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Saturday, 2 January 2021

New Year's Speech of State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, Chairperson of National Reconciliation and Peace Centre (1 January 2021)

IN the New Year of 2021, may all citizens of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar be in good health, may you be able to send metta vibrations among yourselves and may you have peace of mind and well-being.

The year 2020 has been a difficult year all over the world, and our citizens know this already. It has been a difficult year for us also. Myanmar had to confront the problems of the COVID-19 pandemic and at the same time, face these problems without ignoring the challenges that are important for our future.

On behalf of the Union Government, I wish to express our extreme gratitude for the support and cooperation of the people in our efforts to overcome the various problems and challenges for public support is the main source of strength of the country as well as the most valuable resource.

I think what the people wish to know most of all at this time is regarding the vaccination programme for COVID-19 and when this programme would start. The purchase contract for buying the first batch of the vaccines from India has already been signed. As soon as the authorities concerned in India have issued permission to use this vaccine, we have made arrangements for the import of these vaccines into Myanmar. In accordance with this programme, we will be vaccinating the first priority group, which comprises medical professionals and medical personnel in February. There is a lot of competition as all the countries of the world are trying to get this vaccine. However, we believe that the vaccination programme could be carried out all over the country step by step. During the period when the vaccines are still not available, I wish to appeal to the people to abide by the health rules and regulations and give support to our efforts to beat COVID-19. Please be vigilant; please be patient. Please brace yourself by visioning the



future. We are all in this together.

In 2020, just as we had to contain and control the COVID-19 pandemic in the best possible way, we had to exert our efforts to successfully conduct the General Election which was very important for our country's future. The Union Government had to provide support to the efforts of the Union Election Commission to the best of its ability so that the people could express their will by voting in accordance with the law within the bounds of the health rules and regulations which are necessary to prevent the spread of the disease.

Because of the strong determination and duty consciousness of the people in the belief that they are the creators

of their own destiny, the General Election was conducted successfully. This is something for our country to be really proud of. For this, let me thank the people one more time.

I also wish to thank the people for showing their confidence for our government with their votes. We have made a very firm resolve to continue striving hard to be worthy of the people's trust and confidence.

Ever since our government took over responsibility in 2016, we have never lost sight of our ultimate goal, which is to establish a peaceful and developed Democratic Federal Union, on a solid and firm foundation. We have made continuous efforts cognizant of the fact that in

marching towards this goal, peace and sustainable development, healthy growth of democracy and peaceful development, healthy growth of democracy and amendment of the constitution, amendment of the constitution and peace; all these things are interrelated in a circular fashion with backward and forward linkages.

That is why, no matter what kind of difficulties we had to encounter, in our efforts to establish a Democratic Federal Union, we have never stopped our efforts for peace and development as these may be considered as the beginning, the middle and the end of the peace process. We have made changes and amendments in accordance with the needs of the situation and continued with our work.

We knew and have accepted the fact that national reconciliation is something which is absolutely necessary for the emergence of the Union, which is our aspiration ever since the NLD was founded in 1988. Because of differences in beliefs, ideologies and views among our Union nationals, metta ceased to exist, anger grew, armed conflicts flared, and peace was burnt to the ground; thus we need to build mutual trust, understanding and respect on a firm foundation to end this vicious and dreadful cycle. That is why when our government took over responsibility in 2016, one of our first acts was to establish the "NRPC - National Reconciliation and Peace Centre". We will be putting more focus and efforts into the programmes of the NRPC during this year.

The first session of Union Peace Conference-21st Century Panlong began in 2016. There were enormous difficulties during peace dialogues in 2015, based on the provisions of Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement signed between the previous government and some ethnic armed organizations. However, we continuously implemented the peacemaking process step-by-step.

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“People are the key”

Done Island in Myeik to receive local tourists in 2nd week of January

COMMUNITY-based tourism (CBT) will be open in the second week of January with local tourists in Done Nyaung Hmine village on Done island in Myeik District, Taninthayi Region, according to some tour operators.

A community-based tourism project was planned to open in Nyaung Hmaing village in December but was postponed to the second week of January for various reasons.

“Since this is the COVID-19 period, we will start with local tourists. It was previously scheduled to open in December but has not yet been completed and is scheduled to open in the second week of January 2021,” said Dr Thein Swe Myint, chairman of the Myeik District Tourism Entrepreneurs Association.

As the Myeik Archipelago is island-based tourism industry,



Done Island in Myeik plans to receive local tourists starting from the second week of January 2021 for community-based tourism development. **PHOTO: MYINT OO (MYEIK)**

tourists are not allowed to stay overnight on the island. After the opening of the first CBT in January, both local and foreign tourists will be able to spend the night on the island, according to the Regional Hotel and Tourism Department.

As the Done Nyaung

Hmine village is the first CBT on the island, it is planning to create jobs for local people, said U Pho Zaw, a member of the Community-Based Tourism Committee.

During the CBT tour to Done Nyaung Hmine village on Done island, tourists can

find the culture, traditions and ways of life of Salone, Kayin and Myanmar people and there will also be programmes to explore the natural wetlands and fishing activities accompanied by traditional fishing boats.

The islands in the Myeik Archipelago have beautiful

beaches and natural forests. Due to the beauty of the floating and underwater resources, infrastructure has been built on the popular islands among local and foreigners.—Myint Oo (Myeik)

(Translated by Ei Phyu Phyu Aung)

Myanmar citizens abroad brought back home by relief flights



Myanmar returnees are seen at the Yangon International Airport on 1 January 2021. **PHOTO: MNA**

A total of 250 Myanmar citizens including seamen who were stranded in foreign countries because of the suspension of commercial flights returned home by relief flights yesterday.

The Myanmar Embassies in Singapore organized the relief flight of Myanmar National Airlines to repatriate 144 Myanmar nationals from Singapore. The flight landed at Yangon International Airport in the evening.

The Myanmar Embassy in Seoul and Dragon Tun Company jointly arranged the relief flight of Myanmar Airways International to bring back 106 Myanmar nationals and seamen home – 81 is from the Republic of Korea, 6 from the Philippines, 7 from Viet Nam, 10 from Indonesia, 1 from the People’s Republic of China and 1 from Turkey. The flight depart-

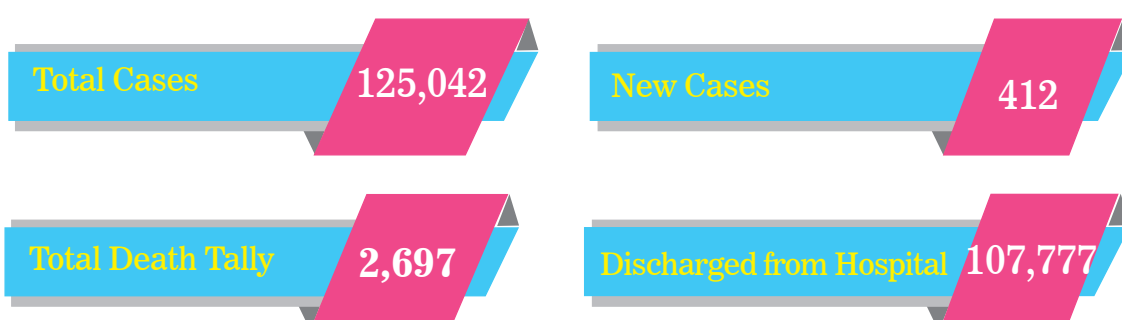
ed from the Incheon International Airport landed at Yangon International Airport in the evening. The Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population, the Ministry of Health and Sports and the Yangon Region government provided them with proper medical tests and arranged 7-day quarantine at specific places or designated hotels, followed by the 7-day home quarantine.

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

412 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 1 January, total figure rises to 125,042

MYANMAR’S COVID-19 positive cases rose to 125,042 after 412 new cases were reported on 1 January 2021 according to the Ministry of Health and Sports. Among these 125,042 confirmed cases, 2,697 died, 107,777 have been discharged from hospitals.—MNA

Updated at 8 pm, 1 January 2021



Daily death toll until 8 pm 1-1-2021



Ministry of Health and Sports

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)

New Year's Speech of State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi ...

FROM PAGE-1

When official peace negotiations were suspended due to some disagreements, the NRPC and the Peace Commission were able to organize many informal discussions, and they finally managed to resume official peace talks.

Despite considerable difficulties amidst the COVID-19 crisis in 2020, the 4th session of 21st Century Panglong could be organized due to the all-out efforts. The stakeholders also satisfactorily signed the agreement which was full of political essence. Thus we have been able to successfully sign Part 3 of the Union Accord which stipulates the step by step programmes and implementation processes in the post-2020 period. At this time when we already have the peace roadmap for the post-2020 period clearly in our view, we will implement the post-2020 period peace process with new approaches by exerting our efforts from all angles and points of view so that not only the NCA signatories but also the non-signatories will come on board and cooperate.

We have realized that both formal and informal dialogues are pivotal to the peacemaking processes in the post-2020 period. Similarly, we also recognize the role of public participation. This is related to paving the way for inclusiveness of all the stakeholders. Moreover, we have to focus on the design aspect of the peacemaking process such as policy and framework guidelines, the formation of necessary working groups, and the establishment of systems and mechanisms.

By keeping these goals in view, we will be making practical implementations for process, design and inclusiveness of all stakeholders in the upcoming five years. We will make strenuous efforts with increased momentum on 'the New Peace Architecture' in the post-2020 which balances representation and effectiveness and allows thorough negotiations among the main stakeholders; a review process which has been widely discussed from all points of view; thus it would enable subject matter and management support groups, political parties, CSOs, and the people to join in and participate.

The year 2022 will be the 'Diamond Anniversary' or the '75th Anniversary' of the Panglong Agreement. In this year our aim should be to arrive at an encouraging situation where we can see clearly and distinctly in front of us a clear path for us to march towards the goal of our Union; I wish to state that we would be making exerted efforts by using this as our "New Peace Architecture" in the post-2020 period. Amendment of the State Constitution is absolutely necessary for the emergence of a democratic federal system which is the goal of our peacemaking efforts. We must strive with might and main for the emergence of the Constitution aligned with the peace agreements, the long-term needs of the country and the expectation of our people. There are only two years left for the 75th anniversary of Myanmar's Independence. A top priority of the government is to shape the country for our posterity. It is

also the task for the people. While leaving from the old system, its practices and policies must also be abandoned in addition to the amendment of Constitution.

That means the substitution of the old system and administration with sound policies and good practices. The general administration reform and model anti-corruption activities at the various levels of public services, from administrative to business sectors, must be carried out in leaving the old system and administration behind for implementation of the public sector that includes transportation, infrastructure and nationwide electrification.

When our government took office, only 34 per cent of households were connected to the national grid. The electricity coverage has increased to 57 per cent now and has been targeted to 75 per cent in 2025 and 100 per cent in 2030 respectively.

Moreover, our government has made a commitment to introduce Universal Health Coverage which can reach every citizen. The government will adopt specific plans in the upcoming five years to manufacture medicines medical equipment, to provide medical services from international standard hospitals and healthcare centres in the country, to upgrade technologies in healthcare services, to attract more investments in the health sector by promoting public healthcare services to be able to reduce the outflow of revenue.

The government has implemented the short-term plan of CERP to relieve the impacts of COVID-19. In addition to the relief

plan, the country was required to adopt wider policies for the economic recovery of the country. The Myanmar Economic Recovery and Reform Plan (MERPP) has been drafted to solve economic problems. Among the mid-term projects of the plan, the works with highest recovery opportunities will be prioritized. The MERPP emphasizes on the economic sector, and the implementation of works in the plan could help the country to reach the objectives of Myanmar Sustainable Development Plan.

Rather than inviting investment proposals, opportunities will be created to attract local and foreign investments. Therefore, more infrastructures of domestic, international and joint-venture investments are expected to appear in the county in the near future. Financial and monetary stimulus packages will be effectively carried out based on the situations of economic response during and post COVID-19 crisis. Government budgets will be spent in areas where they will be effective, and the private sector will be encouraged.

Education is a very crucial sector for the development of the country. It is a long-term process. The government will make more investment to promote the education sector, and the private education sector will be supported. Education reform plans will be carried out to meet the demanding situations. Expanding vocational education could help in creating more employment for young people, and they would enjoy job security for life. The power of education is

the ability to build capacity in a person to enable him/her to solve problems in the best possible way. The government will implement an education system to nurture the citizens who can dutifully work for the establishment of a Democratic Federal Union which can overcome all local and foreign challenges of the country in 2021 and the following years.

The time when the new year is foreseen with expectations is an opportune period to take lessons from the past and to create a better life. In a New Year occasion, I was asked about my wish. I immediately gave my answer that I wish each citizen should be a dutiful person. I now wish to expand a bit on this matter.

Specific duties must be known to become a dutiful citizen. It is very important not to misunderstand the desires caused by greed, hatred and delusion as our duties. Try to understand your own duties correctly. Try to find the right answer by asking oneself whether the bounden duties are personal or universal, or for taking or giving. And also try to accept the actual answers to serve for the country as a decent citizen. In this way, we don't need to worry about the future of our country beyond 2021.

I wish that not only our citizens but also all the people of the world could share and enjoy peace in 2021, also share happiness and feel happiness. May they be able to send metta vibrations and also accept metta.

May you all have peace of mind!

(Translated by Kyaw Myaing, Aung Khin)

The infection rate has gone down a bit; we need to make efforts so that this infection rate will come down considerably



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.

(Excerpt from State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's report on COVID-19 containment measures, on 25 December 2020)

MoHT minister visits Lewe for tourism destination development



Union Minister U Ohn Maung and party visit Lewe for tourism development on 1 January 2021. **PHOTO: MNA**

UNION Minister for Hotels and Tourism U Ohn Maung, Deputy Minister U Tin Latt, Member of Nay Pyi Taw Council Area U Tin Tun and officials made a visit to Guhnalone Sesu Village-tract and Aung Mingala Village in Lewe Township, Dekhina District yesterday.

The Union Minister and party, abiding by the COVID-19 guidelines issued by the Ministry of Health and Sports, looked around the Shwe Inn Lyaung Lake near the two caves in Guhnalone Sesu Village-tract and near Mingala Village and discussed with the village elders renovation to the

lake without destroying its nature so that travellers can visit there for recreation.

They observed the Nay Pyi Taw City Park Project in Dekhinathiri Township, which includes children's playgrounds, shopping malls, restaurants and bars for the public's recreation.

Guhnalone Sesu Village-tract and Aung Mingala Village are located 12 miles away from Lewe, and most of the residents are farmers.—MNA

(Translated by Kyaw Zin Tun)

Yangon Chief Minister inaugurates Malpyaygyun power sub-station in Twantay

YANGON Region Chief Minister U Phyo Min Thein attended the inauguration of Malpyaygyun power sub-station in Twantay Township.

The project was conducted by Yangon Electricity Supply Corporation with 2019-2020 Yangon Region Budget.

At the ceremony, the Chief Minister talked about the 13 33/11kV, 5 MVA sub-stations implemented in Yangon Region and efforts of YESC in building Malpyaygyun sub-station.

The Region government utilized K2038.39 million of the

budget for electrification in Twantay Township and further eight villages and 1,255 households have access to electricity now.

The Chief Minister also discussed the importance of efficient power in local businesses sectors and duties of the local populace to maintain the power grids, sub-stations and transformers.

Pyithu Hluttaw representative U Myint Lwin of Twantay Township expressed words of thanks to the officials.—San Kyaw Oo

(Translated by Khine Thazin Han)



Yangon Region Chief Minister U Phyo Min Thein looks around the Malpyaygyun power sub-station in Twantay on 1 January 2021. **PHOTO: SAN KYAW OO (IPRD)**

COVID-19 Call Centre opens daily

In efforts to speed up the prevention, containment and treatment of the COVID-19 disease, the call centre ([phone number 2019](tel:095-252525)) 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

Bago Region Chief Minister attends ceremony for electrification in Yedashe Township



BAGO Region Chief Minister U Win Thein attended the inauguration for electrification in Ywartawlay and Waryonele villages of Yeni Town in Yedashe Township of Bago Region yesterday.

The government electrified these two villages with 11kV line, 11/0.4kV, two 100kVA under NEP (National Electrification Project) and Bago Region government cabled 400-volt transmission line.

20 villages out of 21 villages of Yeni Town are electrified to date. 12 villages have access to

electricity with 2 miles of NEP while 3 villages are electrified with 2019-2020 region budget and 5 villages are electrified on the self-reliant basis. If the rest one is electrified within 3miles of NEP, the electrification will be completed in full.

The Chief Minister and party also met with the Heads of Region Public Health and Medical Services Department and donated K500,000 to Yedashe COVID-19 Emergency Response Committee. -Tin Soe
(Translated by Khine Thazin Han)

Bago Region Chief Minister participates in the switch-on ceremony for electrification of Ywartawlay and Waryonele villages in Yeni Town, Yedashe Township on 1 January 2021. **PHOTO: TINT SOE**

MIC's performances in October and November 2020

THE Myanmar Investment Commission (MIC) is permitting local and foreign investments in accordance with the Myanmar Investment Law.

The MIC permitted a total of US\$117.681 million worth of foreign investments including increased investments in October 2020, and \$82.075 million of foreign investments including increased investments in November.

The following are foreign investments permitted during October and November 2020:

Sr	Sector	October		November	
		No. of investment	Capital US\$ (million)	No. of investment	Capital US\$ (million)
(a)	Transport and Communications sector	-	-	-	-
(b)	Industrial sector	5	111.091*	3	31.935*
(c)	Electricity sector	-	-	-	-
(d)	Housing and building construction sector	-	-	-	8.000*
(e)	Hotels and tourism sector	-	-	-	-
(f)	Animal husbandry and fisheries sector	1	5.000	2	6.087
(g)	Other services sector	-	0.200*	1	27.455
(h)	Oil and Gas sector	-	-	-	-
(i)	Mining sector	-	-	-	-
(j)	Agricultural sector	1	1.390	1	8.598
(k)	Industrial zone construction sector	-	-	-	-
	Total	7	117.681	7	82.075

* Increased investments were included in the total amount.

The MIC permitted a total of K62,962.319 million worth of local investments including increased investments in October 2020, and K6,897.700 million worth of local investments including increased investments in November 2020. The following are local investments permitted during October and November:

Sr	Sector	October		November	
		No. of investment	Capital US\$ (million)	No. of investment	Capital US\$ (million)
(a)	Housing and building construction sector	1	7,500.000	-	-
(b)	Industrial sector	7	21,262.840	1	1,244.500
(c)	Hotels and tourism sector	2	3,200.000	-	-
(d)	Construction sector	-	-	-	-
(e)	Other services sector	3	29,089.863*	1	673.200
(f)	Oil and Gas sector	-	-	-	-
(g)	Industrial zone construction sector	-	-	-	-
(h)	Mining sector	-	-	-	-
(i)	Animal husbandry and fisheries sector	-	1,609.616*	1	4,980.000

(j)	Electricity sector	-	-	-	-
(k)	Agricultural sector	1	300.000	-	-
(l)	Transport and Communications sector	-	-	-	-
	Total	14	62,962.319	3	6,897.7

* Increased investments were included in the total amount.

The following are the jobs created in October and November 2020 by the foreign investments:

Sr	Sector	Number of jobs created for local workers	
		October	November
(a)	Oil and Gas sector	-	-
(b)	Agricultural sector	13	53
(c)	Animal husbandry and fisheries sector	59	124
(d)	Mining sector	-	-
(e)	Industrial sector	2,986*	3,760*
(f)	Electricity sector	-	-
(g)	Transport and Communications sector	-	-
(h)	Hotels and tourism sector	-	-
(i)	Construction sector	-	-
(j)	Housing and building construction sector	-	-
(k)	Industrial zone construction sector	-	-
(l)	Other services sector	-	86
	Total	3,058	4,023

*Increased number of employees was included in the total number.

The following are the jobs created in October and November 2020 by the local investments:

Sr	Sector	Number of jobs created for local workers	
		October	November
(a)	Electricity sector	-	-
(b)	Mining sector	-	-
(c)	Industrial sector	194	290
(d)	Hotels and tourism sector	92	-
(e)	Housing and building construction sector	71	-
(f)	Animal husbandry and fisheries sector	-	139
(g)	Transport and Communications sector	-	-
(h)	Industrial zone construction sector	-	-
(i)	Construction sector	-	-
(j)	Agricultural sector	18	-
(k)	Other service sector	403	33
(l)	Oil and Gas sector	-	-
	Total	1,488	462

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Few vessels running in Chindwin River cover maritime insurance

Only a few vessels operating in Chindwin River have purchased marine insurance. **PHOTO: WIN OO (ZAYYARDINE)**

A few ferries and cargo vessels running in Chindwin River in Sagaing Region are buying the maritime insurance from Myanma Insurance, said U Tin Tun, the deputy officer in charge of Myanma Insurance (Sagaing Region) office.

The private entrepreneurs have also bought insurance from privately-owned insurance companies. People running small businesses transport only a few cargos even though they have many different kinds of shipments in

bulk. So, only a few people are buying maritime insurance.

"Some are buying insurance from private insurance companies. Another reason is that the vessels running in the Chindwin River are not carrying the cargos in bulk.

There are also a few damages of cargos. So, people are not interested in buying maritime insurance. Some motor vessels are engaged with outside insurance companies. So, it is hard for our Myanma Insurance to persuade the ferries and cargo vessels owners to buy the maritime insurance for their vessels and cargos. People are not interested in maritime insurance. So, we are persuading them to buy the maritime insurance, promoting the awareness of the benefits of buying the insurance," said the deputy officer in charge of Myanma Insurance (Sagaing Region) office.

There are many boat associations, cargo vessel associations and passenger vessel associations running in Chindwin River. Among them, only six-passenger vessel associations and one boat association are engaged with our Myanma Insurance (Sagaing Region) office to buy the maritime insurance policy.

— Win Oo (Zayyardine)
(Translated by Hay Mar)

YSX approves listing of Amata Holding on 28 December

AFTER scrutinizing submitted application documents and a deliberate listing examination, Yangon Stock Exchange (YSX) approved the Amata Holding Public Co., Ltd. (AMATA) to be listed on YSX under Section 41 (c) of the Securities Exchange Law and Section 7 and 8 of the Securities Listing Business Regulations, on 28 December 2020.

The listing date of AMATA will be made in time for the investors. The base price of AMATA will be announced on the YSX website one working day before the listing date.

AMATA would be the seventh public company to list on the exchange. As per the company's profile, AMATA is a public holding company and operates a resort in Ngapali Beach, Inle Lake and Bagan and hot air ballooning business with 15 balloons in six cities.

AMATA owns 99.99% share from United International

Group Co., Ltd and 51% shares from Myanmar Ballooning Co., Ltd.

At present, shares of six listed companies — First Myanmar Investment (FMI), Myanmar Thilawa SEZ Holdings (MTSH), Myanmar Citizens Bank (MCB), First Private Bank (FPB), TMH Telecom Public Co. Ltd (TMH) and the Ever Flow River Group Public Co. Ltd (EFR) — are being traded on the exchange.

In November 2020, the share prices of FMI were closed at K9,900 per unit, MTSH at K3,700, MCB at K8,400, FPB at K22,000, TMH at K2,700 and EFR at K3,900 respectively. Usually, over K60 million worth shares were traded on the exchange every day. The COVID-19 impacts cool down the market at present.

The stock markets worldwide have reported their largest declines since the 2008 financial crisis. Similarly, the local equities market is also scared by

the COVID-19 crash, a market observer points out.

At present, people are putting money in savings, rather than investing the COVID-19 crisis, he added.

YSX held webinar sessions on 26 and 27 December to share the future benefit of stock investment for the investors, in coordination with securities companies (MSEC, KBZSC, CBSC, AYA Trust SC, KTzRH and uabsc).

Next, the Securities and Exchange Commission of Myanmar (SECM) has allowed foreigners to invest in the local equity market from 20 March 2020. The foreign shareholding amount stood at 4,509,475 shares of three listed companies on the exchange as of November-end.

Furthermore, YSX launched pre-listing board (PLB) on 28 September 2020 to provide unlisted public companies with fund-raising opportunities and build a bridge toward listing on

YSX, YSX stated.

The YSX was launched three years ago to improve the private business sector. It disseminates rules and regulations regarding the stock exchange and knowledge of share trading through stock investment seminars. The stock exchange has also sought the government's support to get more public companies to participate in the stock market and help more institutional investors, such as financing companies, investment banks, and insurance companies, to emerge.

Amid the COVID-19 crisis, Myanmar's securities market has been able to continue operating without stopping trading.

According to the annual report released by the exchange, a total of 2.4 million shares worth K13.39 billion were traded on the YSX in 2019, a significant increase compared to the previous year. — Ko Htet

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

Price of Myanmar raw rubber plunges to around K800 per pound

By Nyein Nyein

MYANMAR raw rubber's price is dropping to around K800 per pound, according to the Myanmar Rubber Planters and Producers Association (MRPPA).

"Although the country's raw rubber was priced K950 per pound in November 2020, the natural rubber currently fetched around K800 per pound, MRPPA Chair U Aung Myint Htoo said.

"Last November saw the rubber price hit K950 per pound. Now, the raw rubber is sold for around K800 per pound," he added.

"The prevailing price of raw rubber in the international market is US\$300 per tonne," said U Khaing Myint, the secretary of MRPPA.

"In fact, the global price of raw rubber was at over \$2,500 per tonne last week. However,

the global price of raw rubber recently dropped to \$2,300 per tonne this week," he explained.

He also added that the raw rubber price falls with international finished-product producers' reluctance because of COVID-19 pandemic.

"The main reason for the up and down of the raw rubber price is that the international traders are buying raw rubber and planning to manufacture the finished rubber products over COVID post period. But, they don't have an accurate answer about the pandemic yet. For instance, England started to inject COVID vaccine to the people across the county. But, England was immediately locked down as mutated COVID-19 virus was found in their country. Europe was also locked down, and the producers in Myanmar are backtracking," said U Khaing Myint.



(FILES) Rubber is weighed on a digital scale. PHOTO: AYE THAN

Rubber is primarily produced in Mon and Kayin states and Taninthayi, Bago, and Yangon regions in Myanmar. As per 2018-2019 rubber seasons' data, there are over 1.628 million acres of rubber plantations in Myanmar, with Mon State accounting for 497,153 acres, followed by Taninthayi

Region 348,344 acres and Kayin State with 270,760 acres, according to the MRPPA.

Besides, about 300,000 tonnes of rubber is produced annually across the country. Seventy per cent of rubber made in Myanmar goes to China. It is also shipped to Singapore, Indonesia, Malay-

sia, Viet Nam, the Republic of Korea, India, Japan, and other countries.

Myanmar yearly exports over 200,000 tonnes of natural rubber to foreign countries, generating over US\$200 million.

(Translated by Hay Mar)

YGEA to go online for its gold market trading

By Nyein Nyein

ACCORDING to the association, the Yangon Gold Entrepreneurs Association (YGEA)'s gold market trading will be conducted online.

YGEA Chair U Myo Myint said that YGEA is launching virtual trade through the Zoom application every Sunday to lead the trading via an online system.

"We have started trading online. We also have a problem

with Wi-Fi for online trade. Most of our traders are the old-age people. They cannot use phone expertly. Most of our traders are over 50 years old. Now, we are teaching them how to use the phone. Every Sunday, we are giving them knowledge via training. The virtual trade is also available through the Zoom application on every Sunday at the YGEA office. Once we've all learnt how to use, we will start steadily," he elaborated.

YGEA is carrying out the gold trading through the online system intending to prevent the people from being crowded so that the spreading of COVID-19 can be prevented.

"An online system has come to be in the mainstream in our effort to prevent the spreading of the pandemic. We don't want too many people to gather. Additionally, the gold shops could save their time by trading the gold via an online system di-

rectly. Nowadays, the trading market has widely expanded with traders from states and regions being engaged," said the YGEA chairperson.

On account of the second wave of COVID-19, the Yangon gold market was temporarily closed on 5 September 2020. During the suspension period, the pure gold fetched over K1.3 million per tical (0.578 ounces or 0.016 kilogrammes) in the domestic market. The gold was

then priced at over K1.3 million in early October when the gold trading was resumed.

On 1 January 2021, the pure gold in Myanmar was traded at a price of over K1.3 million per tical while the global gold price hit US\$1,890 per ounce.

During the first wave of COVID-19 in Myanmar, Yangon gold market was closed between 29 March and 17 May.

(Translated by Hay Mar)



(FILES) Thailand is purchasing 80 tonnes of fresh chilli daily from Myanmar. PHOTO: KO TAMAR (IPRD)

Myanmar exports 80 tonnes of fresh chilli daily to Thailand

MYANMAR is exporting 80 tonnes of fresh chilli daily to Thailand, according to the chilli traders.

At present, about 10 or 15 trucks loaded with fresh chilli are entering Mae Sot through Myawady trade zone. Thailand has allowed importing with Customs clearance at an average price of 50 or 90 baht per kilogramme depending on the fresh chilli quality.

Thailand has allowed the

traders to export fresh chilli with the pesticide recommendation free from the Agricultural Department.

The fresh chilli is produced mostly from Mandalay, Kyaukse, Yamethin, PyinOoLwin, Magway and Ayeyawady regions in Myanmar. The chillies unmixed with other chilli species and of the same size are earning higher prices.

The fresh chilli price is ranging between K900-1,200

per viss in the domestic market. The countries that are usually trading the chillies in kilogramme export them by the refrigerated container trucks to prevent them from deterioration.

The fresh chilli from Myanmar can only be exported to Thailand, and the quality of chilli is lower than Malaysia and Viet Nam. —Aye Chan Moe

(Translated by Hay Mar)

Good investment climate called key to attracting investors

AS WITH the global economic crisis brought by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Union Government is taking measures to implement a strategic plan, namely the Myanmar Economic Recovery and Reform Plan-MERRP to relieve economic and social pains caused by the pandemic.

With the formation of economic policies, the MERRP will focus on expanding expenditure on health, infrastructure — both for long-term economic development.

Besides, a range of liberalizing measures are designed under MERRP to make doing business easier and to encourage foreign investment.

To further strengthen the investment in our country, the years to come will offer more investment opportunities for local and foreign investments rather than scrutinizing and

giving nods to investment proposals. Hence, basic infrastructures and investment opportunities which can attract local and foreign investment will emerge in our country.

Firstly, the Union Government will lay down special plans and opportunities luring local and foreign businesses to do investment in the health sector especially in production of medicines and medical equipments, public health care services with modern technology for the next five years to promote the public health care standard and to reduce spending on importing medicines and medical equipment. This goal is under the Universal Health COverage and committed by the government.

The MERRP will be the base for building a resilient economy which will underpin the sustainable and balance economic development in coming years.

The MERRP will be the base for building a resilient economy which will underpin the sustainable and balance economic development in coming years.

The new plan will focus on macroeconomic and financial stability, prioritise growth strategies that are sustainable for the economy in the long run, such as renewable energy sources. It will include support for agriculture, infrastructure that boosts connectivity, as well as improving human capital and promoting innovation.

The new recovery and reform roadmap, which is aimed at rebuilding the economy over the longer term, was drawn up after a recent review of the Covid-19 Economic Relief Plan (CERP), which was a short-term response to manage the impact of Covid-19 on households and businesses. Short-term stimulus measures under the CERP were implemented.

Under the MERRP, quick wins contained in the middle-term tasks of the MERRP will be given priority.

Likes emergency policies and relief plans to response to the pandemic, creation of a good investment climate characterized by transparency, simplicity, predictability and competitiveness capable of attracting foreign direct investment would be encouraged to support the sustainable development of the country.

Government Technical Institute and the Vocational Education System

THE State Counsellor, in her "on-line" message on the occasion of the 125th Anniversary of the Government Technical Institute (GTI) Vocational Education System said that "In building a modern and developed Democratic Federal Union, it is very important for the GTI schools to be of high quality in order to produce highly qualified technical professionals, professionals and technicians". The State Counsellor has always been a strong supporter of Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) whether in public or private sector and the students may well be proud of it. As she has pointed out in her address, TVET Schools and Institutes need for professionals and technicians.

Engineering Technicians, who are being trained by Government Technical Institutes and some private sector schools, are persons who have expertise in the practical application of engineering knowledge in the various fields of engineering such as Mechanical, Electrical, Construction, Mining, and so on. They also supervise "on site", engineering works and processes. Nowadays it seems the GTI's scope has been broadened to train "technicians" in other Production fields as well.

Engineering Technician Education

Myanmar's Engineering Technician Education can be said to have gained a foothold when the Government Technical Institute, Insein was established.



Over 120-year-old Government Technical Institute (GTI) in Insein township, Yangon Region. PHOTO CREDIT: GTI INSEIN.TVET.EDU

There has been 25 GTI and 3 GTC schools established all over Myanmar since then. But the Insein GTI, which has been honoured as a "Cultural Heritage Site" is being developed into a "Hub" for Technical and Vocational Training and Education. The Government Technical Institute (GTI) courses are in the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) stream of "Post-Secondary Education" in the UNESCO's classification of Education Systems. The AGTI Diploma holders, through service and experience could, and as many did, rise up to the level of Executive Engineers and Chief Engineers and some even higher, in their organisations. In fact in the highest level of their careers they would be termed Profession-

al Engineers (PE) on par with any engineering higher degree holder. However many new AGTIs would still like to have a "degree". The Bachelor of Engineering Degree like other professional degrees awarded by the Universities is under the UNESCO classification of "Tertiary Education". The BE degree curricula are of six years duration after Matriculation and focusses more on the practical application and maintenance of engineering processes and facilities.

For the AGTI Diploma holder aspiring to get a "BE Degree"

there are several "pathways". The present pathway is "bridging" to a BE degree course after passing the "entry" requirements of the BE degree course concerned. The next option would be to join a BE degree course offered on-line as a program of the concerned University. Another would be to link with Open University running Engineering Degree Courses in-country (if any) or abroad. There may still be other "pathways" to acquiring an academic "degree".

Myanmar Engineering Council Law

However, an alternative for the AGTI Diploma Holders, to advance their "qualification" further could be for them to seek the Myanmar Engineering Council's

By Lokethar

registration of practising Engineering Technicians and Engineers in line with the Myanmar Engineering Council Law and Rules. According to the Myanmar Engineering Council Rules, registration system of Technologists and Technicians is from the level of "Registered Technician" (R.Tech) for an engineering diploma holder (like AGTI), "Registered Graduate Technician" (R.G Tech) on to "Registered Engineer" (R.E) for BE Engineering Degree holder and upward to "Registered Senior Engineer" (R.S.E) ending in the award of "Registered Professional Engineer" (PE) the highest registration (recognition) in the engineering profession according to the Myanmar Engineering Council Law.

Registration of engineers from the level (not taking into account "Apprentice Engineers") of Engineering Diploma Holders involves a required period of engineering service and attendance in a short training course followed by a written exam. Those who are successful in the written exam are required to submit a paper of his/her career followed by an interview by the "Assessment for Registration Working Committee" of the Engineering Council. The registered Engineering Technician after a period of required service can take the Engineering Councils' Examination to be a Registered Engineer as is stipulated in the Law.

It would perhaps help

the assessment process if the candidates could be required to submit, in support of their paper, their "Portfolios" of learning and experience gained as Engineering Technicians/ Technologists. A "Portfolio" could be required especially from Senior Engineers. It would make it easier for the assessors to assess the applicant's knowledge and competence.

Engineer Registration Scheme

The Engineer Registration scheme of the Engineering Council came into being only after the Myanmar Engineering Council Law was enacted in 2013 followed by the "Rules" in 2014. The Apex body and the Working Committees have been formed and the award of "qualifications" in the form of Registration for recognition at the relevant level is underway. The AGTI Diploma holder could follow the Engineering Council's Registration upwards step by step up to the level of "Professional Engineer," which would be equivalent to the highest "Degree" awarded in the academic stream.

With charity to all and malice to none.

Reference:-

1. The Myanmar Engineering Council Law . (2013)
2. The Myanmar Engineering Council Rules . (2014)



WHO grants 'emergency validation' to Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine

THE World Health Organization on Thursday granted emergency validation to the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, paving the way for countries worldwide to quickly approve its import and distribution.

Britain launched its inoculation drive with the US-German vaccine on Dec 8, with the United States, Canada and EU countries following suit.

WHO said the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine was the first to receive its "emergency validation" since the novel coronavirus first broke out in China a year ago. "This is a very positive step towards ensuring global access to Covid-19 vaccines," said Mariangela Simao, a top WHO official tasked with ensuring access to medicines.

"But I want to emphasise the

need for an even greater global effort to achieve enough vaccine supply to meet the needs of priority populations everywhere," she said in a statement.

WHO said its emergency use listing opens the way for regulators in different countries to approve the import and distribution of the vaccine.

It said it also enables Unicef, which plays a key logistical role

in distributing anti-Covid vaccines, and the Pan-American Health Organization to procure the vaccine for countries that need it.

WHO convened its own experts and those from around the world to review the data on the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine's "safety, efficacy and quality," weighing the benefits against the risks.

SOURCE: AFP



(FILES) In this file photo taken on 28 December 2020 a syringe and a vial of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine are seen at the medical centre of Tzrifin military base in the Israeli town of Rishon LeZion. PHOTO: AFP

73rd Independence Day Anniversary (2021)

National Objectives

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



Myanmar Daily Weather Report

(Issued at 7:00 pm Friday 1st January, 2021)

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

FORECAST VALID UNTIL NOON OF THE 2 January, 2021: Weather will be partly cloudy in Yangon, Taninthayi Regions and Eastern Shan State 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 Deltaic, 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 (5-9) feet in Deltaic, Gulf of Mottama, off and along Mon-Taninthayi Coasts and about (4-6) feet off and along Rakhine Coast.

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT: Likelihood of decrease of night temperatures in Bago, Yangon, Taninthayi Regions and Kayin, Mon States .

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 2 January, 2021: Fair weather.

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 2 January, 2021: Generally fair weather.

FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 2 January, 2021: Fair weather.

WEATHER OUTLOOK FOR WEEKEND: Weather will be generally fair in Nay Pyi Taw, Yangon, Mandalay Regions.

marketing@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

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CHILE

Chile reports Latin America's first detected case of new virus strain



A worker checks the temperature of a customer outside a supermarket in Valparaiso on Jun 12 as the city went under quarantine. **PHOTO: AFP/ADRIANA THOMASA CARBALL**

Chile's health authorities said on Tuesday they had detected a case of the new coronavirus strain initially found in Britain, the first such confirmed infection in Latin America. Experts believe this Covid-19 variant to be considerably more contagious than the original strain first detected in China. The case was found in a Chilean woman who returned to the country on December 21 from Madrid, having also traveled to Britain and Dubai.

She started displaying coronavirus symptoms upon her ar-

rival in Chile's capital Santiago, health ministry undersecretary Paula Daza said. She has since travelled 800-kilometres southwards by airplane to the city of Temuco.

Health authorities responded to the news by announcing that from December 31, everyone arriving in Chile would have to spend 10 days in quarantine.

That quarantine extends to two weeks for those who visited Britain in the two weeks prior to arriving in Chile.

SOURCE: AFP

NEWS IN BRIEFS

BioNTech racing to ramp up vaccine production

GERMAN firm BioNTech said Friday it was racing to ramp up production of its Covid-19 jab in Europe, to fill the "gap" left by the lack of other approved vaccines.

The vaccine developed by BioNTech and its US partner Pfizer was the first to be approved in the European Union in late December.

Countries including Britain, Canada and the United States okayed the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine earlier and have since also greenlighted jabs by US firm Moderna or Oxford/AstraZeneca, leaving the EU's inoculation drive lagging behind.

"The current situation is not rosy, there's a hole because there's an absence of other approved vaccines and we have to fill this gap with our vaccine," BioNTech co-founder Ugur Sahin told Der Spiegel weekly.

Criticism of the slow pace of Europe's vaccine rollout has grown louder in recent days.

In Germany, where the focus has been on inoculating elderly people in care homes, senior doctors have complained that hospital staff are being left waiting for their jabs despite being in the priority groups.

SOURCE: AFP

PFIZER/BIONTECH VACCINE

UK approaches one million vaccinated as cases surge

BRITAIN said Thursday that it had vaccinated almost 950,000 people, as a surge in coronavirus cases prompted the reopening of field hospitals and warnings not to party on New Year's Eve.

According to the latest government figures, 944,539 people in the UK had received a first dose of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine as of Sunday.

A second approved vaccine, developed by Oxford University and British drugs firm AstraZeneca, will be given from next week.

Health Secretary Matt Hancock said the figures showed the state-run National Health Service had "risen to this enormous task".



The Oxford-AstraZeneca and Pfizer-BioNTech vaccines have been approved for use in the UK. **PHOTO: AFP**

He predicted the number of vaccinations would "rise rapidly in the months ahead".

Prime Minister Boris Johnson in a New Year message underscored the "hard struggle"

ahead, as pressure mounted on the NHS to deal with the rise in cases.

But at the same time, he said that "as the sun rises tomorrow on 2021, we have the certainty of

those vaccines".

The UK recorded 55,892 new cases on Thursday, more than 12,000 of which were in London.

The number of people testing positive in the UK in the last seven days rose 24 per cent compared to the previous week.

NHS England said there were 22,728 beds occupied by confirmed cases in England on Thursday.

Three-quarters of England's population are currently under the harshest anti-virus restrictions and ordered to stay at home except for essential trips.

The UK has recorded 2.4 million virus cases and 73,512 deaths.

SOURCE: AFP

"SAVE OUR STAGES"

From dives to Broadway, US arts aid offers 'lifeline' to devastated venues

THE Stone Pony in New Jersey's Asbury Park has hosted dozens of musicians on their ascent to stardom -- including none other than Bruce Springsteen -- but for months it's sat dark due to the coronavirus pandemic.

And like hundreds of other cultural institutions across the United States its owners are hopeful relief is finally on the way: the latest COVID-19 bill recently signed into law by President Donald Trump includes \$15 billion for beleaguered arts venues to survive the ongoing crisis.

The funds -- part of a \$900 billion coronavirus relief pack-

age -- aim to support institutions from dives to Broadway, and come after months of efforts as part of the "Save Our Stages" campaign.

Caroline O'Toole, who manages The Stone Pony, voiced hope that the money would offer a lifeline to the music world, calling the fervent efforts from the industry to get the bill passed "outstanding."

"It just makes you so proud to be part of something like this. To get Washington to move on something like this is amazing," she said.

'A backstop'

Independent entertain-

ment venues and theaters as well as many cultural nonprofits can apply to the grants geared

towards supporting rent and maintenance.

SOURCE: AFP



Katie and Tim Tuten, co-owners of The Hideout bar and live music venue, pose outside their business in Chicago, Illinois, on December 29, 2020. **PHOTO: AFP**

Global optimism tempered

China and Brazil joined more than 50 governments restricting flights from Britain or air traffic in both directions, after the highly infectious new coronavirus strain first appeared there.

Thousands of trucks remained stranded at a major British port as France sent 10,000 kits to test drivers before allowing them to cross the Channel.

Despite the new strain that British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said was "up to 70 percent more transmissible" than the original coronavirus, Britain said rail and sea links with France would remain open over Christmas.

SOURCE: AFP

TRADITIONAL ANGELUS PRAYERS

Pope appears for first time since sciatica revealed

POPE Francis appeared in public Friday for the first time since skipping New Year's masses at St Peter's Basilica because of a bout of sciatica.

Standing behind a desk and next to a Christmas tree and a nativity scene, the pontiff led the traditional Angelus prayers in the Apostolic Palace.

"I send you all my best wishes for peace and serenity in the new year," he said.

"The painful events which marked the life of humanity last year, in particular the pandemic, taught us how necessary it is to take an interest in the problems of others and share their concerns."

The Vatican announced Thursday that Francis would be unable to celebrate New Year's masses Thursday evening and Friday morning because he was



Cardinal Pietro Parolin (2ndR) celebrated New Year mass in St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican, in the absence of Pope Francis. **PHOTO: POOL/AFP**

suffering from sciatica, a chronic nerve condition causing hip pain for the 84-year-old.

Shortly before Christmas, two cardinals in the pope's entourage contracted Covid-19,

raising fears that Francis, who rarely wears a mask, risked infection.

During Italy's first lockdown in March, Francis initially delivered his Sunday Angelus prayers from the Vatican library instead of his usual window overlooking crowds on Saint Peter's Square.

The restriction prompted him to say he felt "caged", and he made several brief appearances at the window, greeting the few people who ventured out into the vast square.

The pope has a risk factor for the coronavirus aside from his advanced age. When he was 21 years old in 1957, he suffered from severe pleurisy, requiring surgery to remove part of his right lung, according to biographer Austen Ivereigh.

The Vatican has not yet indicated when the pope may be vaccinated against Covid-19.

SOURCE: AFP

NATO'S PATIENCE TESTED

German government at odds over armed drones

SHOULD the German army be equipped with killer drones? With less than a year to go before a general election, it's a question that has bitterly divided Chancellor Angela Merkel's coalition government, testing NATO's patience.

German armed forces have so far only been allowed to use reconnaissance drones as part of military missions in Mali and Afghanistan, leaving it to other international partners to deploy armed drones.

In 2018, Germany signed a contract to lease five new Heron TP drones from Israeli manufacturer IAI with the initial purpose of using them only for surveillance, although they can be equipped with missiles

if desired.

Merkel's conservatives and their centre-left Social Democratic (SPD) coalition partners agreed at the time that parliament would have the final say on any future arming of the drones.

Any kind of military action remains a sensitive issue in Germany, a nation scarred by its past as the instigator of two world wars.

But calls have also grown louder in recent years for Germany, as a major European country with considerable political and economic clout, to take on more international responsibility in matters of defence and security.

SOURCE: AFP



A soldier watches an Israeli IAI Heron TP drone on a tarmac. The IAI Heron TP is a multirole, advanced, long-range Medium Altitude Long Endurance, Unmanned Aerial System for strategic missions. **PHOTO COURTESY IAI**

CLASHES WITH POLICE

Peru farm workers maintain road block after deaths

HUNDREDS of agricultural workers were maintaining a blockade of the key Pan-American Highway in the north of Peru to protest against the death of three people in clashes with police.

The workers are demanding an increase in wages, and also object to the passage of a new agriculture bill passed by congress last week.

Authorities said three people, including one minor, were killed in clashes with police.

One of the victims died while being transferred to hospital after being held up by the roadblock. The clashes have left 28 protesters and 36 police injured, while 45 agricultural workers were arrested.

The protesters are blocking



Three people died in clashes between farm workers and police in northern Peru. **PHOTO: AFP**

a part of the Pan-American Highway about 500 kilometres (300 miles) north of the capital, Lima, where they had already been on strike since early last month.

Television images showed

police using tear gas and bird-shot against demonstrators.

The workers are angry about a bill passed by Congress on Tuesday.

SOURCE: AFP

In late Trump salvo, US rejects UN budget over Israel, Iran

PRESIDENT Donald Trump's outgoing administration on Thursday fired a late salvo against the United Nations by voting against its budget, citing disagreements on Israel and Iran, but it found virtually no international support.

Only Israel voted with the United States, with 167 nations in favour, as the General Assembly closed the year by approving the \$3.231 billion UN budget for 2021.

Kelly Craft, the US ambassador to the United Nations, voiced objections that the budget would fund a 20th anniversary event for the 2001 UN conference on racism in Durban, South Africa, where the United States walked out in solidarity with Israel over what it said was a fixation by Muslim-majority countries against the Jewish state.

The United States, the biggest funder of the UN, "called

for this vote to make clear that we stand by our principles, stand up for what is right and never accept consensus for consensus's sake," Craft said on the General Assembly floor.

"Twenty years on, there remains nothing about the Durban Declaration to celebrate or to endorse. It is poisoned by anti-Semitism and anti-Israel bias," she said.

SOURCE: AFP

NEW YEAR, NEW RULES

UK begins post-Brexit future

BRITAIN on Friday began a new year and life outside Europe, after leaving the bloc's single market trading rules to go it alone for the first time in nearly half a century.

Brexit, which has dominated politics on both sides of the Channel since 2016, became reality an hour before midnight, ending the UK's 48-year obligation to follow Brussels' rules.

Free movement of over 500 million people between Britain and the 27 EU states ended.

More rigorous customs checks returned for the first time in decades, despite the hard-fought brokering of a tariff- and quota-free trade deal.

New Year's Day newspapers reflected the historic but still deeply divisive change, which will have repercussions for generations to come.

The pro-Brexit Daily Express' front-page photograph showed the White Cliffs of Dover -- an enduring symbol of Britishness -- with "Freedom" written on a Union flag.

"Our Future. Our Britain. Our Destiny," its headline said. The pro-EU Independent,



The divisions over Brexit, both political and social, remain deep and are likely to last for years. PHOTO: POOL/AFP/FILE

though, was less sure: "Off the hook -- or cut adrift?" it asked, reflecting widespread uncertainty at the path the country had now chosen.

As dawn broke on 2021, attention turned to Britain's borders, particularly its key Channel seaports, to see if the end to seamless trade and travel would cause delays and disruption.

But with New Year's Day a public holiday followed by a weekend, and the government having announced the phased introduction of checks, few immediate problems were envisaged.

"The traffic forecast for the next few days is very light,"

said John Keefe, spokesman for Eurotunnel, which transports freight, cars and coaches under the Channel.

Practical changes

From Monday, more truckers transporting goods to and from mainland Europe face the new rules, including permits to even drive on the roads leading to Channel ports like Dover.

The Road Haulage Association, an industry body, estimates that some 220 million new forms will now need to be filled in every year to allow trade to flow with EU countries.

SOURCE: AFP

NEW YEAR'S DAY ADDRESS

N. Korea's Kim sends letter to citizens ahead of ruling party congress

NORTH KOREAN leader Kim Jong Un sent a letter to citizens on New Year's Day, state-run media reported Friday, in the run-up to the first congress of the ruling party in five years in early January.

Kim gave New Year's Day addresses for seven straight years through 2019, but is unlikely

to do so this year for the second year in a row given that he is set to make a speech at the gathering of the Workers' Party of Korea.

"In the new year, too, I will work hard to bring earlier the new era in which the ideals and desires of our people will come true," Kim was quoted by the official Korean Central News Agency

as saying in the letter.

"I sincerely wish all the families across the country greater happiness and beloved people, good health...I offer thanks to the people for having invariably trusted and supported our Party even in the difficult times," Kim said, according to KCNA.

SOURCE: Kyodo



North Korean leader Kim Jong Un thanked the public for their trust and support "in the difficult times" and wished them happiness and good health in his first New Year's Day cards sent to his people. PHOTO: KCNA/KYODO

SAFETY OF COMMUNITY

New Year injuries in Philippines down sharply due to firecrackers ban

PHILIPPINE health authorities said on Friday that about 50 people were injured in the revelries of celebrating Christmas and welcoming the New Year, significantly lower than in the past due to the fireworks ban amid COVID-19 pandemic.

Health Secretary Francisco Duque said 49 people needed hospital treatment because of fireworks injuries and one from a stray bullet from Dec. 21, 2020, to Jan. 1 this year. No deaths were reported, he added.

"This is 85 per cent lower than the 340 total cases reported last year, and 89 per cent lower than the average number recorded between 2015 and 2019," Duque told an online briefing.

Although the number of injured people in Metro Manila had fallen from last year, he said almost half of the fireworks-related injuries occurred in the capital area.

Duque attributed the low number of injuries this year to the COVID-19 pandemic and the ban on fireworks the government imposed to avoid gathering and prevent transmission.

SOURCE: Xinhua



Customers buy Christmas decorations from a Manila street stall in 2018. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

NEWS IN BRIEF

COPYRIGHT INDUSTRY GROWTH RATE

China's copyright industry's added value exceeds 7 trillion yuan

THE added value of China's copyright industry reached 7.32 trillion yuan (about 1.12 trillion U.S. dollars) in 2019, registering a year-on-year increase of over 10 per cent, according to the Chinese Academy of Press and Publication. From 2016 to 2019, the added value of the copyright industry has grown from 5.46 trillion yuan to 7.32 trillion yuan, with an increase of 34 per cent, showed a report recently issued by the academy. The proportion of the copyright industry in China's GDP also increased from 7.33 per cent in 2016 to 7.39 per cent in 2019, said the report.

SOURCE: Xinhua

JIHADIST ATTACK

Car bomb hits near Russia base in northeast Syria: monitor

A car bomb detonated near a Russian military base in northeastern Syria Friday in the first such jihadist attack in the area against the ally of Damascus, a war monitor said.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights monitoring group reported several wounded in the attack after midnight in the Tal Saman area in Raqa province, but did not give an exact figure.

There was no immediate Russian report of the incident, which occurred in a broader area controlled by Kurdish-led forces but where the Syrian regime and its ally Russia are also present. A statement circulated on social media and attributed to the Al-Qaeda-linked Hurras al-Deen jihadist group claimed the attack.

SOURCE: AFP

ECONOMIC STATISTICS

S.Korea's export falls 5.4 pct in 2020 over COVID-19

SOUTH KOREA'S export fell last year due to an economic fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic, but the slide was limited owing to a partial global demand recovery in the latter half of 2020, a government report showed Friday.

Export, which takes up about half of the export-driven economy, declined 5.4 per cent over the year to 512.85 billion U.S. dollars in 2020, according to the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy. Import contracted 7.2 per cent to

467.23 billion dollars, sending the trade surplus to 45.62 billion dollars. The trade balance stayed in black for 12 straight years. Last year's export topped 500 billion dollars for the fourth consecutive year, while the trade surplus picked up 17.3 per cent compared to the previous year. For the whole year of 2020, the outbound shipment went down in single digits, but global demand partially turned around in the second half.

SOURCE: Xinhua



A makeshift clinic for coronavirus tests is seen near the Seoul Express Bus Terminal in Seocho-gu of Seoul, South Korea, Dec. 14, 2020. PHOTO: NEWSIS/HANDOUT VIA XINHUA

TWICE-DELAYED HSR PROJECT

Singapore, Malaysia scrap high-speed rail project

SINGAPORE and Malaysia announced Friday their decision to scrap their plan for a high-speed rail line between the two countries after negotiations to resume the twice-delayed project collapsed.

The two sides had been negotiating changes to the Kuala Lumpur-Singapore High Speed Rail project that Malaysia had requested in the hope of reaching an accord before a year-end deadline.

"Both governments had conducted several discussions with regard to these changes and had not been able to reach an agreement. Therefore, the HSR Agreement had lapsed on 31 December 2020," Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong and his Malaysian counterpart Muhyiddin Yassin said in a joint statement.

The project originally called for building a 350-kilometre-long high-speed rail that would have cut travel time between Kuala Lumpur and the city-state to just 90 minutes, compared with over four hours by car.

Malaysia must compensate Singapore for costs incurred in implementing the project. The amount was not specified on Friday, but Singapore's parliament is expected to discuss the issue when it meets on Monday.

In February 2013, Lee and then Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak announced their agreement to build the high-speed rail.

A bilateral agreement to build the line was signed in December 2016, after which the tender process attracted the interest of bidders from many foreign countries, including Japan.

SOURCE: Kyodo

CHANNEL TUNNEL

Cross-Channel traffic smooth in France as Brexit kicks in

SCORES of heavy goods vehicles early Friday passed through the Channel Tunnel connecting Britain and France "without any problem", its operator said, dispelling fears of immediate snarl-ups as Brexit took effect.

Almost 200 lorries crossed into France and left the country for the UK after Britain formally left the EU customs union and single market at midnight in the final act of its exit from the European Union, operator Getlink said.

"The traffic was strong enough for an exceptional and historic night, everything went well," a spokesperson for the group told AFP.

"All the trucks completed the formalities" required by the fact Britain is no longer part of the EU customs union. "None



Trucks arrive at Calais, northern France, after crossing from Britain on January 1.

PHOTO: AFP

of the lorries were sent back," the spokesperson said. French officials have insisted that disruption at the frontier in Calais in northern France is being minimised by a so-called "smart border".

Hauliers are re-

quired to enter information about their freight online in advance with only a rapid scan needed at the border. Once this is done the trucks can either be waved through with a green light or subjected to extra checks if given

an orange one.

Officials also say that British businesses have also stockpiled for January, which is also a relatively quiet month with little activity after Christmas.

SOURCE: AFP

TIES SPIRAL DOWNWARD

New York stock exchange delists Chinese telecoms firms

THE New York stock exchange has begun the process of delisting three Chinese telecoms companies as it seeks to comply with an order by the Trump administration barring investment in firms with ties to the Chinese military.

It comes as relations between the world's two

biggest economies spiral downwards over sore points ranging from trade and the coronavirus to Hong Kong and Xinjiang.

Trading in China Mobile Communications, China Telecommunications Corp and China Unicom (Hong Kong) Ltd will end within the next week, subject to transac-

tions being settled, the exchange said in a statement on Friday.

In November, President Donald Trump signed an executive order banning Americans from investing in Chinese companies deemed to be supplying or supporting Beijing's military and security apparatus, earn-

ing a sharp rebuke from China. The order listed 31 companies it said China was using for the "increasing exploitation" of US investment capital to fund military and intelligence services, including the development and deployment of weapons of mass destruction.

SOURCE: AFP

Public Tender Announcement

Dear All Prospect Insurance Company,

Kyauk Phyu Electric Power Company Limited (hereinafter referred to as "Tenderee") would like to purchase relevant insurance with respect to Multiple Insurances for Construction and 1st year Operational Period of Gas&Steam Combined-Cycle Power Plant (total investment value at USD173m) at Kyauk Phyu, Rakhine, Myanmar. The types of insurance include:

Construction Period:

- Construction All Risk Insurance (CAR), Third Party Liability Insurance (TPL) and Delay in start-up insurance followed by CAR(CDSU),
- Marine Cargo insurance (MC) and Delay in start-up followed by Marine Cargo insurance (MDSU)
- Political Violence (PV)

Operational Period:

- Property All Risk Insurance(PD)
- Business Interruption followed by PD(PDBI)
- Machinery Breakdown(MB)
- Business Interruption followed by MB(MBBI)
- Third Party Liability Insurance (TPL)
- Political Violence (PV)

If your good company would like to participate in this tender, please kindly send your confirmation letter before January 7th, 2021 to both email addresses as below. Upon receiving the letter, Tenderee will send the tender document to your good company on January 7th, 2021.

Email: xiudesu@gmail.com, luanjicheng@powerchina.cn
Tel: +95 9786565692

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V VSG DREAM

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V VSG DREAM VOY. NO. (056) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 02-01-2021 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of AIPT where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

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Stone plaques kept in the chamber.



Two chambers for **stone plaques** in Mandalay Royal Palace

By Maung Tha
(Archaeology)

TRANSLATED BY
THAN TUN AUNG

DISCOVERING evidence for history and culture in Myanmar mainly rely on results of excavating stone inscriptions and archaeological objects. Records from stone inscriptions and evidence from the excavation were applied in shaping the histories. Myanmar Encyclopaedia mentioned observation of stone

inscriptions could contribute to assessing faiths, isms, cultures, fine arts and social relations in the eras when the stone inscriptions were carved, much supporting the history of the country.

The Archaeological Survey of Myanmar was formed in 1902 for maintaining and conducting research on movable and unmovable historical, cultural

objects which existed before 1885. At present, the excavated archaeological survey branch of the Department of Archaeology and National Museum under the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture takes responsibilities for stone inscriptions while storing the collected stone inscriptions at original sites, museums and chambers.

Some 3,000 stone plaques were found across Myanmar. Stone inscriptions were carved on shale and marble rocks. Most of the stone plaques were found in central Myanmar, according to archaeologist U Myint Aung. Among ancient stone inscriptions in Myanmar, 729 stone plaques bearing inscriptions of Tri Pitakat treatises erected in the precinct of Kuthodaw Pagoda in Mandalay and Rajakumar stone plaque on the platform of Mya Ceti in Bagan were recognized as Memory of the World by the UNESCO.

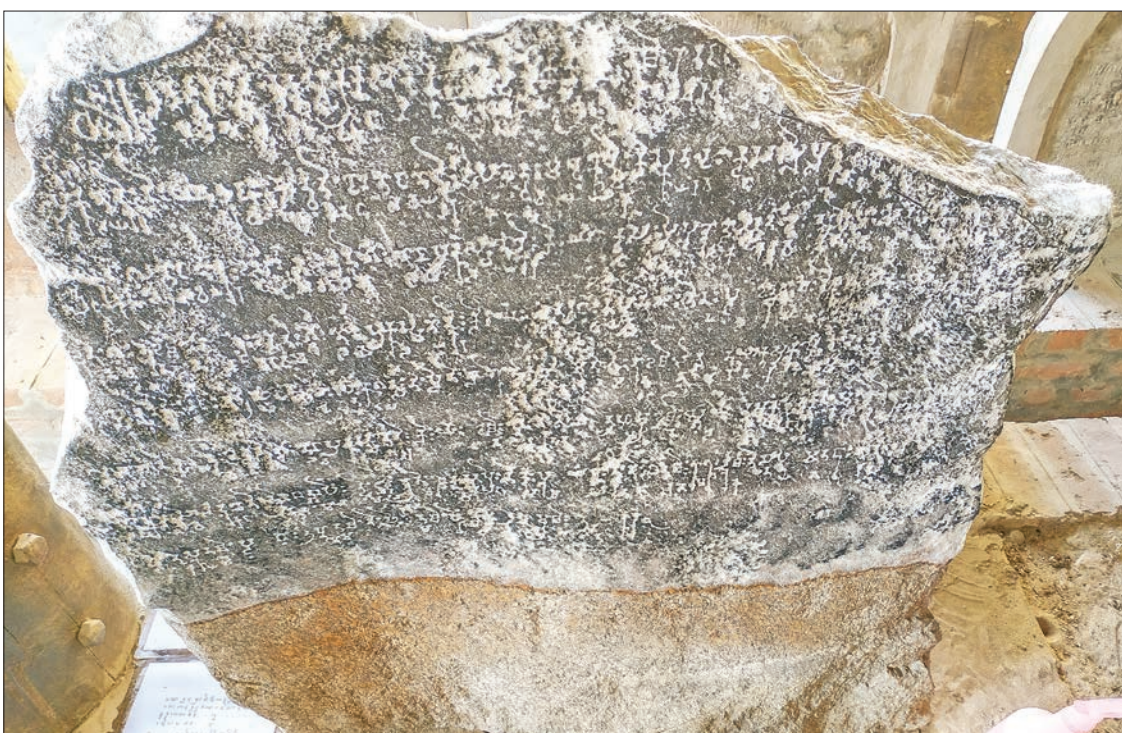
Stone inscriptions in original works, re-carved works and combined works

Some stone inscriptions were carved in original works. Some stone inscriptions were carved again in line with the

original works. Some stone inscriptions were combined with one or two or all kinds of original works.

Although any stone plaques were not named, these stone inscriptions were titled with the names of carvers such as Rajakumar stone inscription, Shin Dispramuk stone inscription, Manuha stone inscription and Dhammaceti stone inscription. Titles of some stone inscriptions were based on carving locations such as Thaton Myathabeik Pagoda stone inscription and Bago Kalyani ordination hall stone inscription. Titles of some stone inscriptions depended on their locations such as Shwezigon Pagoda stone inscription, Htilo Minlo stone inscription and Kuthodaw Pagoda stone inscription. Some stone inscriptions were based on reasons such as King Kyaw Swa's order stone inscription and Sawrahan ordination hall stone inscription. And, some stone inscriptions were regarded as their locations such as royal palace stone inscription, Htupayon stone inscription and Hanlin chamber of stone inscription.

As stone inscription found across Myanmar were carved



A stone plaque erected in the chamber.



Copying stone inscriptions from plaque

in Pali, Sanskrit, Myanmar, Mon, Pyu and Rakhine languages, background histories could be discovered by studying languages, religious affairs, social and economic progress in respective eras. Although the majority of stone inscriptions bore records of meritorious deeds, some significant stone inscriptions were also found.

Minwaing stone inscription mentioned natures of landlords, tenants and land trading, Laymyethna stone inscription trading of slaves, Dhammarazika stone inscription politics in Bagan era and titles of districts, Khemar Pagoda's stone inscription eight levels of hell, Nyanawisi stone inscription artistes, North Gugyi Pagoda stone inscription musical instruments, Sawrahan ordination hall stone inscription architectural science, Dispramuk stone inscription records of diplomatic relations with China, Shinpin Bawdi stone inscription use of metals and Phonthemin Anantathu stone inscription way to making the palm leaves.

Two Myanmar stone inscription ministers

Historical treatises were published in the history of Myanmar literature from the late 18th century to early 19th century. U Kalar History was compiled in the reign of King Tanninganwe (1714-1733 AD) in Nyaungyan era, Twinthin New History in the time of King Badon (1782-1819 AD) in Konbaung era and Glass Palace History in the tenure of King Sagaing (1819-1837 AD). These histories were expressed on palm

leaves. At a time when printing technology developed, the books of history were printed to publish.

King Badon in Konbaung era ordered to collect stone inscriptions from the entire country for separating religious lands and the lands of the king depending on stone inscriptions. Twinthin Minister Maha Sithu and Thetpan Secretary Bala Raza Kyawhtin who supervised stone inscriptions became the first stone inscription ministers of Myanmar.

As King Badon found differences between ancient histories and expression of stone inscriptions, he ordered Twinthin Minister Maha Sithu to compile a new history in conformity with the stone inscriptions. As such, the Twinthin New History, which was the first history-based on stone inscriptions, came out. It mentioned, "If descriptions are different between histories and stone inscriptions, it is necessary to rely on the expression of stone inscriptions."

Books on stone inscriptions

Books compiled by scholars in successive eras on observation of stone inscriptions were published by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Ministry of Culture. Dr E. Forchhammer, who became the Superintendent of Archaeological Survey from the Professor of Pali Language of Yangon University, copied stone inscriptions in ink in entire Myanmar in 1881. After Forchhammer had passed away, books were published on stone inscriptions in Bagan, Pinya and Inwa, 1892, the Inscriptions copied from

the stones collected by King Bodawpaya and placed near the Arakan Pagoda Vol. I, II, 1897, the Inscriptions collected in upper Burma, 1900 and 1903 and Original Inscriptions collected King Bodawpaya and now palace near the Patodawgyi Pagoda, Amara-pura, 1913.

The archaeological survey published seven series of Epigraphic Birmanica within 20 years starting from 1919 and collected seniority of stone inscriptions found till 1921, dates, finding places, current locations, languages used in stone inscriptions and reasons and published the book on a list of the inscription found in Burma.

Likewise, Professor U Pe Maung Tin and GH Luce published the book on selected Bagan stone inscriptions in 1928 and five volumes of the indigenous Myanmar stone inscriptions in 1956, and Professor U E Maung the selected stone inscriptions in Bagan in 1958. The Department of Archaeology also published five volumes of ancient Myanmar stone inscriptions carved from 474 to 998 Myanmar Era collected by Assistant Archaeologist U Nyein Maung and the book on Myanmar ancient stone inscriptions.

Two chambers of stone plaques in Mandalay Royal Palace

In the reign of King Badon in Konbaung era, stone plaques from various corners of Myanmar were conveyed to the Royal Palace. But, these stone plaques scattered in the croplands near

Hsinky Pagoda of Amarapura for many years. So, the Archaeological Survey of Myanmar built a temporary chamber of stone inscriptions near the wall of Maha Wizayaranthi Stupa in Amarapura where stone plaques were vertically kept for storage.

However, cattle entered the chamber as well as some people discarded waste. As such, a chamber for stone inscriptions was built in Mandalay Royal Palace one year ahead of the Second World War, and stone plaques with least damage were moved to the new venue. These stone plaques were 489 in number. A book mentioning inscriptions from originally carved stone inscriptions collected by King Bodawpaya in the precinct of Pahtodawgyi Stupa in Amarapura was published in 1913.

Moreover, the stone plaques with least damage were connected with damaged parts, erected in the precinct of Htupayon Pagoda in Sagaing and kept in Bagan museum. The newly carved stone inscriptions which were copies of the much-damaged plaques were erected in the southwest corner precinct of Maha Muni Buddha Image in Mandalay. Some stone plaques were carved with original inscriptions combined with names of later donors. Among them, 187 shale stone plaques were maintained in the eastern chamber and 523 marble plaques in the western chamber in the precinct of Maha Muni Buddha Image.

During the Second World War, roofs and walls of the stone plaque chamber in Mandalay

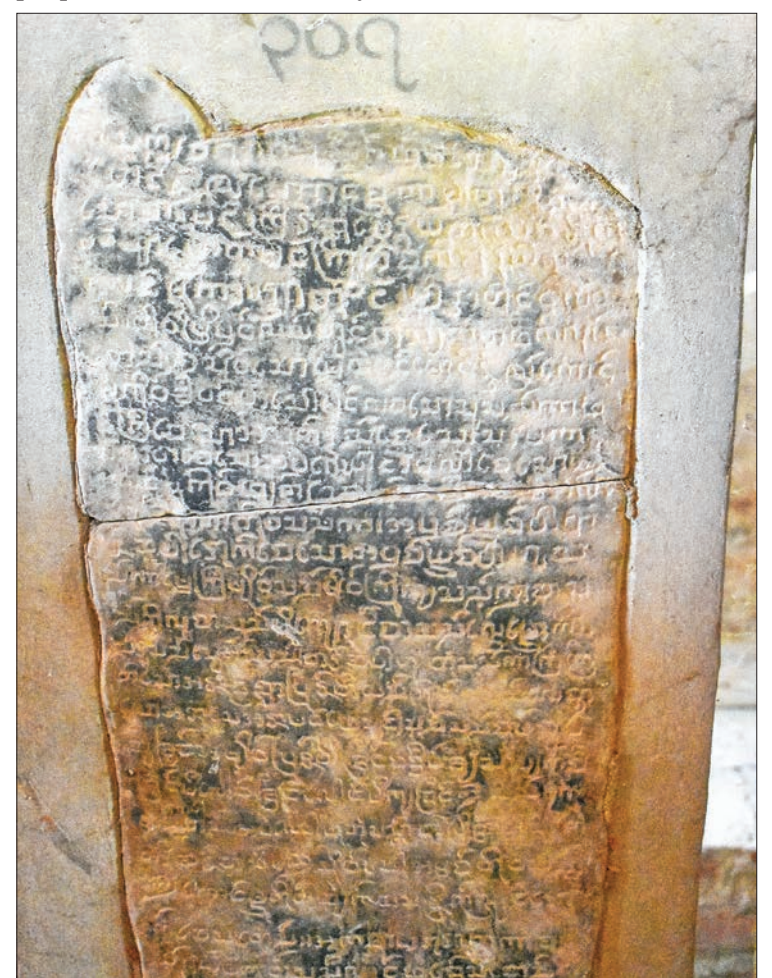
Royal Palace were damaged into pieces. Some stone posts were totally damaged in bomb blasts. As such, the chamber was repaired in 1948, and a new chamber with a capacity of 200 stone posts was built. And, stone plaques from number 1 to number 433 were kept in the large chamber and stone plaques from number 434 to 552 in the small one.

A total of 36 stone plaques were found from the culvert near Wataya corner on Mandalay-Amrapura road in Mandalay in December 1962. These plaques were moved to the chamber in Mandalay Royal Palace. Actually, the large chamber stores 451 stone plaques and the small one, 114. These stone plaques are kept on 1.5 feet high concrete benches for easily reading and copying the stone inscriptions.

The large chamber of stone plaques in Mandalay is 114 years old. Stone inscriptions carved in various languages were collected from various corners of Myanmar in successive eras. Now, two chambers of stone plaques in Mandalay Royal Palace systematically store invaluable stone inscriptions as cultural heritages.

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A stone plaque erected in the chamber.



The debut of beach soccer game will be seen in the upcoming South East Asian Games in Viet Nam. **PHOTO: AFP**

Beach soccer game to be included in 2021 SEA Games in Viet Nam

THE beach soccer game will be seen for the very first time in the upcoming 2021 South East Asian (SEA) Games in Viet Nam, according to an official statement with the ASEAN Football Federation.

The SEA Games 2021 will be held next year depending on the COVID-19 condition and detail fixture for the beach soccer game will be released later, according to the officials.

“The game will be even

more exciting with the inclusion of both futsal and beach soccer alongside football for the biennial multi-sports championship next year beach soccer will only be making their debut at the SEA Games in 2021,” said an official from AFF.

The 2021 Southeast Asian Games is scheduled to take place in Hanoi, Viet Nam from 21 November to 2 December 2021 and will feature 40 sports, including the debut beach soccer game.

This is the second time Viet Nam will hold the SEA Games since 2003.

Beach soccer, also known as beach football or sand football, is a kind of game played on a beach or a smooth ground filled with a large amount of sand.

Each beach soccer team consist of five players, including the goalkeeper. A game lasts thirty-six minutes, and it has split up into three twelve-minute periods.—Lynn Thit (Tgi)

Haaland back in action as Bundesliga returns from mini-break

DORTMUND—Borussia Dortmund striker Erling Braut Haaland is expected to make an eagerly awaited return from injury as his side look to battle back into the Bundesliga top four with a win over high-fliers Wolfsburg on Sunday.

The prolific Norwegian prodigy has missed the last four league games and the last seven in all competitions after picking up a hamstring injury in early December. Yet the 20-year-old returned to team training this week, and Dortmund sporting director Michael Zorc confirmed that he would be back in action this weekend.

“Erling’s recovery has

gone well. We are working on the assumption that he can play against Wolfsburg,” said Zorc.

Haaland’s return is timely, with his side in desperate need of a win after a miserable run of form before Christmas saw them drop to fifth in the table, eight points behind leaders Bayern Munich and two behind Sunday’s opponents Wolfsburg.

Dortmund sacked coach Lucien Favre after they were thrashed by promoted side Stuttgart in mid-December, before suffering a shock away defeat to minnows Union Berlin in their second game under caretaker boss Edin Terzic.

—AFP ■



Erling Haaland is getting treatment on a hip injury in Qatar. **PHOTO: AFP**

Man United eye Premier League summit after Liverpool stumble

LONDON—Liverpool will start 2021 in a familiar position at the top of the Premier League but with a rejuvenated Manchester United leading a pack of challengers who are all within striking distance.

Ole Gunnar Solskjaer’s side would join the champions on 33 points if they beat Aston Villa today, with Juergen Klopp’s men not in action until Monday.

But just seven points separate Liverpool from their next opponents Southampton, all the way down in ninth spot, giving clubs a chance to dream.

AFP Sport looks at some of the main talking points ahead of the weekend action in the English top-flight.

Liverpool v United battle?

Juergen Klopp said he was not “overly frustrated” after seeing his side held to a goalless draw at Newcastle on Wednesday.

But the squandered points denied Liverpool the comfort of a five-point lead over bitter



Manchester United would join Liverpool on 33 points if they beat Aston Villa today, with Juergen Klopp’s men not in action until Monday. **PHOTO: AFP**

rivals United heading into the New Year. The leaders have now drawn three of their past five Premier League games, including last weekend’s disappointing 1-1 draw against struggling West Brom.

Midfielder James Milner has noticed Manchester Unit-

ed’s rise and has warned injury-hit Liverpool that they must “kick on” or risk losing their crown.

Liverpool and United are the two most successful clubs in English football history but have rarely been at their best at the same time.—AFP ■

Arsenal’s Kolasić joins Schalke on loan

LONDON—Sead Kolasić has agreed to join Bundesliga side Schalke on loan for the rest of the season, Arsenal announced on Thursday (Dec 31).

The Bosnia defender, 27, will head back to the club where he joined the youth set-up and went on to become a first-team regular before moving to the

Premier League in June 2017. Kolasić’s loan move is set to begin on January 4. The full-back has made 113 appearances for Arsenal. Arsenal technical director Edu told the club website: “Sead needs to be playing regularly, so we have decided together that a move back to Germany with

Schalke will benefit him at this moment. “We will be keeping in close contact with Sead, and wish him huge success for the remainder of the season with Schalke.”

Schalke are currently bottom of the Bundesliga with just four points and without a win all season.—AFP ■