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Friday, 25 December 2020

Korea-Myanmar Industrial Complex (KMIC) groundbreaking ceremony held

A groundbreaking ceremony of the Korea-Myanmar Industrial Complex (KMIC) was held yesterday morning at the project area in Hlegu Township, Yangon Region in accordance with the COVID-19 guidelines of the Ministry of Health and Sports.

State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi delivered a video statement at the event.

(Video speech of the State Counsellor is covered on page-4)

In his opening remarks at the event, Union Minister U Thaung Tun of the Ministry of Investment and Foreign Economic Relations said that Myanmar's Sustainable Development Plan (MSDP) and South Korea's New Southern Policy share core values that could benefit the people of both countries and that the establishment of the KMIC would result in mutually beneficial cooperation.

Next, Chairman Mr Park Bok-Yeong of the Presidential Committee on New Southern Policy addressed that Korea considers Myanmar an important partner and that the Republic of Korea desired to participate not only in the KMIC project but also in various other ventures in Myanmar such as the construction of bridges, development of new urban centres and other infrastructure projects.

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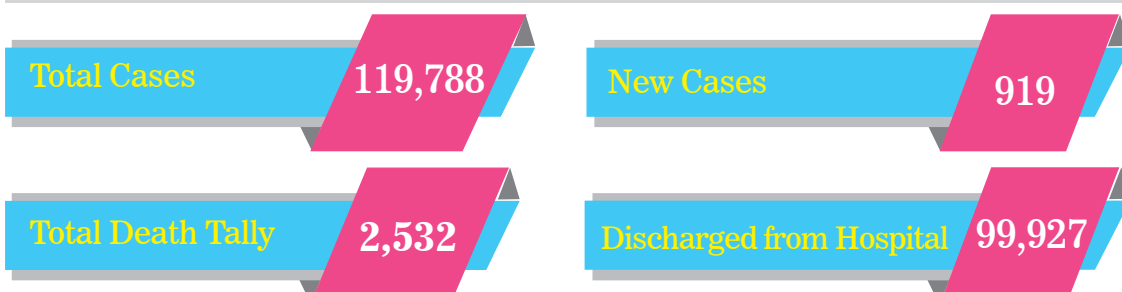


State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi delivers the video message to the groundbreaking ceremony of Korea-Myanmar Industrial Complex in Hlegu Township, Yangon Region on 24 December 2020. PHOTO: GNLM

919 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 24 December, total figure rises to 119,788

MYANMAR'S COVID-19 positive cases rose to 119,788 after 919 new cases were reported on 24 December according to the Ministry of Health and Sports. Among these 119,788 confirmed cases, 2,532 died, 99,927 have been discharged from hospitals.—MNA

Updated at 8 pm, 24 December 2020



Daily death toll until 8 pm 24-12-2020



Ministry of Health and Sports

SC DASSK reports to people regarding COVID situation

If I were to begin my talk beginning from the COVID disease, during the past five days, the infection rate has been below 1,000. Since the number of persons infected by the virus has gone below 1,000, although we can say there has been the progress, we cannot say it is good enough. However, I wish to express my thanks to all those who worked to control the disease, and to continue controlling this disease. Please continue with the containment measures. Therefore, what we are now focusing our attention on is the vaccine. To purchase vaccines for 15 million people, our delegation is now in India. We will get a clearer picture regarding the purchase of this vaccine within next week.

We have already made necessary preparations to initiate the vaccination programme not long after the sales agreement has been signed and all the necessary preparations have been made. This is for the whole country. We will be carrying this out step by step in order of priority; for example, the first priority will be for the healthcare workers who are on the frontlines. After that, we will conduct the vaccination programme as needed for the country as well as for the people. This will be carried out step by step. Whatever the case may be, even after we have obtained the vaccines, the vaccination process for the whole country will take months. That is why we need to be very vigilant during this interim period. We should not stumble just as our goal comes into view. That is

why I wish to say this again to our people that it could take months before the vaccines become available. I wish to request the people once again to make sure that this infection does not spread, from yourself to others and from others to you. You need to live with vigilance. The reason is that the infection rate has gone down a bit; we need to make efforts so that this infection rate will come down considerably. The infection rate needs to decline continuously. We need to make strenuous efforts to be completely free from this virus. Furthermore, if we contain the situation by using the vaccine, our country will be able to operate normally again.

In some countries of the world, they don't even know which wave they are confronting. Is it the third, fourth or fifth wave? There are places where the situation is getting worse. That is why I wish to stress again that we cannot be careless or irresponsible. The other thing is that we are now in the Christmas period. Tomorrow is Christmas day. Not too far off we will have New Year. That is why on the one hand I want to remind you all not to engage in too much merry-making during the Christmas and New Year season to the extent that you begin to break the rules and regulations. On the other hand, during this season I wish to send my warm greetings and metta. At this time, I send these warm greetings not only to all our Christians but to all our people and the people of the world to be blessed with Peace and Joy.

Thank you.



Notification to Public

24 December 2020

- There were 654 cases of COVID-19 infection as of 22 December 2020 in Nay Pyi Taw Union Territory. An analysis of the virus found that the number of cases was higher in December. Although most of them were repatriated people, truck drivers and helpers, there were some local infections, too.
 - (c) Phalaung Waterfall (Pyinmana Township)
 - (d) Awaiyar Dam (Pyinmana Township)
 - (e) Myathida Waterfall (Pyinmana Township)
 - (f) Kotit Springs (Pyinmana)
 - (g) Mingala Lake (Zabuthiri Township)
- Therefore, public access will be temporarily closed in the following areas, which are likely to be crowded with people during Christmas and International New Year holidays in December, in order to effectively prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the Nay Pyi Taw Union Territory.
 - (a) Paunglaung River Recreation Centre (Zeyathiri Township)
 - (b) Pazunzate Waterfall (Pyinmana Township)
- Hence, we urge you to comply with the directives issued by the Ministry of Health and Sports and participate in the prevention and control of COVID-19 infection by avoiding going to crowded places to effectively prevent the spread of COVID-19 in Nay Pyi Taw Union Territory.

Nay Pyi Taw Council COVID-19 Control and Emergency Response Committee

NRPC donates cash assistance to COVID-19 central committee



Union Minister U Kyaw Tint Swe (centre) presents K300 million cash to Union Minister Dr Myint Htwe (left) on 24 December. PHOTO: MNA

National Reconciliation and Peace Centre- NRPC donated cash assistance to the National-Level Central Committee on Prevention, Control and Treatment of COVID-19, yesterday morning in Nay Pyi Taw.

At the donation ceremony, Union Minister for the Office of the State Counsellor U Kyaw Tint Swe, in his capacity as the Deputy Chair of the NRPC said that he was very pleased to be able to donate to the COVID-19 central committee. He said the NRPC is at the forefront of the peace process by working with all ethnic armed groups on a policy of "leaving no one behind" in COVID-19 prevention and control as well as the COVID-19 central committee whose health workers are outstandingly at the forefront of public health. Union Minister for Health and Sports Dr Myint Htwe, in his capacity as the Secretary-General for the COVID-19 central committee, said he wished

to achieve the peace sooner because it is crucial not only to ensure equal access to health care and public health services for people in remote and insecure areas but also to improve the country's social and economic development.

He also added the effective management of the donations without wastage, and the donation is used for free treatment in hospitals and health care in quarantine centres as well as for upgrading medicines and medical equipment in hospitals, which has many benefits in the long run.

Afterwards, Union Minister U Kyaw Tint Swe handed over K300 million to Union Minister Dr Myint Htwe and received the certificate of honour.

The donation ceremony was also attended by Deputy Ministers U Khin Maung Tin and U Min Lwin, Dr Mya Lay Sein, the Permanent Secretary, Directors-General and officials.—MNA

(Translated by Ei Phyu Phyu Aung)

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

Korea-Myanmar Industrial Complex (KMIC) groundbreaking ceremony held

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He further said he was confident that there would be more prominent projects like the KMIC in the future and that the ties of friendship between Myanmar and Korea would be further strengthened. He added that the establishment of the KMIC was the beginning of a journey that would bring significant economic growth to Myanmar.

Chief Minister U Phyo Min Thein of the Yangon Region, Deputy Minister Dr Kyaw Linn of the Ministry of Construction and Vice-Chair Mr Lee Yong-sam of the Korea Land and Housing Corporation also delivered welcoming remarks.



Union Minister U Thaung Tun, Yangon Region Chief Minister U Phyo Min Thein, Yangon Region Hluttaw Speaker U Tin Maung Tun, Deputy Minister for Construction Dr Kyaw Linn, Chairman of the Presidential Committee on New Southern Policy Mr Park Bok-yeong and party drive stake at the groundbreaking ceremony of Korea-Myanmar Industrial Complex on 24 December 2020. PHOTO: PHOE KHWAR



Union Minister U Thaung Tun holds talks with ROK's Chairman of the Presidential Committee on New Southern Policy Mr Park Bok-yeong on 24 December 2020. PHOTO: PHOE KHWAR

The ceremony was also attended by Speaker U Tin Maung Tun of the Yangon Region Hluttaw, the cabinet ministers of the Yangon Region, Korea Am-

bassador to Myanmar Mr Lee Sang-hwa, and Senior Officials from Ministries concerned and the Embassy of the Republic of Korea.



Picture shows Conceptual Design of Korea-Myanmar Industrial Complex. PHOTO: PHOE KHWAR

The Korea-Myanmar Industrial Complex (KMIC) is a project approved by the Myanmar Investment Commission (MIC). It is a joint venture between the

Department of Urban and Housing Development, the Ministry of Construction of Myanmar, and the Korea Land and Housing Corporation (LH).

The project is strategically located 25 kilometres north of Yangon International Airport, and connected via road to Yangon port. The project is expected to support Myanmar's advancement within the regional and global supply chains. The KMIC will house around 135 enterprises, creating numerous jobs and facilitating transfer of skills and technology.

The KMIC is planned to be a smart and green industrial complex using advanced technology and renewable energy. This project will result in closer ties of friendship between Korea and Myanmar – based on the principles of “people”, “prosperity” and “peace”. — MNA

It is important for all to participate and join hands to control the spread of COVID-19

We take full responsibility for taking care of the public's health. We are proud of the fact that we can take care of people's health. However, we have a limited budget due to the situation in our country. I have frequently reminded our people about this. We would unavoidably have to reduce certain amounts of the budget in a specific sector to cover the expenditures in another sector. The costs for health services, COVID prevention and treatment, were taken out of the development funds. If our people expect development, immediate progress, and the situation to return to normal, it is important for all to participate and join hands to control the spread of COVID-19. We want all of you to take this seriously..

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



State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's video speech at groundbreaking ceremony for Korea-Myanmar Industrial Complex (KMIC)

Greetings to all attendees and guests!

I am delighted to have the opportunity to deliver this speech at today's groundbreaking ceremony for the Korea-Myanmar Industrial Complex. I would like to express thanks to everyone who worked hard for today's ceremony.

I would like to warmly welcome New Southern Policy Committee Chairperson Mr Park Bok-Yeong and Ambassador of the Republic of Korea to Myanmar Mr Lee Sang-hwa.

I would also like to thank Korea Land and Housing Corporation and Global Sae-A Co., Ltd for implementing this project to use public land for economic development effectively.

There is no doubt that the efforts of all those who came today are to create job opportunities, not only to bring prosperity to the people of Myanmar but also to strengthen the friendship between the people of Myanmar and Korea.

Today's ceremony is not only about developing an industrial zone but also about building a basic economic foundation for a better future for the people of Myanmar, including the residents in Yangon.

We all know that this is a challenging year. People are experiencing a recession and job losses. These difficulties are particularly affecting Yangon residents, who are facing long-term restrictions.

However, as we emerge from 2020, we will have to work hard for next year, and it is certain that KMIC and similar projects will bring sustainable and all-inclusive

economic recovery to our country.

Despite the difficulties and challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, Myanmar is working hard in all aspects and still doing well.

According to the latest data released by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, Myanmar's GDP growth is still relatively stable compared to other nations in the region. Despite the losses caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, we are confident that the situation will continue improving in the years to come.

Regarding this, I remember some remarks made by President of the Republic of Korea Mr Moon Jae-in at the Myanmar-Korea Business Forum held in Seoul last year. He said that the KMIC would become a new step for supporting the creation of miraculous innovations on the Ayeyawady river basin. I wish to share this expectation fully.

In addition, as a result of the current government's reforms in investment and foreign economic relations, not only will the KMIC project be completed but similar new projects will also emerge.

As a result of these reforms, we will see a new industrial zone in our area.

After completing the KMIC project, by creating more opportunities for small and medium enterprises, it would be possible to expand local business enterprises and many industrial enterprises, including suppliers and restaurants.

Thanks to all for all your hard work in creating this KMIC. Myanmar has been

able to allow foreign direct investment projects since the current government took office, creating hundreds of thousands of new high-quality jobs.

To date, the industrial sector has contributed up to 38 per cent of the country's economy and contributed significantly to the employment of women in addition to jobs created by traditional factories. In addition, this sector has been able to make many high-quality jobs.

This kind of progress is not easy and does not come smoothly. But we can see the progress here in Yangon and across Myanmar with our own eyes vividly.

In implementing the KMIC project, our simple concept is that it is the government's duty to create a conducive environment for jobs and industrial growth. We can see that it is the most important thing.

The government alone cannot create jobs; it alone cannot bring sustainable development. So, the government creates linkages between MSMEs and investment capitals; helps people prepare for jobs that require advanced technical skills and lays the foundations for such investments that will generate 21st-century jobs. By doing so, workers, their families and the communities will get great business opportunities.

Foreign direct investments will bring innovations and expertise, which will strengthen the private sector. Such private sector development is also one of our government's priorities, as mentioned in the Myanmar Sustainable Development Plan (MSDP).

The jobs available through KMIC and similar investments are 21st-century jobs. These investments can help our country boost manufacturing and the industrial sector, and integrate them into regional and global value chains. Moreover, participation in the recently signed Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) can help the economic sector. In addition, such investments can help us create high-quality "Made in Myanmar" brands.

Today's ceremony shows that we are on the right track to implement our goals successfully.

We must continue investing in creating infrastructures such as new roads, bridges, ports, schools, smart factories and highways. We must implement effective water and waste management systems, and we must work hard to create a sustainable and all-inclusive green economy. To do so, we must continue investing in basic organizational infrastructures and capacity building of our human resources.

The surest way to overcome any obstacle is to move forward without looking back. We have to continue marching forward.

The implementation of the KMIC project is an example of the strengthening of Korea-Myanmar cooperation and friendship between citizens of the two nations. That is why I believe this project will succeed.

Thank you all.

Ayeyarwady Foundation donates COVID medical supplies for hospitals in Ayeyawady Region



Ayeyarwady Foundation donates COVID-19 medical supplies for hospitals in Ayeyawady Region. **PHOTO: KO MOE**

AYEYARWADY Foundation donated COVID-19 medical supplies including one oxygen plant worth K350 million in total for the district/township hospitals in Ayeyawady Region on 23 and 24 December.

On 24 December, the foundation's officials handed over the COVID medical devices to the Region Chief Minister U Hla Moe Aung and delivered the donated items to the relevant hospitals.

To support the hospitals in the battle against coronavirus pandemic, the foundation provided medical supplies for the district general hospitals of Patheingyi, Hinthada, Myaungmya, Labutta, Maubin and Pyaw, and township hospitals of Bogale, Mawlamyinegyun, and Yekyi in Ayeyawady Region.

The donated items included one oxygen plant, 36 sets of HDU beds, 17 ECG devices, 42 syringe pumps, 10 HFNC devices, and 135,000 surgical masks.

Ayeyarwady Foundation has been working on the COVID-19 control processes in cooperation with the Ministry of Health and Sports since March when the COVID-19 outbreak began in Myanmar.

The foundation also constructed 1,000-bed Ayeyarwady Centre (Yangon) and 375-bed Ayeyarwady Centre (Mandalay) to treat the COVID-19 patients, bearing the daily costs for foods and accommodations of the patients, healthcare workers and volunteers.

—Ye Yint Shin

(Translated by Kyaw Zin Tun)

Tatmadaw (Navy) holds 73rd Anniversary with warships' commissioning ceremony

Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing delivered a speech at the commissioning ceremony of naval vessels at the No 3 Naval Jetty in Yangon in commemoration of 73rd founding anniversary of Tatmadaw Navy yesterday.

Chief of Staff (Navy) Vice-Admiral Moe Aung explained the salient points of the naval vessels.

Vice-Admiral Atul Kumar Jain, the Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief (FOC-in-C), Eastern Naval Command (ENC), talked about the matters relating to the hand-over of a submarine.



Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing attends the commissioning ceremony of naval vessels at the No 3 Naval Jetty in Yangon to mark the 73rd Anniversary of Tatmadaw Navy on 24 December 2020. **PHOTO: MNA**



The Commander of Naval Dockyard Command Headquarters handed over the papers of the naval vessels to the commander of the Naval Fleet.

The Senior General and party inspected the naval vessels including Minye Theinkhathu Submarine, two 63-metre an-

ti-submarine warfare ships, one 49-metre fast assault craft, one 56-metre tank landing ship, and two 26-metre tow/tugboats.

The Senior General presented gifts of honour to the officers and other ranks who took part in the construction of the commissioned naval vessels.

He then delivered speech at the ceremony, according to the news released by the Office of Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services.—MNA (Translated by Kyaw Zin Tun)

Minye Theinkhathu Submarine is seen during the 73rd Anniversary of Tatmadaw Navy on 24 December. **PHOTO: MNA**

Union Minister Dr Than Myint addresses Myanmar Korea Desk



Union Minister Dr Than Myint delivers video message to the Myanmar Korea Desk in Lotte Hotel, Yangon on 24 December 2020. **PHOTO: MNA**

UNION Minister for Commerce Dr Than Myint addressed the opening ceremony of Myanmar Korea Desk held in Lotte Hotel, Yangon, through a video message

yesterday afternoon. He firstly expressed words of thanks to officials from both Korea and Myanmar for their efforts to open the Korea Desk despite the

challenges and restrictions of the COVID-19 crisis.

He added the MoU between Korea Trade-Investment Promotion Agency of the Ministry of

Trade, Industry and Energy of the ROK and the Ministry of Investment and Foreign Economic Relations and the Ministry of Commerce from Myanmar, during the Korean President Mr Moon Jae-in's visit to Myanmar. The Union Minister said the Korea Desk would be able to provide trade and investment information to Korean and Myanmar entrepreneurs, to share business guidelines and facilitate trade and investment between the two countries, as well as relevant government departments and agencies.

Although trade between Myanmar and Korea increased by 17.3%, the agricultural sector, technology and e-commerce sectors are still in need of coopera-

tion. On 15 November, Myanmar signed the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), the world's largest free trade agreement with 15 countries, providing an opportunity for foreign investment and job opportunities including from ASEAN countries.

On the other hand, he said, local businesses need to study and prepare in advance as economic competition will increase. The ceremony was attended by Economic Advisor to the President Office of the ROK, the Korean Ambassador to Myanmar, officials from KOTRA and KOCHAM, Ministry of Commerce and UMFCCI.—MNA (Translated by Ei Phyu Phyu Aung)

ROK delegation meets with MIFER Minister, visits Hyundai Motor

A ROK delegation led by the Republic of Korea's Chairman of the Presidential Committee on New Southern Policy Mr Park Bok-Young, who were arriving in Myanmar on a goodwill visit, met Union Minister for Investment and Foreign Economic Relations U Thaung Tun at the

ministry yesterday. The ROK Chairman of the Presidential Committee on New Southern Policy and party then participated in the groundbreaking ceremony of Korea-Myanmar Industrial Complex-KMIC in Hlegu Township, Yangon Region. They also attended the Korea Desk

at the Lotte Hotel in Yangon, and visited Hyundai Motor Plant. — MNA (Translated by Kyaw Zin Tun)

A Hyundai factory worker assembles a car on the production line at the factory in Yangon. **PHOTO: MNA**



MoE minister meets students for drafting NESP 2021-2030

UNION Minister for Education Dr Myo Thein Gyi organized the second-day virtual meeting with students' unions and students to draft National Education Strategic Plan-NESP 2021-2030 yesterday.

Deputy Minister for Education U Win Maw Tun, the ministry's Permanent Secretary and Directors-General, students' unions, students, representatives and officials from the universities, degree colleges and institutes participated in the online meeting.

Speaking at the meeting, the Union Minister said that economic and job opportunities have been changing due to the technical developments of the 21st Century. The skills of 20th Century wouldn't guarantee the jobs of 21st Century.



Union Minister Dr Myo Thein Gyi participates in the virtual meeting with students' unions and students on drafting of National Education Strategic Plan 2021-2030 on 24 December 2020. **PHOTO: MNA**

High-level skills are needed to secure jobs, and only quality education can provide the skills. Those who with high-level skills

will get high-paid job, he added.

He also stressed the importance of shared accountability and responsibility, shared val-

ue, shared decision making for sustainable life-long learning opportunities.

United Nations' Sustain-

able Development Goal 4 is quality education, and Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)'s Future of Education and Skills (2030) also stated the education system and skills required for youth's future.

He added that it is crucial to promote sustainable life-long learning opportunities with high-tech learning and high-touch learning and blended learning.

The ministry's Permanent Secretary and Director-General of the Higher Education Department also made discussions.

The meeting came into conclusion after the questions, discussions and suggestions of the attendees. —MNA

(Translated by Kyaw Zin Tun)

MoSWRR discusses rehabilitation procedures, effective work plans

THE Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement held a coordination meeting on reviewing rehabilitation procedures and effective work plans yesterday.

Union Minister Dr Win Myat Aye discussed the rehabilitation processes of ministry being conducted for socio-economic development for all under leave no one behind plan and cooperation works among the public, civil society organization, NGOs and INGOs.

He said the Department of Rehabilitation needs to conduct



Union Minister Dr Win Myat Aye discusses rehabilitation procedures and effective work plans on 24 December. **PHOTO: MNA**

a survey on the real situation of public while implementing the required law, by-law, strategies and work plans for all sectors.

The Ministry is carrying out the priority sectors set by the government such as accepting the human-trafficking victims,

reintegration and rehabilitation programmes, drug rehabilitation centres and resettlement for refugees.

He then discussed the plans conducted together with Myanmar Sustainable Development Plan (MSDP), reviews on challenges including the impacts of COVID-19 and work schedules to join CERP (COVID-19 Economic Relief Plan).

He also highlighted the cooperation works among the department concerned in carrying out the public utilities, rehabilitation procedures and

plans to develop vulnerable people groups and sustainable development.

Then, the attendees briefed the drafted policies, law and strategies, effective use of budgets, assistance via cooperation with local and foreign organizations, reviews on the amendment of Anti Trafficking in Persons Law (2005) and Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Law (2018) and mine clearance operations.—MNA

(Translated by Khine Thazin Han)

MoEA organizes meeting on Myanmar Ethnic Culture Festival 2021

THE Ministry of Ethnic Affairs held a virtual preliminary coordination meeting on holding the 3rd Myanmar Ethnic Culture Festival 2021 online in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

Union Minister Naing Thet Lwin, Deputy Minister U Hla Maw Oo, the Permanent Secretaries, Directors-General of relevant departments, Deputy Chairman of Myanmar Ethnic Entrepreneur Association U La Phine Khum Sar, General Secretary Ba Nyar San and Joint General Secretary Dr Aung Ye Zaw joined the meeting via videoconferencing.

The Union Minister firstly said the objectives of the festival are to assist the national peace process, showcase ethnic solidarity and culture, boost tourism,

expand regional products and ethnic textiles to international markets, and create employment to promote the socio-economic status of ethnic people.

The 1st festival was held from 25 to 30 January in 2019 while the 2nd one was from 1 to 7 February in 2020.

The State Counsellor and Vice-President U Henry Van Thio attended the 2nd Myanmar Ethnic Culture Festival.

During COVID-19 pandemic, Myanmar Ethnic Entrepreneur Association makes efforts to broadcast the 3rd Myanmar Ethnic Culture Festival via Webinar, Facebook and MRTV.

The Union Minister recommended the need to avoid mass gatherings in holding the festival, although it is held in accord-



Ministry of Ethnic Affairs holds virtual meeting on organizing Myanmar Ethnic Culture Festival 2021 on 24 December. **PHOTO: MNA**

ance with the health rules of the Ministry of Health and Sports.

He then said it is an excellent move to explore the culture of ethnic people and promote the tourism industry and all-round development programmes.

He stressed to consider the

facts that can affect the interests of ethnic people and mainly focus on the safety of ethnic people during such virus outbreak period.

Deputy Minister U Hla Maw Oo called on the officials of relevant ministries and the

ethnic entrepreneurs to present the preparations for the virtual festival which will be held from 27 February to 5 March 2021 in accordance with the COVID-19 health rules.

The officials of Myanmar Ethnic Entrepreneur Association briefed the preparations for holding online festival via platforms like Webinar, Facebook and MRTV and work plans to be conducted with regions/states ethnic entrepreneur association and department concerned.

The officials of the Ministry of Ethnic Affairs coordinated the discussion regarding with the facts presented by Myanmar Ethnic Entrepreneur Association.—MNA

(Translated by Khine Thazin Han)

Thousands of tonnes of Areca nut stockpiled amid COVID resurgence

THOUSANDS of tonnes of areca nuts have been stockpiled on the back of a slump in India's demand triggered by the coronavirus impacts, traders said.

Additionally, the areca nut production this year dropped in Dawei district, Taninthayi Region. The weak demand by India brings down the price as well.

This year's packaged areca nuts fetch around K4,000-K4,200 per viss (a viss equals to 1.6kg), plunged from K4,700 per viss.

The areca nuts are primarily sent to India, which is also shipped to Australia and Malaysia.

Typically, 8,000-10,000 betel nuts were sent to India through the land border every day. At present, trading is sluggish amid the pandemic. We cannot

rely on the domestic market. The price will rise if there is foreign demand, said a trader from Tamu border.

Last year, areca nut exporters faced problems as India had imposed a 40-per-cent import duty. India's tax hike on areca nut imports often posed difficulties for growers and traders.

The areca nuts are primarily sent to India, which is also shipped to Australia and Malaysia.

There are nearly 150,000 acres of betel nut plantations in the country, mostly in Taninthayi and Ayeyawady regions and Mon State.

Myanmar conducts border trade with neighbouring India through Tamu and Reed checkpoints. — Naing Win/ Ko Khant (Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

Miracle of Han River in Korea flows into Yangon River with KMIC groundbreaking ceremony

THE first phase, 558 acres of construction, of the Korea-Myanmar Industrial Complex (KMIC) in Hlegu township, Yangon, started on 24 December with the groundbreaking ceremony.

ROK, Myanmar's sixth largest investment country, is building a large-scale industrial complex with world-class infrastructure there. It is attracting companies in various industries such as textiles, garments, construction, and telecommunications.

KMIC Development Co., Ltd. is a joint venture between the Myanmar Government and the Korea Land & Housing Corporation (LH) which is the combination of LH's business development experience with the cooperation of the Myanmar government. It will create new opportunities in this rapidly developing market and will benefit both communities within the country and overseas companies wishing to enjoy its many advantages.

The KMIC Easy Service Centre will be set up to help companies conveniently handle tasks such as obtaining permits and licences. A variety



ROK-Myanmar dignitaries are seen at the KMIC groundbreaking event. PHOTO: PHOE KHWAR

of benefits, including tax incentives, will also be provided to the tenant companies. During the 2019 Launch Ceremony, Korea's leading economic and financial companies signed MOUs. Nine companies, including K-Exim Bank, K-Sure, and KOTRA, have decided to support companies in KMIC by forming "One Team Korea". This extensive aid will make the whole proposition safe and reliable.

High-level government officials from Myanmar, including U Thaung Tun (Union Minister of the Ministry of Investment and Foreign Economic Relations), Dr Kyaw Linn (Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Construction),

and U Phyo Min Thein (Chief Minister of Yangon Region government), and Korean VIPs including Mr Park Bok Yeong (Chairman of the Presidential Committee on the New Southern Policy), Mr Lee Sang-hwa (Korean Ambassador), and Mr Lee Yong Sam (Vice President of Korea Land and Housing Corporation) attended the ceremony.

Mr Lee Yong Sam, Vice President of Korea Land and Housing Corporation, said at the groundbreaking ceremony, "KMIC will be the turning point that makes the miracle of the Han River in Korea into the miracle of the Yangon River."—GNLM

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Magway region chief minister inspects sesame value chain



Magway Region Chief Minister Dr Aung Moe Nyo inspects the sesame processing plant in Magway Township, Magway Region on 24 December 2020. PHOTO:ZAYYATU (MAGWAY)

MAGWAY Region Chief Minister Dr Aung Moe Nyo and official concerned inspected sesame processing plant on 24 December 2020, which produces value-added sesame paste, tahini and other products.

The plant is located between Kanpya and Gwaytauksan vil-

lages in Magway Township. The Department of Rural Development jointly establishes it under the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation (MOALI) and non-political NGO, PC Myanmar. The plant is manufacturing peanut butter and tahini with good packaging,

Director-General U Myo Aung of the regional Department of Rural Development explained to the regional chief minister and regional minister U Win Maw Htay for Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation on the management systems of the plant intending to move forward to the sustainable agriculture of the growers.

Afterwards, the team led by regional chief minister inspected the operations of the plant and value chain process. The tahini and peanut butter are sent to 37 supermarkets in Yangon and Mandalay. Further plans to link with European markets were also explained.

Regional minister U Win Maw Htay instructed the requirements and urged them to entice more growers to participate in this value chain through raising awareness of the value chain process.

A sesame processing plant,

which can produce 7 tonnes of value-added sesame per hour and 6 tonnes of purified sesame oil every 8 hours, started operations on 23 December 2018 in Magway Region.

The plant is making value-added products using good manufacturing practices (GMP), and it is only processing sesame seeds supplied by over 600 growers from 30 villages in Minbu and Magway townships. The sesame is also produced following Good Agriculture Practices (GAP). The value-added sesame products are placed in the export markets, said an official in charge of the plant.

"The plant was initiated under the Italy-based Progetto Continenti (PC) project, which aims to consolidate the productive base of small-scale sesame growers through their training and organization, sustainable agriculture, and upgrade of the value chain. When that project's term was nearly due, sesame

growers' groups were set up to help growers who participated in the project to find a market. Now, they are supplying raw materials to sesame processing plants," said U Naing Win Lat, PC Myanmar project manager for agriculture.

The cost of the facility is estimated at K180 million, including infrastructure costs for electricity and water, and installation of sesame seeds cleaning machine, weighing machine, packaging machine, oil-producing machine, storage tank, laboratory, and drainage system, which was carried out with the use of Italian technology. "The growers who have linked with the plant have a strong market. Also, they do not have to pay additional charges to brokers," said U Sein Aung Min, a member of a sesame grower group from Nankan Village in Magway Township. — Zayyatu (Magway)

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

Enforcing law, educating people a must to conserve habitats of endangered birds

A RECENT report on poaching hornbills, which are listed as an endangered species under the Biodiversity and Conservation of Protected Area Law, in Kyauktaga Township, Bago Region, hit the headlines and has alerted us that the endangered species is under the threat of hunters.

Public weakness of knowledge about endangered species has been a big blow to our avian heritage for decades.

Those who poach or sell protected wildlife, possess the wildlife or its part without permission, or traffic or transfer them, will face no more than five years in prison, a fine of K300,000 to K1,000,000, or both.

Now, migratory birds from foreign countries are coming to our country for hibernation since the winter began in November.

To protect the visiting migratory birds from hunting, authorities have sought to educate local residents by erecting billboards warning not to kill the birds, which eat harmful snails in paddy fields every year.

Migratory birds from Russia, Siberia, and northern China are found in the winter in large lakes, such as Indawgyi Lake in Kachin, Palake Lake and Taungthaman Lake in Mandalay Region, Meiktila Lake in Meiktila, Moeyngyi Lake in Bago Region and some lakes in southern Myanmar.

Local authorities have erected signboards at the wetland areas, warning residents not to kill migratory birds. Authorities also perform surprise checks at local markets to prevent the sales of migratory birds, while raising awareness about these birds.

This is a good job to conserve and give protection to avian visitors in which endangered species are also included, but these efforts should be expanded from just wetland areas and just in winter to habitat areas of other species of birds the whole year.

Our country is home to 331 endangered species, according to the latest research by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), including birds, orangutans, elephants, deer, freshwater turtles, pangolins and tigers.

In our country, more than 300 species are facing the threat of extinction.

Our failure to effectively enforce the law should not give hunters and people with little knowledge about endangered species a free pass to continue destroying our endangered species until there is nothing left.

Driving force for greater win-win partnership: KMIC and Korea Desk

By Mr Lee Sang-hwa, Ambassador of the Republic of Korea

AS the Korean Ambassador, 24 December marks a special day in the context of Korea-Myanmar relations. I have witnessed multiple times the concerted efforts undertaken by Myanmar and Korea to advance key development projects and how such remarkably coordinated actions bore tangible fruits on Christmas Eve, as a mutually beneficial gift.

On 24 December 2018, Dala Bridge, better known as Korea-Myanmar Friendship Bridge, had a groundbreaking ceremony. Expected to be completed in October 2022, it will become a shining symbol for a more prosperous Yangon. Exactly two years after its ceremony, on the date of 24 December 2020, Korea-Myanmar industrial complex (KMIC) held its ground-breaking ceremony. In Myanmar, the number nine (9) seems to be an auspicious digit. For instance, in the Shwedagon Pagoda, people pay homage to Buddha images by pouring water nine times thereon. To note, and coincidentally, when you add the individual digits of the date "24" (2+4) and the digits of the month of December "12" (1+2), it equals to the number nine. While this numerical permutation may just be a pure and lucky coincidence, there is no doubt that 24 December, also a Christmas Eve, has a special place in terms of win-win partnership between the two long-term friends - Korea and Myanmar.

In the context of business partnership, KMIC will serve as a new, powerful engine for Korean investment in Myanmar. As a Korean government-led industrial complex, the first of such nature and scale in Myanmar, KMIC is highly expected to strengthen Myanmar's industrial sector and in return, contribute positively in creating new jobs. Ever since Myanmar started its arduous journey for democracy and economic reform, the country has been considered as the last frontier market in the region. Such perception has since been gaining more traction and momentum, especially under the COVID-19 context, which served as a wake-up call for restructuring global value chains. As the most resourceful country in the Mekong



State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and President of Korea Mr Moon Jae-in hold the bilateral meeting between Myanmar and ROK at the Westin Chosun Busan Hotel on 26 November 2019. PHOTO: MNA

region, Myanmar is positioned to offer the most attractive environment for foreign investors. Many Korean entrepreneurs stationed in neighbouring countries, such as in China and Viet Nam, are considering relocating their factories. In doing so, they look to Myanmar as a viable option. Moreover, with the overwhelming victory by the NLD government in the recent election, Myanmar is on track to carry on its key economic policies in a stable and sustainable atmosphere. Against this backdrop, KMIC is expected to draw as many as 150 to 200 Korean companies. Furthermore, it is encouraging to see that prominent MSMEs and big companies with global standing, are showing keen interest in this endeavour. As the first-ever G-to-G overseas project to build a smart, green industrial complex, by quasi-governmental organization, LH (Land & Housing Corporation), KMIC is strongly supported by the Korean government for this key initiative. As such, it is no surprise that KMIC was specifically mentioned as a flagship project when the Korean government unveiled seven key priority areas under the banner of New Southern Policy Plus (NSP Plus). With the SEZ-type one-stop-service built in the complex, KMIC is set to be a smart green industrial com-

plex. It will introduce sophisticated elements of the 4th industrial revolution, such as smart factory, big data and IoT, in line with the modern digital technology trend. In addition, KMIC will showcase eco-friendly design by being significantly energy self-reliant. In doing so, it aims to use renewable energy as much as possible. In a nutshell, Smart green industrial complex is a hallmark of Korean overseas development projects.

The groundbreaking ceremony of KMIC received its due recognition and was honored with

many key VIP guests in attendance. On the Myanmar side, State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi delivered a speech via video conference, appreciating the fast-growing relationship between our two countries. High-level dignitaries, including Union Minister U Thaug Tun for Investment and Foreign Economic Relations, Chief Minister U Phyo Min Thein and Deputy Minister Dr Kyaw Linn for Construction, were present. On its part, the Korean government sent Mr Park Bokyeong, chairman of the Presidential

Committee on New Southern Policy. It is particularly noteworthy that Mr Park chose Myanmar as his first trip among the ten (10) ASEAN partners following the announcement of NSP Plus. NSP Plus, coupled with recent decision of elevating Korea-Mekong ties to strategic partnership, will surely bring Myanmar-Korea bonds stronger than ever.

The launching of Korea Desk made 24 December this year even more special. Located in two offices, DICA (Directorate of Investment and Company Ad-

ministration) and Yangon Office of Ministry of Commerce, Korea Desk will serve as a one-stop-service entry point for incoming Korean businessmen. Korea is only one of the handful of countries Myanmar allows this one-stop-service function with a view to facilitating Korean entrepreneurs to start their business. Korea Desk will certainly help new Korean comers to put a solid foothold in Myanmar. Myanmar is the second country in the ASEAN region, after Vietnam, in which Korea Trade Promotion Agency (KOTRA) set a Korea Desk. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, Korea and Myanmar spared no efforts to expedite the implementation of key agreements during the two summit meetings in 2019. In addition to the KMIC project, the first Joint Commission on Cooperation in Trade and Industries was convened in September this year and agreed upon setting a Korea Desk before the end of the year. The Joint Commission covers four sectors - Trade, Investment, Industries, and Energy. Both Myanmar and Korea share the view that trade volume, which stands at around 1 US billion per year, can double in the coming years. In this context, the recently signed RCEP - Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership - is also expected to provide a favorable atmosphere for augmenting trade between Myanmar and Korea.

To conclude, I have no doubt that all would agree that the year 2020 was an eventful year. As 2020 draws to an end and as we usher in the new year, I am grateful that even the COVID-19 global pandemic crisis was no match for us in deterring our firm, joint commitment to enhance cooperation between our two countries. The successful inauguration ceremony of KMIC and the launching of Korea Desk speak for themselves. Building on this precious momentum, the year 2021 will mark a milestone for a greater win-win partnership between Myanmar and Korea, with a lasting impact. The world is watching us, and the next chapter has just begun.

The opinions expressed in this article are those of the author.—Ed.



Conceptual Design of KMIC.

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 Thursday 24th December, 2020)

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

FORECAST VALID UNTIL AFTERNOON OF THE 25th December, 2020: Rain or thundershowers will be isolated in Taninthayi Region. Degree of certainty is (80%). Weather will be partly cloudy in Upper Sagaing, Yangon Regions and Kachin, Eastern Shan, Chin, Kayin, Mon States and generally fair 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 (4-6) feet Deltaic, off and along Rakhine Coast.

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT: Likelihood of isolated rain in Taninthayi Region.

Man jailed for impersonating ACC member

NYAUNGDON Township Court has sentenced a man to three years in prison for impersonating a member of Anti-Corruption Commission yesterday.

U Min Thu, who lives in 25th Thumida Street, No 1 Ward in North Okkalapa Township, Yangon Region, was arrested after he was found guilty of impersonating ACC member and illegally taking K 3 million from two govern-

ment employees in Nyaungdon Township. After receiving a complaint, the commission investigated the suspect, and filed a case against him at the Nyaungdon Myoma Police Station on 27 February 2020.

The court in Nyaungdon sentenced the suspect one year in jail in accordance with Criminal Section 170 and two years in accordance with Criminal Section 384. —MNA (Translated by Kyaw Zin Tun)

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

Kyaw Myaing

EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Aung Khin

LOCAL & INTERNATIONAL NEWS EDITORSYe Htut Tin
editor1@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com
Aung Htein
Tun Tun Naing**TRANSLATORS**Hay Mar Tin Win, Ei Myat Mon,
Kyaw Zin Lin, Kyaw Zin Tun,
Maung Maung Swe, Khine Thazin Han,
Ei Phyu Phyu Aung**REPORTER**

Nyein Nyein Ei,

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Kyaw Zeya**COMPUTER TEAM**Thein Ngwe, Zaw Zaw Aung,
Kay Khaing Win,
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Hotline - 09 974424114**ADVERTISING & MARKETING**(+95) (01) 8604530,
Hotline - 09 974424848
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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.

4,000 acres of Shwebo Paw San paddy grown under GAP system

About 4,000 acres of Shwebo Paw San paddy were cultivated consecutively under the Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) system and have been successfully harvested in Dabayin township, Shwebo district, according to the Sagaing Region Agriculture Department.

GAP special zone was established successfully in Thayet Kan village-tract, Dabayin township, Shwebo district, Sagaing Region.

"The local farmers have already known the quality and market condition of the crops grown normally or with the GAP system. So, we are supporting them to cultivate their crops under the GAP system. The department staff are also providing the local farmers' awareness on their farmlands and providing them the agricultural method, necessary high-yield seeds and



Nearly 4,000 acres of Shwebo Paw San paddy are cultivated under the Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) system in Dabayin Township, Shwebo District in Sagaing Region. **PHOTO: WIN OO (ZAYYARDINE)**

cultivation and preparation of farmlands," said U Win Hlaing Oo, Director of Sagaing Region Agriculture Department.

About 4,000 acres of Shwebo

Paw San paddy farmland owned by 894 local farmers were cultivated consecutively in the GAP special zone in the financial year 2019-2020 monsoon pad-

dy season. The local farmers are also adding farm record to apply for a group certificate. —Win Oo (Zayyardine)

(Translated by Hay Mar)

UMTA requests permit to keep running non-landing sightseeing flight tour

By Nyein Nyein

AFTER the successful launch of non-landing sightseeing flight tour, the Union of Myanmar Travel Association (UMTA) has called for a permit to continue the flight tour, said U Naung Naung Han, chairman of UMTA.

On 20 December, Myanmar National Airlines successfully operated non-landing sightseeing flight tour with Yangon-Kyaikhtiyo- Hpa-an-Yangon schedule by flying low with ATR-72. Passengers can enjoy the beautiful landscape and scenic view of Hpa-an in Kayin State and the famous pilgrim site, Kyaikhtiyo

Pagoda in Mon State.

After the successful pilot project, the UMTA asked to continue the tour plan.

"We have sought a permit for that non-landing sightseeing tour. The travellers are interested in taking sightseeing flights. They have registered their names, and they are ready to book the tour," said U Naung Naung Han.

The average capacity of the aircraft is 72 passengers in non-landing sightseeing flight tour. However, the maximum number of passengers on board is just over 50 per the Department of Civil Aviation

regulations.

A ticket costs K90,000 for a window seat and K60,000 for an aisle seat. Additionally, all the travellers must present COVID-19 test certificate with the negative result before boarding. The travellers do not need to be quarantined after the trip as they do not land anywhere except Yangon Airport.

Myanmar's tourism industry has been suspended for about nine months amid the COVID-19 crisis. Some tour agencies did not survive from the pandemic impacts. Therefore, to revive the industry, we cannot expect tourists to focus on inbound tour

with local travellers first, he highlighted.

"The association is trying to seek a permit for this tour. Low flying has aviation rules for safety," U Naung Naung Han said.

The UMTA stated that they would schedule a new trip plan upon the positive review of this sightseeing flight tour.

The UMTA has conducted cruise tour along Yangon River beyond the non-landing sightseeing flight tour. They will continue to create other road trip plans as well. Myanmar's tourism industry has halted since the first coronavirus case in late March 2020. (Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

YGN River cruise to run beginning from 25 December

By Nyein Nyein

YANGON River cruise ship will resume its operations two times a day starting from 25 December, according to the Myanmar Tourism Entrepreneurs Association (MTEA).

"At present, the cruise ship will run during the Christmas holidays from 25 to 27 December. The vessel will run for two times: from 8 am to 10 am and 4 pm to 7 pm," said MTEA Chair U Naung Naung Han.

"Now, we are operating the

cruise ship on a trial basis, and we will continue doing so. We will run the ship on holidays until Myanmar Independence Day. We will announce the schedule if we amend it," he affirmed.

MTEA has rented two cruise ships named Toe Pwar and Tay Za from the Inland Water Transport (IWT) for a riverine cruise on the Yangon River. Although the cruise ship's accommodation capacity is 120 passengers, the vessels will accept only 30 passengers for each trip in line with the

Ministry of Health and Sports' social distancing rule.

"Currently, we will carry only 30 passengers for each trip to prevent the ship from being crowded and to conform to the COVID guidelines of the Ministry of Health and Sports," he added.

The ship will depart from the health jetty to enjoy the river breeze and the Yangon River's view. It will then return to the health jetty through Yangon River along Bayintnaung, the confluence of three rivers.

"The Yangon River cruise ship is running to remedy the tourism sector adversely affected by COVID-19 outbreak, support the revitalization of tourism in the future, and arrange the trips for the domestic travellers," explained the MTEA chair.

The tourism sector businesses have been halted since March 2020 when the first case of the COVID-19 was discovered in Myanmar.

(Translated by Hay Mar)

Myanmar citizens abroad brought back home by relief flights



Myanmar returnees are seen at the Yangon International Airport on 24 December 2020. PHOTO: MNA

MYANMAR nationals stranded in Japan and Singapore because of the suspension of commercial flights returned home by relief flights yesterday.

Myanmar Embassy in Tokyo arranged the relief flight of All Nippon Airway to repatriate the Myanmar citizens from Japan. The flight landed at Yangon International Airport in the evening.

Myanmar Embassy in Singapore also organized the 32nd

relief flight of Myanmar National Airways to bring back Myanmar citizens stranded in the city state. The flight landed at the Yangon International Airport in the late evening.

The Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population, the Ministry of Health and Sports and the Yangon Region government provided them with proper medical tests and arranged 7-day quarantine at specific places or designated hotels, followed

by the 7-day home quarantine.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been working with Myanmar embassies in foreign countries and local ministries concerned to bring back citizens stranded abroad due to the suspension of international commercial flights, in accordance with the guidance of the National-Level Central Committee on Prevention, Control and Treatment of COVID-19. —MNA
(Translated by Kyaw Zin Tun)

Yuzana Plaza to reopen after New Year day

By Nyein Nyein

Yangon Yuzana Plaza will be reopened on 6 January 2021, according to the Yuzana Plaza Management Committee.

The plaza has suspended its operation in the second wave of COVID-19 for three months starting from 12 September.

According to the Plaza Management Committee, the shop owners doing businesses at Yuzana Plaza have asked permission to reopen their shops because of economic harms.

Following the COVID rules and regulations, the plaza will be reopened. The shopkeepers must systematically wear the masks and make sales by checking the buyers' body temperature, making them wash their hands and wear the masks, preventing the people

from being crowded and supervising the plaza gates. The management committee also requested the Yangon City Development Committee (YCDC) to provide the necessary guidelines.

Currently, the shops from significant markets in Yangon region are not allowed to run their businesses except those selling the necessary food supplies and medicines.

Now, a total of 21 markets are designated as Grade A in Yangon region, according to the statistics of the YCDC's market department.

The Ministry of Health and Sports announced on 22 December that they are preparing to grant step-by-step permission for the businesses' resumption in compliance with the health regulations regarding COVID.

(Translated by Hay Mar)

Trade Mark Ads

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Numbers of migratory bird in Myanmar fall this year

THE numbers of migratory birds visiting wetlands of Mandalay Region decline this year, said U Zay Maung Thein, Vice-Chair of Birds and Environmental Conservation Association.

The birds migrate in mid-October and stay in Myanmar until March. The number of migratory birds to Paleik Lake, Taungthaman Lake, Manaw Lake, Sont Ye Lake and Pyu Lake drop this year due to climate change, illegal poaching and changing ecosystem.



People watch birds with telescope at a wetland of Mandalay Region. PHOTO: MIN HTET AUNG (MANDALAY SUB-PRINTING HOUSE)



Numbers of migratory birds visiting wetlands of Mandalay Region decline this year. PHOTO: MIN HTET AUNG

“According to the nature of migratory birds, they inhabit in the lakes depending on the food. The number of birds is decreasing this year. We can see only 3 or 4 Baer's Pochard in Paleik Lake and Pyu Lake. The numbers of birds and species also drop in Taungthaman Lake. The birds are slow to arrive this year. Although there were between 50 and 100 Common Myna (*Acridotheres tristis*) in previous years,

there are only 10 this year. We do not see other birds except the *Egretta garzetta* and residential birds this year. The number of migratory birds declines due to illegal hunters or traders. Therefore, we have to wait and see the numbers of migratory birds this year,” he said.

The Sarus Crane, Geese, Fulvous Whistling-Duck and Common Moorhen (*Gallinula chloropus*) from Mongolia and

northern part of China mostly enter the lakes in Mandalay Region.

The Birds and Environmental Conservation Association, Bird Lover Groups, INGOs and NGOs collect data for a comprehensive list of migratory birds throughout the country in January.—Min Htet Aung (Mandalay Sub-Printing House)

(Translated by Khine Thazin Han)

NUCLEIC ACID TESTS

Beijing launches community test after asymptomatic case emerges



Residents follow a health worker to a testing station at a sports centre in Xicheng district after Beijing municipal government demanded all residents who visited the Xinfadi food market since May 30 to undergo nucleic acid tests for possible infection with the novel coronavirus after the city reported 51 confirmed COVID-19 cases. **PHOTO: LI HAO/GT/XINHUA / FILE**

Beijing has conducted nucleic acid tests for all residents in the city's Lianzhu Garden community after a man living there was found to be an asymptomatic carrier of the novel coronavirus on Wednesday.

The government of Shunyi District said the community was immediately placed under closed management and its nearly 2,000 residents underwent nucleic acid testing and are waiting for the results.

All residents in the apartment building of the asymptomatic case have been asked to stay home and thorough disinfection is being carried out in the

residential compound's public space.

The sweeping actions came after the city of Ningbo, east China's Zhejiang Province, reported that a resident of Beijing's Shunyi District was found to be an asymptomatic case after flying to Ningbo.

Officials said they are rushing to determine the source of the infection. The Chinese capital reported two confirmed COVID-19 cases on Dec. 18, both close contacts of an imported confirmed case, and did not report locally transmitted cases between Dec. 19 and Dec. 22.

SOURCE: Xinhua

NEWS IN BRIEFS

Russia sets records for virus cases, deaths

Russia on Thursday registered record numbers for daily infections and deaths from the coronavirus, as the country avoids reimposing a nationwide lockdown.

Health officials reported 29,935 new infections, bringing the country's caseload to 2,963,688 -- the fourth-highest in the world.

They also registered 635 deaths, increasing total fatalities to 53,096 since the beginning of the pandemic.

Russia's death rate is much lower than that of other badly hit countries, raising concerns that authorities could be downplaying the scale of the outbreak.

Data published by the country's statistics service earlier this month indicated excess deaths of nearly 165,000 year-on-year between March and October, suggesting virus deaths could be much higher.

Officials on Wednesday also registered a record number of new infections in the capital Moscow, the epicentre of Russia's outbreak.

SOURCE: AFP

SLOPE'S THE LIMIT

Austria ski resorts reopen despite looming third lockdown

AUSTRIA allowed its more than 400 ski stations to open on Thursday, just two days before the country enters its third nationwide coronavirus lockdown.

At the beginning of this month the government announced it was allowing ski stations to open on December 24, and has stuck by the decision even after a third lockdown was announced last week. As an outdoor sport, the government says skiing can be practised safely if sufficient precautions are taken.

However, hotels, bars and restaurants remain closed, ef-

fectively limiting the slopes to locals, while the lockdown will also force the country's shops and much of its service industry to close until mid-January.

"This is a first step, and we hope that we can fully open soon -- as soon as the infection rates allow for it," Andreas Steibl, head of tourism for the Ischgl resort, told AFP in a recent interview. Ischgl gained infamy as the resort where thousands of international skiers got infected in one of Europe's first, large-scale outbreaks in March.

SOURCE: AFP



Ischgl gained infamy as the resort where thousands of international skiers got infected in one of Europe's first, large-scale outbreaks in March. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

SPRING BACK IN THE STEP

After catastrophic year, Bollywood hopes for a 2021 comeback



Bollywood actress Shriya Saran (C) and dancers perform for a music video in Mumbai in February. Pandemic restrictions have forbidden producers from shooting the elaborate musical sequences that are a hallmark of Hindi movies. **PHOTO: AFP**

THE dancers stopped strutting on Bollywood film sets this year as the Indian film industry struggled to find any spring in its step

during a disastrous 2020.

The annus horribilis for the world's most prolific movie industry began with the heart-

breaking deaths in April within 36 hours of luminaries Irrfan Khan and Rishi Kapoor.

Others to pass away included composer Wajid Khan, who died from the coronavirus at 42, director Basu Chatterjee, Bollywood's first female choreographer Saroj Khan, and S.P. Balasubrahmanyam, singer of an estimated 40,000 film songs.

But it was the suicide in June of 34-year-old star Sushant Singh Rajput that had the widest repercussions. India's sensationalist TV news channels -- eager to cast the film industry as a den of iniquity -- accused Rajput's former girlfriend, actress Rhea Chakraborty, of driving him to his death with black magic and cannabis. The 28-year-old, who

denies any wrongdoing, spent months in custody for allegedly buying drugs for Rajput, while stars such as Deepika Padukone were hauled in for questioning as the investigation escalated.

"It has been a terrible year," actress Swara Bhasker told AFP.

"The slander campaign by some sections of the media against the film industry has been horrendous."

Reel problems

Virus restrictions meanwhile forced producers to hit pause on shootings, putting thousands of livelihoods at risk in Hindi-language Bollywood as well as India's other regional film industries.

SOURCE: AFP

Chile, Costa Rica to begin Covid-19 vaccine rollout

Chile and Costa Rica will begin a rollout of coronavirus vaccinations on Thursday, joining Mexico among the first Latin American countries to begin mass immunization campaigns.

A flight carrying 10,000 vaccines produced by Pfizer/BioNTech arrived at Santiago airport in the Chilean capital on Thursday morning.

Vaccinations of high-priority health workers from four Chilean regions are set to begin on the same day. Chilean President Sebastian Pinera said the country has secured 30 million coronavirus vaccines from three suppliers, enough to inoculate 15 million people -- over two-thirds of the population -- in the first half of 2021. Costa Rica received its first shipment of Pfizer-BioNTech vaccines late Wednesday.

"Tomorrow the first Costa Ricans will be vaccinated," President Carlos Alvarado said at a news conference.

SOURCE: AFP

INVESTIGATION UNDERWAY

China begins anti-monopoly probe into tech giant Alibaba

CHINA has launched an anti-monopoly investigation into Alibaba, regulators said Thursday, sending the share price of the e-commerce giant tumbling and intensifying the troubles of its billionaire founder Jack Ma.

Regulators will also hold "supervisory and

guidance" talks with Alibaba's gigantic financial services subsidiary Ant Group, state media reported, just weeks after its record-breaking IPO was halted at the last minute by Beijing.

The continued squeeze on one of China's most influential companies

is the latest sign that the Communist leadership is ready to deflate the ambitions of big tech firms in a runaway internet sector, which has made Ma one of China's richest people with an estimated \$58 billion fortune.

Investigators are probing Alibaba for "sus-

pected monopolistic practices", the State Administration for Market Regulation said in a statement. The probe threatens to impede the growth of Alibaba, a tech juggernaut which revolutionized the e-commerce landscape of China.

SOURCE: AFP



China has launched an anti-monopoly investigation into e-commerce giant Alibaba. PHOTO: AFP/FILE



A view of Bolivia's ominous Death Road just outside La Paz, which is popular amongst thrill seeking tourists. PHOTO: AFP

NOVEL IDEA

Bolivia to boost tourism with extra holidays for public sector staff

BOLIVIA has come up with a novel way to reactivate its tourism sector decimated by the coronavirus pandemic: it's giving extra holidays to its public sector employees.

More than 500,000 people work in the public sector in the South American country of just 11 million people.

Depending on the number of years of service, public employees receive between two and four weeks of annual leave.

But under the program launched at the end of November, they will be able to boost their time off by 20-30 per cent as long as they go on holiday within the country.

The coronavirus has cost Bolivia's tourism sector one billion dollars according to one estimate.

"We obviously need to reactivate it, but for this we need the state's help and this is the way we're starting," productive development minister Nestor Huanca told AFP.

SOURCE: AFP

END IN SIGHT

Pound jumps on expected Brexit trade deal

THE pound jumped Thursday, while European stock markets were little changed, with Britain and the EU finally expected to announce a post-Brexit trade deal.

Sterling was up around half a per cent against the dollar and euro as London's FTSE 100 stocks index closed up 0.1 per cent in shortened pre-Christmas trading.

In the eurozone, the Paris CAC 40 index finished with a loss of 0.1 per cent. Frankfurt was closed.

Traders said early gains were capped by ris-

ing fears over a new strain of the coronavirus that has forced the UK to impose tougher regional lockdowns across the nation.

Asian stock markets earlier closed mixed.

Hong Kong finished higher but was weighed down by a fall of more than eight percent in Alibaba shares after China said it had launched a probe into the e-commerce giant for "suspected monopolistic practices".

Elsewhere, oil prices were down around 1.0 per cent.

SOURCE: AFP

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V PACIFIC VENTURE V.2007

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V PACIFIC VENTURE VOY. NO. (2007)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **25-12-2020** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **TMIT-2** 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: **2301928**

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

M/S OCEAN 7 PROJECTS HAMBURG GMBH

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V SEA SAPPHIRE V.20001

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V SEA SAPPHIRE VOY. NO. (20001)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **27-12-2020** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **WILMAR** 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: **2301928**

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

M/S WILHELMSSEN SHIPS SERVICE (S) PTE LTD

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V VASILIS V.004L

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V VASILIS VOY. NO. (004L)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **27-12-2020** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **MKW** 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: **2301928**

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

M/S WILHELMSSEN SHIPS SERVICE (S) PTE LTD

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V DAISY OCEAN V.2312

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V DAISY OCEAN VOY. NO. (2312)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **27-12-2020** 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: **2301928**

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

M/S CHUN AN INTERNATIONAL LOGISTICS CO LTD

CHANGING DISTRIBUTOR OF REGISTERED PESTICIDE

This is a notification of the change of distributor of below herbicide, registered by Bayer AG, under the Myanma Pesticide Registration Board, from Bayer Thai Co., Ltd. (Myanmar Branch) to Wi Sar Ra International Co., Ltd. Any objection to this change can notify to Joint Secretary, Pesticide Registration Board, Plant Protection Division, West Gyogone, Insein, within 14 days.

Trade Name	Active Ingredient	Reg. Type	Reg. No.
Laudis 420 SC	Tembotrione 420g/l SC	Provisional	P2020-3354

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

"GUESS WHERE THEY CAME FROM: IRAN"

Trump warns Iran over rocket strike on embassy in Iraq

US President Donald Trump warned Wednesday he would hold "Iran responsible" in the event of a fatal attack on Americans in Iraq, as the first anniversary of the killing of a top Iranian general in a US air strike approaches. "Our embassy in Baghdad got hit Sunday by several rockets," Trump said on Twitter, referring to an attack that caused damage but no deaths. "Guess where they came from: IRAN," he added. "Now we hear chatter of additional attacks against Americans in Iraq," he added, before offering "some friendly health advice to Iran: if one American is killed, I will hold Iran responsible. Think it over," he said. Responding to Trump, the Iranian foreign minister Mohammad Javid Zarif tweeted on Thursday: "Putting



President Donald Trump warned Wednesday he would hold "Iran responsible" in the event of a fatal attack on Americans in Iraq, as the first anniversary of the killing of a top Iranian general in a US air strike approaches. Iranian Quds Force commander Qassem Soleimani was killed in a targeted US bombing in Iraq. **PHOTO: AFP**

your own citizens at risk abroad won't divert attention from catastrophic failures at home." He also attached an image of years-old Trump tweets that claimed ex-president Barack Obama

would have started a war with Iran to win re-election, as well as a screengrab of a graph that purported to show the severity of the coronavirus pandemic in the US. **SOURCE: AFP**

NEWS IN BRIEF

THE TERROR ATTACK

Vienna attack report lays bare intelligence lapses

AUSTRIA'S intelligence agencies missed several chances to spot the danger posed by a jihadist gunman who launched a deadly attack in Vienna in November, an official report said on Wednesday.

The report is the first from a government commission assessing how the threat was handled in the run-up to the November 2 attack, in which four people were killed before the gunman was shot dead by police.

SOURCE: AFP

SQUALID MIGRANT CAMP

Migrant camp burns as Bosnia struggles with influx

FIRE engulfed a refugee camp in Bosnia on Wednesday minutes after the site was closed because of its poor condition, deepening a crisis over where to house thousands of migrants during winter.

The centre's former residents looked on as thick black smoke billowed from the site, which the UN migration agency had started withdrawing from earlier in the day because it lacked proper heating, electricity and other essentials for winter.

There were no casualties but the infrastructure of the site was destroyed, police spokesperson Ale Siljdedic told AFP.

SOURCE: AFP

THE FINAL 2,000-PAGE AGREEMENT

EU and Britain seal post-Brexit trade deal



A supporter of a pro-Brexit group walks down Whitehall in London, Britain, on Jan. 31, 2020. **PHOTO: XINHUA**

THE European Union and Britain on Thursday struck a post-Brexit trade deal to cushion the economic blow of the UK's imminent departure from the single market

after 10 months of tortuous negotiations.

"A deal is done," British Prime Minister Boris Johnson tweeted.

"We have finally found an agreement," said the president of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen.

"It was a long and winding road, but we have a good deal at the end of it," she said. "The single market will be fair and remain so." Britain formally left the EU in January after a deeply divisive referendum in 2016, the first country to split from the political and economic project that was born as the continent rebuilt in the aftermath of World War II.

London remains bound by the EU's rules during a transition period that runs until midnight on 31 December, when the UK will leave the bloc's single market

and customs union.

The final 2,000-page agreement was held up by last-minute wrangling over fishing as both sides haggled over the access EU fisherman will get to Britain's waters after the end of the year.

Following the announcement of the political accord, von der Leyen's Commission will send the text to the EU member states.

They are expected to take two or three days to analyze the agreement and decide whether to approve its provisional implementation. The UK parliament will also have to interrupt its end of year holidays to vote on the deal before the 31 December cut-off. Once it is signed off and

the text published in the EU's official journal it will go into effect on 1 January when Britain has left the bloc's single market. The European Parliament will then have a chance to retrospectively approve the deal, at some point in 2021, EU officials said.

BATTERY OF NEW REGULATIONS

Assuming the process goes as planned, the negotiating teams will have agreed the mammoth deal in record time. And the 11th hour deal heads off the threat that Britain could crash out of the club after 47 years of shared history with no follow-on rules.

SOURCE: AFP

CHRISTMAS DAY

UK-France border to stay open at Christmas to clear truck logjam

RAIL and sea links between the UK and France will remain open over Christmas to clear the backlog of thousands of trucks stranded by a new strain of coronavirus, Britain said Thursday.

Thousands of European truckers on Wednesday spent a fourth night sleeping in the cabs of their vehicles, which are stuck close to the major cross-Channel port of Dover while the drivers wait to pass a COVID test, as required by France for travel.

Around 6,000 trucks were waiting early Wednesday evening to cross the border, according to the British Department of Transport, including 3,750 vehicles parked at the old Manston airport, which is also COVID testing site.

The others are stuck on the nearby roads in the southeastern county of Kent.

"As testing in Kent continues... I've spoken to my French counterpart (Jean-Baptiste Djebbari) and we've agreed the UK/French border at Eurotunnel, Dover & Calais WILL remain open throughout Xmas in order to help hauliers & citizens return home as soon as possible," UK transport minister Grant Shapps wrote on Twitter. Ferry services do not usually run between Dover and France on Christmas Day.

The massive testing operation, which is being bolstered by the military, began late Wednesday, under an agreement between London and Paris to resume the flow of cross-Channel traffic.

France suspended the routes after a potentially more contagious variant of the virus was identified in Britain.

SOURCE: AFP



Drivers and their vehicles were still stuck at the port of Dover, in Kent, south east England. **PHOTO: AFP**

US LEADS VACCINE RACE

One million Americans vaccinated against COVID-19: official

MORE than a million people have received their first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine in the United States, Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Director Robert Redfield said Wednesday.

“The United States achieved an early but important milestone today -- jurisdictions have now reported that more than one million people have received their first dose of COVID-19 vaccine since the administration began 10 days ago,” said Redfield.

In a call with reporters, Moncef Slaoui, chief advisor of the government’s Operation Warp Speed, said that

the objective of immunizing 20 million people this month was “unlikely to be met.” But he said the U.S. was still aiming for 100 million people immunized by the end of the first quarter of 2021 and another 100 million by the second quarter.

Three million doses were delivered last week across the United States, with the first authorized vaccine, developed by Pfizer and BioNTech, administered on December 14. The target was to distribute six million vaccine doses by Moderna this week and another two million of Pfizer’s.

SOURCE: AFP An ambulance sits outside the US Capitol in Washington, DC. PHOTO: AFP/FILE



AFTER A GRINDING PANDEMIC YEAR

World readies for lockdown Christmas

CORONAVIRUS misery hung over Christmas preparations worldwide on Thursday, with countless millions forced to cancel plans or limit festivities under fresh virus lockdowns.

After a grinding pandemic year that has seen more than 1.7 million people die from Covid-19, a slew of new outbreaks are a stark reminder that despite emergency vaccine roll-outs, life is unlikely to return to normal quickly.

In Australia -- often a rare bright spot in keeping the virus in check -- a growing cluster of cases in northern Sydney has confined residents to seaside suburbs and prompted a ban on all but the smallest Christmas family gatherings.

Jimmy Arslan, who owns two cafes at the epicentre of the



Germany has been forced to cancel its famous Christmas markets, as countries around the world grapple with coronavirus restrictions during the festive period. PHOTO: AFP

city’s outbreak, said trade was down 75 per cent and his Canberra-based family had been forced to cancel their Christmas visit.

“It’s heartbreaking. It’s a very, very sour ending for a sour year,” the 46-year-old told AFP.

“Let’s just say we all should welcome 2021 and kick 2020 in its arse.”

In Europe, much of the continent is enduring a dark winter of resurgent outbreaks.

SOURCE: AFP

A SHARP REBOUND

Israel announces third nationwide virus lockdown

ISRAEL announced Thursday that it will impose a nationwide lockdown from next week, its third of the Covid-19 pandemic, just days after it began vaccinations against the virus.

“A general lockdown will be imposed from 17:00 (1500 GMT) on Sunday for two weeks,” a statement from Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s office said.

“There is an option to extend the lockdown for an additional two weeks, unless the basic reproduction number (for the virus) falls below 1 and the number of new cases per day falls below 1,000.”

Israelis will be barred from travelling more than one kilometre (1,000 yards or so) from their homes and businesses will be closed except

for deliveries.

Exceptions will be made for those travelling for vaccinations and schools will remain partially open for some age groups.

The new lockdown comes after a sharp rebound in the infection rate since the last lockdown in September, when the per capita infection rate was among the highest in the world.

In a population of nine million, Israel has now confirmed 385,022 coronavirus cases, 3,150 of them fatal.

Israel launched a nationwide inoculation programme on Monday after receiving a first consignment of the vaccine developed by US pharmaceutical giant Pfizer and its German partner BioNTech.

SOURCE: AFP



A Palestinian worker gets his temperature checked as he returns home from working at an Israeli settlement via the Mitara checkpoint in the occupied West Bank city of Hebron on March 25. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

NEWS IN BRIEF

AIM OF CONVERSION

The BJP’s next mission: eradicating ‘love jihad’ in India

IN India’s most populous state, the Hindu nationalist BJP government is on a mission against “love jihad”, the conspiracy theory that Muslims are luring Hindu brides with the aim of conversion and eventually national domination. While interfaith marriage remains rare in the Hindu-majority nation, this zealous drive in Uttar Pradesh has taken the form of a new law that can land the couples in serious trouble. A few weeks ago, when 22-year-old Muskan and her

Muslim husband Rashid went to register their marriage in the town of Moradabad, he ended up in jail and the young woman in a state-run shelter home. Three months pregnant, she suffered a miscarriage. The couple’s “crime” was the alleged violation of an “unlawful conversion” ordinance promulgated last month in Uttar Pradesh by the local Bharatiya Janata Party government. It carries a punishment of up to 10 years in jail. SOURCE: AFP

‘MORE TRANSMISSIBLE’ VIRUS VARIANT

China suspends UK flights over new virus strain

CHINA on Thursday suspended flights to and from Britain after it reported a new, more infectious strain of the coronavirus.

China has largely curbed the spread of Covid-19 within its borders, but authorities remain highly vigilant about the threat of “imported” virus cases.

“Given the exceptional nature of the virus mutation and its potential impact ... China has

suspended flights between China and the UK after full assessment,” foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said at a routine briefing. As fears rose over the new virus strain, Ireland, Italy, Germany, the Netherlands and Belgium halted UK flights earlier this week. Turkey and Canada have also banned incoming flights from Britain indefinitely. SOURCE: AFP

Aung Kaung Mhan joins Thai League-2 club Khon Kaen United

MYANMAR striker Aung Kaung Mhan has joined Thai League-2 club Khon Kaen United on a season-long loan, according to an official statement with the Khon Kaen United announced on 22 December.

Aung Kaung Mhan started playing in Thailand at the beginning of this year, and he was playing for another Thai League 2 club Lampang FC, before moving to the Khon Kaen United.

Aung Kaung Mhan made a good performance in his former Thai club Lampang FC with scoring a goal in his last game.

Now, five Myanmar players including Zaw Min Tun, Swam Lamang and Kyaw Ko Ko have been playing for Thai clubs this season since Myanmar football star Aung Thu joined Thai League 1 club Buriram United during the mid-season transfer window.

Khon Kaen United Football Club, who are top of the Thai League-2 standings, are recruiting new talented players during the mid-season transfer window and have brought Aung Kaung Mhan in for the team's striker position. Khon Kaen United are currently third in the standings table after the first round of the Thai League-2, and the team is nearly advance to the Thai League-1.—Shine Htet Zaw
(Translated by Kyaw Zin Lin)



Myanmar star player Aung Kaung Mhan holds the Khon Kaen United banner as he arrives at the football club this month. PHOTO: KHON KAEN UNITED

Federer, Serena among entries for Australian Open



Roger Federer and Serena Williams are among the entries for the delayed Australian Open, which will begin three weeks later than scheduled on February 8. PHOTO: AFP

MELBOURNE—Roger Federer and Serena Williams were among the entries announced Thursday for the coronavirus-disrupted Australian Open, with tournament director Craig Tiley vowing a “happy Slam” after months of painstaking planning.

All the world's top players have signed on, led by world number ones Novak Djokovic and Ashleigh Barty.

There was a question mark over Swiss great Federer, who warned this month he was in a “race against time” to be fit after two rounds of knee surgery.

But he has begun training in Dubai and was among those entered to play at Melbourne Park as he targets a seventh title. US superstar Williams, who like Federer turns 40 next year, is also committed as she once again attempts to pull level with Margaret Court as a 24-time Grand Slam champion. Her last triumph at the majors came in Australia in 2017 when she was pregnant.

“There are so many great storylines for AO 2021,” said Tiley. “Serena is gunning for her eighth title while Novak, who often seems invincible at Melbourne Park, is going for a record ninth title. “Our own world No.1 Ash Barty will return to Grand Slam competition, as will Roger Federer as he comes back from injury.”—AFP ■

Manchester rivals to clash in League Cup semis



Manchester United's Uruguayan striker Edinson Cavani (centre) reacts at the final whistle during their English League Cup quarter final match against Everton at Goodison Park on December 23, 2020. Manchester United won 2-0. PHOTO: NICK POTTS | AFP

LONDON—Manchester United will face bitter rivals Manchester City in the League Cup semi-finals after a dramatic 2-0 win at Everton, while Tottenham joined

them in the last four with victory against Stoke on Wednesday.

United dominated for long periods of their quarter-final at Goodison Park, but it took until

the 88th minute before Edinson Cavani broke the deadlock.

The former Paris Saint-Germain striker's fourth goal for United since joining on a free

transfer in October came at the same venue where he opened his account for the club last month.

Anthony Martial bagged United's second goal in stoppage time. “Cavani's finish wasn't bad! He is a quality striker. We know when we defend well we have got players to win us the game,” United manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer said.

“The spirit in the camp is good and this will give us a boost going into the Christmas period.”

After a rocky period that raised questions about Solskjaer's future following their exit from the Champions League, United have recovered their equilibrium.

They are third in the Premier League and have won their last three matches in all competitions.—AFP ■

Maradona suffered from liver, kidney, heart disorders: report

BUENOS AIRES—Argentina football legend Diego Maradona was suffering from liver, kidney and cardiovascular disorders but there were no signs of alcohol or narcotics consumption in his autopsy, the public prosecutor said on Wednesday. World Cup winning captain from Mexico '86, Maradona died of a heart-attack on November 25 at the age of 60.

The public prosecutor in San Isidro, a north-

ern suburb of the capital Buenos Aires, published the results of Maradona's autopsy late on Tuesday night. It was ordered as part of an investigation into his death to see if there was any negligence or recklessness in the health care he was provided.

At the end of his life he was suffering from a variety of illnesses including cirrhosis, heart disease and kidney failure.—AFP ■



After his death, Maradona's coffin was taken to the presidential palace to lie in state as thousands of fans flocked to say their farewells. PHOTO: RONALDO SCHEMIDT/ AFP/FILE