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THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

Vol. VII, No. 252, 10th Waxing of Nadaw 1382 ME

www.gnlm.com.mm, www.globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

Thursday, 24 December 2020

Japanese businesses eye new investments in Myanmar

UNION Minister for Investment and Foreign Economic Relations and Myanmar Investment Commission Chairman, U Thaung Tun provided a comprehensive update on recent reforms to Myanmar's investment environment via a video message to the high-level virtual event jointly organized by the ASEAN-Japan Centre and the Myanmar Embassy in Tokyo, supported by the Myanmar Ministry of Investment and Foreign Economic Relations (MIFER) and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

Mr Masataka Fujita, ASEAN-Japan Centre Secretary-General launched the event with welcoming remarks.

U Soe Han, Myanmar's Ambassador to Japan then delivered a keynote speech during which the Ambassador noted that Myanmar's natural environment has huge potential for the production of agriculture and fisheries. He added that as more than 70% of the country's population live in rural areas and engage in the agricultural sector, it would be advantageous for investors to invest in agriculture.

The Union Minister said in his message to the Webinar a comprehensive overview of recent reforms undertaken to improve Myanmar's investment environment, including an analysis of new investment opportunities made possible by Myanmar's signing of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) last month.

The Union Minister highlighted the



Union Minister and Myanmar Investment Commission Chairman U Thaung Tun explains recent reforms to Myanmar's investment environment via a video message on 23 December. PHOTO: MNA

important contribution Japan has been making to our nation's development efforts – from infrastructure to industry, from transport to tourism, from energy to environmental sustainability.

He welcomed Japan's commitment to the development of the Dawei Special Economic Zone. He also informed the meeting of Myanmar's intention to set-up

a Special Economic Zone in Mon State, pointing out the strategic location of the state in the Greater Mekong East-West Economic Corridors.

Mr Noriji Sakakura, Chief Representative of Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) presented Japan's projects on technical cooperation, economic reforms, financial support and loan assistance

in Myanmar. U Sett Aung, Deputy Minister of Planning, Finance, and Industry, and U Aung Naing Oo, Permanent Secretary of MIFER responded to questions posed by the participants. It is learnt that over 380 local and foreign participants including senior officials from MIFER and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) took part in the event. —MNA

923 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 23 December, total figure rises to 118,869

MYANMAR'S COVID-19 positive cases rose to **118,869** after **923** new cases were reported on 23 December according to the Ministry of Health and Sports. Among these **118,869** confirmed cases, **2,507** died, **99,325** have been discharged from hospitals.—MNA

Updated at 8 pm, 23 December 2020

Total Cases

118,869

New Cases

923

Total Death Tally

2,507

Discharged from Hospital

99,325

Daily death toll until 8 pm 23-12-2020

23

Ministry of Health and Sports

“People are the key”



A new Embraer E 190-100LR XY-ALP aircraft joins the MAI fleet and it will fly to domestic destinations under healthcare guidelines. **PHOTO: PHOE THAW ZIN**

MAI receives new Embraer E 190-100 LR XY-ALP aircraft

A new Embraer E 190-100 LR XY-ALP aircraft joined the fleet of Myanmar Airways International yesterday.

The long-range aircraft was purchased from CDB Aviation, and it can fly up to the maximum altitude of 40,000 ft.

It is fitted with 6 Business seats and 92 Economy seats.

The MAI will fly the new air-

craft to Myeik, Sittway, Dawei Kawthoung, Heho, Kengtung, Myitkyina, Putao, Nay Pyi Taw, NyaungU and Mandalay.

The airlines announced that flights would be operated in line with healthcare measures against COVID-19.—Ye Yint Shine

(Translated by Aung Khin)

Myanmar nationals return home from abroad by relief flights

A total of 171 Myanmar citizens, including 49 former detainees in Malaysia, arrived in Yangon by a relief flight of Myanmar Airways International, organized by the Myanmar Embassy in Kuala Lumpur yesterday evening.

Moreover, 130 Myanmar

seamen whose contracts have expired with the respective shipping lines were brought back home by another relief flight of MAI, organized by the Myanmar Embassy in Seoul and the Crew Change Supporting Committee (Myanmar) in the same evening.

The group of Myanmar seamen included 96 from the Republic of Korea, 16 from Singapore, 3 from the UAE, 10 from Qatar, 4 from Egypt and 1 from Indonesia.

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 seamen and citizens in accordance with the instructions from National-Level

Central Committee on Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is working together with the relevant ministries, Myanmar embassies from respective countries and shipping companies.—MNA
(Translated by Aung Khin)

Pyu bead (Chin bead) handicraft art in Phayagyi village in Natogyi

THE handicraft art of Pyu bead (Chin bead) in Phayagyi Village is one of the activities to see in Natogyi Township in

Mandalay Region. The township is known for its ancient historical old town, Sakya mountain, the village of peo-

ple who still have Myanmar traditional hairstyle known as sanyitwine, a topknot with a circular fringe and other interesting places and activities to see.

Pyu beads (Chin beads), the detail work with natural dyes, are especially popular with young people and international tourist. They are made of Ingyin Kyaut (Petrified wood) and are meticulously made into beads and armbands.

The beadwork was done by hand in the past, but in modern times, it has been mechanized. In order to make the beads, the Petrified woods are first ground by the machine.

Afterwards, they are

made into rounded shape by machine and drilled to make holes. Once the holes have been drilled, they are put in a steam pot to make the step-by-step colour coating. Then the beads can be painted.

During the painting to the beads, a metal tweezer is used to hold the bead and put the natural paints made of mixed natron, neem syrup, borax and limestone.

After the natural painting, various designs are made with black ink, a mixture of breast milk, sulfur, blue vitriol and yellow orpiment by toasting on a charcoal stove.

At present, U Sein Kyi Lay and Daw Khin Mar Wai make the Pyu beads (Chin beads) all year round in Phayagyi village

in the old town of Wadi in Natogyi Township.

Each piece of Pyu bead, painted in the style of ancient Pyu beads, sells for 200 or 300 kyats depending on the quality of the stone, and a necklace with 100 Pyu beads costs 23,000 kyats.

A good stone bead sells for 3,000 to 10,000 kyats. Depending on the quality of the stone and painting designs, there may be different prices for the beads.

Small Pyu beaded bracelets are sold for 5,000 kyats each and resellers sell them at various prices.—U Soe Shwe(Myitnge)

(Translated by
Ei Phyu Phyu Aung)



Ladies are making handicrafts in Phayagyi village of Natogyi Township in Mandalay Region. **PHOTO: U SOE SHWE(MYITNGE)**



Hand-made products of local people in Phayagyi village. **PHOTO: U SOE SHWE(MYITNGE)**



Pyu bead (Chin bead) made in Phayagyi village **PHOTO: U SOE SHWE(MYITNGE)**

Build a Union with a diversity of strength

The word Union is such a beautiful word. It is imbued with grace. It is very important for all of us to value, love and cherish this word. A Union means something which has been established collectively. A country which has been established collectively, a great country which has been established collectively is not the same as those countries which have not been established collectively. We will be able to establish a Union only after transforming our diversity and differences into strength.

(Extract from a Message of Greetings delivered by State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi on 15 January 2020 at the ceremony to celebrate Kayah State Day)



Myanmar Folk Dance - U Shwe Yoe and Daw Moe. PHOTO: ZAW MG MG OO (SANDAKU)

MoLIP conducts training in Settlement of Labour Disputes Law

THE Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population organized a virtual opening ceremony of training in the Settlement of Labour Disputes Law and capacity building for officials working in the Labour Relations Department yesterday afternoon.

Union Minister U Thein Swe, Deputy Minister U Myint Kyaing, Directors-General, Deputy Directors-General, trainers from the Union Attorney-General's Office and the Ministry, and officials from the Labour Relations Department participated in the virtual ceremony.

The purpose of the training is to provide lectures related to the Second Amendment provisions to the Settlement of Labour



Union Minister U Thein Swe makes a speech at virtual opening ceremony of training in the Settlement of Labour Disputes Law on 23 December. PHOTO: MNA

Disputes Law. It is also aimed at making the trainees know and understand the provisions of the law and the by-laws as well as the relevant laws and regulations of the associated departments,

according to the Union Minister. The course will be conducted online for 5 weeks, said the Union Minister, who added that the training would improve employer-employee relations and reduce

labour disputes. He said that township-levels need to effectively mediate between employers and employees as much as they can, in order to reduce the number of labour dis-

pute cases submitted to higher levels of the department.

He said labour disputes between employers and their employees need to be settled initially by the Workplace Coordination Committee (WCC), and the relevant township officials under the ministry will provide assistance in the process.

He also called on the officials to be accountable, have transparency and high capacity. He urged them to work hard for the benefits of the country.

The Director-General of the Labour Relations Department explained the training in detail. —MNA

(Translated by Maung Maung Swe)

Magway Region sets over K2,700 mln for drilling wells to fight water shortage

REGIONAL Department of Rural Development will drill 67 wells in 30 places of Magway Region, which could suffer from water shortage problem in the coming summer, spending of over K2,700 million in 2020-2021 financial year, according to the Magway Regional DRD.

“Initially, the department will conduct field inspection.

They will then submit a budget proposal after they have decided whether they should dig the ground for water pond or tube well.

Regarding this, they have to submit a proposal to the Union Government and sometimes, to the regional government,” said U Myo Aung, the head of Regional DRD.

The department has been drilling 12 wells with eight machines owned by the Rural Department in the first week of this budget year.

So far, the seven wells have been successfully drilled.

According to the local villagers’ requirements, the

department will dig water ponds and wells in the villages, likely to face the water shortage in the Magway region.

The department has planned to supply emergency drinking water, according to the department. —Zayyatu (Magway)

(Translated by Hay Mar)

A new well of Magway Region Rural Development Department. PHOTO: ZAYYATU (MAGWAY)



The infection could occur also after 90 days

Some people have the wrong notion that those who have recovered from this disease will not be infected again. Let me remind you that it is not like that. I understand that experts have confirmed that the disease will not infect almost entirely to the former cases again in 90 days or around three months. However, the infection could occur also after 90 days. So, it should not be considered that they will not be at risk to the infection again. Repeated infection would have an impact on the basic health conditions and impose a burden on the family and the country.

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



MoHT discusses early recovery of tourism industry

UNION Minister for Hotels and Tourism held the 4/2020 meeting of Tourism Committee, led by Union Minister U Ohn Maung, at its headquarters in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

Deputy Minister U Tin Latt, members of region/state governments, senior officials of MoHT, tourism experts and representatives of private travel agencies joined the meeting via videoconferencing.

The meeting focused on implementing Myanmar Tourism Strategic Recovery Roadmap (MTSRR), which was jointly drafted by the ministry, UN World Tourism Organization and the Luxembourg Development Cooperation (LuxDev) which is the Luxembourg Agency for Development Cooperation.

The Union Minister said that the ministry had finalized the MTSRR that includes recommendations of travel agencies for early recovery of the Myanmar tourism industry within two or



Union Minister U Ohn Maung chairs the 4/2020 meeting of Tourism Committee on 23 December. **PHOTO: MNA**

three years.

Based on the immediate, medium and long term plans of MTSRR, the Regional Master Plan will be adopted for the respective areas.

The ministry will carry out

'Enchanting Myanmar Health and Safety Protocol (HSP) at the region, national and international levels.

The regional level committees and the staff members of Ministry of Health and Sports are

working for reopening of hotels and restaurants in line with the healthcare guidelines for ensuring Myanmar, a 'safe-to-travel destination' of international travellers.

The Union Minister added

that Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) need to work for ensuring a safety tourism sector as this business is important for regional development.

Director-General U Maung Maung Kyaw from the Directorate of Hotels and Tourism discussed the accomplishment of decisions in the 3/2020 meeting of the committee and other tourism development programmes.

Deputy Minister U Tin Latt, the secretary of the committee, briefed on conducting tourism training courses and reports from the region/state governments and travel agencies.

Myanmar has lifted domestic flight suspension on 16 December. The Myanmar Tourism Entrepreneurs Association has organized the non-landing sight-seeing flight and the river cruise on 20 December, in coordination with the Ministry of Transport and Communications. —MNA

(Translated by Aung Khin)

Book of ancient artifacts at Mahamuni Pagoda to be published



A religious edifice that displays Buddhism Chronology in Mandalay. **PHOTO: MIN HTET AUNG (MAN SUB-PRINTING HOUSE)**

CHAIRMAN U Soe Lin of the Board of Trustees of the Mahamuni Pagoda said the book would be published with photos of ancient artifact collections at the Mahamuni Pagoda in Mandalay.

The book, which will be published as a record, includes rare and historic mural paintings, palm-leaf inscriptions and manuscripts and valuable items donated in the past, together with photographs.

During the current COVID-19 period, renovations are be-

ing carried out on the buildings inside the Mahamuni Pagoda compound as well as the preservation of the ancient heritage.

The Buddhist Museum is also being renovated and is being used as a miniature version of the Mahamuni Pagoda. It is said that this small model was built at the cost of 30 million kyats to make it easy for future generations to see everything inside the pagoda.—Min Htet Aung (Man Sub-Printing House)

(Translated by Ei Phyu Phyu Aung)

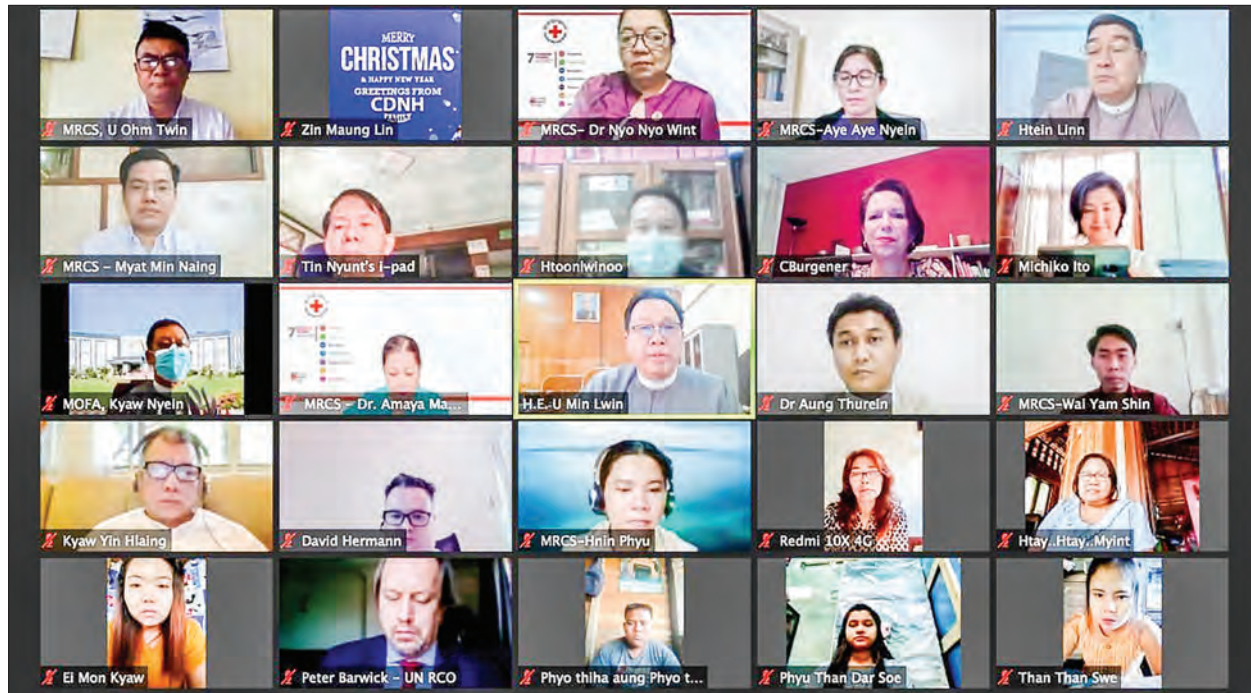
Closing ceremony held for First Aid for All Training Project (Phase 1)

DEPUTY MINISTER for the Office of the State Counsellor U Min Lwin addressed a virtual event held yesterday to mark the conclusion of the First Aid for All Training Project (Phase 1), targeting youths and women from townships in Rakhine State.

In his remarks, the Deputy Minister said that the art of first aid is indeed noble, and by serving first aid to those who are suffering from injuries, loss of lives could be prevented.

He noted that these trainings are being held for the benefit of youths and women from Rakhine State, and that although all was set to commence the trainings since August of this year, due to the situation of COVID-19, they could be only held virtually in December. He highlighted the fact that regardless of being an online training, due to qualified instructors and the interest shown by trainees, the training was a great success.

He expressed his trust that those who have completed this training will be of a benefit to their wards, villages, and com-



Deputy Minister U Min Lwin makes a closing remark on the First Aid for All Training Project (Phase 1) on 23 December. **PHOTO: MNA**

munities with the first aid education that they have gained, urging them to share with their communities whatever they have learnt. He said he believed that social harmony would be enhanced by furthering understanding and trust among youths. He pointed out that goodwill, loving kindness, sympathy, and consideration for others, which are the fundamental principles of the Red Cross, are vital in the de-

velopment of social harmony.

He revealed that plans are already underway to hold Phase 2 and Phase 3 of the project to cover all townships in Rakhine State, emphasizing that human injuries, caused by natural disasters, armed conflicts, and mines planted in Rakhine State and needing emergency care, can now be assisted with first aid courses learnt here. He also thanked

everyone who turned this training into a success.

Next, Ms Christine Burgener, UN Secretary General's Special Envoy to Myanmar, spoke words of honour at the event. Dr Maung Maung Myint, President of Myanmar Red Cross Society (MRCs), and Dr Kyaw Hlaing, Executive Director of Centre for Diversity and National Harmony (CDNH) also added their commendations at the course completion.

Dr Aung Thurein, Director from the Ministry of the Office of the State Counsellor and First Aid for All Training Project In-charge, explained the objectives of the training and tasks being carried out in Rakhine State for the emergence of social harmony.

The closing ceremony was attended by Colonel Htein Lin (Retd), Advisor to the Office of the Presi-

dent, dignitaries from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of the Office of the State Counsellor, Executive Committee members of the MRCs, resident representatives from ICRC and IFRC, heads of UN agencies, instructors, and trainees, numbering over a hundred.

First Aid for All Training Project (Phase 1) was implemented from December 6 to 23, 2020, and it was attended by 170 trainees from various communities, including IDPs, from Sit-tway, Pauktaw, Maungtaw, Buthidaung, Kyaukpyu, and Thandwe townships from Rakhine State. The three-day virtual training for each township was attended by about 30 trainees and coached by instructors from MRCs. Phase 2 of the training project will be held from January 6 to 20, with three-day township-wise training for youths and women from Manaung, Yanbye, An, Toungup, and Gwa townships.

The Ministry of the Office of the State Counsellor, the MRCs, and the CDNH collaborated in organizing the First Aid for All Training Project.—MNA

COVID-19 Call Centre opens daily

In efforts to speed up the prevention, containment and treatment of the COVID-19 disease, the call centre (phone number 2019) is established by four communications operators and the Blue Ocean Company with the coordination of the Medical Research Department of the Health and Sports Ministry and Post and Telecommunications Department from 9 am to 5 pm daily at the Medical Research Department in Yangon. Over 43 staff from the Medical Research Department and 17 volunteers from the Myanmar Medical Association totally 60 workers have been working at the centre since 8th April.—MNA

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marketing@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com
subscription@globalnewlightofmyanmar.comPrinted and published at the **Global New Light of Myanmar Printing Factory** at No.150, Nga Htat Kyee Pagoda Road, Bahan Township, Yangon, by the **Global New Light of Myanmar Daily** under Printing Permit No. 00510 and Publishing Permit No. 00629.
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Online meeting held to include 'Kayin traditional dance' in UNESCO list

THE virtual meeting held at Hpa-an University Convocation Hall on 22 December tried to entice the whole Kayin ethnic to participate in seeking the inclusion of Kayin traditional dance (Kayin Don Yein) in the UNESCO's intangible cultural heritage list.

Kayin State Chief Minister Daw Nang Khin Htwe Myint led the efforts to include Kayin dance in the UNESCO's list. Kayin State Social Affairs Minister U Bo Bo Wai Maung and Kayin Ethnic Affairs ministers from Mon State and Taninthayi, Yangon and Ayeyawady regions, the members of region/state-level committee on intangible cultural heritage conservation and restoration, Kayin Ethnic Affairs committees from seven townships in



Virtual meeting discussed seeking inclusion of Kayin traditional dance in the UNESCO's list. **PHOTO: SAW MYO MIN THEIN (IPRD)**

Kayin State, Kayin Literature and Cultural Committee members, members of research sub-committees attended the virtual events. They discussed how to attract the entire Kayin ethnic group's participation in the efforts for Kayin dance

to be listed in UNESCO's list.

Chairman U Bo Bo Wai Maung of the state-level committee on intangible cultural heritage conservation and restoration delivered the opening remark. Five research teams studying theoretical and me-

thodical approaches to Kayin Don Yein dance, Kayin musical instrument, musical behaviour, cultural dimension, documentary and literature explained their works respectively. The participants of the online meeting also shared their opinions and suggestions.

The virtual meeting called for the participation of Kayin ethnic people across the country. The team members who will submit the nomination file of Kayin traditional dance for the inclusion in UNESCO's intangible cultural heritage list will go on a research tour in other regions and states outside Kayin State to compile the facts of the Kayin Don Yein dance. —Saw Myo Min Thein (IPRD)

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

AIR KBZ resumes its flights to Kyaukpyu

AMONG the domestic flights halted because of the pandemic, the AIR KBZ will resume its flights three days a week to Kyaukpyu Township in Rakhine State, according to the AIR KBZ airline in Kyaukpyu Township.

The round trip Kyaukpyu-Yangon direct flights were started on 23 December 2020. Upon boarding the plane, the passengers need to produce the health certificates whose term is only 36 hours and wear face shields and masks.

The Public Health Department's staff will conduct the COVID-19 tests on the passengers using standard Q COVID-19 antigen rapid diagnostic test (RDT) one day ahead at the religious building in Ah Lae



AIR KBZ is launching the domestic Kyaukpyu-Yangon flights three days a week on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. **PHOTO: TIN TUN OO (DISTRICT IPRD)**

Paing ward. It will cost K10,000 per person.

AIR KBZ is launching the

domestic Kyaukpyu-Yangon flights three days a week on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fri-

days.— Tin Tun Oo, Phyo Win Lin (District IPRD)

(Translated by Hay Mar)

At least 20 highway bus lines running daily: YRTA reports

By Nyein Nyein

NO highway bus lines are suspended, and about 20 bus lines are providing service with 30 express buses per day, said joint secretary U Hla Aung of Yangon Region Transport Authority (YRTA).

"YRTA has not banned any passenger bus line service until today, including Aungmyingala Highway, Dagon Ayar Highway and Dala Highway lines. Some highway bus lines are transport-

ing passengers with health certificates and goods," he affirmed.

Despite the non-stop running of the highway bus lines, the passengers barely take the highway service for now as the prevention and control measures of the COVID-19 vary in each region and state, he continued.

"The highway bus lines rarely see passengers during the meantime because of the strict security measure and health regulations. The pas-

sengers require to present the official documents from the related institutions and must comply with the coronavirus health instructions of the Ministry of Health and Sports and regulations issued by the regional government," elaborated the YRTA joint secretary.

Last 20 December 2020, 23 highway bus lines plied from nine regions and states to 14 cities with 31 buses. Twenty bus lines provided transportation service with 27 buses to 14 cities

as well on 21 December. Also, 33 buses of 21 highway bus lines left for 16 cities on 22 December, YRTA stated.

More than 400 express bus lines typically provide transport service from Yangon-based highway terminals (Dagon Ayar, Aungmyingala and Dala) to the 14 regions and states. The express lines halted their service starting from August, and some are turning to freight transport mode.

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

Sesame price hits minimum K45,000 per basket in early harvesting season

ACCORDING to the sesame traders, the price of sesame hit a minimum of K45,000 per basket (one basket = 33.33 kilos) in the early harvesting season.

Mandalay traders are saying that the winter sesame is less cultivated compared to monsoon sesame. The traders demand the sesame with early yield, offering a fair price in the market. The sesame price is K70,000 per basket if it is of

superior quality. (GAP) black sesame costs K10,000 more than the normal one.

The price of black sesame is higher than that of other types of sesame. The yielding volume is also greater than other sesame. That is the reason why the foreign market is demanding black sesame. Last year, the winter sesame price started at K48,000 per basket.

Myanmar exports 90 per

cent of sesame product to foreign markets. China is the primary buyer of Myanmar sesame, which is also shipped to markets in Japan, South Korea, China (Taipei), UK, Germany, the Netherlands, Greece, and Poland among the EU countries. The EU markets prefer organic-farming sesame seeds from Myanmar, said an official from the Trade Promotion Organization.

Japan prefers Myanmar black sesame seeds, cultivated under the good agricultural practices (GAP), and purchases them after making a quality assessment. Black sesame seeds from Myanmar are also exported to South Korea and Japan. Meanwhile, China buys various coloured sesame seeds from the country.

The number of sesame acreages has increased in the

country. Sesame is cultivated in the country throughout the year. The winter black sesame starts to grow in September and yield in December.

Currently, sesame (normal) crops are ranging K45,000-K55,000-K57,000 per basket depending upon the sesame quality in the market.

—Zin Yaw Aye

(Translated by Hay Mar)

Myanmar exports nearly 250,000 tonnes of various pulses as of 4 December

MORE than 249,245 tonnes of various pulses and beans were exported to foreign markets between 1 October and 4 December of the current financial year 2020-2021, with an estimated value of US\$217 million, the Commerce Ministry's data indicated.

Over the past two months, the country shipped \$158.24 million worth 195,104 tonnes of pulses and beans to foreign markets, and \$58.783 million valued 54,141 tonnes were sent to neighbouring countries through border crossings.

Myanmar's agriculture sector is the backbone of the country's economy and contributes to over 30 per cent of Gross Domestic Products. The country primarily cultivates paddy, corn, cotton, sugarcane, various pulses and beans. The second-largest production is the pulses and beans, counting for 33 per cent of agro products and covering 20 per cent of growing acres. Among them, black bean, pigeon peas and green grams constitute 72 per cent of bean acreage.

Other beans including peanut, chickpea, soybean, black-eyed beans, butter bean and rice bean are also grown in the country.

India is the leading buyer of Myanmar beans, especially black beans, green grams and pigeon peas. Besides India, Myanmar's beans are purchased by Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nepal, Dubai, Malaysia, Indonesia, China (Taipei), Japan, and European countries. But, the volume of demand by those countries is small, according to the domestic beans market.

At present, black bean is priced lower than K1 million per tonne due to the supply of fresh bean in the domestic market and lower price by Indian traders. Similarly, pigeon peas' price dropped when the new beans enter the market amid the low demand by foreign countries. However, green gram market raised its head on the back of steady demand by China and other ASEAN countries.

The domestic bean market

is positively related to the law of supply and demand, said Secretary U Min Ko Oo of the Myanmar Pulses, Beans and Sesame Seeds Merchants Association.

Myanmar has a stock of below 100,000 tonnes of black bean and about 30,000 tonnes of pigeon peas in the warehouses, the association stated.

On 22 May 2020, India rapidly changed the import period of black bean (400,000 tonnes) to three months by August-end 2020 from the earlier set deadline of March 2021, prompting Myanmar's bean body to call for an extension of the deadline, as per its official notice.

Although the bean body asked to extend the August-end deadline, India still has not responded to the request. Myanmar exported only 100,000 tonnes of black beans then, the association stated.

On 1 October 2020, India issued a notification to purchase 150,000 tonnes of black beans instead, and the import

deadline is March 2021. The licence will be equally granted for India's companies.

Although Myanmar does not have adequate stock, for now, it can reach the quota of 150,000 tonnes, along with the beans which are harvested this season, U Min Ko Oo maintained.

Since 2017, India has been setting import quota on beans, including black bean and pigeon peas. Therefore, the growers face difficulties to export their beans to India market.

Myanmar has to export black bean and pigeon peas to India under a quota system and limit period. Consequently, there is no guarantee that we could get the fair market price next year, a market observer shared his opinion.

Following the uncertainty in black bean and pigeon peas markets, the association suggested in October that the growers cultivate black-eyed bean more.

The Ministry of Commerce has been conducting a series

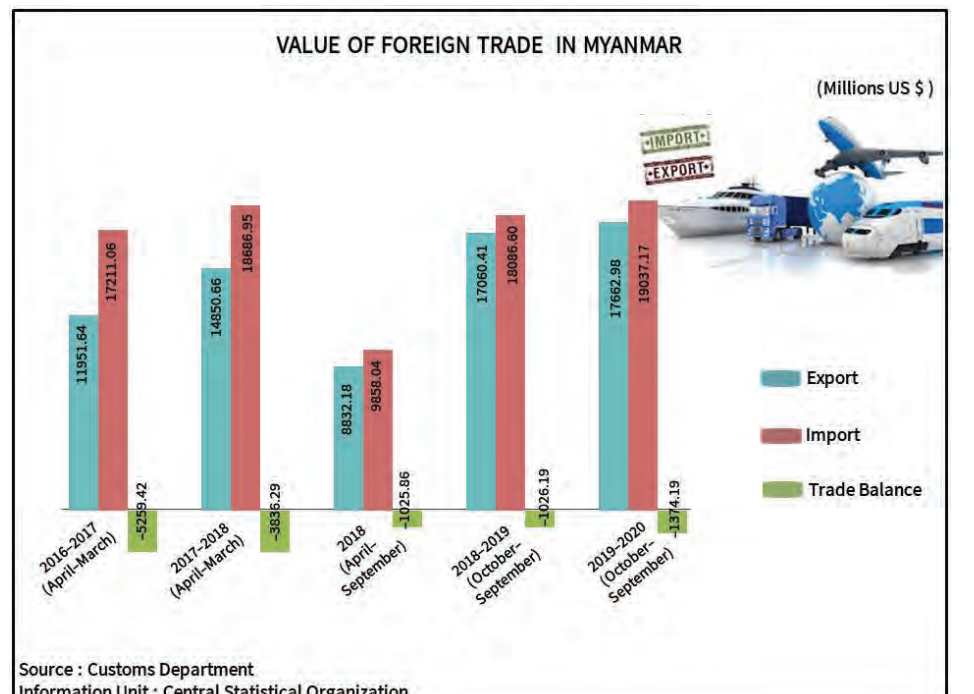
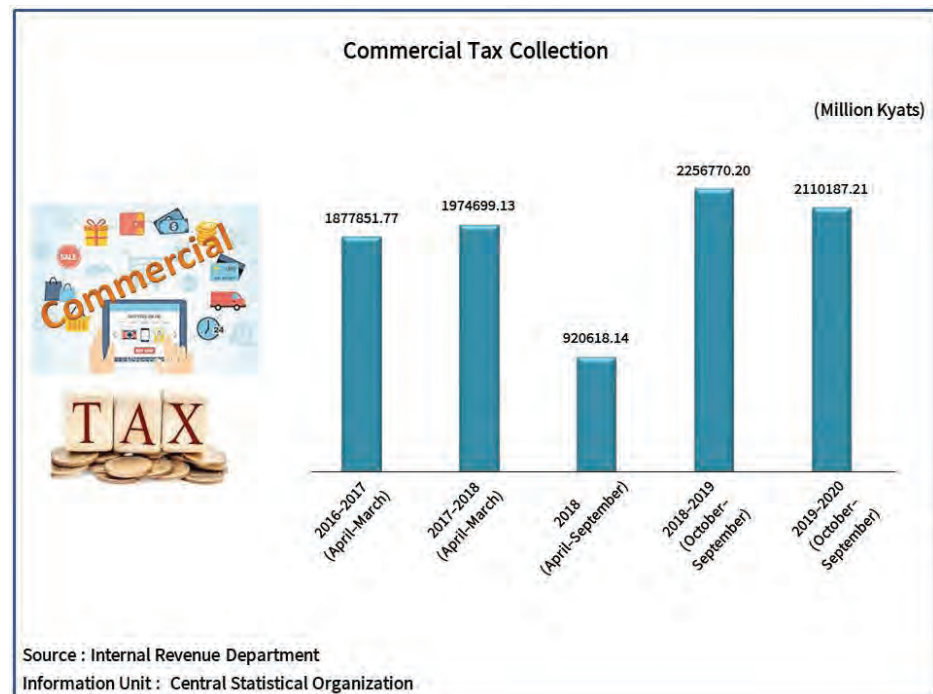
of discussions to sell Myanmar's beans through government-to-government (G2G) pacts. Besides, the ministry has been exploring more external markets, said U Aung Htoo, Deputy Minister for Commerce.

India's move to restrict importation of pulses in August, 2017 severely affected growers in Myanmar. The price of pulses also drastically plummeted.

In the 2017-2018FY, over a million tonnes of mung beans, pigeon peas, and green grams were shipped to foreign countries. But, the earnings have registered at just \$713 million owing to the price drop.

Myanmar shipped over 1.6 million tonnes of different varieties of pulses, especially mung beans, with an estimated worth of US\$1 billion, to other counties in the FY2018-2019. During last FY2019-2020 ended 30 September, the country delivered 1.6 million tonnes with an estimated value of \$1.195 billion. — Ko Htet

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)



Safe and responsible COVID-19 services must come first to revitalize travel sector

WITH the resumption of domestic air services on 16 December in line with the health and safety protocols, the Ministry of Hotel and Tourism is taking a step forward to restore public confidence in the travel sector. Besides, launching of the Non Landing Sight Seeing Flight and River Cruise on 20 December has brought the revitalization sunshine to the domestic travel sector.

Safety is at the top of the mind for travellers and services when travel services resume and travel destinations are reopened with the Enchanting Myanmar Health and Safety Protocol (HSP).

With people booking tickets for next tours, we are confident that launching domestic travel with national health guidelines would revitalize our domestic travel sector and would open the door to jump-starting tourism with regional countries.

Safety is at the top of the mind for travellers and services when travel services resume and travel destinations are reopened with the Enchanting Myanmar Health and Safety Protocol (HSP).

We must revitalize our tourism industry with safe and responsible COVID-19 services, which can guarantee the highest levels of safety from our tourism industry, and people are urged to strictly follow the health and safety guidelines.

With the resurgence of the coronavirus infection, the second wave has been a cudgel to the back of the knees of the people relying on the hotel and tourism sector for their livelihoods.

When it comes to reviving the hospitality sector hit hard by COVID-19, Destination Management Organizations-DMOs in regions and states are obliged to draw regional master plans based on MTSRR which includes immediate, medium and long term plans under the Myanmar Travel Strategic Recovery Roadmap.

The coronavirus will remain a problem for a long time, and it means we need to getting used to ways for living with it for the long term in our everyday lives.

The hotels and tourism sector is one of the sectors driving socio-economic development in Myanmar. The State is also encouraging the sector because it can create jobs for people living with disabilities and the aged.

The Union Government will take three steps to implement the Enchanting Myanmar Health and Safety Protocol (HSP) as part of efforts for turning our country to become a safe travel destination in the region.

DMOs formed with stakeholders from hotel and tourism industry and town elders in accordance with the Myanmar Tourism Law are urged to ensure public safety at the destinations.

To promote the travel sector amidst COVID-19, we also need to ensure travel costs-in prices of accommodation and transportation remain affordable for domestic travellers.

All hands from local authorities, DMOs and associations related to hospitality sector should be on deck to put the country's economy on the road to quick recovery through the travel sector.

Hailing 100th Anniversary of Yangon University (1920-2020); Yangon Universities' Boat Club (formerly known as Rangoon University Boat Club)

By: Tommy Pauk

(CONTINUED FROM THE PREVIOUS DAY)

EVEN then, the traditional rite was practised whenever the club conducted the regatta on the Inya Lake. The committee of the University Regatta used to hold the ceremony of "Saluting the Nats" (propitiating the spirits) at the opening of the Regatta. The fruits and flowers were distributed on the water to propitiate the Nats (spiritual beings) believed to be residing around the Lake in the traditional manner before a race in laungs. From 1927 onwards, occasional inter-college boat races were held for various teams belonged to colleges of Yangon. In 1939, Rangoon University Boat Club rowing team started to compete with English Boat Club rowing team with English racing boats. Sometimes, Burmese laungs (မြန်မာလောင်းလှေများ) were used in competing with English racing boats.

In 1945 and in 1946 (post second world war), the writer Let-Wai-Min-Nyo (စာရေးဆရာလက်ဝဲမင်းညို), U Chan Tha (ဦးချမ်းသာ) (ICS) and Commodore U Than Pe (ဦးသန်းဖေ) (Naval) had re-established the club in order to develop rowing sport among the university students. They also expected to bring about the vigorous male and female University students from the Yangon Universities' Boat Club.

In 1980s, YUBC teams had won the National Championship in local regattas. Most of the brilliant rowers (both male and female) are selected for National Rowing Team (Myanmar Selected Rowing Teams) to meet the regat-



YOUNG GENERATION OF YANGON UNIVERSITIES' BOAT CLUB MEMBERS

tas in foreign countries especially in ASEAN member countries or invited boat races abroad.

Since the Yangon University Boat Club's foundation in 1923, the rowing teams of the Yangon Universities' Boat Club teams have gained triumphs in the invited Boat Races in Asia in 1970s and 1980s. During those years, Yangon Universities' Boat Club teams have been invited to participate in F.E.A.R.A (Far Eastern amateur Rowing association) as Yangon Universities' Boat Club became a member club in 1981. Then it has been allowed to participate in AUG (ASEAN University Games).

Yangon Universities' Boat Club rowing teams had won the gold medals, silver medals and bronze medals in the regatta held in Singapore in October, 1979 for different classes of rowing races. Also, in 1981, RUBC rowing teams had won the gold medals and silver medals for different rowing events

significantly in Hong Kong conducted by (F.E.A.R.A — Far Eastern amateur Rowing association).

YUBC teams had won the higher prizes in 1982 Regatta conducted by (F.E.A.R.A — Far Eastern amateur Rowing association) in Manila, the Philippines.

The triumphs of Yangon Universities' Boat Club teams in the years 2000s are as follows;

In 2016, Yangon Universities' Boat Club teams had taken part in Varsity Boat Race (VBR) in Malaysia and won some outstanding prizes on different fixtures of the boat races.

2018 Varsity Boat Race (VBR) held in October, Penang, Malaysia

Yangon Universities' Boat Club's men and women rowing teams won the gold medals (first prize), silver medals (second prize) and bronze medals (third prize) in the different category of events competed with foreign boat

club teams.

Remark.

The Celebrations of the 40th Anniversary the of the RUBC was held in 1963; the 50th Anniversary the of the RUBC was held in 1973; the 60th Anniversary the of the RUBC was held in 1983; the 75th Anniversary the of the RUBC was held in 1998; the 80th Anniversary the of the RUBC was held in 2003; the 90th Anniversary the of the RUBC was held in 2013 respectively. N.B. Rangoon University Boat Club was renamed Yangon Universities' Boat Club in 1964 to date.

Up till now, Yangon University Boat club has been striving for the development of the club and members by giving training and buying modern race-boats in order that the rowing teams can participate in boat races in foreign countries especially in South East Asia. Evidently, YUBC teams have participated in boat races in Asian

countries. Occasionally, inter-colleges boat races are also held. Basic rowing training is given to the University students those who are rowing enthusiasts. In addition, the modern rowing boats are being used for the YUBC for the crew members in order to cope with the usage of standard rowing boats in the world regatta. Thus, YUBC has been receiving the increasing number of members from various Universities of Yangon who are of boat rowing enthusiasts.

N.B Excellent Yangon Universities' Boat Club members are from respective Universities and colleges in Yangon. For example, the excellent rowers from Yangon from Economics University are selected for participating in the invited boat races in Asia countries. Yangon Universities' Boat Club teams, made up of excellent members from respective Universities in Yangon, are prepared for Asian University Games.

The winning results in international rowing races participated by Yangon Universities' Boat Club teams are rather encouraging due to assiduous efforts, well-disciplined and harmonious teamwork of the members. In other words, the RUBC members of both man and women members have shown that they are physically and mentally strong enough to compete with Asian Universities' boat club members in any invited regatta ever held in three decades. Moreover, YUBC teams are well-prepared

to participate in invited regatta in 2019 and 2000. Due to Covid-19 pandemic, all the boat races of both inter-Universities and abroad have been halted. Nevertheless, the onus is on alumni of University of Yangon to share any proud and glorious events and background of it. That is why I collected about the history of Yangon University Boat Club (YUBC) and shared its famous events and activities.

By honouring the hundredth Anniversary of Yangon University, I am convinced that Yangon University might maintain its prestigious status and stand still among the prestigious Universities around the world.

In conclusion, I am so honoured that I have got an opportunity to write about the brief history of Yangon Universities' Boat Club and its significance sport activities throughout the hundred years (from 190 to 2020) and present standing with brilliant rowing teams formed by various Universities and colleges in Yangon so far.

References; Dr Kyaw Win (Retired History Department, University of Yangon) ခေါက်တံဘေကျွန်းသမိုင်းပါမောက္ခ (ဦးခင်); ရန်ကုန် တက္ကသိုလ်သမိုင်း (၁၉၂၀-၂၀၂၀) Reference ; Wikipedia Credit; Htet Lin Aung (Secretary of Yangon Universities' Boat Club) who contributed the photos of YUBC to this article.

Corrigendum

In the yesterday article's photo caption — A bronze bust of Commodore Than Pe, who was a president of YUBC from 1958 to 1962 — the name was erroneously mentioned as Pe Than. The error is regretted. —Author

SheTrades offers new opportunities for Women Entrepreneurs in Myanmar

SHE Trades has launched a women's economic empowerment initiative as part of the Myanmar Trade and Investment Project (TIP), funded by the Government of the United Kingdom and implemented by the International Trade Centre (ITC). The virtual launch was attended by more than 90 women entrepreneurs, as well as, representatives from Women Business Organizations (WBO). The virtual launch provided an overview of the activities that will be implemented by

ITC, as well as an opportunity for women entrepreneurs to discuss key issues and challenges they have been facing in global trade.

Most Myanmar women-led firms still struggle to compete in the domestic markets and face even greater difficulties in accessing international markets. According to the COVID-19 Comprehensive Survey Report for Myanmar's export sectors, only 26% of the Myanmar exporting companies have female senior managers. Moreover, women-owned

export businesses were hardest hit by the Covid-19 pandemic due to cash flow shortages and having less or no access to finance. In addition, according to the International Labour Organization, only 46% of women participate in the labour force, compared to 75% of men, and the Work Bank informs that women only own 1 in 4 small and medium firms. By increasing the competitiveness of women entrepreneurs, the overall objective is to capitalize the untapped potentials with regards

to women's innovation and capacities, job generation, creation of new and sustainable businesses, and poverty alleviation.

Daw Khine Khine Nwe, Managing Director of Best Industrial Co., Ltd said, "To promote the emergence of Women Entrepreneurs in Myanmar; it is very important to support women with the necessary skills, resource and networks to access global markets. With the support of the SheTrades Initiative in Myanmar; women in trade will be shown

ways to grow their businesses sustainably and compete regionally and internationally in the post-COVID economy."

SheTrades will support a number of women-owned firms in Myanmar by connecting them with the global markets and by providing the necessary skills through the resources, tools and methodologies such as SheTrades Partnerships, and its online learning platform via SheTrades.com. In order to maximise scale, the proposed activities will orientate

around a partnership with a selected Women Business Organization (WBOs), which supports women-owned businesses in order to create a sustainable and more effective source of training, coaching and general advisory services for women entrepreneurs in Myanmar.

SOURCE: ITC SheTrades - International Trade Centre

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.

Letter to the editor

Dear Editor,

The GNLM is the reliable, factual and timely and only state-owned English daily in Myanmar as we all are already striving in the transitional period for Democratic Federal State. I would like to suggest that the articles pertinent to vox pop or constructive criticism on any issues should also be selected so that the readers can learn more about needs and wants of the vast majority of people while striving to build Democratic Federal State. Despite having social media pathway, the role of print media is still important. I humbly opine that freedom of expression must, by any means, be applied in the print media and that must not be detrimental to the persons or organization or community and so on.

During the eras of the successive military regimes, we the writers and authors had encountered bitter feelings of losing freedom of expression caused by the notorious censorship on any publication in our country. We had fed up with so-called propaganda articles and news published and broadcast in all media. Now it is time for the unbiased writers and man of letters to express their opinions or views or constructive suggestions or criticism in the form of articles or poems in the state-owned newspaper like the GNLM. Hopefully, the Ministry of Information and authorities concerned will encourage and welcome those unbiased writers, who write in good faith for the countrymen and the country. However, if the expressions are considered obscene, politically unacceptable, or a threat to security or personal defamation, they should be censored. The policy of censoring articles should be exercised to some degree. Otherwise, the sensible readers and unbiased writers would not trust a certain newspaper published by the government.

It is encouraging that our young generation share and express their knowledge, opinions, and thoughts in English as much as they can. I.e. Next Generation Supplement Pull-out in the GNLM on Sunday. That is an excellent format of the GNLM as well. All readers appreciate the articles and poems of young writers those who are of Primary School students and University students.

They need to enjoy the freedom of expression in the media so that they might become happy writers in future.

May the GNLM gain much more readership!

Hein Htet

A regular reader of the GNLM

CONTINUED GROWTH

China launches bid to become commodities market player

CHINA, a big raw materials consumer, hopes to position itself as a global commodities marketplace with its launch of a new futures contract on the popular copper market.

The Shanghai International Energy Exchange (INE), a division of the Shanghai Commodity Exchange, opened the contract for the so-called eternal metal to foreign investors on November 19, following several trial runs -- including one in oil -- in 2018.

Copper contracts already existed in China but exclusively for domestic trading.

"The launch of bonded copper futures is necessary for the continued growth of China's copper industry," INE has said.

Philippe Sebillé-Lopez, of



China accounts for around half of the world's copper production. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

the Geopolia Institute, called it was a shrewd move by China, given its reliance on certain commodities to power its economy.

"The greater the Chinese

market share for a given raw material, the more Shanghai will be able to attract foreign investors," he said.

The world's factory ac-

counts for around half of global copper production but it faces an uphill struggle to win business.

London's edge

Although large brokerage companies want a presence in Shanghai, its trading volume remains very low compared with London, by far the bigger sister in the relationship.

London has historically dominated exchanges.

The London Metal Exchange (LME), which was founded in 1877, proclaims itself the "world centre" for industrial metals trading, especially non-ferrous metals such as copper, aluminium, lead and zinc.

The LME, a subsidiary since 2012 of the HKEX -- owner of the

Hong Kong Stock Exchange -- has significant technical advantages to retain its pre-eminence.

They include a network of warehouses around the world as well as a degree of liquidity and flexibility that its superior size provides.

It also has "the 'date structure' -- you can trade for any single day," Marc Bailey, head of Sueden trading house, told AFP.

"That uniqueness makes it extremely attractive to trade," he added.

Sebillé-Lopez nonetheless sees an opening for Shanghai.

"Each new contract is interesting because it presents margin opportunities," compared with other markets, he added.

SOURCE: AFP

UNEMPLOYMENT

US jobless claims drop sharply latest week

NEW applications for US jobless benefits fell by 89,000 last week after two weeks of increases but remain high as Covid-19 cases have spiked, according to government data Thursday.

Applications fell to 803,000 in the week ended December 19 from an upwardly-revised 892,000 in the prior week, according to the seasonally-adjusted Labour Department data. That was far below the level economists had been expecting, although analysts warn that the reports can be erratic due to seasonal adjustment errors around the holidays. New claims for special pandemic jobless benefits -- which are set to expire in days -- fell by nearly 57,000 to 397,511, without seasonal adjustment.

President Donald Trump has threatened to veto the long-awaited pandemic relief bill that would extend the extra payments for workers who do not usually qualify. In a video message Tuesday, he demanded Congress amend the package finally approved after months of partisan wrangling to increase the direct relief payments from \$600 to \$2,000.

SOURCE: AFP

ANNUAL CHRISTMAS LOTTERY

World's richest lottery spreads Christmas cheer in Spain

SPAIN'S annual Christmas lottery doled out 2.4 billion euros (\$2.9 billion) to multiple winners on Tuesday, spreading holiday cheer in one of the European nations worst hit by the coronavirus pandemic.

Unlike other big lotteries that generate just a few big winners, "El Gordo" (The Fat One) aims to share the wealth, with thousands of numbers getting a prize.

The total prize money involved makes it the world's richest lottery.

El Gordo shelled out 400,000 euros to the lucky holders of tickets bearing this year's top-prize number, 72897. A total of 1,720 tickets bearing this number were sold across the country.

"It's an enormous reward during a very difficult year," Manuel Rodriguez, a lottery salesman from northwestern



This handout picture released by the Spanish Lottery Society on December 22, 2020 shows pupils of the San Idefonso school calling out numbers of the draw of Spain's Christmas lottery 'El Gordo' at the Royal Theatre in Madrid. PHOTO: AFP

Spain who sold several winning tickets, told local media.

"We are happy that it landed here amongst our neighbours, that is what we work for,

to spread prizes and dreams among our neighbours."

As in other years, winners gathered at lottery offices that sold winning tickets to celebrate

with champagne and confetti, temporarily dispensing with social distancing and mask-wearing amid the euphoria.

SOURCE: AFP

DINNERS RUINED

Pandemic dashes Christmas hopes for Michelin-starred chef

PASCAL Aassignac, a Michelin-starred French chef based in London, had been counting on delivering Christmas dinners to recoup his restaurants' losses after a year blighted by the pandemic.

Then everything fell apart in the space of just a few days.

"I've got 50 capons and ducks stuck in France; they'll never ar-

rive in time for Christmas dinner because we should have stuffed them (already)," he told AFP.

Restaurants in London were forced to close unexpectedly last week in the middle of the crucial holiday season as strict coronavirus restrictions were imposed.

A "no-deal" Brexit would make matters even worse for Aassignac's restaurants, impos-

ing customs duties and quotas on the local French produce that is his speciality.

Then a snap decision on Sunday by a number of countries including France to halt travel to and from Britain caused a fresh crisis. Trucks full of food from France have been left stranded on the other side of the Channel.

Aassignac had to break the

news to his customers that he would only have stuffing to sell them for their Christmas meal.

"They have to find English poultry," he explained, adding they would have to cook the birds themselves. Some customers did not appreciate this development and made their feelings known, he said.

SOURCE: AFP

POLITICAL BRINKMANSHIP

Trump rejects Covid relief bill, calling it 'a disgrace'



People enjoy a drink on the outdoor area of Ocean drive restaurants on December 19, 2020 in South beach, Florida amid the coronavirus pandemic **PHOTO: DANIEL SLIM / AFP**

PRESIDENT Donald Trump on Tuesday rejected a massive Covid economic relief package passed by Congress, branding it "a disgrace" in an act of political brinkmanship less than a month before he must leave office and

when millions of Americans are suffering fallout from the pandemic.

Trump dropped the bombshell via a pre-recorded statement made in the White House and sent out on Twitter.

It came just a day after his Republicans and the Democrats finally agreed overwhelmingly to a \$900 billion bill meant to throw a lifeline to businesses and people struggling to keep heads above water.

In his address, Trump said he would refuse to accept the bill as it is and demanded changes, notably a big increase in the proposed \$600 direct payments to less well-off Americans.

"I am asking Congress to amend this bill and increase the ridiculously low \$600 to \$2,000, or \$4,000 for a couple," he said, referring to relief checks. Tapping into his nationalist "America First" brand, Trump also castigated measures added onto the bill during complex negotiations that would provide funding for projects benefiting US partners abroad and other non-Covid related items like the environment.

"It really is a disgrace," he

said. "I'm also asking Congress to immediately get rid of the wasteful and unnecessary items from this legislation, and just send me a suitable bill."

Trump has not yet received the bill and he did not explicitly say he would not sign. If he actually vetoed the package, Congress would almost certainly quickly override that, given the bipartisan support.

In what is widely expected to be only a portion of a slew of presidential pardons and commutations issued in the dying days of the administration, the White House also announced late Tuesday that 20 people had been selected. They included two convicted in special counsel Robert Mueller's Russia probe into Trump campaign ties to Moscow and four men convicted in connection with the mass killing of 17 Iraqi civilians.

SOURCE: AFP

PRAGUE

Czechs extend emergency, close shops as cases soar

THE Czech government on Wednesday extended its state of emergency and announced tighter restrictions including closing shops, as the number of new Covid-19 cases started to soar again.

The Czech Republic, an EU member of 10.7 million people, registered 10,821 new Covid-19 cases on Tuesday, the fastest daily growth since November 6.

It has recorded almost 650,000 cases and more than 10,600 deaths since the March outbreak.

"The Czech Republic will move to the top tier (of its epidemic system) with the highest risk from December 27," Health Minister Jan Blatny told reporters.

This means that shops selling non-essential goods will be closed and public gatherings



Demonstrators protest in central Prague against the Czech government's new measures to slow the spread of the Covid-19 coronavirus on October 18, 2020. **PHOTO: MICHAL CIZEK, AFP**

restricted to two people, with a curfew between 9 pm and 5 am.

The measures will stay in

place at least until January 10, while the state of emergency, a legal instrument allowing the government to impose restric-

tions and buy medical equipment without tenders, will last at least until January 22.

SOURCE: AFP

SUBDUED SEASON

Migrant workers in limbo as Austrian ski resorts reopen

AUSTRIA'S ski lifts may be operating but as the country struggles to control coronavirus infections, the sector expects a subdued season -- and migrant workers who depend on it face an uncertain winter.

In a normal year they would

be part of one of Europe's largest seasonal labour migrations.

In western Austria's Tyrol province alone, more than 31,000 foreign workers are needed when its 80 ski resorts are in full swing, according to one estimate.

But events in Ischgl, the village that became one of Europe's first major coronavirus clusters, explain why many of those workers are now unemployed.

Around 6,000 tourists claim to have carried the virus home from there.

AFP interviewed workers from Germany, Italy, Croatia and Slovakia, some of whom spoke on condition of anonymity because they feared risking future employment.

SOURCE: AFP

NEWS
IN BRIEF

PFIZER/BIONTECH

First vaccines leave plant for EU rollout

TRUCKS carrying the first batches of coronavirus vaccines for EU citizens left the giant Pfizer plant in Belgium Wednesday ahead of a rollout across the 27-nation bloc.

Member states are set to start issuing the Pfizer-BioNTech inoculations from December 27 after the European Union's medicines regulator gave the green light on Monday. An AFP journalist saw three refrigerated trucks leaving US pharmaceutical giant Pfizer's sprawling factory in northeast Belgium with two police cars escorting each.

SOURCE: AFP

SWITZERLAND

Swiss start Covid-19 vaccinations

SWITZERLAND started its Covid-19 vaccine rollout on Wednesday, with a care home resident in her 90s becoming the first person in the country to receive the jab.

The woman, who lives in the Lucerne region in central Switzerland, was given the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, just four days after it was approved by national regulators.

"I am very satisfied that we have now been able to start vaccinations in the canton of Lucerne," the region's health services chief Guido Graf said in a statement. --SOURCE: AFP

BORDER CONTROLS

Lorry drivers need rapid test to enter France from UK

BRITAIN announced on Tuesday it had reached an agreement with France to allow lorry drivers stranded in the UK following the closure of the border to leave, providing they take a rapid virus test.

"All lorry drivers, irrespective of nationality, will require a lateral flow test. This can detect the new strain of Covid-19 and provide results in around 30 minutes, rather than the 24 hours required after a PCR test," said the transport ministry, adding the deal would be reviewed on 31 December.

SOURCE: AFP

NON-COERCIVE MEASURES

Sweden stands by COVID-19 strategy despite tighter measures

SWEDEN is continuing to pursue the same strategy against the COVID-19 pandemic, despite a recent slew of stricter measures, Prime Minister Stefan Lofven insisted on Tuesday.

Sweden has made headlines around the world for its decision to combat the spread of the virus with mostly non-coercive measures and never imposing the type of lockdown

seen elsewhere around Europe.

But faced with a strong second wave and a once again rapidly rising death toll, the country imposed stronger measures during the autumn, notably a ban on public gatherings of more than eight people and a call for people to severely limit social interactions to one household of a very small circle of friends.— SOURCE: AFP

CHARTING NEW COURSES

New COVID-19 variants under the microscope as travel bans mount over UK mutation



Pedestrians walk past shops in London's Piccadilly on Saturday. PHOTO: TOLGA AKMEN/AFP

SCIENTISTS have been working to understand new COVID-19 variants that have been reported in South Africa and the United Kingdom.

According to news reports, more than 40 countries have now banned arrivals from the UK, because of mounting concerns over a new, more transmissible mutation of the new coronavirus, although health officials there stress that there is no evidence it is more deadly, or that it would not respond in the same way to the vaccines cleared for emergency use.

“The bottom line is that we need to suppress transmission of all SARS-CoV-2 viruses as quickly as we can”, World Health Organization (WHO) Director-General Tedros Adhanom

Ghebreyesus told on Monday a regular press briefing.

“The more we allow it to spread, the more opportunity it has to change”, he added.

In early 2021, \$4.6 billion in additional funding will be needed to purchase COVID-19 vaccines for at least 20 per cent of low and lower middle income countries, according to the WHO chief.

“This will ensure health workers and those at highest risk of severe disease are vaccinated, which is the fastest way to stabilize health systems and economies and stimulate a truly global recovery”, he said.

As part of the hundred-hundred initiative – a major sprint by WHO, the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Bank to support 100 countries

in conducting rapid readiness assessments and develop country-specific plans within 100 days for vaccines and other COVID-19 tools – 89 countries have already completed assessments and teams are working round the clock to ensure that governments and health systems are ready for the global vaccine rollout.

While the pandemic has exploited the world's vulnerabilities and inequalities, it has also shown that “in the face of an unprecedented crisis, we can come together in new ways to confront it”, said Tedros.

“Every crisis is an opportunity to question the way we do things, and to find new ways of doing them”, he upheld.

SOURCE: UN NEWS

NEWS IN BRIEFS

RESULTS WITHIN 15 MINUTES

Slovenia starts mass virus testing

SLOVENIA began mass coronavirus testing on Tuesday in a huge drive targeting a fourth of its two million population.

The first phase will run until Thursday and is available to anyone who wishes to be tested. Another is due after Christmas, focussing on key workers such as teachers, soldiers and police officers.

Over a hundred people queued up at the central Kongresni Square in the capital Ljubljana, one of several locations in 13 cities where testing is available.

Health ministry secretary Marija Magajne said on Monday the programme aimed at “containing the spread of the virus, reducing the number of people hospitalized as well as deaths”. Results will be delivered on mobile phones within 15 minutes along with instructions for those who test positive, Magajne said.— SOURCE: AFP

BUSINESS

40,000 UK retailers in “significant financial distress”

THE Guardian reports that almost 40,000 retailers in the UK were in “significant financial distress”, even before non-essential shops were forced to shut over the weekend.

A study finds that this figure is 24% higher than in the year before. The businesses include both online shops and physical stores. In the hospitality sector, the figure has even jumped to 34%.

The Christmas and holiday period is a crucial driver for revenue.—SOURCE: AFP

THE VIRUS-HIT ECONOMY

UK government borrowing soars further on virus spending



Much of the UK is once more in full lockdown. PHOTO: ALEX MCBRIDE / SPUTNIK VIA AFP

UK government borrowing continued to soar in November on emergency action to support the virus-hit economy which nevertheless rebounded stronger than expected in the third quarter; official data showed on Tuesday.

Government borrowing last month hit £31.6 billion (€34.2bn), a record for November – taking public sector net debt to £2.1 trillion, the Office for National Statistics said in a statement.

Separate data showed the UK economy bounced back by an all-time high 16 per cent in the July-September period, up from an initial reading 15.5 per cent, as the country exited the

first lockdown.

British economic output, however, remains 8.6 per cent below the level of one year ago.

At the same time, “November's surge in borrowing is unlikely to be reversed much over the next few months as the ongoing COVID-19 restrictions keep many businesses closed,” noted Capital Economics analyst Thomas Pugh.

“This will only increase talk of how to pay for the crisis, but the successful roll out of vaccines next year and a rapid rebound in GDP could mean that the deficit returns to its pre-crisis level within the next few years without the

need for much fiscal tightening.”

State borrowing by Prime Minister Boris Johnson's government has reached £241 billion since the first UK lockdown in late March – an increase of £189 billion year-on-year.

It means the UK's overall debt is 99.5 per cent of gross domestic product – the highest level for 58 years.

A chunk of the money raised has been to keep millions of private-sector worker in jobs via the government's furlough scheme, with the bulk of wages expected to be paid until the end of April next year.

SOURCE: AFP

YEARENDER

Tourism suffers in Thailand due to COVID-19 pandemic

FIVE-STAR hotels in Bangkok, Thailand have dimmed their lights for more than half a year due to the COVID-19 pandemic that forced the country to shut its doors to foreign tourists since April.

In a once-bustling riverfront night bazaar in Bangkok, Christmas lights have been put up only to attract few visitors and the dazzling lights could hardly beat the gloom. The city is not in a festive mood.

In southern Thailand's resort island Phuket, hotel occupancy rate hovers at less than 20 per cent. "Cheaper flights, public holidays added by the government and drastic drop of hotel rates are still far less likely to win domestic tourists," a receptionist at a local hotel told Xinhua.

UNPRECEDENTED CRISIS

Tourism and hotel industries are suffering from the absence of international tourists. Only 1,201 foreign tourists visited Thailand in October, as the country gradually opened up to a select number of visitors to help its struggling, tourism-reliant economy.

Thitiporn Maneenetr, director in charge of the East Asian market of the Tourism Authority of Thailand, told Xinhua that Thailand welcomed 3.07 million foreign visitors in the same month last year. Two thirds of the kingdom's tourism revenue comes from foreign arrivals.

"Though domestic tourism started to recover with



Tourism accounts for 18% of Thailand's gross domestic product and Chinese holidaymakers make up more than a quarter of total arrivals. PHOTO: AFP / MLADEN ANTONOV/FILE

people flocking to some destinations during weekends, it's not enough to salve the whole industry as the domestic market contributes only 30 per cent of total tourism revenue."

Tourism-related businesses that are heavily reliant on foreign tourists have to adapt and now cater to local customers. If they keep shutting down their businesses, facilities will be run down and staffs dismissed, said Thitiporn.

FIND WAY OUT

Facing the pandemic-induced economic woes, some tourism-related businesses in Thailand are trying to find a connecting piece within the collapsing jigsaw.

The hotel industry is in an unprecedented crisis. "Our enemy is even invisible. Yet the pandemic has only served to push us to realign our strategies to suit domestic travellers who now seek exclusive escapes with a component of seclusive, valued-added and heightened wellness experiences," Suphaje Suthumpun, CEO of Dusit International, a leading hotel and property development company, told Xinhua.

"We partner with travel platforms, such as travel agencies and local communities, to jointly explore some niche routes, the hidden gems that could be hardly discovered in mass tourism. We offer guests bespoke itineraries and val-

ue-added packages. We try to reinvent ourselves to stay attractive to domestic travellers," she said.

Hotels under Dusit group are baiting consumers with bundle deals, such as the flower field trip package, including accommodation, meals, transportation and personal photographer. It offers tourists trips to less visited local communities all over the kingdom with authentic experiences.

OPAQUE PROSPECT IN NEAR FUTURE

As a way to make the pandemic-hit economy move, the Thai government has given greenlight to extend a stimulus package for local tourists.

The "We Travel Together" campaign, which subsidises 40 per cent of hotel expenditure and airfares, is likely to run from January to March next year.

In tandem with the domestic tourism stimulus plan, the government tries to invigorate the domestic economy by holding events and festivals.

The Thailand Convention & Exhibition Bureau (TCEB) has launched a Festival Economy policy to nurture partnerships between professional festival associations and local city governments to co-create new festivals with lasting economic, social and environmental impacts.

Phuket's old town seemed to be wakened from a long quiet low season, with people flocking to trendy destinations at the recent Living Art Festival.

TCEB is bringing new and high-profile festivals based on the city's unique DNA. Such festivals will help attract visitors with high spending power and help revive the local economy, stimulate job creation and spur infrastructure development, said Nichapa Yoswee, TCEB senior vice president who chaired the opening ceremony of the art festival.

The tourism sector may have to wait until 2022 to see "normal," or 80 per cent of the pre-pandemic level, as major markets are reluctant to ease travel restrictions unless there is distribution of a successful vaccine, said the Tourism Authority of Thailand.

SOURCE: XINHUA

BANGALORE

India's IT hub imposes night curfew over new virus strain fears



A passenger arriving from Britain is hugged by a relative at Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel International Airport in Ahmedabad before the ban on UK arrivals was imposed. PHOTO: AFP

INDIA'S Karnataka state, home to the nation's vibrant technology hub, has imposed a night curfew in a bid to stave off the new fast-spreading coronavirus strain sweeping Britain.

The southern state has banned gatherings and non-essential travel from 10 pm to 6 am until January 2, Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa said Wednesday.

"I request the public to cooperate to prevent the spread of the new Covid strain," Yediyurappa told reporters.

India is the world's second most-infected nation behind the United States, with more than 10

million cases and over 146,000 deaths.

A new strain of coronavirus that emerged in Britain in the past week has prompted dozens of countries to ban travellers from the UK and step up local measures.

Travellers to Karnataka, of which the IT hub of Bangalore is the capital, will be tested on arrival unless they have been cleared 72 hours before departure.

The western state of Maharashtra, home to financial capital Mumbai, imposed a similar curfew on Tuesday.

SOURCE: XINHUA

LASHING OUT

Venezuela's oil unions accuse government of persecution

VENEZUELA'S vital oil industry is failing and the socialist government is feeling the pressure, and now the regime of President Nicolas Maduro is being accused of lashing out at the sector's unions.

In recent months, several union leaders have been arrested, accused of terrorism, sharing confidential information and inciting hatred.

SOURCE: XINHUA

NORMALIZATION PACT

Morocco, Israel agree to immediately establish full diplomatic ties

MOROCCO and Israel agreed on Tuesday to immediately establish full diplomatic relations, marking the fourth Arab-Israel agreement in four months.

The two countries agreed to “immediately resume full official contacts, and establish full diplomatic, peaceful and friendly relations,” said a joint declaration issued by Morocco, the United States and Israel in the Moroccan capital Rabat.

The declaration was signed by Morocco’s Prime Minister Saad Dine El Otmani, Senior Advisor to U.S. President Donald Trump Jared Kushner, and Israeli National Security Advisor Meir Ben-Shabbat.

Israel’s Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Thursday: “This will be a very warm peace ... the light of peace has never shone brighter than today in the Middle East.”

Morocco’s King Mohammed VI also said in a statement that Morocco would take three steps to advance the two countries’ relations in the near future.

Israel and Morocco agreed to open direct flights between the two countries, while pledging to promote a dynamic and innovative economic bilateral cooperation, according to the declaration.

SOURCE: AFP



Israel’s Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (L), U.S. President Donald Trump (C) and Morocco’s King Mohammed VI. PHOTO: AFP

A “STRATEGIC RIVAL”

Russia not expecting ‘anything good’ from Biden administration



Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov in 2019. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

RUSSIAN Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov said Wednesday Moscow was not expecting “anything good” from US President-elect Joe Biden, accusing members of his future administration of “Russophobia”.

“We are definitely not expecting anything good. And it would be strange to expect good things from people, many of whom made their careers on Russophobia and throwing mud at my country,” Ryabkov said in an interview with news agency Interfax.

The interview was released days after the US accused Russia of a major cyber attack on government agencies.

Biden on Tuesday said the attack cannot go “unanswered”, promising to retaliate once he takes office on January 20.

Ryabkov said Moscow should move to a “total containment” approach in relations with the United States,

retaining “selective dialogue” on subjects that are of interest to Russia.

The deputy foreign minister said that Russia would not initiate any contacts with Biden’s transition staff, and would also not make any “unilateral concessions”.

He added that if the US continued approaching Russia as a “strategic rival” then Moscow would “treat them in a similar way”.

Referring to fresh US sanctions imposed earlier this week on 45 Russian organizations over their military connections, Ryabkov said the outgoing administration was trying to “loudly slam the door”.

“We are going from bad to worse. This was very typical for the past four years and so far there is no feeling that this trend has outlived its usefulness,” Ryabkov said.

SOURCE: AFP

THE SHORT-LIVED UNITY GOVERNMENT

Israel parliament dissolves, sparking fourth election in two years

ISRAEL’S parliament dissolved on Wednesday after Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s fractured ruling coalition failed to pass a budget, triggering a fourth election in two years and renewing an unprecedented political crisis.

The coalition led by Netanyahu and his former election rival, Defence Minister Benny Gantz, had been inching towards collapse for weeks, undermined by mutual acrimony and mistrust.

The dissolution of parliament, the Knesset, could see

elections held as early as March 23, likely forcing Netanyahu to seek re-election while the coronavirus pandemic is still raging and as his long-awaited corruption trial intensifies.

The coalition headed by Netanyahu’s right-wing Likud and Gantz’s centrist Blue and White party had until midnight to pass a 2020 budget.

Failure to do so legally forces parliament’s dissolution, Knesset spokesman Uri Michael told AFP on Tuesday.

The deadline’s expiration

marks the end of a troubled political marriage between Netanyahu and Gantz, who faced off in three inconclusive elections in April and September of 2019 and again in March.

Budget battle

They agreed to form a so-called unity government in April.

Gantz has said he never trusted Netanyahu, but wanted to spare Israelis a fourth election, especially as the pandemic was gathering pace.

SOURCE: AFP

ALLEGED COLLUSION

Trump grants pardons to 15 individuals including two charged in Russia probe

US President Donald Trump on Tuesday announced a wave of pardons including two for men who pleaded guilty in Robert Mueller’s investigation, and also to Republican allies who once served in Congress and military contractors involved in the deadly shooting of Iraqi civilians.

In total, Trump granted clemency to 15 people and five commutations that were announced Tuesday evening by the White House, the Hill reported.

The pardons were given to former campaign aide George Papadopoulos, former US con-

gressmen Duncan Hunter and Chris Collins, and the four Blackwater guards involved in the Iraq massacre.

Also included in the batch announced on Tuesday is Alex van der Zwaan, the Dutch lawyer who was sentenced to 30 days in jail after pleading guilty to lying to Mueller investigators

Additionally, Trump commuted the sentence of Steve Stockman, a former Republican congressman who was convicted in 2018 of money laundering, conspiracy, and other charges related to a scheme to defraud

charitable donors.

Trump has been weighing issuing a handful of clemency grants in his final days in office.

Late last month, Trump pardoned Michael Flynn, his former national security adviser, who was also charged in connection with Mueller’s investigation.

The pardon came as the Justice Department was seeking to withdraw its case against Flynn, who pleaded guilty to lying to the FBI about his contacts with the Russian ambassador, bringing a dramatic end to his case.

SOURCE: ANI

DEPARTING SOMALIA

US naval ships arrive in Somalia to help withdraw troops

US naval ships arrived in Somalia Monday to support withdrawal of troops from the country, the Pentagon said Tuesday.

The ships arrived off the coast of the Horn of Africa, 16 days after President Donald Trump ordered pullout of troops.

The 700 personnel had been in Somalia for years undertaking operations against the armed group, al-Shabab.

In a statement, the US Africa Command said the troops will be sent to other East Africa operating locations.

The troops will be rebased in Kenya or Djibouti, where they will continue to pile pressure on al-Shabab.

Africom Commander General Stephen Townsend noted Saturday that the US is not withdrawing or disengaging from East Africa. "We remain



US Marine Corps F35-B prepares to land on the flight deck of the amphibious assault ship USS Makin Island. PHOTO: PATRICK CROSELY/US ARMY/AFP

committed to helping our African partners build a more secure future", he said.

The move comes as Donald

Trump seeks to wind down US military engagements abroad during his final weeks in office.

He ordered US troop levels

to be slashed by mid-January in Afghanistan and Iraq, to 2,500 troops in both cases.

SOURCE: AFP

TO CONTINUE OR NOT?

Twitter followers of US govt accounts won't transfer to Biden

TWITTER said Tuesday it would not automatically transfer the millions of followers of official Trump administration accounts to the incoming Biden administration, but instead give users the option to continue or not.

The move affects followers of government-led accounts such as @WhiteHouse and @POTUS, which will be transferred to Joe Biden when he takes over the

presidency in January.

Twitter's decision won't affect the personal account @realDonaldTrump, which is frequently used by President Donald Trump and has some 88 million followers.

The official government accounts "will not automatically retain their existing followers. Instead, Twitter will notify followers of these accounts to pro-

vide context that the content will be archived and allow them the choice to follow the Biden administration's new accounts," a Twitter statement said.

"For example, people who follow @WhiteHouse will be notified that the account has been archived as @WhiteHouse45 and given the option to follow the new @WhiteHouse account."

Twitter has been working on

the transition for the platform widely used by Trump since the election results were finalized, and has indicated that as a private citizen Trump may not have as much leeway in stretching the rules for newsworthy comments. While not as widely followed as Trump's personal account, @POTUS has some 33 million followers and @WhiteHouse 26 million.

SOURCE: AFP

ANNUAL TRADITION

Elephant Santas spread virus awareness among Thai children

CHRISTMAS and Thailand's love of elephants combined Wednesday when four of the gi-

ant creatures dressed as Santa turned up at a school just outside Bangkok, complete with huge

coronavirus masks.

Excited children from Jirasat Wittaya School in Ayutthaya, an hour's drive from the capital, sang Christmas carols and lined up to have their photos taken with the animals in the annual tradition.

The elephants, Sri Mongkon, 14, Sri Raya, 6, Peter, 15, and King Kaew, 18, used their trunks to carry baskets of face masks to the youngsters and motorists outside the school.

English and science teacher Brett Baxter said the event brought a special kind of Christmas spirit coupled with a flavour of Thailand.

"It's fantastic for the children. It mixes two cultures together. It's not just about Santa Claus... the culture of Thailand

is based around elephants," he said.

Ayutthaya, the former capital of Siam, the country now known as Thailand, is considered the birthplace of the kingdom's Catholic community.

European Catholic missionaries built a church on the banks of the Chao Phraya River three centuries ago.

Ittipan Paolamai, the manager of Ayutthaya's elephant palace, where the animals are cared for, said the school visit had been held for 17 years.

"This year due to the pandemic as well as the recent outbreak, we used this opportunity to raise public awareness about the spread of Covid-19," he told AFP.

SOURCE: AFP



An elephant from the Ayutthaya Elephant Palace, dressed in a Santa Claus costume and wearing a face mask, is greeted by students during an event to hand out masks at a school in Ayutthaya, Thailand. PHOTO: AFP

NEWS IN BRIEF

SAINT-JUST SHOOTING

Three French police shot dead by domestic violence suspect

THREE police officers were killed and a fourth wounded in central France on Wednesday by a gunman they confronted in response to a domestic violence call, the deadliest attack in years on French law enforcement outside of terrorism incidents.

The suspect, a 48-year-old man known to authorities for child custody disputes, was "discovered dead" several hours after fleeing the home in an isolated hamlet near Saint-Just, a village of some 160 people south of the city of Clermont-Ferrand, Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin said in a tweet.

He gave no further details on how the man died, but said he was heading to the scene personally.

SOURCE: AFP

HALF A CENTURY

Japan top court allows retrial for 'longest' death row prisoner

Japan's highest court has upheld a ruling granting a retrial to a man described as the world's longest-serving death row inmate, a lawyer for the 84-year-old said on Wednesday.

Iwao Hakamada has lived under a death sentence for more than half a century, after being convicted of robbing and murdering his boss, the man's wife, and their two teenaged children.

But he and his supporters argue that he confessed to the crime after an allegedly brutal police interrogation that included beatings, and that evidence in the case was planted. He tried to retract his confession, but was sentenced to death in 1968, with the verdict confirmed by the Supreme Court in 1980. However, in a rare about-face for Japan's rigid justice system, a district court in the central city of Shizuoka in 2014 granted his request for a retrial.

SOURCE: KYODO



Hantharwady United young winger Hein Htet Aung. **PHOTO: BHONE THAW**

Hantharwady winger Hein Htet Aung to join Malaysian football club

HEIN Htet Aung, a young winger of the Hantharwady United and Myanmar U-22 national football team, is planning to move to a Malaysian football club, according to a statement with the Hantharwady United.

The 19-year-old winger is being linked with football authorities from the top Malaysian clubs, and his transfer will be likely to be finalized later this month.

Hein Htet Aung's contract with Hantharwady has expired recently, and he is now making some quick decisions to move to a Malaysian club.

Hein Htet Aung is a graduate of the Myanmar Football Academy and played for Hantharwady as a professional player from 2018 to the end of the 2020 season. Hein Htet Aung performed well in the

2020 season to assist Hantharwady United winning the second prize.

Hein Htet Aung made 54 appearances for Hantharwady United from the 2018 football season until the end of the 2020 football season, scoring nine goals.

The youth player has been selected in the U-22 squad of the Myanmar national team in the previous year and showed his superb performance in international football tourneys.

During a couple of weeks, Hein Htet Aung will make a quick decision to sign a contract with a Malaysian club for at least two years, according to the statement with the Hantharwady United. —Shine Htet Zaw

(Translated by Kyaw Zin Lin)

Messi passes Pele as top scorer at a single club

MADRID — Lionel Messi beat Pele's record of goals for a single club when he scored his 644th for Barcelona in a 3-0 victory against Valladolid on Tuesday.

The Argentina forward scored Barca's third goal when he collected Pedri's backheel and struck the ball past goalkeeper Jordi Masip on 65 minutes.

"When I started playing football I never thought I would break any records. And even less the one I achieved today," Messi posted on Instagram shortly after the game.

"I can only thank all those who helped me over the years, my teammates, my family, my friends and all those who support me every day." —AFP ■

Sasaki to take lead creative role for revised Tokyo Games ceremonies



Hiroshi Sasaki (far L) and Nomura Mansai (C) attend a press conference in Tokyo on Dec. 23, 2020. **PHOTO: POOL/KYODO**

TOKYO — Advertising agency owner Hiroshi Sasaki, who was initially appointed to oversee the 2020 Paralympic ceremonies, was named chief executive creative director of the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games on Wednesday.

The 66-year-old Sasaki will replace acclaimed Kyogen actor Nomura Mansai in the role, in which he will be in charge of revising plans for all four opening and closing ceremonies for the games that were pushed back a year to

2021 because of the coronavirus pandemic.

"I want to express some sort of breakthrough or hope for the future (in the ceremonies)," Sasaki said in a press conference where he was joined by Nomura.

"This is a chance to change the inflated image of Olympic ceremonies as being flamboyant stage shows," he said, hinting at the possibility of emulating the 1964 Tokyo Olympics opening ceremony which he described as "so simple yet so moving."

Sasaki was responsible for the flag handover ceremony at the 2016 Rio Olympics, which starred former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe dressed as Super Mario, as well the one-year countdown event at the National Stadium on July 23 featuring leukemia-surviving swim star Rikako Ikee.

Sasaki is also known in Japan for his hit TV commercials including a long-running series for telecommunications company SoftBank Corp.—Kyodo ■

10-man Juventus crash to first Serie A defeat of season

MILAN — Ten-man Juventus crashed to their first Serie A defeat of the season 3-0 at home against Fiorentina on Tuesday in a nightmare final game before Christmas.

The defeat came hours after the champions learned they must play the match against Napoli which was cancelled on 4 October after Napoli decided not to travel to Turin because of coronavirus cases.

On Tuesday, Napoli won their appeal to the Italian Olympic Committee (CONI) after be-

ing handed a 3-0 defeat and a one-point deduction. As a result Juventus, who had started the day with 27 points, finished it with 24. Juventus are fourth, tied on points with Napoli and Roma, and seven points behind leaders AC Milan, who play Lazio on Wednesday.

"It's not a problem for us to play the Napoli game, but it seems unfair on the other teams who travelled, and perhaps lost points, with absences due to COVID," said Juventus coach Andrea Pirlo.—AFP ■



Juventus lost 3-0 to Fiorentina on 22 December 2020. **PHOTO:AFP**