Generally fair weather

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## TRIAL

## No snap election until coronavirus brought under control: PM Suga



Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga speaks during a meeting in Tokyo of the government's headquarters tasked with promoting the 2025 World Exposition in Osaka on 10 December 2020. PHOTO: AFP

PRIME Minister Yoshihide Suga said Monday he does not plan to dissolve the House of Representatives for a general election until Japan brings the outbreak of the novel coronavirus under control.

"We should not do it unless we can completely prevent the spread of the coronavirus," Suga said in a recorded TV appearance as infections continued to rise across the country heading into the year-end holidays.

The prime minister's window of opportunity to call a snap election is gradually narrowing as his term as leader of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party ends September next year. Lower house members' current four-year term ends

the following month.

Public support for Suga, who enjoyed a wave of popularity after taking office in September, has plummeted amid widespread dissatisfaction with his COVID-19 response. A Kyodo News poll conducted earlier this month showed the approval rating for his Cabinet fell to 50.3 per cent from 63.0 per cent in November.

Suga said during an interview on Tokyo Broadcasting System Television's "News 23" programme the government must successfully curb the spread of the coronavirus to win back public support.

"I will lead the efforts with the intention of doing everything in my power," he said.—SOURCE: KYODO

## FOODS

## Fears of fresh food shortages mount as UK faces isolation

BRITAIN could face a shortage of fresh produce and greens due to transport chaos at the border as tortuous Brexit talks linger and more countries shut borders after the emergence of a more contagious Covid-19 variant in England.

France on Sunday decided to prevent freight travelling through the key port of Dover, through which 10,000 heavy goods vehicles pass each day.

The decision, initially set to last for 48 hours, caused Britain to bring forward "Operation Stack", the contingency plan drawn up to deal with anticipated freight tailbacks on roads around Dover in the event of a no deal Brexit.

"Retailers have stocked up on goods ahead of Christmas which should prevent immediate problems. However, any prolonged closure of the French

border would be a problem," said Andrew Opie, director at the British Retail Consortium.

The giant Sainsbury's supermarkets chain sought to strike a reassuring note, saying: "All products for the Great British Christmas lunch are already in the country and we have plenty of these."

But it warned that "if nothing changes, we will start to see gaps over the coming days on lettuce, some salad leaves, cauliflowers, broccoli and citrus fruit -- all of which are imported from the continent at this time of year."

James Sibley, head of international affairs at the UK's Federation of Small Businesses (FSB), said: "This morning we heard evidence which pointed, even in the event of a Brexit deal, to potential food shortages and price rises."

As the clock ticks down to Brexit, the country has already had a taster: a logjam at sea-ports has lasted several weeks, disrupting supply chains.

"The closure of France to UK traffic, including accompanied freight poses difficulties for UK capacity to import and export key goods during the busy Christmas period," Opie said.

"While goods can enter from France, few haulage firms will be willing to send trucks and drivers across to the UK without a guarantee they can return to the EU in a timely manner," he said.

Only 10 days are left until January 1 when Britain will leave the EU single market and customs union and hopes of securing a new arrangement suffered a blow as another deadline went by with negotiators still unable to reach a deal.

SOURCE: AFP



People buy fresh fruit and vegetables from a stall in an outdoor street market in Walthamstow, east London on May 28, 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic. PHOTO: AFP

## DRUGS

## Pandemic making Canada's opioids crisis worse: official

THE coronavirus pandemic is having a troubling knock-on effect on Canada's opioid crisis, with drug-related deaths up sharply in the spring, a government report said Wednesday.

Canada's special intragovernmental advisory committee on the opioids epidemic said 1,628 people died of opioids overdoses from April to June, up 58 per cent

from the previous quarter.

It was the highest total number of opioid-related deaths in any one quarter since national statistics were first compiled in 2016.

"Prior to the onset of the Covid-19 outbreak in Canada, we were seeing early and promising signs that opioid toxicity deaths were beginning to decline in some areas of the country,"

committee leaders said.

"The national data released today offers insight into the severe and worsening impact that the Covid-19 pandemic has had on the overdose crisis," they added.

Experts said opioid users were facing increased risk because of the pandemic, which has sparked increased unem-

ployment and homelessness as housing costs soar.

"We must act now to change these troubling projections. We must renew our collective efforts across the country."

In the first half of 2020, approximately half of all opioid-related deaths also involved the use of a stimulant, such as cocaine or methamphetamine.

"Unfortunately, updated projections released today by the Public Health Agency of Canada suggest that these numbers may remain high in the coming months," the committee said.

From January 2016 to June 2020, more than 17,600 people have died in Canada as a result of the opioids crisis, data showed.

SOURCE: AFP

UPDATE

# Coronavirus: Latest global developments

HERE are the latest developments in the coronavirus crisis:

## Britain cut off

India and Russia are among the latest of more than two dozen countries to ban flights and travellers from Britain as London says a more infectious new virus strain is spreading “out of control”.

## Crisis meeting

Britain’s Prime Minister Boris Johnson will chair an emergency meeting to discuss the situation, with the flow of freight in and out of the UK in jeopardy.

## European markets plunge

European stocks, oil prices and the British pound dive as the new virus strain in Britain sends traders running for cover.

## US relief package deal

US lawmakers agree on a nearly \$900-billion (740-billion-euros) Covid-19 relief package for millions of Americans, in a deal that follows months of wrangling and comes as the nation battles the world’s largest

outbreak.

## South Korea tightens curbs

South Korea bans gatherings of more than four people in the capital and surrounding areas as the country records its highest daily death toll.

## Japan shelves rituals

Tokyo’s Meiji Shrine, among the most significant Shinto sanctuaries in Japan, will close its doors over New Year for the first time since the end of World War II, as religious sites in the country adapt year-end events amid record cases.

## Thai PM blames migrants

Thai Prime Minister Prayut Chan-O-Cha blames an outbreak linked to the kingdom’s largest seafood market on low-paid migrant workers in the lucrative shrimp industry.

The majority of the new cases -- numbering more than 800 so far -- are workers from Myanmar, who toil on boats and in processing factories.

## Vaccine crime



A man receives a nasal swab as part of a test for the covid-19 novel coronavirus at a temporary testing centre at city hall plaza in Seoul on December 18, 2020. PHOTO: AFP

Interpol chief Juergen Stock predicts a sharp rise in crimes with robbers seeking to get their hands on precious vaccines aimed at stopping the pandemic.

“With vaccines rolling out, crime will increase dramatically,” he says. “We will see thefts

and warehouse break-ins and attacks on vaccine shipments.”

## Nearly 1.7 million dead

At least 1,693,576 people have died since the outbreak emerged in China last December, according to a tally from

official sources compiled by AFP

The US is the worst-hit country with 317,684 deaths, followed by Brazil with 186,764 fatalities, India with 145,810, Mexico with 118,202 and Italy with 68,799.

SOURCE: AFP

SEQUENCING

## Not too late to contain new strain: virus mutation tracker



Travellers queue with their luggage in the departures hall at Terminal 2 of Heathrow Airport in west London on 21 December 2020, as a string of countries around the world banned travellers arriving from the UK, due to the rapid spread of a new, more-infectious coronavirus strain. PHOTO: AFP

IT is not too late for Europe to contain the new variant of Covid-19 exploding in southeast England, a top coronavirus mutation tracker told AFP.

However, there is a fair chance that the strain is already circulating under the radar in other countries, said Emma Hodcroft.

The US-British molecular

epidemiologist, based at the University of Bern, is a co-developer on the Nextstrain project, analyzing SARS-CoV-2 sequences from around the world to monitor variations that emerge.

The expert has been tracking the current British and South African mutations.

Is it too late to contain the

## new mutation?

Hodcroft: “On a European level, I don’t think so.

“There’s a fair chance that there are more cases of this variant across Europe that we just haven’t detected yet.

“Low levels of this variant might still be containable. If it’s in a few people and those people are doing a good job, following the guidelines, wearing a mask, then it might not spread further.

“So it is worth trying to keep the number of people with this variant down, because that does help us to contain it through other measures.

“If this variant has increased transmissibility, as scientists in Britain seem to really think it does, the best way to counter that is, unfortunately, with the same measures that we take now.”

## Can it be contained in Britain?

“Within the UK it’s tougher because it’s much harder to draw the lines.

SOURCE: AFP

## NEWS IN BRIEFS

### VARIANT

## No evidence Pfizer vaccine won’t work against new strain: EMA chief

THE head of the EU’s medicines regulator said Monday it appeared the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine would protect against a new strain of the coronavirus found mainly in Britain.

“At this moment there is no evidence to suggest this vaccine will not work against the new variant,” European Medicines Agency chief Emer Cooke told a press conference as she announced approval of the jab.

SOURCE: AFP

### HEALTH

## Singapore gets Asia’s first Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine doses

SINGAPORE received Asia’s first delivery of the Pfizer-BioNTech coronavirus vaccine on Monday, capping what the city-state’s premier said had been a “long and arduous” year spent fighting the pandemic.

The trade and finance hub last week joined a handful of other countries around the world, including Britain and the United States, which have approved the jab.

It plans to inoculate its 5.7 million people by the third quarter of 2021, with priority given to health workers, the elderly and the medically vulnerable.

SOURCE: AFP

## POPE

## Vatican jobs are safe in pandemic: pope

VATICAN employees are safe in their jobs during the coronavirus pandemic, Pope Francis said Monday as he addressed Christmas wishes to the city state's 4,000 employees and their families.

"You are the ones who count the most," the pontiff told Vatican staff, socially distanced and wearing masks in the cavernous Paul VI Audience Hall. "No one should lose their jobs (or) suffer the brutal economic consequences of this pandemic," the 84-year-old pope said. With no unemployment fund, the world's smallest state has been paying its workforce their full-time wages despite a steep loss in revenues -- notably with the forced closure of the world-famous Vatican Museums.

The policy reflects Pope Francis's broader position on the pandemic and its economic and health effects.

"The pandemic has exposed the plight of the poor and the great inequality that reigns in the world," he said during a weekly Wednesday audience in August.

He lamented "a larger virus, that of social injustice, inequality of opportunity, marginalization and the lack of protection for the weakest." Earlier Monday, the Argentine pope told the Curia, the Holy See's central government: "This is the Christmas of the pandemic, of the health, economic, social and even ecclesial crisis that has indiscriminately struck the whole world."

SOURCE: AFP



Pope Francis, flanked by Monsignor Leonardo Sapienza (L), speaks during an audience to deliver his Christmas greetings to the employees of the Vatican, on December 21, 2020 at Paul-VI hall at The Vatican. PHOTO: AFP

## MINKS

## Denmark introduces year-long ban on mink farming after cull

DENMARK'S parliament on Monday passed a law banning the keeping of minks for a year, following the country's controversial cull of all minks over a mutated strain of the novel coronavirus.

The law, which bans mink husbandry until December 31 2021, also contains a provision that dictates that in case the ban is not respected, the minks will be euthanized, effectively removing a legal challenge that has shaken the government after it in early November ordered all minks in country culled.

"The Danish mink breeders have sacrificed their life's work

for the common good. We owe them a big thank you," agriculture minister Rasmus Prehn said in a post to Twitter, adding that there was now a compensation scheme for breeders.

In early November, Denmark -- which is the world's largest exporter of mink fur -- announced it would cull all of the country's more than 15 million minks after a mutated version of the novel coronavirus was discovered and believed to jeopardise the effectiveness of future vaccines.

Once a mass gassing programme had already begun, a court challenge to the order

found that the executive's decision had no legal basis, leading to the resignation of the previous agriculture minister.

Adding to the scandal, it was later revealed that the disposal of the dead animals posed an environmental threat amid fears that phosphorus and nitrogen could be released in large quantities into the soil surrounding mass graves due to the decomposition process.

In one grisly turn of the story, one mass grave saw dead minks, that had been buried too shallow, rising out of the ground.

On Sunday the government said four million mink carcasses would be dug up and burned in six months' time once the risk of infection is completely passed.

Copenhagen said on November 19 that the "Cluster 5" mutation had been wiped out, and so far mink are the only animal confirmed to be capable both of contracting the strain and of passing it to humans.

Danish broadcaster DR also reported Monday that a majority of the parties in parliament had agreed to appoint a commission that would evaluate the government handling of the mink crisis.

SOURCE: AFP



(FILES) Photo of two minks taken 30 January 2004 inside a fur farm in Lille Rorbaek outside of Copenhagen. Over the last ten years, fur has gone from a no-no to a must-have item. PHOTO: AFP

## ISRAEL

## Israel parliament to vote on bill to delay election call

ISRAEL'S parliament was set to vote Monday on a proposal from its fraught coalition that would temporarily put off a call for a fourth election within less than two years in the pandemic-hit country.

Israel's coalition government -- a broken marriage between Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his political rival, Defence Minister Benny Gantz -- has been inching towards collapse for weeks.

Under the current arrangement between Netanyahu's right-wing Likud and Gantz's centre-left Blue and White, the coalition has until one minute past midnight on Wednesday to agree a budget for the current year.

If a 2020 budget is not passed, Israel's parliament, the Knesset, would dissolve, with new elections held as early as March.

Gantz, a former army chief, has accused Netanyahu of refusing to approve a budget for personal political reasons.

The three-year coalition deal stipulates that Netanyahu serves as premier for 18 months, with Gantz, currently the alternate prime minister, taking over in November 2021.

Gantz has insisted the co-

alition pass a budget covering both 2020 and 2021, arguing Israel needs stability after its worst ever political crisis and with its economy devastated by the pandemic.

Netanyahu has refused to endorse a 2021 budget.

That, according to his critics, is a political tactic to keep the coalition unstable and make it easier for him to sink the government before he must hand power to Gantz.

Late Sunday, Blue and White said it had reached a compromise with Likud to buy more time.

Under the deal, a deadline for approving a 2020 budget will be pushed back to December 31. The government will then have until January 5 to pass a 2021 budget.

"In the absence of the budgets passing by said dates, the bill stipulates that the Knesset will automatically dissolve and elections will be held" on March 23, the statement said.

A parliamentary committee gave the bill initial approval in the afternoon ahead of its first plenary reading, expected Monday night. A bill needs to pass through three successful readings before it is approved.

SOURCE: AFP

MARKETS

# Pandemic made 2020 wild year for Wall Street

QUINCY Krosby, chief market strategist at Prudential Financial, does not hold back in describing 2020 on Wall Street: “a year of extreme extremes”.

From the start of the coronavirus pandemic that sent stocks crashing, to their resurgence after the approval of vaccines holding the best hope for eradicating the disease, here’s a look back at the year in US stocks:

### March: Historic crash

After a rather quiet January and February, Wall Street suddenly collapsed in March, frightened by the arrival of Covid-19 and its consequences for the world’s largest economy.

The major New York indices took on water, with the Dow Jones Industrial Average experiencing its third-worst session in his-



(FILES) In this file photo taken on 09 December 2020, a Salvation Army volunteer dances in front of the New York Stock exchange (NYSE) at Wall Street in New York City.

PHOTO: AFP

tory on March 16, with a 13 per cent fall that was exceeded only by the 1929 Great Depression and the 1987 crash.

That marked Wall

Street’s transformation into a “bear” market -- meaning it had declined more than 20 per cent from its recent highs -- as investors grappled with fears of a

paralyzed American economy and a liquidity crisis.

“If companies cannot raise money to survive, they go bankrupt, they lay people off, the unemploy-

ment rate skyrockets,” Krosby said. But the malaise didn’t last long. Traders found a second wind when the Federal Reserve launched a massive asset purchase program and cut its lending rate to zero, and when Congress passed a huge stimulus package later in March.

### April to September: Recovery

Wall Street’s recovery continued in the spring and intensified over the summer, with the market in August nearing its pre-pandemic levels.

Driving this growth were tech giants, which experienced a meteoric rise: between April and September the share prices of Facebook, Amazon, Microsoft, Apple and Google parent Alphabet climbed, with the iPhone manufacturer gaining more than 80

per cent.

The “rationale behind going into the mega-cap tech companies was that these were known companies, they were the best of breed and their goods and services were in demand,” Krosby said. Other companies saw their fortunes boom because of the pandemic, including video conferencing platform Zoom, which spiked in popularity. Companies selling cleaning products to virus-wary consumers, like Clorox and Procter & Gamble, as well as food companies like Hormel and Hershey, have also gained. Small investors, many of whom found themselves at home with lots of time on their hands, also made their presence known in the markets, pushing up the shares of fashionable companies like Tesla. —SOURCE: AFP

## DATA USAGE PLAN

### SoftBank to launch lower data usage fees following rival NTT Docomo

SOFTBANK Corp., a wireless carrier unit of SoftBank Group Corp., will offer a 20-gigabyte monthly data usage plan for 2,980 yen (\$29) under

its budget brand following rival NTT Docomo Inc.’s move to cut fees, sources close to the matter said Monday.

SoftBank will intro-

duce the new charge plan under its group mobile phone service operator Line Mobile, the sources said. NTT Docomo said earlier in the month it will

offer the same data usage service at the same price with unlimited calls up to five minutes.

SOURCE : KYODO NEWS

## DEBT

### Pakistan signs \$1.7 billion debt relief deal

PAKISTAN has secured a \$1.7 billion debt relief agreement to help offset the financial headwinds sparked by the coronavirus pandemic, officials said Monday.

The deal, following

months of negotiations with creditors, will provide a moratorium on debt payments for large swathes of the current fiscal year and help ease the cash-strapped country’s massive financial

obligations. “The Government of Pakistan has successfully negotiated and concluded rescheduling agreements with 19 bilateral creditors, including members of the Paris club,” the country’s

ministry of economic affairs said in a statement.

The ministry went on to describe the deal as “timely” that will help save the “lives and livelihoods of millions”.

SOURCE: AFP

## ELECTRONIC COMMERCE

### Tianjin sees 27 mln cross-border e-commerce orders in 11 months

THE northern Chinese port city of Tianjin saw over 27 million foreign trade orders via cross-border e-commerce from January to November, with the import sector accounting for most of the orders.

The city handled

more than 26.84 million declared import orders in the first 11 months of this year, up 5.91 per cent year on year, according to the municipal commission of commerce.

The sales volume of the import orders hit 4.46 billion yuan (about 680.6

million U.S. dollars), an increase of 4.75 per cent over the same period last year.

Tianjin received 909,500 export orders during the period, with its sales volume reaching 27.99 million yuan, said the commission.

Local commerce authorities said the municipality would implement more facilitation measures and diversify customs clearance models to develop cross-border e-commerce.

SOURCE: XINHUA

## CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V AS FENJA VOY. NO. (007W)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V AS FENJA VOY. NO. (007W)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **22-12-2020** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **MIP/MITT** where it will lie at the consignee’s risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

Phone No: **2301185**

Shipping Agency Department  
Myanmar Port Authority

Agent For:

**M/S NEW GOLDEN SEA LINES**

## CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V NEGAR VOY. NO. (SCY1087)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V NEGAR VOY. NO. (SCY1087)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **22-12-2020** 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  
Myanmar Port Authority

Agent For:

**M/S LAND AND SEA INTERMODAL LOGISTICS  
SDN BHD LINE**

## NUCLEAR

## Iran nuclear deal parties eye US return to accord



A handout picture provided by Iran's Defence Ministry on 30 November 2020 shows Iranian officials praying over the coffin of slain top nuclear scientist Mohsen Fakhrizadeh during his funeral ceremony in Iran's capital Tehran. **PHOTO: AFP**

THE remaining parties to the ailing 2015 Iran nuclear deal said Monday that they were preparing for the possible return of the US to the pact as President-elect Joe Biden readies to take office next month.

Biden, who takes office on January 20, has signalled

Washington would rejoin the so-called Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) that was aimed at limiting Iran's nuclear programme.

The deal has been unravelling ever since outgoing President Donald Trump dramatically withdrew from it in

May 2018 and imposed crippling economic sanctions on Tehran.

"Ministers acknowledged the prospect of a return of the US to the JCPOA and underlined their readiness to positively address this in a joint effort," a statement on behalf of ministers from Iran, Chi-

na, Russia, Germany, France and the UK said after Monday morning's online meeting.

Tehran has retaliated to US sanctions by progressively abandoning limits on its nuclear activity laid down in the deal.

Most recently Iran announced it planning to install advanced centrifuges at Iran's main nuclear enrichment plant in Natanz, a plan condemned by France, Germany and Britain -- collectively known as the "E3" -- as "deeply worrying".

German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas said that the change of administration in the US meant that there was "a last window" for progress that "shouldn't be wasted".

"There can be no more tactical manoeuvres of the kind we have seen all too often recently," Maas warned at a press conference, adding that such actions "would only further undermine the agreement".

His British counterpart Dominic Raab said that at the meeting he had "made it absolutely clear Iran must not implement the recently announced expansions to its nu-

clear programme".

"To do so would undermine the opportunities for progress we hope to see in 2021," Raab added in a tweet.

The assassination last month of prominent Iranian nuclear scientist Mohsen Fakhrizadeh has heightened tensions in the region, with Iran blaming the killing on Israel.

In the wake of Fakhrizadeh's death, Iranian MPs passed a bill calling for further expansion to Iran's nuclear programme and an end to inspections of nuclear facilities by the UN watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

The Iranian foreign ministry said it did not agree with the bill and President Hassan Rouhani has suggested he will not sign it into law.

The end of IAEA inspections in Iran would probably mark a fatal blow to the accord's chances of survival.

The statement issued after Monday's meeting "stressed the importance of continued good faith cooperation with the IAEA".

SOURCE: AFP

## WAR CRIMES

## German prosecutors charge Syrian doctor with murder, torture

A Syrian doctor living in Germany who was arrested on suspicion of having committed crimes against humanity in Syria faces more charges including one case of murder, German prosecutors said Monday.

The suspect, identified as Alaa M., was arrested on June 19.

He was first charged with two instances of torturing detainees at a prison run by Syrian intelligence services in the city of Homs in 2011.

But prosecutors said he now stands accused of far more violations than initially thought -- including for allegedly killing one person and another 18 counts of torture.

Alaa M. was a doctor at the military prison in Homs in 2011 when he allegedly carried out horrific abuses including setting fire to the genitals of a teenager.

In 2012, he sought out a de-

tainee whose wounds became infected and who had been transferred to a military hospital.

Together with two other officers, Alaa M. allegedly kicked and beat the prisoner, and poured flammable liquids on his wounds before setting them on fire.

He also kicked and beat the detainee, who subsequently lost consciousness.

Several days later, Alaa M. is accused of going to the particularly detainee's prison cell, where he went on to beat and kick the 20 other prisoners in the cell.

One of them, named only as O., sought to defend himself.

"Shortly after, the defendant administered an injection with a lethal substance into his upper arm, from which he died a few minutes later," said prosecutors.

SOURCE: AFP

## VACCINE-RELATED CRIME

## Interpol expects 'dramatic' jump in crime over vaccine shipments

INTERPOL chief Juergen Stock predicted Monday a sharp rise in crimes with robbers seeking to get their hands on precious vaccines aimed at stopping the coronavirus pandemic.

"With vaccines rolling out, crime will increase dramatically," Stock told business weekly *Wirtschafts Woche*.

"We will see thefts and warehouse break-ins and attacks on vaccine shipments."

The secretary general of the France-based global policing agency said he also expected more cases of graft related to Covid-19 vaccines.

"Corruption will be rampant in many places to get the valuable vaccine quicker," he said.

A vaccine produced by German company BioNTech and US giant Pfizer has already been approved for use by 16 countries.



Interpol Secretary General Juergen Stock addresses the 43rd Regional European Interpol Conference in Bucharest on 19 May 2015. **PHOTO: AFP**

The European Union's EMA is posed to make a similar decision on Monday, with the first jabs to begin in the bloc on Sunday (December 27).

In Germany, federal police will be deployed to secure

transportation of the vaccines, which will also be stored in secret places.

Besides the threat of robberies, fears are also running high of possible sabotage by anti-vaxxers.

SOURCE: AFP

BUDGET

## Japan cabinet approves record budget, higher defence spending

JAPAN'S cabinet on Monday approved a record budget proposal for the next fiscal year from April, including stimulus for the pandemic-hit economy and another hike in defence spending to counter China.

The budget proposal totals 106.6 trillion yen (\$1.03 trillion), a 3.8 per cent rise from the current year and the ninth straight annual increase.

Once again the government is seeking a record defence

budget, for the seventh year running, this time of 5.3 trillion yen, up 0.5 per cent from fiscal 2020 as Japan faces threats from an assertive China and unpredictable North Korea.

Among the key items of military spending are 57.6 billion yen to develop a next-generation fighter and 33.5 billion yen for the development of a new missile.

"We will strengthen the capacity necessary for national defence... in order to keep pace

with the security environment which is becoming increasingly tough," Chief Cabinet Secretary Katsunobu Kato told a regular briefing.

The overall budget reflects the long shadow cast by the coronavirus pandemic and the growing cost of supporting the country's ageing population, with social welfare and pension programmes estimated to cost 35.8 trillion yen.

Prime Minister Yoshihide

Suga's cabinet also wants to set aside a 5.5 trillion yen reserve, likely to be used for further virus measures.

Japan is bracing for falling tax revenues as the coronavirus pressures business activity, and the government will turn to debt to cover about 40 per cent of the budget.

The proposal will now go to parliament for its approval, expected sometime in spring next year.—SOURCE: AFP

NEWS  
IN BRIEF

TRANSPORT

## India suspends flights from UK

INDIA said Monday it was joining other countries in temporarily suspending all flights from Britain after the emergence of a new and more infectious strain of coronavirus there.

"Considering the prevailing situation in UK. Govt. of India has decided that all flights originating from UK to India to be suspended till 31st December 2020," the aviation ministry said in a tweet.

SOURCE: AFP

DEMONSTRATION

## Women on the frontlines of Thailand's democracy movement

DENOUNCING sexual violence, demanding abortion reform and destigmatizing sex work — once-taboo issues are finding public expression in Thailand as women take up leadership roles in a youth-led pro-democracy movement.

On the protest frontlines, they are urging for gender equality in a kingdom where workplaces and politics are still dominated by men.

AFP met three of them.

### Chief negotiator

On the night police tried to stop protesters from marching to the Thai parliament, activist Chonticha Jangrew remembers rallying them to push past the barricades.

"We cut the barbed wire, we approach the parliament as close as we can. We won't back down," she recounts herself saying during the November rally.

Moments later, police fired tear gas and water cannon at the marchers — a turning point for a movement that has brought thousands onto the streets since July.

Chonticha, 27, is a familiar face at demonstrations and is often the only one trusted to negotiate with police, but her visibility has also led to a spate of criminal charges — including sedition.

She said she received death

threats and "sexual insults" from ultra-royalists who oppose the protest movement but insisted the struggle must continue.

"We must do as much as men if we want equality," she said.

Like the majority of protesters, she is demanding the resignation of Prime Minister Prayut Chan-O-Cha, reform to the monarchy and a rewriting of the military-scripted constitution.

She is also fighting for better representation of women in politics — so far, they make up only 14 per cent of lawmakers in parliament and 10 per cent of the cabinet. Chonticha was raised by a military father in a conservative environment.

"I needed to emancipate myself. Today, I don't hide my opinions from my family. They accept them, but they are afraid for me," she said.

### Star attraction

A star of Thailand's silver screen since her teenage years, Inthira Charoenpura — better known by her nickname "Sai" — says she has had movie contracts cancelled since joining the protests.

"In show business, nobody dares to talk about politics for fear of ruining their career," she says.

She faces criminal charges for allegedly insulting the monar-



This photo taken on 3 December 2020 shows Chumaporn Taengkliang, co-founder of Women for Freedom and Democracy, during a protest rally in front of the Cambodian embassy in Bangkok. PHOTO: AFP

chy under Thailand's tough royal defamation laws. The 40-year-old actress has nearly half a million fans on social media and is one of the few celebrities in Thailand to publicly acknowledge her financial support for the movement, earning her the moniker "Sugar Mama" from young protesters.

She collects donations and distributes meals, helmets, gas masks and inflatable ducks — which have emerged as a symbol for the movement.

"The demonstrators are so courageous. In our country, protest movements often end in deaths," she says, referring to civil unrest in 2010 that ended in a bloody crackdown.

The protests today have been largely peaceful, with young students coming together demand social change — including an end to sexual harassment and gender discrimination.

"Women in the protests dare to talk about what they are going through as victims," says Sai.

Born to a director father and film producer mother, Sai considers this year's protests one of the most worthwhile causes she has supported.

"We cannot yet speak of victory, but there is an irreversible change," she says. "This fight is even more important than the cinema that flows through my veins."— SOURCE: AFP

POLITICS

## S. Korea taps presidential aide as top nuclear envoy

SOUTH Korea's Foreign Ministry said Monday that Noh Kyu Duk, secretary to the president for peace planning at the Office of National Security, has been tapped as the country's new top nuclear envoy.

Noh replaces Lee Do Hoon, who has been South Korea's chief negotiator on North Korean nuclear issues as the special representative for Korean Peninsula peace and security affairs since September 2017.

SOURCE: KYODO NEWS

DIPLOMACY

## China calls Trump cyberattack claims 'a farce'

CHINA on Monday said tweets by President Donald Trump suggesting Beijing was involved in a massive cyber-attack on the US government were "a farce" concocted for political motives.

A large-scale hack of US government agencies including the Treasury was "under control" as of Saturday, according to the outgoing US President.— SOURCE: AFP

DISSOLVING PARLIAMENT

## Nepal's president dissolves parliament, sets elections for spring

NEPAL'S president dissolved parliament on Sunday at the recommendation of the prime minister and set midterm general elections for April 30 and May 10.

In a surprise move, Prime

Minister Khadga Prasad Sharma earlier in the day held an emergency Cabinet meeting and recommended dissolving parliament, two years before completion of his term.

Oli, analysts believe, took

the decision to evade a no-confidence motion from his own party members in parliament. He has long complained of having been cornered by the anti-Oli camp in his own party, preventing him from playing his executive role.

Bhandari approved Oli's recommendation and announced the two dates for the two-phase snap polls, according to a statement issued by her office.

SOURCE: KYODO NEWS

## FIFA ranking: Myanmar holds on to No 4 spot in ASEAN



THE Myanmar men's national football team is currently standing fourth in the ASEAN region and ranked 137<sup>th</sup> in the world with 1,081 points, according to the FIFA rankings released this month.

Viet Nam, Malaysia and Thailand moved some points up

Myanmar's defender David Htan (white jersey) attempts to clear the attack of Nepal striker during a previous friendly match played at Mandalay Thiri Stadium in Mandalay on 7 November 2019. **PHOTO:MF**

while Myanmar fell three points down in the FIFA Ranking of this month.

Team Viet Nam is still standing first in ASEAN with a world ranking of 93 and 1,258 points earned.

Meanwhile, Thailand's national football team is placed second in ASEAN with FIFA ranking of 111 and 1,178 points.

The Philippines squad is third with a world ranking of 124 and 1,136 points.

Next to the fourth-placed Myanmar, Malaysia national team is fifth in ASEAN and 153<sup>rd</sup> in the world ranking with 1,040 points earned.

In the meantime, Singapore is next with FIFA world ranking of 158 and 1,020 points.

Indonesia and Cambodia are tied in the seventh place in ASEAN with FIFA ranking of 173 and 964 points each and Laos is next in the eighth with FIFA world ranking of 188. Brunei and Timor Leste are in the ninth and tenth place with FIFA ranking of 191 and 197.

Myanmar had highest records of FIFA ranks as 97 in April 1996 and lowest as 182 in August 2012, according to the announcement released by FIFA.— Lynn Thit (Tgi) ■

## Tokyo Games organizers to raise opening, closing ceremony budget

TOKYO — The Tokyo Games organizing committee is planning to increase the budget for the opening and closing ceremonies of the postponed Olympics and Paralympics to 16.5 billion yen (\$159.7 million), sources close to the games revealed Monday.

Organizers have decided to raise the budget by an additional 3.5 billion yen due to the influence of the games' one-year postponement over the coronavirus pandemic, the sources said. The increase will be discussed at a board meeting on Tuesday.

It will be the second time organizers will have raised the budget for the opening and

closing ceremonies of the Tokyo Games, scheduled to start on July 23 in the Japanese capital next summer.

The budget was increased by about 43 per cent to 13 billion yen in February last year after it was determined the 9.1 billion yen estimate generated at the time of Tokyo's bid would not be enough.

The Tokyo Games were projected to cost around 1.35 trillion yen (\$13 billion) prior to the one-year delay, with an extra 294 billion yen in costs arising from the postponement and countermeasures needed to prevent the spread of the coronavirus.—Kyodo News ■



People walk past a countdown clock for the postponed Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games outside Tokyo railway station on 16 December 2020. **PHOTO: AFP**

## Zambian club Nkana defend 62-match unbeaten home record in Africa

JOHANNESBURG (South Africa) — Zambian club Nkana have played 62 home matches in Confederation of African Football (CAF) competitions and never lost -- a record even mighty Al Ahly of Egypt cannot match.

They hope to extend the remarkable run of 44 victories and 18 draws from 1983 when they host Petro Luanda of Angola on Wednesday in a CAF Champions League last-32 first leg.

The record could be in jeopardy, though, as Nkana struggled to overcome modest Bantu of Lesotho in the preliminary round and their domestic form has been poor with just three wins in eight league matches.

Here, AFP Sport highlights five of the 32 clubs seeking overall victories, places in the group stage and a minimum \$550,000 (450,000 euros) prize money.

### Nkana

Nkana sacked coach Manfred Chabinga last week and hired Kelvin Kaindu after a disappointing start to the Zambian Premier League and the Champions League seasons.

Kaindu has been set a tough target of going beyond the group stage in Africa with a club he calls "the greatest in Zambia".

While Nkana struggled against Bantu, Petro did not impress either, needing an 89<sup>th</sup>-minute goal from 'Yano' to squeeze past minnows Akonangui from Equatorial Guinea.



Nkana's Hassan Ramadhani (front) vies for the ball with San Pedro's players during the CAF Confederation Cup play-offs second legs football match between FC San Pedro and Nkana FC at the Felix Houphouët-Boigny Stadium in Abidjan on 20 January 2019. **PHOTO: AFP**

### Simba

The Tanzanian club caused the biggest upset of the preliminary round by scoring the only goal of a tie against Plateau United of Nigeria.

It was the first time a club from the east African nation had beaten Nigerian opponents in a two-legged Champions League encounter.

The team coached by Belgian Sven Vandebroek face another tricky assignment, away to Platinum of Zimbabwe, who reached the group stage of the last two editions.

### Sonidep

The Niger club have traditionally struggled, even at home, against top-class opposition and are the first team to

confront Al Ahly in Africa since they won a record-extending ninth title last month.

Uncomfortable heat -- it was 34 degrees celsius (93 fahrenheit) in Niamey Sunday -- could hamper the Cairo Red Devils with the first leg scheduled to kick off at 1500 local time.

Ahly travelled to west Africa without head coach Pitso Mosi-mane, who is self-isolating after contracting Covid-19, and fellow South African Cavin Johnson has taken temporary charge.

### GorMahia

No Kenyan club has reached the group stage and the odds are against Nairobi outfit GorMahia ending a run of three straight last 32 exits.—AFP ■