

NATIONAL

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Sunday, 3 January 2021

Sittoung River-Crossing Bridge (Yedashe) unveiled to mark 73rd Independence Day

BAGO Region Chief Minister U Win Thein and officials opened the Sittoung River-Crossing Bridge (Yedashe) yesterday to mark 73rd Anniversary of Independence Day.

The bridge was constructed with a total of K3,500 million — K1,350 million by Bago Region government fund and K2,150 million by the Union Government Fund. It was built by Special Bridge Group (6) of Bridge Department under the Ministry of Construction.

The bridge is 800 ft in length, 30 ft in width, 24 ft for roadway and has a three-foot long pedestrian walkway on each side. The waterway clearance of the bridge is 28 metres (92 ft) in width and 3.7 metres (12 ft) in height. The steel truss bridge can accommodate up to HS-25. The bridge can facilitate the transport of people and develop the socio-economic, health and education sectors. The bridge is on Yedashe-Kayinchaung-Leiktoe Road and will connect Taungoo-Leiktoe-Yardo-Hopong Road via inter-district road No (2).—Tin Soe (Bago) (Translated by Khine Thazin Han)



Sittoung River-Crossing Bridge was opened on 2 January 2021 in the commemoration of the 73rd Independence Day. PHOTO: MNA

574 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 2 January, total figure rises to 125,616

MYANMAR'S COVID-19 positive cases rose to 125,616 after 574 new cases were reported on 2 January 2021 according to the Ministry of Health and Sports. Among these 125,616 confirmed cases, 2,711 died, 108,660 have been discharged from hospitals.—MNA

Updated at 8 pm, 2 January 2021

Total Cases

125,616

New Cases

574

Total Death Tally

2,711

Discharged from Hospital

108,660

Daily death toll until 8 pm 2-1-2021

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Ministry of Health and Sports

“People are the key”

We should not stumble just as our goal comes into view



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.

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

Myanmar nationals brought back home from Singapore by relief flight

THE 4th relief flight of Myanmar National Airlines (MNA) organized by the Myanmar Embassy in Singapore landed at Yangon International Airport bringing back a total of 78 Myanmar nationals, who were stranded in Singapore due to the suspension of international flights, yesterday evening.

The Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population, the Ministry of Health and Sports and the Yangon Region government arranged 7-day quarantine at specific places or designated hotels, followed by the 7-day

home quarantine.

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

(Translated by Ei Phyu Phyu Aung)



Myanmar returnees are seen at the Yangon International Airport on 2 January 2021. **PHOTO: MNA**

Pa-O Self-Administered Zone continues 2020-2021FY border area development activities



Authorities inspect the progress of Lat Taing-Pan Un road construction near Na Khaik/Na Than Village-Tract, Hsihseng Township.

PHOTO: NAY MIN TUN (HOPONG)

THE MINISTRY of Border Affairs, Progress of Border Areas and National Races Department have been paving the Lat Taing-Pan Un road near Na Khaik/Na Than Village-Tract, Hsihseng Township, Pa-O Self-Administered Zone, with 191.647 million kyats from the Union Fund for Border Area Development in 2020-2021 financial year and about 60 per cent of the 7-mile long road is now paved.

After the road is completed, it will be easier to go to Hopong Township, Pinlaung Township, Taunggyi Township and the entire Hsihseng Township as well as the convenient transportation will provide the regional economy, education, social and health development of more than 5,000 residents in 9 surrounding villages.

Farmers in the area will be able to easily export their products to the market in a short period of time, which will increase incomes, improve socio-economic life, and improve urban and rural development in a short time due to the improved transport links.— Nay Min Tun (Hopong)

(Translated by Ei Phyu Phyu Aung)

COVID-19 Call Centre opens daily

In efforts to speed up the prevention, containment and treatment of the COVID-19 disease, the call centre (phone number 2019) is established by four communications operators and the Blue Ocean Company with the coordination of the Medical Research Department of the Health and Sports Ministry and Post and Telecommunications Department from 9 am to 5 pm daily at the Medical Research Department in Yangon.

Over 43 staff from the Medical Research Department and 17 volunteers from the Myanmar Medical Association totally 60 workers have been working at the centre since 8th April.—MNA

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: THANT ZAW OO

MoSWRR discusses laws for disaster management, social protection, anti-human trafficking

UNION Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Dr Win Myat Aye presided over a virtual meeting to review Disaster Management Law, Myanmar Social Protection Assistance Law (draft) and Anti-Trafficking in Persons Law (draft) yesterday.

The Union Minister said the ministry is conducting amendment and stipulation of laws during such period of democratic transition.

He also discussed the objectives in building democratic federal union, peace and people, democratic norms, human rights, decisions to make in accordance with the international treaties and conventions and plans to create harmony and to promote solidarity among the public.

Then, he urged the attendees to coordinate the discussion from their respective sectors.

Deputy Minister U Soe Aung briefed the work plans in imple-



Union Minister Dr Win Myat Aye participates in the virtual meeting on reviewing and drafting laws for disaster management, social protection and anti-human trafficking on 2 January. PHOTO: MNA

menting the disaster management in accordance with the law and the Permanent Secretary, and Director-General of Disaster Management Department presented the suggestions of experts

including definition for Disaster Management Law, announcement for disaster-prone areas, budget allocation and authorization, international aids, co-operation work between foreign

organizations and role of media. Regarding the Social Protection Assistance Law (draft), the Union Minister also highlighted the importance of social protection programmes to

reduce poverty and to develop the human resources and plans to implement as a sustainable investment in social protection sectors.

The Director for Social Protection Division of Social Welfare Department presented the draft of Myanmar Social Protection Assistance Law (draft).

During the discussion for Anti-Trafficking in Persons Law (draft), the Director-General for Rehabilitation Department discussed stipulations of law regarding human trafficking in the neighbouring countries, while the Deputy Director-General showed the educational videos about human trafficking.

Then, the officials also discussed reforms in accepting the victims of human trafficking and effective reintegration and rehabilitation programmes for the victims rights. —MNA

(Translated by Khine Thazin Han)

Young motorcyclist killed in car crash in Thaton Township

A young motorcyclist was killed when his motorcycle crashed into a vehicle on 1 January in the evening on Yangon-Mawlamyine Express Road near Thuwunnawady town in Thaton township, Mon State.

According to the accident report, the police from Thein Seik police station and Tada-U

village administrator rushed to the scene for investigation. The vehicle, which was driven by Thet Paing Ye (25) from Tada-U village heading for Thaton from Bilin town, crashed the motorbike driven by Myat Soe Oo, 15, together with Saw Chit, 18, onboard from the same direction at Mileposts

between 137/5 and 137/6 when the vehicle turned into the opposite land. At the same time, the motorbike tried to overtake the car.

The accident left the motorcyclist dead on the spot while Saw Chit on board the motorbike was injured slightly. The injured person was trans-

ported to Thein Seik People's Hospital for treatment.

Both drivers of the vehicle and motorcycle were charged with Section 279, 337, 304(A) of the Penal Code by Thein Seik Police Station. — Khun (Win Pa)

(Translated by Hay Mar)

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Despite high yield, Taiwan tomato growers face hardship as price drops

TAIWAN tomato growers are struggling from lower profit because of the declining price of tomatoes. However, the tomato yield is high in this season, said Ko Kyaw Zin Win, a local Taiwan tomato grower from Thet Man Yin village, Pwintbyu township, Magway region.

The local people from villages near Mone Creek in Pwintbyu township are growing vegetables and crops on a commercial scale using Mone Creek water and underground water. This year, the Taiwan tomato cultivation is successful with high yield, and the local growers are picking them up to sell in the market, according to the tomato growers.

"Our villagers near Mone Creek are growing the crops and vegetables annually with good use of groundwater and Mone



Tomato growers in Pwintbyu Township face difficulties due to the tomatoes price decline. **PHOTO: YE WIN NAING (IPRD)**

Creek. This year, the villagers are growing mostly Taiwan to-

matos. If they grow the Taiwan tomatoes systematically,

they can produce a minimum of around 3,000 or 4,000 visses from 10,000 tomato trees. With the development of the agricultural method in recent years, the local people are growing the crops by learning the planting method engaging with the agricultural companies. Now, the local farmers are growing the crops and vegetables systematically. This year, the farmers successfully cultivated Taiwan tomatoes. But, the price of tomato is only K400-500 per viss this year. So, the growers can make only less profit," said Ko Kyaw Zin Win.

After three months of cultivation, the Taiwan tomatoes can be sold back in the market, according to the local growers from Pwintbyu Township. —Ye Win Naing (IPRD)

(Translated by Hay Mar)

Wetlet locals earn family income from livestock farming

LOCAL breeders from Wetlet Township are earning their family income from manageable scale livestock farming.

Forty years ago, a family led by U Nyunt Hsaung from Mingon village in Wetlet started a breeding business with milch cows with an initial investment of K1,400. Now, their family possesses 60 cattle with an increase of 10 cattle annually. They sell a small cow for K500,000 and a big one for K1 million for their livelihood. They can profit if they sell a milch cow for K1 million and a male ox for K1.5 million.



Local breeders from Wetlet Township are earning their family income from manageable scale livestock farming. **PHOTO: SOE SOE HLAING (WETLET)**

Earlier, their family tended the cattle by themselves. Now, the

family hired a cowherd to tend the cattle because they are old enough to do so.

The cattle are usually tended from 9 am to 4 pm. They have to buy one trailer (Htawlargyi) load of straw for K35,000 when there lacks the cattle feed. The cow dung is usually used for farming as fertilizer.

There are seven members in U Nyunt Hsaung's family. They usually sell ten cattle per year to cover their family costs, it is learnt. —Soe Soe Hlaing (Wetlet) (Translated by Hay Mar)

Family farms of broccoflower thrive in Pinlebu, Sagaing



Broccoflower plants seen in Pinlebu Township. **PHOTO: MYO LWIN (IPRD)**

The family farms of broccoflower are thriving and the business is doing well in Pinlebu Township in Sagaing Region, according to U Min Kyaw, a township cauliflower grower in Moe Kaung Ward.

The broccoflower has been grown and sold on a small scale by families since September for K500 for a large flower. In addition to it, cauliflowers, cabbages, Chinese kales, collards, tomatoes, beans, pumpkins, gourds and other vegetables are also being grown and sold.

Although the crop is not selling better than in previous years due to COVID-19, the all-year-round small-scale family farms provide a regular daily income and support the family business.

After growing the paddy, family plants winter crops on the backyard plots of land and sand banks and sell them to annually support family business in Pinlebu Township. —Myo Lwin (IPRD)

(Translated by Ei Phyu Phyu Aung)

VACCINATIONS

Vatican to begin vaccinations second half of January

THE Vatican announced Saturday its Covid-19 vaccination campaign will begin “in the next few days” with health workers and the elderly to receive vaccines from the second half of January.

No mention was made in the short press release about Pope Francis and when the 84-year-old pontiff will receive a vaccine.

“It is foreseeable that the vaccines could arrive in the State in the second week of

January, in a sufficient quantity to cover the needs of the Holy See and the Vatican City State,” it said.

The Vatican has purchased a low temperature refrigerator for storing the vaccine, with inoculations to start in the second half of January, it said.

Priority would be given to “health and public safety personnel, the elderly and personnel most frequently in contact with the public.”

SOURCE: AFP



The St. Peter's Basilica (centre) in Vatican city is pictured in this May 6, 2020 photograph. PHOTO: FILIPPO MONTEFORTE / AFP

NEWS IN BRIEFS

Crowds throng Wuhan, where pandemic began, to celebrate New Year

Thousands of New Year revellers packed into the centre of Wuhan, the Chinese city where Covid-19 was first detected, cheering and releasing balloons to welcome in 2021.

Police erected fences to try to prevent congestion around the city's Customs House clock tower, but the measure was ineffective due to the large turnout of mainly young people.

“2020 has been a very difficult year for us because we have experienced the epidemic, especially in Wuhan, which is an unforgettable experience for us,” local resident Xu Du told AFP.

Most of the crowd wore masks for the celebrations on Thursday evening, which included a light show.

Wuhan was put under a strict lockdown for more than two months from late January, but has returned to normal life since the summer. Schools fully reopened in September.

SOURCE: AFP

AFTER TWO DAYS

Mass rave in France breaks up amid virus fears



Police were checking all those leaving the site. PHOTO: AFP

REVELLERS early Saturday began leaving an illegal New Year rave in northwestern France that drew some 2,500 people, led to clashes with police

and sparked concerns it could spread the coronavirus.

Police had failed to stop the underground event, set up in two warehouses in Lieuron, south of

Rennes in Brittany on Thursday.

Such mass gatherings are strictly prohibited across France to prevent the spread of Covid-19, and a nationwide 8:00 pm curfew -- which was not lifted for New Year -- applies across the country.

The local prefecture said Saturday the music had been switched off after two nights and the first revellers began leaving the site before dawn.

“There has been no intervention by security forces,” it said in a statement, but added that police were checking all those leaving the site.

Only “a few hundred” revellers remained, the prefecture said, quoting an association that oversees the security risks of

such events.

Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin tweeted that the large police presence at the site had led to the breakup of the rave “without violence.”

About half of the car park at the site was empty Saturday morning, an AFP photographer said.

Police had Thursday night tried to “prevent this event but faced fierce hostility from many partygoers” who set one of their cars on fire and threw bottles and stones, the prefecture said on Friday.

Those present had come from across France and even abroad, it said.

SOURCE: AFP

ICONIC VENUE

Opera to return to Sydney after virus hiatus

THE finishing touches were being put on a glitzy show at the Sydney Opera House Saturday, as the venue prepared to host an opera crowd for the first time since March. “The Merry Widow” will open on Tuesday to masked audiences up to 75 per cent capacity, in a sign of hope for a performing arts industry crippled by the pandemic, artistic director Lyndon Terracini told AFP. “Walking back into the theatre was a very emotional time for everyone involved,” he said.

“I think throughout this year, other opera houses will be opening very soon and people will be coming back to the theatre with a sense of hope.” Thanks to Aus-

tralia's success in suppressing the virus, crowds inside venues -- including the Sydney Opera House -- have been permitted in the country's most populous city for months.

But even as the performers readied for their opening night, an outbreak in the city forced officials to tighten restrictions -- including a new mandate on mask-wearing on public transport and in many indoor settings from midnight Saturday. The outbreak of over 180 cases first emerged in December in Sydney's northeast but has since sparked other clusters, including in Melbourne. Areas of Sydney remain under lockdown and of-



Australia's performing arts industry has been hit hard by the virus, but performances at the Sydney Opera House are due to restart this week. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

officials have suggested further restrictions may be needed to curb the spread -- which could

include a change to audiences at indoor performances.

SOURCE: AFP

Tokyo calls for state of emergency over virus third wave

Tokyo's governor on Saturday asked Japan's central government to declare a new state of emergency as the country battles a third wave of the coronavirus, with record numbers of new cases.

Yuriko Koike, joined by the governors of three neighbouring regions, called for the measure to be imposed in their areas during a meeting with Yasutoshi Nishimura, the minister in charge of the coronavirus response.

Japanese officials have in recent weeks asked restaurants and businesses to close early and urged people to stay at home, measures that Koike said were having “some effect”.

“But considering the number of cases and the situation of the medical system in Tokyo and the three neighbouring prefectures, we decided it was necessary to immediately and thoroughly curb the movement of people,” she told reporters.

SOURCE: AFP

RAFT OF RESTRICTIONS

Bangkok imposes partial lockdown to combat virus

BANGKOK'S nightlife will go quiet as a ban on bars, nightclubs and restaurant alcohol sales goes into effect Saturday, among a raft of restrictions aimed at curbing the kingdom's rising coronavirus toll.

Thailand initially appeared to have escaped the worst of the virus, registering just under 4,000 total cases in November, despite being the second country to detect an infection in January.

But an outbreak last month at a massive seafood market has spiralled into a resurgence, with infections now detected in 53 of the kingdom's 73 provinces. By Saturday the caseload had jumped to over 7,300.

In Bangkok, where more than 2,600 active cases have been detected, city authorities acted swiftly and announced a partial lockdown to go into effect Saturday.

Bars and nightclubs, boxing stadiums, cockfighting rings and massage parlours -- as well as



Bangkok on Saturday imposed partial lockdown measures to deal with a recent uptick in Covid-19 coronavirus cases. PHOTO: AFP

beauty salons and gyms -- will be among a slew of businesses affected.

The capital also announced yesterday that public schools will be closed for two weeks, while

more than a dozen virus checkpoints were set up Saturday across the city.

"We don't want to use extreme measures like a lockdown and putting up a curfew,

but we need a stronger medicine to prevent the new surge," said Taweessin Visanuyothin, a spokesman for Thailand's Covid-19 taskforce.

SOURCE: AFP

EXTRAORDINARY MILESTONE

New Year arrives with US hitting 20 million Covid cases

THE United States marked the New Year on Friday by passing the extraordinary milestone of 20 million Covid-19 cases, after global celebrations welcoming in 2021 were largely muted by the pandemic.

The US has floundered in its efforts to quell the virus, which is spreading rapidly across the country and has already caused more than 347,000 deaths -- by far the highest national death toll.

Worldwide hopes that Covid-19 vaccines will bring a rapid end to the pandemic in 2021 have been shaken by the slow start to the US vaccination programme, which has been beset by logistical problems and overstretched



Medical workers test for coronavirus at a church in Texas, US, on July 17, 2020. PHOTO: AFP

hospitals.

Nearly 2.8 million people in the US have already received their first jabs, but the figure fell

well behind the 20 million inoculations that President Donald Trump's administration promised by the end of 2020.

The desperate race to vaccinate is set to dominate the coming year, with the coronavirus already having killed at least 1.8 million people since emerging in China in December 2019, according to a tally from official sources compiled by AFP.

German firm BioNTech said Friday it was racing to ramp up production of its Covid-19 jab to fill a shortage left by the lack of other approved vaccines in Europe. Countries including Britain, Canada and the United States approved the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine earlier, and have since also greenlighted jabs by US firm Moderna or Oxford-AstraZeneca.

SOURCE: AFP

VACCINATION ROLLOUT

India holds vaccine drills ahead of mass inoculation drive

INDIA on Saturday staged nationwide drills to start one of the world's biggest coronavirus vaccination programmes as the drug regulator prepared to approve the first vaccine.

A government panel on Friday recommended emergency use of the AstraZeneca-Oxford University shot and the first injections could be given in the coming week after the Drugs Control Authority of India gives final approval. India, which has the world's second highest number of pandemic cases -- more than 10.2 million -- has set an ambitious target of inoculating 300 million of its 1.3 billion people by mid-2021. Serum Institute of India, the world's

biggest vaccine producer, has already stockpiled tens of millions of doses of AstraZeneca's Covishield ready for the campaign and 96,000 health workers have been trained for the inoculation drive.

The drills saw 25 health workers receive dummy vaccines at each of the centres to be used across the country in a test run ahead of the launch. Health minister Harsh Vardhan said the exercise would help build expertise "so that the upcoming vaccination drive may proceed without any glitch." He has also called for a campaign to counter "misleading rumours" that may scare people off getting the vaccine.

SOURCE: AFP



The mock drills are to check for any glitches before rolling out a national inoculation drive. PHOTO: AFP

NEWS IN BRIEFS

UK

'Chaos' following last-minute decision to keep all London primary schools closed

THE UK government has taken a u-turn on the reopening of schools, with critics accusing them of creating chaos through the last-minute change of heart. UK Education Secretary Gavin Williamson in mid-December said that all primary school pupils in England would be returning to school as normal in January, though secondary pupils and college students would see a staggered return. With the number of new confirmed cases rising, however, he announced on Wednesday that some primary pupils in south-east England and parts of London would see a delayed return. Two days later, this was expanded to the whole of the capital. SOURCE: AFP

GAZA

2020 has drained economy 'in all respects'

THE Public Relations and Media Manager at the Gaza Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Maher Tabbaa, stated that the year 2020 has been a devastating year for all economic rates in Gaza, mainly as covid worsened the economic crisis. In the third quarter of the year, the rate of unemployment increased to 49%, as the number of jobless surpassed 208,000 people, and the poverty rate among the population grew up to 53% according to actual consumption trends and the extreme poverty rate hit 33.8%. SOURCE: AFP

FIRST DAY OF BREXIT

Covid woes, not new checks, weigh on post-Brexit passengers



Passengers board a Eurostar train at St Pancras International station in London more than a week ago, in the runup to Britain withdrawing from the Customs union. **PHOTO: AFP**

TRAVELLERS braving trains between London and Paris on the first day after Britain's exit from the EU Customs union experienced additional checks

but were more worried by the extra rules required for travel in a pandemic-haunted world.

A much reduced Eurostar service is taking passengers be-

tween the French and British capitals during the pandemic, with London-bound travellers needing to quarantine on arrival and those heading to Paris re-

quiring a negative Covid-19 test.

Those stepping off the train from London onto the platform at Gare du Nord in Paris found new Customs checks awaiting them, with limits, taxes and even bans on bringing in some goods.

British travellers who are not resident in France however can now also enjoy tax rebates on their shopping when leaving Paris. "In the first days of Brexit, there will be a lot of explaining to do," acknowledged Jean-Roald L'Hermitte, the head of Customs for the Paris region.

"We will gradually get travellers used to these services and these controls," he told AFP, emphasising that checks should not slow down flows and will not target every traveller.

He said some 700 new French Customs officers had been recruited to deal with Brexit, adding the service had been "innovative" in rising to

the challenge, with automated kiosks being set up for British passengers to get their VAT rebates.

'It's ruined'

As the passengers emerged from the newly-arrived train in Paris, some were called by the Customs to stop and say what they were carrying.

"When I arrived, they asked me if I had any goods or food worth up to 300 euros. If so, I had to pay taxes," said Stephanie Bapes, a 35-year-old Frenchwoman who lives in London.

"Like all French people, I bring meat, cheese or wine when I return to London. Meat will now be banned from our luggage and we will have to pay attention to what we're carrying and check on the government website. For the return, I will bring nothing at all. It's ruined," she sighed.

SOURCE: AFP

ANXIETY AND SUICIDE

Pandemic, celebrity deaths likely trigger rise of suicides in Japan

Japan has seen a rise in the number of people taking their own lives in recent months as anxieties brought on by the coronavirus pandemic take an emotional and psychological toll.

The trend is believed to have been exacerbated by the apparent suicides of celebrities and has had mental experts scrambling to respond.

Yasuyuki Shimizu, representative director of the Japan Suicide Countermeasures Promotion Centre, warned that the risk of suicide has been growing in Japan, especially for women, and his concern is borne out by the figures.

Suicides by women began to rise in June from a year earlier and in November marked the sixth straight month of increase, logging an 88.6 per cent jump in October, according to provisional National Police Agency data compiled on Dec. 16. The total number of suicides from July to November also rose from a year earlier.

"The anxieties or problems women tend to face have likely worsened during the pandemic," Shimizu said, with factors such as mental illness, finan-



Yasuyuki Shimizu, representative director of the Japan Suicide Countermeasures Promotion Centre, gives an interview in Tokyo on Dec. 9, 2020. **PHOTO: KYODO**

cial and employment difficulties, child-rearing and domestic violence contributing to the female suicide rates.

Professional counsellors have also been drawing a link between the pandemic and the increased risk of suicide.

Nonprofit organization Tokyo Mental Health Square near Ikebukuro Station has been providing consultations via private messaging, telephone and face-to-face meetings, among others.

Counsellors pay close attention to particular signs provided by clients in assessing their risk level. These include whether they express a firm intent to kill themselves rather than a

vague desire, indicate a method, such as hanging, or specify a place and date, according to Katsuyoshi Shingyouchi, head of the organization's counselling centre.

If counsellors judge a client to be at high risk of suicide, they report the case to police, who request telecommunications companies to disclose personal information about the individual, said Shingyouchi.

"I was talking with my staff around August that there might be something going on, as the number of cases we were reporting to police was rising," he said. The following month, the center saw a spike in the number of people accessing its social media consultation service after the death of a popular actress Yuko Takeuchi in an apparent suicide, with daily queries jumping from around 200 to around 1,800 shortly after her death.

The death of Takeuchi, 40, in late September and that of actor Haruma Miura, 30, in July are among the cases reported in Japan of celebrities appearing to take their own lives during the pandemic.

SOURCE: Kyodo

PFIZER/BIONTECH JAB

Israel administers one million COVID vaccines in 10 days to lead global race

ISRAEL has vaccinated more than one million people against COVID-19 in just over 10 days, in what experts believe is the world's fastest ever vaccine drive.

More than one million Israelis have received an initial shot of a COVID-19 vaccine manufactured by Pfizer/BioNTech, including all medical staff and one in every four people aged over 60. Two doses of the vaccine must be administered, around three weeks apart, to confer full virus immunity.

Israel's vaccination drive began on December 20 when prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu

became the first person to receive the vaccine, doing so on live TV. Since then, the country has enlisted army paramedics, hospital staff and community clinics as it powers towards its target of vaccinating 150,000 people every day.

Rollout of the vaccine has been made more efficient thanks to the use of technology that sends citizens text and voice messages as soon as they are eligible for an inoculation appointment. Anyone who believes they have been overlooked can call the national health service and set an appointment over the phone.

SOURCE: AFP



A nurse holds coronavirus vaccine doses as they arrive at Shaare Zedek Medical Centre in Jerusalem on December 19, 2020. **PHOTO: YONATAN SINDEL/FLASH90/AFP**

Taxation is vital for capital formation in developing countries

ONLINE shopping has mushroomed during the COVID-19 crisis. Their market platform seems to have lesser restrictions than the traditional vendors in selling the goods. While registered companies are struggling for to get back reasonable profits amid a wide range of costs, from shop rental and employment payments to tax to the government, the online sales are penetrating the communities with little costs in investment.

Online shopping is welcomed as it has emerged together with the digital age. However, systematic measures will be required to control its market practices for ensuring a fair-ground of market competition for the registered companies.

Online vendors might use various trade channels to purchase the goods to be sold, while the registered dealers have to pay some form of taxes, at least company registration fees to the state. Although the former is not paying almost all the kind of taxes, the prices of their some of commodities are dramatically higher than that of registered items.

... while it is a very useful tool of under-developed countries to break the vicious circle of poverty and to liberate from poverty.

The online sale vendors should not be exempted from the regular taxes, which are very crucial for the country. Taxation is also vital to capital formation in developing countries, while it is a very useful tool of underdeveloped countries to break the vicious circle of poverty and to liberate from poverty.

Why? This is because taxation is a source of capital formation, an incentive for investment, an instrument of equalization, and an implement to curtail the consumption of those above the subsistence level.

Meanwhile, online sales and e-commerce advocates argued that new and emerging businesses need to be free from certain government regulations to grow. However, it is required to be more aware of the lost tax revenue.

In the near future, online retailing sources are expected to become the largest revenue for the country.

After all, there is no doubt that taxation will play a very important role in economic development. The country should have systemic measures to control and coordinate some online market places so as not to turn it into something like "collecting frogs in a bag with holes".

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CAMPAIGNS TO RAISE AWARENESS AROUND THE IMPORTANCE OF IMMUNIZATION

Over 50 Countries Launch Vaccination Campaigns

China, where the pandemic first emerged, was also the first to start vaccinations over the summer, without waiting for a vaccine to be formally authorized but targeting the most vulnerable. To date nearly five million Chinese people have been vaccinated.

Around 50 countries around the world have already started vaccinating their people against COVID-19, barely a year after the first alert by China signalled the start of the epidemic.

A snapshot:
China Leads The Way

China, where the pandemic first emerged, was also the first to start vaccinations over the summer, without waiting for a vaccine to be formally authorized but targeting the most vulnerable.

To date nearly five million Chinese people have been vaccinated. Beijing on Thursday granted "conditional" market approval to a Sinopharm vaccine with a reported 79 per cent efficacy rate against COVID-19.

Russia followed on 5 December, rolling out vaccinations for those considered high risk with its contentious Sputnik V vaccine, which has since been approved

in Belarus and Argentina, which launched their vaccination campaigns on Tuesday.

Algeria is set to follow them in January.

Britain First In The West

Britain led the way in the Western world, authorising the vaccine made by US-German pharma alliance Pfizer-BioNTech. Its vaccination campaign started on 8 December and by 27 December close to 950,000 people had received their jabs, according to official figures published Thursday.

Britain was also the first on Wednesday to approve the coronavirus vaccine developed by AstraZeneca and Oxford University. It will be administered for the first time on 4 January.

Canada and the United States (US) started their vaccination drives on 14 December; Switzerland on the 23rd, Serbia the 24th, the vast majority of the

European Union (EU) on 27 December, Norway on Sunday and Iceland on Tuesday. All of them are using the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine.

The US and Canada are also the first two countries to have authorized the vaccine by US pharma company Moderna, which is up for approval on 6 January by the EU.

Around 2.8 million Americans have already been given their first dose of the COVID-19 jab. In the 27-nation EU, Germany has so far given the most injections, with more than 130,000 in five days.

Israeli Target

In the Middle East, the United Arab Emirates were the first to launch their vaccination campaign with doses of China's Sinopharm, on 14 December in the capital Abu Dhabi. Dubai started its vaccinations on 23 December, using doses of Pfizer-BioNTech.



A medical staff prepares to administer the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine at the United Memorial Medical Center on 21 December, 2020 in Houston, Texas. PHOTO: AFP

Saudi Arabia and Bahrain launched their campaigns on 17 December; Israel two days later; Qatar on the 23rd, Kuwait the 24th, and Oman on 27 December. All are solely using the Pfizer-BioNTech jab, except for Bah-

rain which is also using China's Sinopharm.

Israel, which has set itself the ambitious goal of inoculating a quarter of its population in a month, has already injected nearly 800,000 people. Bahrain

has vaccinated nearly 60,000 and Oman more than 3,000.

Turkey, which has received doses of China's Sinovac, will launch its vaccination drive in mid-January.

SOURCE: AFP

THE WORLD CELEBRATES THE NEW YEAR IN LOCKDOWN CONDITIONS WITH MUTED CELEBRATIONS.

Coronavirus: Latest Global Developments

HERE are the latest developments in the coronavirus crisis:

Muted New Year Celebrations

Fireworks burst above eerily quiet landmarks from Sydney Harbour Bridge to Copacabana beach, as the world ushered in the New Year with muted celebrations.

In New York's famous Times Square, the public were blocked from entry and the usual overflowing crowd replaced with a group of specially invited frontline workers, separated by barricades to enforce social distancing.

Illegal Rave

Some 2,500 partygoers attend an illegal New Year rave in north western France, violently clashing with police who failed to stop it and sparking concern the underground event could spread the virus, authorities say.

WHO Emergency Validation

The World Health Organization (WHO) granted emergency validation to the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, paving the way for countries worldwide to quickly approve its import and distribution.

The WHO says the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine is the first to receive its "emergency validation" since the virus first broke out in China a year ago.

UK Nears One Million Vaccinated

Britain says it has vaccinated almost 950,000 people, as a surge in cases prompts the reopening of field hospitals.

According to the latest government figures, 944,539 people in the United Kingdom had received a first dose of the Pfizer/BioNTech



New Year's Eve fireworks erupt over Sydney's iconic Harbour Bridge and Opera House (L) during the fireworks show on 1 January 2021. PHOTO: SAEED KHAN/AFP

vaccine as of Sunday.

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

France: No 'Unjustifiable Delays'

With France's vaccination programme so far paling in comparison to many other EU countries, President Emmanuel Macron in his New Year address vowed to avoid "unjustifiable delays" in efforts to immunize citizens against COVID-19.

Since Sunday, fewer than 200 people have been given the Pfizer/

BioNTech jab in the country.

Shortly before Macron's speech, Health Minister Olivier Veran announced plans to expand the vaccination campaign which so far has solely targeted care-home residents and health workers aged over 65.

Veran says that from Monday health workers aged over 50 could also get the jab.

Ramping Up Vaccine Production

The German firm BioNTech says it is racing to ramp up production of its COVID-19 jab in Europe, to fill the "gap" left by the lack of other approved vaccines.

NBA Tracking Devices

The NBA is expected to require its players to wear tracking devices on team buses and airplanes in its ongoing fight to control the spread of the virus, United States (US) media reported.

The sensor programme will go into effect on 7 January and will involve players and team officials, including coaches, American sports broadcaster ESPN said.

No Neymar Mega Party

Football superstar Neymar laughed off controversy over reports he had been planning a mega New Year's party for 500 guests, taking to Instagram several hours before midnight to show his plans, which he described as small-scale.

1.8 Million Dead

The coronavirus has killed at least 1,818,946 people since the outbreak emerged in China in December 2019, according to an AFP tally on Friday based on official sources.

SOURCE: 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.

73rd Independence Day to be broadcast live

THE flag hoisting and saluting ceremony to mark the 73rd Anniversary of Independence Day 2021 will be held in front of the City Hall in Nay Pyi Taw starting from 7 am on 4 January. The ceremony will be broadcast live on MRTV, MITV, Up to Date, Channel 9, One News, BBM Channel, MRTV-4, MWD and aired live on Myanmar Radio starting from 6:40 am on that day. The live stream is also available to watch the ceremony on the Ministry of Information Facebook Page, MRTV Facebook Page and Myanmar Digital News Facebook Page.—MNA (Translated by TTN)



Myanmar Daily Weather Report

(Issued at 7:00 pm Saturday 2nd 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 AFTERNOON OF THE 3 January, 2021: Weather will be partly cloudy in Upper Sagaing, Taninthayi Regions and Kachin, (Southern 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: Generally fair in the whole country.

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 3 January, 2021: Generally fair weather.

THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF UNICEF

Make 2021 'safer, healthier world for children', UNICEF chief urges



Midwife lifts one of the very first babies born in Mali in 2020 at a Health Centre in Segou, central Mali. **PHOTO: UNICEF/SEYBA KEÏTA**

THE UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) said on Thursday that more than 371,500 children would be born on the first day of 2021.

"The children born today enter a world far different than even a year ago, and a New Year brings a new opportunity to re-imagine it", UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta Fore said.

Sorting logistics

As always, the Pacific island nation of Fiji will welcome the first baby of the new year and the United States the last one.

Over half of these global births are estimated to take place in the 10 countries of India – 59,995; China – 35,615; Nigeria – 21,439; Pakistan – 14,161; Indonesia – 12,336; Ethiopia – 12,006 – US

(10,312), Egypt – 9,455; Bangladesh – 9,236; and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) – 8,640. In total, UNICEF estimates an 84-year average life expectancy for the 140 million children it projects will be born throughout 2021.

More to celebrate

The year will also mark the 75th anniversary of UNICEF.

Over the course of 2021, UNICEF and its partners will be commemorating the milestone anniversary with events and announcements celebrating three-quarters of a century of protecting children from conflict, disease and exclusion, and championing their right to survival, health and education.

"Children born today will in-

herit the world we begin to build for them today", reminded the UNICEF chief.

"Let us make 2021 the year we start to build a fairer, safer, healthier world for children", she added.

COVID challenges

Meanwhile, as the number of COVID-19 cases continue to soar, so do the needs of children and their families, the UN agency said.

From delivering life-saving health supplies, to building water and hygiene facilities, to keeping girls and boys connected to education and protection, UNICEF is working to slow the spread of the pandemic and minimize its impact on children worldwide.

SOURCE: UN News

LEBANON

Medics warn of coronavirus 'catastrophe'

LEBANON'S hospitals are being overwhelmed by coronavirus cases, medics warned Saturday, as infection rates surge in the wake of end of year holidays.

The national Covid-19 task force was to meet later the same day and expected to advise a three-week lockdown, said Petra Khoury, its head.

Lebanon, with a population of around six million, has recorded 183,888 coronavirus cases, including 1,466 deaths, since February.

On Thursday, it hit a daily record of more than 3,500 new cases.

In what he termed a "catastrophic" situation, Sleiman Haroun, head of the Syndicate of Private Hospitals, said "the 50



Lebanon, with a population of around six million, has recorded 183,888 coronavirus cases, including 1,466 deaths, since February. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

private hospitals in the country receiving patients with Covid-19 are now almost full".

They have a total of 850 beds, including 300 in intensive

care units, Haroun said.

"Patients are now waiting in line... waiting for a bed to be free," he told AFP.

SOURCE: AFP

MAJOR STRIDE

China's first vaccine hustled to market as race to inoculate 1.3bn speeds up

CHINA has granted "conditional" market approval to a Sinopharm vaccine with a reported 79 per cent efficacy rate against Covid-19, health authorities said Thursday, a major stride towards inoculating the world's largest population. The Sinopharm jab, which has surged ahead of a raft of Chinese competitors during Phase 3 trials, could signal a breakthrough in the battle to squash the pandemic in Asia. Around 4.5 million doses of largely unproven emergency vaccines made locally have already been given to health workers and other workers destined for overseas jobs, according to authorities.

On Wednesday, Sinopharm announced its leading candidate had a 79.34 per cent efficacy rate. That is lower than rival jabs developed in the West by Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna – with 95 and 94 per cent rates respectively – but still a game-changer for China. Chen Shifei, deputy commissioner of the National Medical Products Administration, on Thursday told reporters his agency had granted a "conditional listing" to Sinopharm's vaccine.

A conditional listing helps hustle emergency drugs to market in cases when clinical trials are yet to meet normal standards but indicate they will work.

"The known benefits of Sinopharm's new inactivated coronavirus vaccine are bigger than the known and potential risks," Chen added. The listing allows the government to "extend vaccination to high-risk groups, those susceptible to a severe viral infection... and the elderly," Zeng Yixin, Vice Minister of the National Health Commission told reporters.



Chinese firm Sinopharm has said its coronavirus vaccine is 79 percent effective following Phase 3 trials. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

But China faces the unprecedented challenge of getting vaccines to a population of more than 1.3 billion people. "The general view is you have to vaccinate 60 to 70 per cent to establish universal protection," Zeng added. Beijing plans to vaccinate millions this winter in the run-up to Lunar New Year. "I'm convinced – and please be convinced – that the production of Covid-19 vaccines can meet the demand of large-scale vaccination we have in China," Mao Junfeng, head of Consumer Goods Industry Department added. China has also pledged to swiftly share its vaccines with lesser developed countries at a "fair price", as it seeks global leadership in the recovery from a pandemic which first emerged in the central Chinese city of Wuhan a year ago. As a winter wave of virus infections batters much of the world, spurring fresh lockdowns and grim spikes in death tolls, attention has returned to China's management of the pandemic.

China has broadly stamped out the virus inside its borders, introducing swift local lockdowns and mass testing when cases emerge. Beijing has been at pains to retool the pandemic story in its favour, touting the fast reflexes of its Communist leadership in locking down the country and restarting the economy. China is forecast to be the only major economy to post positive growth this year. But it has been heavily criticised for closing down discussion and reporting that questions the official narrative. On Monday a Shanghai court jailed citizen journalist Zhang Zhan for four years for her reporting from Wuhan during the early months of the pandemic.

SOURCE: AFP

GREEN START

Germany rings in 2021 with CO2 tax, coal phase-out

GERMANY is aiming for a green start to 2021 by shutting down a coal-fired power plant and slapping a CO2 price on transport, but critics say the efforts aren't enough to combat climate change.

The measures are the result of hard-fought compromises thrashed out by Chancellor Angela Merkel's right-left coalition government, and are key to Germany's transition away from polluting fossil fuels towards renewable energy.

From January 1, 2021 the government will charge 25 euros (\$30) per tonne of carbon dioxide emissions released by the transport and heating sectors. The pricetag was raised from the government's initially proposed 10 euros per tonne -- a number widely slammed as too low by Germany's Green party, environmentalists and scientists. The price will increase to 55 euros by 2025, and will be decided at auction from 2026.

Germans will feel the difference at the pump with diesel and petrol set to become more expensive, while heating buildings will also cost more.

The government expects to raise 56.2 billion euros from

companies buying the new carbon certificates or "pollution rights" over the next four years. Also on Friday, the 300-megawatt Niederaussem D unit power plant near Cologne, running on lignite (brown coal), becomes the first to close down as part of Germany's phaseout of coal by 2038.

Energy giant RWE, which has operated the plant since it was built in 1968, said decommissioning the facility -- as required by Germany's 2020 coal exit law -- was "a difficult step" that would lead to some 300 job losses. Under the same legislation, several power plants fuelled by black or hard coal are going offline from January, taking a combined capacity of 4.7 gigawatts off the market.

Exceptions

But the flagship initiatives have drawn criticism. The 25 euro carbon price will not "make the necessary contribution" to helping Germany meet its commitments under the 2015 Paris climate pact, said Christiane Averbeck, director of the environmental group Climate Alliance Germany.

SOURCE: AFP



Prices for diesel and petrol are expected to rise in Germany due to the carbon tax. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

31-PAGE INTERVIEW

Pope recalls his youth playing football, dubs Maradona "poet"



Pope Francis has told of his 'joy' and the 'miracles' of sport. PHOTO: POOL/AFP/FILE

WITH a ball made from rags and surging adrenaline, the young Jorge Bergoglio and his friends pulled off "miracles" playing football in the street, Pope Francis recalled on Saturday.

Now 84, the Argentine pope remembered "the joy, the happiness on everyone's faces", after the 1946 victory of his Buenos Aires team, San Lorenzo, in a 31-page interview about sport published Saturday in Italy's La Gazzetta dello Sport.

The first pope from Latin America called Diego Maradona a "poet" on the field, as he weighed in on the joys of sport.

Expounding on themes of hard work, sacrifice and camaraderie, Francis shared memories of the makeshift footballs that sufficed to exhilarate him and his boyhood friends. "Leather cost too much and we were poor; rubber wasn't used so much yet, but for us all we needed was a ball of rags to amuse ourselves and to create miracles, almost, playing in the little square near home,"

Francis said. Acknowledging he was "not among the best" of the footballers, Bergoglio played goalkeeper, which he characterized as a good school for learning how to respond to "dangers that could arrive from anywhere".

The pontiff -- described by the paper as "a pope of the people in the most noble sense of the term" -- touched on the need for teamwork and working towards a shared goal. "Either you play together, or you risk crashing. That's how small groups, capable of staying united, succeed in taking down bigger teams incapable of working together," he said.

The interview, which took place in early December at the Vatican, also saw the pope condemn doping in sport and stress the need to nurture talent through hard work.

"It's not only a cheat, a shortcut that revokes dignity, but it's also wanting to steal from God that spark which, through his mysterious ways, he gave to some in a special and greater form,"

he said. Francis called the Olympics "one of the highest forms of human ecumenism", involving "sharing effort for a better world".

Fragile poet

He recalled meeting Argentine footballer Maradona, who died in November, during a "match for peace" in Rome in 2014. "On the field he was a poet, a great champion who brought joy to millions of people, in Argentina as well as Naples. He was also a very fragile man," Francis said.

The pontiff said that after learning of Maradona's death, he prayed for him and sent a rosary to his family with some words of comfort. The pope, who has made inclusion of marginalized people one of the central themes of his papacy, shared his amazement and emotion at the accomplishments of the athletes who compete in the Paralympic Games, while expressing disappointment at "rich champions" turned "sluggish, almost bureaucrats of their sport." SOURCE: AFP

COMMON BUT MALIGNED INGREDIENT

US bans palm oil imports from second Malaysian firm

THE United States has banned imports from a Malaysian palm oil giant whose products are found in numerous household goods over concerns that its workers face a litany of abuse. The move against Sime Darby Plantation, one of the world's biggest producers, marks the second time the US has blocked shipments from a palm oil company in the Southeast Asian nation in just months. Palm oil is a common ingredient in items ranging from processed foods to cosmetics, with Malaysia and neighbouring Indonesia producing 85 per cent of the world's supply.

But activists have long claimed that low-paid

workers on plantations face abuse, and also blame the industry for driving destruction of rainforests to make way for the vast agricultural estates. Announcing the ban late Wednesday, US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) said there was evidence Sime Darby workers face abuses including sexual and physical violence, withholding of wages and restrictions on movement. The ban "demonstrates how essential it is for Americans to research the origins of the everyday products that they purchase," said CBP acting commissioner Mark A. Morgan.

SOURCE: AFP



Sime Darby Plantation has faced allegations that its workers on palm oil estates are abused. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

PUSH FOR A SECOND REFERENDUM

Scottish leader Sturgeon tells EU ‘we hope to join you again’

SCOTTISH First Minister Nicola Sturgeon on Saturday told the European Union “we hope to join you again soon” as an independent nation following Britain’s full departure from the bloc.

“As an independent member of the European Union, Scotland would be a partner and a bridge-builder,” she wrote on her party’s website.

A comfortable majority of Scots voted to remain in the European Union during the 2016 Brexit referendum, giving fresh impetus to the movement pushing for Scotland to leave the United Kingdom.

After losing the 2014 independence vote, Scottish National Party (SNP) leader Sturgeon is spearheading the push for another referendum and hopes to rejoin the EU should she fulfil



Nicola Sturgeon said ‘more and more people’ in Scotland favoured independence. PHOTO: AFP

her dream.

“More and more people in Scotland believe our aspirations can best be met by continuing to contribute to the shared endeavour and solidarity that the EU represents,” she wrote.

“Because of Brexit, we can now only do this as an independent member state in our own right. “We didn’t want to leave and we hope to join you again soon as an equal partner,” she added.

Recent polls have shown

consistent support for independence, with the coronavirus outbreak further driving a wedge between the devolved governments and London.

But readmission to the EU would not be a formality, with Scotland running a heavy annual fiscal deficit. Sturgeon would also have to rely on British Prime Minister Boris Johnson agreeing to a referendum in the first place.

He has ruled out such a vote, but the SNP will likely claim a mandate and heap pressure on Johnson should the party perform well in upcoming local elections. Despite calling it a once in a generation vote in 2014, Sturgeon argues that the Brexit vote and Britain’s full departure from the bloc’s single market and Customs union have changed the game.

SOURCE: AFP

ALL CAP

Niger presidential favourite wins first round, heads for runoff

RULING party candidate and former minister Mohamed Bazoum won the first round of Niger’s presidential vote, the electoral commission announced on Saturday, with a runoff set for next month.

The Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI) said the close ally of outgoing President Mahamadou Issoufou garnered 39.33 per cent of the votes in last weekend’s election.

Bazoum will face former president Mahamane Ousmane, who won 16.99 per cent, in the February 20 runoff in the West

African country, which is fighting a bloody jihadist insurgency.

Former prime ministers Seini Oumarou and Albade Abouba came third and fourth respectively with 8.95 per cent and 7.07 per cent of the ballots.

Turnout reached 69.67 per cent or 5.2 million of the 7.4 million registered voters, CENI said, in an election hoped to be the country’s first peaceful handover between elected presidents.

Bazoum, who has been both interior and foreign minister, campaigned on promises of improved security and education.



Bazoum campaigned on promises of improved security and education. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

The 61-year-old was the favourite and had hoped to clinch victory in the first round. But he will now likely have to join forces with one or more of the other 29 candidates who ran in Sunday’s election.

Before the vote, Ousmane clinched a deal with several rivals to back him in a second round, including former foreign minister Ibrahim Yacouba, who came in fifth with 5.38 per cent.

SOURCE: AFP

OVER 215.746 BILLION KWH

Russian nuclear power generation breaks Soviet record



Akademik Lomonosov is a non-self-propelled power barge that operates as the first Russian floating nuclear power station.

RUSSIAN nuclear power plants (NPPs) generated over 215.746 billion kWh of electricity in 2020, an all-time high beating the annual record during the Soviet era, said Russia’s sole national operating enterprise of NPPs Rosenergoatom on Friday. The annual output of Soviet NPPs, including those in Ukraine, Lithuania and Armenia, reached its peak in 1988 with 215.669 billion kWh of electricity, Rosenergoatom said.

The 2020 generation was higher than the annual target of 207.614 billion kWh and the 2019 output by almost 7 billion kWh, it said in a press release.

Compared to the 47 power units operating in the Soviet Union in 1988, Rosenergoatom said it now only runs 37 units. Currently, the share of nuclear generation is about 19 per cent of the total electricity generation in Russia, according to the company.

SOURCE: Xinhua

NEWS IN BRIEF

NO TIME WASTED

Rio’s new mayor launches probes targeting predecessor

THE new mayor of Rio de Janeiro took office Friday launching a raft of investigations into corruption allegations against his predecessor, an Evangelical pastor allied with Brazil’s far-right President Jair Bolsonaro.

Outgoing mayor Marcelo Crivella had already been arrested on December 22 and suspended from his job over the allegations. But the new mayor, Eduardo Paes, wasted no time piling more pressure on the man he defeated in municipal elections last November.

A veteran centrist who previously led Brazil’s second city from 2009 to 2016, Paes used his first day back in office to order four probes into alleged corruption and strongarming in the Crivella administration.

“Never in the history of Rio de Janeiro has a mayor received such a perverse inheritance from his predecessor,” Paes said at his swearing-in ceremony.

SOURCE: AFP

SIX BILATERAL DRILLS

Russian ground troops to partake in nine int’l drills in 2021

RUSSIAN ground forces plan to participate in nine military exercises with foreign troops in 2021, the Russian Defence Ministry said Friday.

Russia plans to respectively host six bilateral drills with Algeria, India, Pakistan, Laos, Viet Nam and Sri Lanka, the ministry said in a statement.

On the territory of Russia, there will be two multilateral drills involving members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Collective Security Treaty Organization.

A Russian-Mongolian military exercise will be held in Mongolia.

“All the maneuvers will be aimed at peacekeeping and counterterrorism,” it said.

SOURCE: Xinhua

DEMANDING AN INCREASE IN DAILY WAGE

Protesting Peru farm workers lift road block for talks

PERUVIAN government officials sat down to talks Friday with representatives of farmworkers who had blockaded a highway to protest the deaths of three people in clashes with police.

Farm workers have been staging protests for weeks to demand more pay. But 28 demonstrators and 36 officers were injured in confrontations, while 45 agricultural workers were arrested.

Authorities said three people, including a minor, were killed in clashes with police in recent days.

This prompted the workers to blockade a part of the key Pan-American Highway some 500 kilometres (300 miles) north of the capital, Lima, in protest.

The blockade held for two days until it was lifted ahead of talks Fri-

day. Television images showed police using tear gas and birdshot against demonstrators.

The presidency of Peru's council of ministers said in a tweet Friday that discussions have started in the city of Trujillo and will involve "active listening" on the part of the commission.

The workers are demanding that agricultural-export companies increase their daily wage from \$11 to \$18, but a bill passed by congress last week proposed an increase to only 48 soles — about \$13.

On Friday, the government said a commission that includes ministers and deputy ministers of agriculture, labour, trade and other senior figures was meeting with workers' representatives.

SOURCE: AFP



Agricultural workers protest to demand higher incomes in Viru, Peru, 510 kilometres north of the capital, Lima, on December 30, 2020. PHOTO: GIAN MAZCO, AFP

OIL PRODUCTION

New Year OPEC+ meeting to decide production levels



The OPEC+ ministerial meeting comes after oil consumption tanked in 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic and a price war between Saudi Arabia and Russia. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

MEMBERS of the OPEC group of oil producers and their partners will meet via videoconference on Monday to decide on production levels for February, hoping to turn the corner on a difficult year. The OPEC+ ministerial meeting comes after oil consumption tanked in 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic and a price war between Saudi Arabia and Russia. Despite a pick up in prices towards the end of last year, the market levels for black gold remain uncertain. After their last summit, from November 30-December 3, the OPEC+ members agreed

to increase production by half a million barrels per day in January.

Also at that meeting the 13 members of the OPEC cartel, led by Saudi Arabia, and their six allies, led by Russia, agreed to meet at the beginning of each month in order to decide on any adjustments to production volumes for the following month. Russia and Saudi Arabia are respectively the second and third biggest oil producers in the world after the United States. The decision illustrates OPEC's desire to maintain a strong influence on the oil market and the

gravity of the situation for crude producers last year. **'Remaining demand uncertainty'**

Before the pandemic, OPEC members were content with two summits per year at the organization's headquarters in Vienna.

"Finally, we saw a strong demonstration of OPEC+ will and capability to manage the market, laying the groundwork for Brent's recovery to over \$50 per barrel despite remaining demand uncertainty in the market," JBC Energy analysts said in a statement.

SOURCE: AFP

CHALLENGING ECONOMIC RECOVERY

U.S. economy plunges into recession amid pandemic, K-shaped recovery widens inequality

AFTER plunging into the worst recession in decades amid COVID-19 shutdowns in 2020, the U.S. economy has been recovering in recent months.

With alarming case spikes and a long-delayed fiscal relief package, however, the recovery momentum is slipping away. Overshadowed even more by a

behind-schedule vaccine rollout, the country will only find an uncertain and challenging economic recovery ahead. What's worse, the economic pain inflicted by the

pandemic has rippled unevenly across a variety of sectors, companies and communities, with certain service-intensive industries, smaller firms, and low-in-

come Americans taking a disproportionate blow. Economists called this a K-shaped recovery, which widens inequality.

SOURCE: Xinhua

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V AEGEAN EXPRESS VOY. NO. (201N/S)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V AEGEAN EXPRESS VOY. NO. (201N/S)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **02-01-2021** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **TMIT/MIP** where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

Phone No: 2301185

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

M/S CONTINENTAL SHIPPING LINES

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V ISEACO GENESIS VOY. NO. (111N/S)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V ISEACO GENESIS VOY. NO. (111N/S)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **02-01-2021** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **HPT** where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

Phone No: 2301185

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

M/S NEW GOLDEN SEA LINES

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V SINAR SOLO VOY. NO. (927 N/S)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V SINAR SOLO VOY. NO. (927 N/S)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **02-01-2021** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **MITT/MIP** where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

Phone No: 2301185

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

M/S SAMUDERA SHIPPING LINE

Second aviation facility for development of Chin State



Lailenpi airstrip in Matupi Township is under construction. **PHOTO: MNA**

By Swe Oo Wai

(Translated by Than Tun Aung)

NOW is time of beefing up development tasks in all parts of Myanmar including hilly areas and remote sites. Despite facing impacts of pandemic Covid-19 similar to other global countries, Myanmar is undertaking development tasks in line with the health guidelines as much as it can. Especially, infrastructures are being built in hilly areas which lagged development behind other regions and states. Currently, one more new aviation infrastructure is under construction in Chin State with 75 per cent completion with the aim of ensuring smooth transportation and contributing much to tourism sector and other busi-

nesses in the state.

Such kind of new aviation facility takes a position in Lailenpi Town of Matupi Township in Matupi District of Chin State. It will be a small airstrip only. Construction of the airstrip started in May 2019. Implementation of the airstrip project was approved by Union Government meeting 12/2017, according to Chin State government.

Lailenpi airstrip is located at an altitude of 4,918 feet. The runway of the airstrip will be 2,500 feet long and 50 feet wide. The airstrip will have facilitated with a 150 feet long and 200 feet wide apron for landing of the aircraft.

It was learnt that construction of Lailenpi airstrip is being

undertaken in southern Chin State with assistance of Mission Aviation Fellowship-MAF. Hence, it will be the first ever airstrip

built in Myanmar with cent per cent monetary and technological assistance given by an international aviation organization.

In fact, Chin State having plentiful of natural beauties is an origin of natural resources which can help develop the tourism



Runway of Lailenpi airstrip.



industry with momentum. Smooth transport is of great importance in creating chances for bringing about the improvement of customs and traditions of ethnic people and their daily lifestyle, and the creation of new destinations for tourists. As such, the government is rendering assistance for fulfilling needs of people as much as it can. Consequently, a new airstrip is scheduled to emerge in Chin State.

In the future, Lailenpi airstrip will render more support to health care services to be given to local ethnic people residing in southern Chin State. Thanks to the airstrip, local ethnic people will have to enjoy health care services and emergency transportation for rescue in natural disasters.

In reviewing construction of the airports in Chin State, Lailenpi airstrip will be the second facility of its kind. The first one was Surbung Airport built at 7,175 feet higher than the sea level, which is located 8.5 miles from Falam of Chin State as

well as about 40 miles from Haka. Moreover, the airport takes a position, about 50 miles from Reed border trade camp at Myanmar-India border area. In addition, the airport was built on 6,000 feet high Surbung mountain near Lonpi Hill in Chin State, it is the highest airport in Myanmar.

The runway of Surbung Airport can withstand 50,000 lbs of load. So, it can admit landing and takeoff of ATR-72 aircraft. The airport is facilitated with a 6,000 feet long and 100 feet wide runway. The lounge of the airport can give services to about 250 passengers. The first landing test of ATR-72 was conducted on the runway of Surbung Airport on the morning of 27 October 2019.

The ground surveys and creation of designs for Surbung Airport, the first-ever airport of Chin State, were conducted in 2015-16 financial year. The airport was built depending on allotment of budgets in respective financial years. Surbung Airport will be a focal point in Chin State to have direct aviation access for local people to Yangon, Mandalay and Nay Pyi Taw so as to contribute much to development of Chin State.

So also, the stake driving ceremony to build the second one Lailenpi airstrip took place on 4 May 2020. The airstrip is purposed to admit landing and takeoff of aircraft which can carry 20 passengers each. Thanks to the new airstrip, local and foreign travellers will have convenience in their visits to Chin State.

Enjoying fruitful results of aviation infrastructures such as airports in Chin State, travellers and businesspersons from Yangon, Nay Pyi Taw and Mandalay will have chance to make a day trip to Chin State in a short time. Moreover, local ethnic people will have better facilities of emergency health care services by transferring the patients to major cities such as Yangon, Nay Pyi Taw and Mandalay if necessary.

The authorities decided to spend US\$2 million on construction of Lailenpi airstrip in Matupi Township of southern Chin State. As the construction will complete soon, it will be the facility to help develop Chin State.



A look back at 2020 with Yangon American International School: **"The pandemic hasn't stopped us"**

By Naw Victory GABRIEL

EVERY school around the world has faced an unprecedented year, and 2020 winds up, we speak to the teachers, parents, and students at Yangon American International School about the highs, the lows, and the learnings.

Fostering a Community Online

"At Yangon American, we pride ourselves on being an inclusive community built on trust, positive relationships, and a strong family atmosphere. Collaborating and Communications with parents is a huge part of the Yangon American culture, especially now during distance learning. It plays an integral role in making sure the students are supported and are successful as they can be." Said Emily Morris, Vice Principal.

"We are really lucky to have an awesome group of parents who are very supportive of what our program is doing and where we would like to be in the future. We have had great experience in having constant open communications with the parents, for them to give us feedback about how the program looks like in their own home and how it works for their child specifically so that we can make any adjustments to make sure we can meet the children where they are." Added Ms Morris.

Predicting the Unpredictable

"I am incredibly proud of how quickly and efficiently our teachers rose to the challenges of developing a completely unprecedented learning model. Never before have we witnessed an entire school community has to shift to a 100% remote learning model overnight. And alongside this, our students delivered. Their resilience, confidence and abilities shone through as they continue to embrace the remote learning model. I am very much looking forward to seeing our whole community back on campus, but until that day, we will continue with a fantastic online offering," stated Principal Robert Crutchfield.

Developing a whole child "The kids are encouraged to take control of their learning through the IB Programme in order to develop physically, intellectually, emotionally and ethically. I like that even via online learning, they still have PE and music besides their usual math & English classes to be able to fully develop their emotions and physical strengths. They also learn new skills such as computer/technology and good manners in online classes, such as respecting other classmates when they're talking, raising their hands when they want to talk and then mute themselves", stated Ms Lien, mother of Mathias and Markus in grades 1 and 3.

A smooth pivot

"When my mum and dad told me that I was going to be doing online classes, I was quite confused as usually, if I don't go to school it's because it's a holiday. When we starting our video classes, it was so different to being in the classroom, but at the same time, it was the same because my teacher has set up the day so we do the same things we would normally do in class. I do miss playing with my friends, and also my teacher, but seeing them every day on video is really great," stated Mathias in grade 3.

"I have to admit that my wife and I were not looking forward to the concept of having our daughter at home with us all day every day at all. Of course we love her dearly, but we also love sending her to school every day! I'm sure most parents would agree.

"However, the way that Yangon American set up the remote learning has just been fantastic. I often sit next to my daughter as I do my work and she does her classes, and I have to say that despite her young age, I often learn from her classes too! I must say, I also have a new-found respect for teachers as I have seen the full spectrum of their roles from within," stated Mr Travis, father of Faie in grade 1.

As Yangon American International School looks ahead to 2021, the whole community is excited for the day they can meet again. But in the meantime, they will continue enjoying and embracing all that remote learning brings!

Pirlo's Juventus face key January test



Andrea Pirlo's Juventus face a key test of their ambitions to clinch a 10th consecutive Serie A title in a packed January of football in Italy after a stuttering start which has left the holders sixth in the league. **PHOTO: AFP**

TURIN—Andrea Pirlo's Juventus face a key test of their ambitions to clinch a 10th consecutive Serie A title in a packed January of football in Italy after a stuttering start which has left the holders sixth in the league.

Serie A returns this weekend after the mini-break of the Christmas period with a tight January schedule.

Juventus host Udinese on Sunday before taking on three of the top four this month, with six Serie A fixtures in addition to Italian Cup and SuperCup commitments.

The two Milan clubs -- the only teams apart from Juventus to have won the league in the past two decades -- are on top as they look to bring the title back to Lombardy.

AC Milan are flying high one point ahead of Antonio Conte's Inter with Roma in third, six points off second place.

Juventus are sixth, 10 points adrift of top spot, but having played a game less.

After Udinese, Juventus visit AC Milan in the San Siro next Wednesday before hosting fourth-placed Sassuolo in Turin followed by a trip to play Inter.

Despite topping their Champions League group, Juventus have struggled for consistency on the domestic front, relying on Cristiano Ronaldo's goals.—AFP ■

Women's FIFA Ranking: Myanmar team stands eighth in Asia



Myanmar national women's football squad seen before an international football match. **PHOTO:MFF**

THE Myanmar women's national football team is currently among the top ten Asian teams, with standing in the Asian level and garnered 44th position in FIFA world ranking and 1,511 total points earned, according to an updated FIFA statement this month.

Two ASEAN women's football teams, Viet Nam and Thailand, are also included in the

top ten list for Asia.

Team Viet Nam is currently in the fifth place among the best of Asian teams, with a 32nd world ranking and 1,657 total points, while Team Thailand is following Viet Nam in sixth place, collecting 1,596 total points and 38th in the FIFA world ranking.

Next to the Thai team, Chinese Taipei team is standing in

the seventh place with 39th of FIFA ranking.

Australia remained the best team in Asia, with first place in Asian level and seventh of FIFA world ranking, while Japan is the second-best Asian team, with a world ranking of 10.

China team is the third-best among Asian teams, with 15th FIFA world ranking, and the

South Korea team is the fourth-best in Asia, ranking 18th in the world.

The United States women's national football team, is currently the best in the world with winning a total of four FIFA Women's World Cups, and four Olympic women's gold medals, according to the statement with the FIFA.—Lynn Thit (Tgi)

Challenges aplenty remain for Tokyo's pandemic Olympics



The Olympic rings glow in the dark after being reinstalled in Tokyo Bay off Odaiba Marine Park on Dec. 1, 2020, after they underwent a safety inspection and maintenance. The rings were temporarily removed in August following the Tokyo Summer Games' postponement until 2021 due to the coronavirus pandemic. **PHOTO: KYODO**

TOKYO—The Japanese prime minister and International Olympic Committee chief promised the Tokyo Games will demonstrate the world is winning the

war against the coronavirus pandemic. But is it really a good idea to go ahead with the Olympics?

With the recent approval and rollout of vaccines in Britain, the

United States and elsewhere, as well as the indication that Japan could be doing the same in the early months of 2021, signs are that an end could be in sight. For Japan, however, the risk of welcoming the world to its doorstep might not be worth the reward.

There are also ethical complexities in holding an international event at a time when much of the world will still have an uncertain path out of the pandemic, and Japan's relative success in its pandemic strategy could be negatively impacted by allowing tens of thousands of people to enter from every part of the globe.

One concern is that people involved in the Olympics may be prioritized in receiving the vaccine. It is such an issue that IOC President Thomas Bach addressed it when in Tokyo in November.—Kyodo ■

Man Utd title challenge a year in the making, says Solskjaer

LONDON—Ole Gunnar Solskjaer hailed Manchester United's progress over the past year after a 2-1 win over Aston Villa took them level on points with Liverpool at the top of the Premier League. A year ago to the day, United lost 2-0 at Arsenal to fall 24 points behind the English champions, having played two games more. Another season contending just for a top-four finish looked in store for Solskjaer's men after winning only two of their opening six league games. But as all the other contenders have stumbled in recent weeks, the Red Devils have now taken 26 from a possible 30 points to mount an unexpected title challenge.—AFP ■