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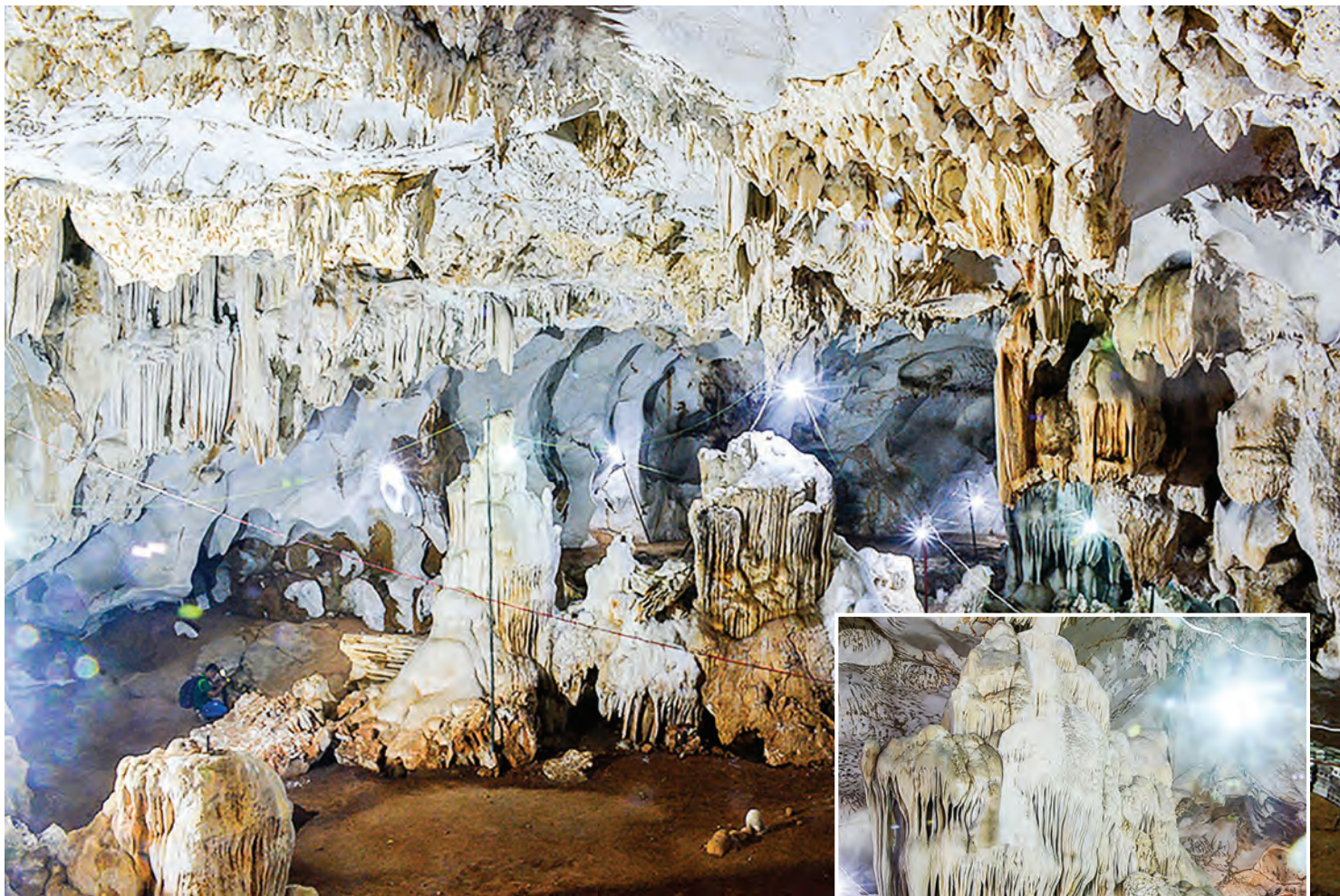
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Tuesday, 26 January 2021

Natural cave in Kayah State to be developed as tourist attraction



Kayah State's Directorate of Hotels and Tourism is working on the development of a natural cave, locally known as Mei Htauk Noon, in Kayah State as an ecotourism site. **PHOTO: KO SAI (LOIKAW)**

A NATURAL cave, locally named as Mei Htauk Noon, in Nan Kit village of Pasawng Township, Kayah State,

to be developed into an ecotourism site.

The Directorate of Hotels and Tourism of the state is working together with the

members of the local tourism development committee, the Destination Management Organization and local hotelier association for a tourist attraction

in the post-COVID-19.

U Lin Zaw Htut, a local official of the department, said, "Mei Htauk Noon cave still has

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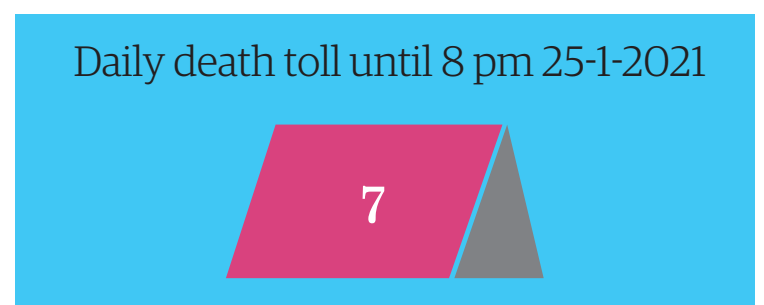
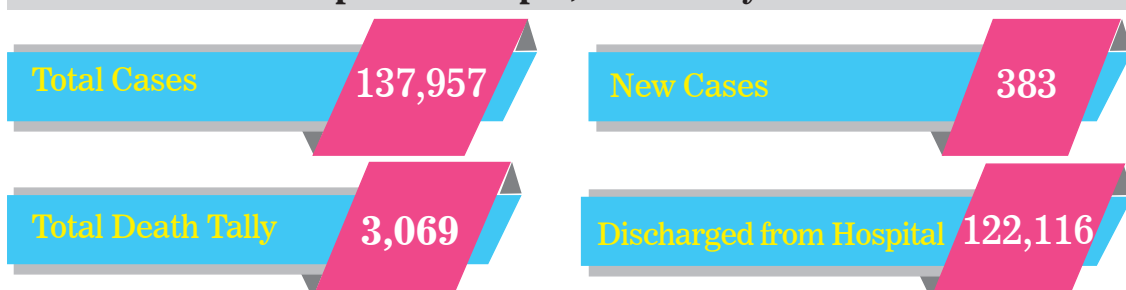
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383 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 25 January, total figure rises to 137,957

MYANMAR'S COVID-19 positive cases rose to 137,957 after 383 new cases were reported on 25 January 2021 according to the Ministry of Health and Sports. Among these 137,957 confirmed cases, 3,069 died, 122,116 have been discharged from hospitals.—MNA

Updated at 8 pm, 25 January 2021



Ministry of Health and Sports

MoBA constructs earth road in Khakaborazi area



Aerial picture shows Khakaborazi area in the northernmost part of Myanmar. **PHOTO: NAW YAW BAW (IPRD)**

THE Ministry of Border Affairs is constructing an earth road in Khakaborazi area in the northernmost part of Myanmar.

The 63-mile road will connect Pan Nan Din to Ta Huan Dum, and its 15-mile road section is expected to be complete in the 2021-2022 financial year.

The General Administration Department of Pan Nan Din Town said that the road would benefit local people from 16 nearby villages in the social-economic sector.—Naw Yaw Baw (IPRD)

Union Day Objectives 74th Anniversary of Union Day – 2021

1. To work on the Union Peace Conference – 21st Century Panglong, till the success of the internal peace process is achieved.
2. Development of the socio-economic life of the ethnic nationals.
3. To work for the emergence of a constitution that is in alignment and harmony with the Democratic Federal Union.
4. All ethnic nationals to work for the preservation and protection of non-disintegration of the Union, non-disintegration of national unity, and perpetuation of national sovereignty.
5. To nurture and develop new generations endowed with high skills and capabilities imbued with strong Union spirit.

Natural cave in Kayah State to be developed ...

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natural beauties such as stalactites and drop of water slowly trickles through cracks in the cave roof. It is still an unspoiled natural cave that can attract both local and foreign visitors.”

The cave is located within around 2 to 3-hour drive from Loikaw Township. The road to this cave is being developed by

the local people led by the senior monk of township Sangha committee.

The development works also include the construction of road and electrification inside the cave with about 600-ft in length and 60-ft to 100-ft in width inside it.

Other interesting places near the cave are a 100-year-old monastery with the displays

of two huge ivories and ancient Buddha images, Woha waterfall and scenic views of Thanlwin River.—Ko Sai (Loikaw)

Picture shows a natural cave, locally named Mei Htauk Noon Cave, in Nan Kit Village of Pasawng Township, Kayah State. **PHOTO: KO SAI (LOIKAW)**



Cash contribution for COVID-19 Vaccination Fund can be made through MoPFI website

1. The contribution of cash for COVID-19 Vaccination Fund can be made via the website of the Ministry of Planning, Finance and Industry (<http://www.mopfi.gov.mm>) in the following ways.
 - (a) MPU Debit/Credit Card of local banks
 - (b) Visa/Master Credit of local banks
 - (c) Visa/Master Debit & Credit Card of foreign banks
 - (d) Mobile Wallets such as CB-pay, KBZ-pay, OK\$ through QR Code (more mobile wallets will be available)
 - (e) Internet/mobile banking App of KBZ, CB, AYA, UAB and MAB (more internet/mobile banking Apps will be available)
 - (f) Over-the-counter at Supermarkets such as City Mart, Marketplace, Sein Gay Har, Aeon, Orange; mini-marts and convenience stores such as Denko Mini Market, Fun Fun Mart, ABC and Oasis; Mobile Wallet agents such as M-Pitesan, True Money and MyTelPay; Mobile Phone shops such as Any Call, e-City, Lu Gyi Min and My Fone; Wai Yan Electronics Sale Centre; the shops available Near Me logo.
2. Therefore, cash contribution can be made at the above-mentioned platforms electronically, in addition to the branches of Myanma Economic Bank and Myanma Agricultural Development Bank and other local private banks.

Ministry of Planning, Finance and Industry

Announcement on fund establishment to purchase COVID-19 vaccines

1. The National-Level Central Committee on Prevention, Control and Treatment of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) on 30-12-2020 formed a Fund Management Sub-committee on the Purchase of COVID-19 Vaccines. The sub-committee has opened the COVID-19 Vaccination Fund at the Myanma Economic Bank in Nay Pyi Taw as follows:
 - (a) Fund for purchase of COVID-19 vaccines (Foreign Currency Account No. EDC 600012). The bank account will be initially deposited with USD250 million, equivalent to about K338 billion from State-funding.
 - (b) Fund for purchase of COVID-19 vaccines (Myanmar Currency Account No. OA 013733). The bank account is initially deposited K1 billion (K1,000 million) from State-funding.
2. Therefore, organizations and people (local/ foreign countries) who want to contribute cash donation for the purchase of vaccines, can donate any type of foreign currency to the COVID-19 Vaccination Fund (Foreign Currency Account No. EDC 600012) at the Myanma Economic Bank (Nay Pyi Taw), and can donate Myanmar Kyat to the COVID-19 Vaccination Fund (Myanmar Currency Account No. OA 013733).
3. The potential well-wishers can contact the following phone numbers:

Director-General (067 3410156)
Treasury Department (067 3410158)

Ministry of Planning, Finance and Industry

The first priority will be given to the people who are working on the frontlines - our health personnel

To give you some good news, on the 22nd, the first batch of COVID-19 vaccines will arrive in Myanmar. Half a million doses will be received. Half a million means about 750,000 of our people can be vaccinated. Each person needs to be vaccinated twice. After the first dose, the next dose has to be given after 28 days. Therefore, the Ministry of Health and Sports has already made plans to carry out these procedures effectively and with meticulous detail.

Therefore, the first batch that we will receive will be only for 750,000 persons. Therefore, we have to give very careful consideration as to how we will use these 750,000 doses in the best interest of the country. Thus the first priority will be given to the people who are working on the frontlines - our health personnel. I believe all our people will agree with this. Our health personnel, who are on the frontlines; among the health personnel, we have also included volunteers.

(Excerpt from Chairperson of National -Level Central Committee on Prevention, Control and Treatment of Coronavirus Disease 2019 and State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's speech on updated situations of COVID-19 containment measures on 22 January 2021)



MoLIP discusses Rakhine State development with UN agencies, international organizations



Union Minister U Thein Swe holds talks with the UN representatives about Rakhine State development in Nay Pyi Taw on 25 January 2021. **PHOTO: MNA**

UNION Minister for Labour, Immigration and Population U Thein Swe received Resident Representative of United Nations High Commissioner for

Refugees Ms Hai Kyung Jun and Deputy Resident Representative Ms Yukiko Iriyama at the ministry in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday morning.

During the meeting, the Union Minister discussed the formation of committees on stability and development of the Rakhine State. He told the UNHCR offi-

cial that more budget was allocated for the Rakhine State than other regions/states. He added that the government has made efforts to improve infrastructures such as road connectivity, and provided better education and healthcare.

He told the UNHCR officials that Myanmar and Bangladesh are coordinating the repatriation and resettlement of the displaced persons in line with the MoU between the ministry and the UNDP/UNHCR.

The UNHCR delegation recently visited Hpa-an in the Kayin State and Sittway, Buthidaung and Maungtau areas in the Rakhine State. The delegation met with local elders and teachers during their visit to Rakhine State, according to Ms Hai Kyung Jun.

Meanwhile, the UNDP and the UNHCR are carrying out Quick Impact Projects (QIPs).

The Union Minister said that the main requirement for regional development is security, and if the region is safe and stable, development works can be carried out efficiently.

The Union Minister stressed that the ministry is working hard in order for displaced persons to be able to go back to their places safely and with dignity. The Ministry is trying to strengthen security, education and healthcare for the displaced persons in line with the MoU.

He said that the government is making efforts for a balanced development plan for the entire country and focuses on stability and development in the Rakhine State. He said that if the government and international organizations, including the UN, can collaborate effectively, the residents will gain great benefits.

— MNA (Translated by Maung Maung Swe)

Japan provides COVID-19 medical supplies, equipment to Myanmar

JAPANESE government and people donated medical supplies and equipment to Myanmar yesterday in the fight against COVID-19 disease.

The donation ceremony took place at the National Health Laboratory in Yangon yesterday.

Mr Takimi Kazuyuki, Counsellor (Head of Economic and Development Assistance) of Embassy of Japan, handed over medical equipment for COVID-19 response, procured by Japan in collaboration with UNOPS to the Ministry of Health and Sports.

The items of the second donation under this project were received by Deputy Director-General of the National Health Laboratory Prof. Dr Htay Htay Tin, and will be used at the Public Health laboratories and public hospitals.

The first donation was made October last year, and

included PCR testing kits, reagents such as RNA extraction kits and molecular biological grade ethanol as well as power supply units and generators for ICU facilities to the National Health Laboratory.

The Government of Japan will continue to procure and hand over medical equipment to the Government of Myanmar under this grant project, including ambulances, additional PCR testing kits, mobile X ray ma-



Deputy Director-General Prof. Dr Htay Htay Tin accepts the medical supplies donated by the Government of Japan. **PHOTO: MNA**

chines, medical monitors, and pulse oximeters, according to

the report of Japanese embassy in Yangon.—MNA

Myanmar's third-cycle report on human rights issue reviewed at 37th session of UPR

THE 37th Session of Work Group on the Universal Periodic Review discussed Myanmar's third-cycle national report on human rights yesterday.

The review session took place at the building of United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland, yesterday. The Myanmar delegation led by Union Attorney-General U Tun Tun Oo joined it via videoconferencing from Nay Pyi Taw, and U Myint Thu, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Representative of Myanmar to UNOG and party took part the event from Geneva.

In making discussions, the Union Attorney-General discussed the focus of Myanmar on human rights issue in establishing a Democracy Federal Union, fundamental needs of peace, socio-economic development, the rule of law and human rights in working for the genuine democratic system, signing the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement with the ethnic armed organizations to end the 70-year internal armed conflicts of the country, the successful holding of the 4th session of the Union Peace Conference—21st Century Panglong, amendment, cancellation and enactment of 185 laws in the five-year term, carrying out the Myanmar Sustainable Development Plan, the COVID-19 Economic Relief Plan of Myanmar aimed not to leave anyone behind across the country, adopting judiciary sector reform strategy and the leading role of the Union Auditor-General Office and



Union Attorney-General U Tun Tun Oo and Myanmar officials taking part in 37th Session of Work Group on UPR via videoconferencing to review Myanmar's third-cycle report on human rights issue on 25 January. PHOTO: MNA

the Court Martial in conducting investigation and taking legal actions against the crimes in accordance with the Independent Commission of Enquiry report.

He also said that the Office of President issued a directive in relation to preventing the instigation of acts of hate speech and violence, progress in developing a law to prevent hate speech, holding of General Election in November 2020. He also expressed thanks to the partner countries and organizations which are supporting Myanmar in its democratic transition processes. The 107 UN member countries discussed and made suggestions on the third-cycle report of Myanmar.

In response to the discussions, Myanmar representatives talked about the government's good democratic practices, good governance, responsibility and accountability, accelerating re-

form processes in management, economy and social sectors for the emergence of a Democratic Federal Union, efforts on anti-corruption and the rule of law, creating of a new political culture to be able to solve conflicts through negotiations by adopting peace plans for the post-2020, implementation of recommendations in the report of Advisory Commission on Rakhine State, closure of IDP camps, emphasis on education and health sector and repatriation programmes of displaced persons in line with bilateral agreements with Bangladesh.

Director-General Daw Marlar Than Htaik from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs discussed providing humanitarian assistance in collaboration with the United Nations, preparations for participating in international human rights agreements; Deputy Di-

rector-General Dr Thida Tin from the Ministry of Information held talks about works for enactment of a law in relation to prevention of hate speech and media freedom; Deputy-Director General Dr Aung Moe Chal from the Ministry of Investment and Foreign Economic Relations about the responsible business that covers economy, human rights and environmental conservation; Director-General U Ko Lay Win from the Ministry of Education about education, health and freedom of belief, Brig-Gen Aung Htay Myint from the Ministry of Home Affairs about anti-terrorism efforts, anti-trafficking in persons, prisoner issue; Director-General Dr San San Aye from the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement about closure of IDPs, gender equality, women rights, child rights and the rights of persons with disabilities; Per-

manent Secretary from the Office of Union-Attorney General Dr Thida Oo, reviewing processes of the existing laws, reforms in judiciary sector, anti-corruption, the rule of law, legal protection for human right activists, freedom of speech, rights for peaceful gathering and protests, land dispute issue; Director-General from the Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population U Nyunt Win about labour rights, prevention of forced labour and social security fund and citizenship issues.

After reviewing the report, U Tun Tun Oo, the Head of Myanmar delegation, expressed his appreciation to the countries that gave constructive recommendations on the report of Myanmar which is focusing on diversity and peaceful co-existence in implementing human rights in the country with diverse national races. He also said that Myanmar would continue cooperation with international organizations and civil society organizations in creating a good environment with social harmony among the people. The Union Attorney-General said that the processes of UPR would be helpful for Myanmar in addressing human right issues.

The initial document of UPR work group in relation to Myanmar's report will be approved on 29 January 2021 and the implementation of recommendations and the progress of human rights situations will be assessed on the 4th cycle report in 2025.—MNA

(Translated by Aung Khin)

People visit Yaykhe Creek in Panwa Town

VISITORS are going to Yaykhe Creek near the border post No 3 in the prominent town of Pan-

wa, Myitkyina District, Kachin State, to enjoy winter frosts and snowfalls.



Visitors seen at Yaykhe Creek in Panwa Township in Kachin State. PHOTO: YE NYUNT (IPRD)

After having snowfalls since 21 January, the number of visitors to the Yaykhe Creek has increased.

U Hkaung Lan Dee, a visitor, said, "I have visited here twice including this time. The ice will not melt at any time. I came here with my friends. I am very happy."

Another visitor U Pyae Phyo Paing said, "I have been in Panwa for 4 years. This is my first visit to the creek. I had to drive for almost an hour. Then, I had to walk for ten minutes, but it's a lot of fun to drive and walk on ice and snow."

In winter, Panwa is usually covered with ice and snow because of snowfalls.—Ye Nyunt (IPRD) (Translated by Maung Maung Swe)

Village Development Project to be carried out in 22 villages in Wuntho

THE Department of Rural Development in Wuntho Township, Kawlin District, Sagaing Region will implement a community-based development project named Village Development Project (VDP) in 22 villages.

Since 20 January, officials have been conducting field consultations on the launch of the project, and formation of required committees in 9 out of the 22 villages, according to U Myat Myo Tun, township-level official from the Rural Development Department. The process includes the introduction of the project in the 22 approved villages, the formation of necessary committees, selecting activities and getting

approval from township TPIC committee and then getting approval from higher levels. After that, the tasks will be handed over to the villagers, and then contracts will be signed. Auditing, as well as submission of completion reports, must also be carried out.

Officials including regional MP U Zaw Lin Oo have been visiting the villages for field discussions for the community-based development project. The Department of Rural Development has provided K10 million per village, so a total of K220 million for the 22 villages to carry out the project.—Township (IPRD)

(Translated by Maung Maung Swe)

Locals hope Paleik ancient site to become tourist attraction



Ancient pagodas in Paleik area of Singaing Township. **PHOTO : MIN HTET AUNG (MAN SUB-PRINTING HOUSE)**

SOME of the residents in Paleik want the ancient cultural area in Singaing Township to be systematically managed to become a

tourist attraction for international tourists, said poet and journalist Maung Ye Nway (Paleik).

Like Bagan, there are many

ancient pagodas in Paleik.

The ancient pagodas and religious buildings reflect the architecture of the Bagan era,

Konbaung era, Yadanarbon era and colonial era. There are a total of 325 ancient pagodas in the area, and because of their great antiquity, the area has been designated as an archaeological site since 2008.

"Paleik has cultural heritages. Locals do not value them. Whenever they think the pagodas should be repaired, they repair. But they do not know how to preserve the original styles. If the pagodas are not properly preserved, the historical heritages could disappear. The area will be a major tourist attraction if undergrowth is cleared and the pagodas are properly renovated," the poet said.

Although there are many ancient heritages, there is no systematic guideline for visiting the area. So, usually, the majority of

visitors visit only the Paleik Snake Pagoda, and other heritage spots are still unpopular, according to the poet.

In addition to ancient pagodas, traditional weaving businesses and migratory birds in the area are able to attract tourists. If tourism can be developed in the area, the living standards of the residents will be improved, said the poet.

Presently, the ancient heritages in Paleik are not fully preserved by the relevant departments and are being damaged because of the lack of appreciation of some residents. —Min Htet Aung (Man Sub-Printing House)

(Translated by Maung Maung Swe)

Lesser rainfall causes reduction of irrigation water in Ngwe Taung Dam

NAN San Hpoo natural water outlet, a water source of the Ngwe Taung Dam, Dimawhso Township, Kayah State, had a declining water yield, and the area had low rainfalls in the raining season, so this year, the dam will be able to supply water for only about 300 acres of summer paddy fields.

"Last year, the Ngwe Taung Dam irrigated more than 1,400 acres of summer paddy fields. This year, Nan San Hpoo natural water outlet had a declining water yield. Moreover, the

amount of stored water in the dam is reduced because there are fewer rainfalls during the rainy season. So the dam can supply water to only about 300 acres of summer paddy fields this year," said U Hla Thein, Staff Officer of the township's Irrigation and Water Utilization Management Department.

"The water storage amount of the Ngwe Taung Dam has reached its lowest level in 20 years, according to U Hla Thein. Every month, more than 1.2 million gallons of water



Ngwe Taung Dam in Dimawhso Township of Kayah State. **PHOTO : RERAL (DIMAWHISO)**



Cultivation of paddy plants near Ngwe Taung Dam. **PHOTO : RERAL (DIMAWHISO)**

from the Ngwe Taung Dam is distributed to the paddy fields and residents in the township for their daily uses," said U Hla Thein.

The construction works for the Ngwe Taung Dam were started in 1962 with the aim of irrigating more than 6,000

acres of farmlands. The dam was completed in 1965. It is an earth dam with a length of 6,000 feet and a height of 35 feet. The dam's capacity is 8,920 acre-feet.

Last year, more than 3,000 acres of summer paddy could be grown in Dimawhso Town-

ship. As for this year, low rainfall caused lower water levels in dams, lakes and creeks, and consequently, only about 800 acres of summer paddy will be grown in the township. — Reral (Dimawhso)

(Translated by Maung Maung Swe)

Myanmar nationals, seamen brought back home by relief flight

THE relief flight of Myanmar National Airlines, organized by the Myanmar Embassy in Seoul and the Crew Change Supporting Committee, flew from Incheon Airport to Yangon yesterday evening, in bringing back Myanmar citizens who were stranded

in foreign countries.

The group of 112 Myanmar seamen included 55 persons from the ROK, 4 from Hong Kong, 1 from Turkey, 1 from Spain, 2 from the Philippines, 7 from Brazil, 3 from Singapore, 4 from Egypt, 1 from Viet Nam, 2

from Malaysia, 1 from Canada, 1 from Thailand, 1 from Pakistan and 29 from Indonesia.

The Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population, the Ministry of Health and Sports and the Yangon Region government arranged 14-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, shipping companies and Myanmar embassies from respective countries. — MNA

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Dotthawadi River inspected to explore new tourist destination in Nawngkhio Tsp



Tourism Committee secretary and team visited along Dotthawadi River to explore new tourism sites in northern Shan State. **PHOTO: HTWE NGE (NAWNGHKIO IPRD)**

A team led by the Shan State Tourism Committee secretary visited along Dotthawadi River to explore new tourism sites in Nawngkhio Township of northern Shan State.

Secretary of Shan State Tourism Committee under the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, Shan State director U Htin

Aung Naing of the Directorate of Hotels and Tourism, members of the state tourism committee, deputy director U Thet Lin of the department (Lashio), chair of Myanmar Hoteliers Association (northern Shan State), township Destination Marketing Organization officials and tourism operators

inspected the Dotthawadi River in Nawngkhio Township intending to create new tourist destination to boost the tourism sector in the township. The officials of the Shan State Tourism Committee raised awareness of eco-friendly tourism through the trash-collecting campaign.

They met village administrators and residents who are interested in tourism activities. They provided fund to implement the new tourism site and shared information on how to ensure travellers safety. - Htwe Nge (Nawngkhio IPRD) *(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)*

Demand slumps on traditional blackboard slates stop production

THE traditional blackboard slates makers in the Mu Doon village of Chaungzon Township in Mon State tried to revive the business with creative designs. Yet, pandemic-induced demand slumps stopped production, coupled with travel restrictions.

Nowadays, the blackboard slates are rarely seen as a teaching tool as technology changed clay tablets to digital boards. However, that did not stop makers following design trends. They are trying to maintain the traditional business with creative



The traditional blackboard slates makers in Mu Doon village of Chaungzon Township try to revive the business with creative designs. **PHOTO: KA (CHAUNGZON)**

designs such as chalkboard paint, chalkboard wedding invitation, chalkboard souvenirs and more interior decorations. The business is on the verge of extinction if they don't follow

the trend, said U Aung Moe Khaing. The creative designs attract both local travellers and tourists. According to Mu Doon village souvenir shops, the travel restrictions due to the COVID-19 resulted in low demand. The blackboard slate business has commenced in Mu Doon village since 1945. The whole town used to rely on the business heavily. On the back of low demand, only ten makers are remained to maintain the traditional industry. — KA (Chaungzon) *(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)*

Rice sale declines by one-third at Yangon wholesale centre

RICE sale has declined by one-third at present during the COVID-19 outbreak, compared to the period before the pandemic, at the wholesale centre (Wahdan) operated by the Myanmar Rice Traders Association in Yangon.

U Kyaw Kyaw, the Joint-Secretary of association, said, "About 40,000 rice bags were sold each day before the outbreak of COVID-19 at our wholesale centre, and the amount has significantly de-

clined by one-third as restaurants, and retail shops were closed during the pandemic." "Rice price, however, increases around the end of each month due to higher demand by consumers," he added.

The wholesale centre is opened five days each week since 18 December as the COVID-19 infection rate has declined although it was run only three days during the second wave of pandemic.—Thant Zin Win



Picture shows the office of Myanmar Rice and Paddy Traders Association in Wahdan Street, Yangon. **PHOTO: THANT ZIN WIN**

Bangladesh negotiates with Myanmar to buy 100,000 tonnes of rice

By Nyein Nyein

BANGLADESH has reopened negotiations with Myanmar to purchase 100,000 tonnes of rice, said U Ye Min Aung, chair of Myanmar Rice Federation (MRF).

Bangladesh signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Myanmar for its self-sufficiency of foodstuffs and cooperation in the rice sector in 2017. Myanmar exported 100,000 tonnes of rice to Bangladesh in the 2017-2018 financial year. Later, Bangladesh stopped importing rice from external markets as they do not have staple food. However, Bangladesh's government called for a tender to purchase rice again to control the market's rise amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The two countries' counterparts are under negotiations for the purchase of 100,000 tonnes of rice, he continued.



Workers carrying sacks of rice at the Botahtaung Jetty in Yangon. PHOTO: PHOE KHWAR

"They get back on track, and the negotiations are still underway. It has not reached any agreement yet," the MRF

chair affirmed.

Myanmar rice's export price hit a record high in 2020 as the local and foreign demand

picked up, MRF stated.

Myanmar shipped over 648,158 metric tons of rice and broken rice to foreign trade

partners between 1 October and 1 January this FY, generating an income of over US\$245.096 million, as per MRF's data.

Moreover, Myanmar regained rice market shares from certain countries on account of high quality. The price also remarkably increased in November and December 2020.

In 2020, the export prices of Myanmar white rice (low quality), broken rice and parboiled rice significantly rose compared to the previous years' rates. The prices move in the range of US\$375-485 per metric ton depending on different varieties.

The export price of Myanmar's rice is relatively lower than the rates of Thailand and Viet Nam. Yet, the prices are higher than those of India and Pakistan's market prices, MRF's data indicated.

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

China demand hikes up Myanmar peanut price

THE price of Myanmar oil crop peanuts in the Mandalay pulses and beans market is significantly rising due to a sudden spike in demand by China, Mandalay bean traders said.

During the previous years, the market used to cool down when Chinese New Year was approaching. This year, they are steadily purchasing the varieties of peanuts and hikes up the price, said the owner of Soe Win Myint depot in Mandalay.

"The bean market used to suspend during Chinese New

Year. Surprisingly, oil crop peanuts are highly demanded. The price consequently gains on the strong demand. Local millers cannot keep up with Chinese buyers, and so, they are forced to stop running the mills for now," he affirmed.

The peanut prices have recently risen, moving in the ranges of K2,200-K3,500 per viss depending on varieties, showing a rise of K200-500 per viss for two weeks. The price is likely to remain high, the traders guessed.

The peanuts from Nay Pyi Taw, Tatkon, Pyinmana, Myinmu and Pakokku areas are abundantly flowing into Mandalay market in the recent days.

Mandalay wholesale centre, which has been suspended for four months due to the COVID-19 resurgence, was reopened starting from 21 January 2021, in line with health guidelines on coronavirus issued by the Ministry of Health and Sports.—Min Htet Aung (Man Sub-Printing House)

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)



Traders are seen evaluating pulses and beans at the Mandalay pulses and beans market in line with health guidelines. PHOTO: MIN HTET AUNG (MAN SUB-PRINTING HOUSE)

Myanmar tea brand becomes first-ever product on Chinese e-Commerce platform

By Nyein Nyein

YOKE THÉ branded Myanmar's authentic, pure milk tea will be displayed on the e-Commerce platform of China after Tawwin Kanbawza Mountain Co., Ltd of Myanmar and Guangxi CAEXPO Brand Management Co., Ltd of Guangxi autonomous region, China entered into a one-year agreement on 14 January to sell Yoke Thé tea brand, according to Myanmar Commercial Attaché in Nanning, China.

Earlier, goods from ASEAN countries can be seen in China during the China-ASEAN Expo period, and the products were difficult to reach Chinese consumers directly. Therefore, China-ASEAN Expo Secretariat Office arranged e-Commerce platform in 2019-end to offer a window for ASEAN products. Myanmar's tea will be on Chinese online marketplaces such as Taobao and other Chinese websites with Guangxi CAEXPO Brand Management Co., Ltd.

The products from ASEAN are displayed on the e-Commerce platform of China in different categories. Nanning commercial attaché has started to negotiate since early 2020 to place Myanmar's products on that platform.

Chinese's e-Commerce Platform is available for products shipped through regular trade. As per the rules, the products meet the following criteria; legal exporter from Myanmar, legal importer from China, Customs clearance documents, registration of the trademark in China, health certificates, labelling standard of China, the bank account in China, tax receipt, on-time delivery service and handling complaint about customer's satisfaction.

Yoke Thé is marked a milestone of the first-ever product of Myanmar on China's websites. To meet the criteria, a Myanmar company prepared for the needs from the various perspectives. The tea will be listed on the e-Commerce Platform within two or three weeks of the agreement date.

Those interested Myanmar suppliers who want to display their products on the e-Commerce Platform related to Guangxi CAEXPO Brand Management Co., Ltd can contact the Commercial Attaché in Nanning city, Guangxi via economicat-tachenanning@outlook.com.

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

Adapting changes post-COVID-19 means strengthening investment opportunities

NOWADAYS, we can see changes in all industries due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

With the digital transformation process, each industry in the world is adapting to maintain and regain their growth before the pandemic in this fast-paced competitive industrial market. This includes the oil and gas industry.

The COVID-19 pandemic will also bring unpredictable changes in the future, and the world's countries including Myanmar will see changes provided by the implementation of new technologies that oil and gas companies are adopting, market competition and climate change.

There are substantial opportunities for investors in our oil and gas sector. Hence, we need to prepare for adapting the changes in the post-COVID-19 era.

Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, new wells are being drilled in inland and offshore fields, and major investment offshore projects such as A-6, A-3, M-9 and M-3 are creating opportunities for services related to crude oil. When new pipeline projects for inland and offshore fields are implemented, we will see further job and service opportunities.

In 2021-2022, the price of crude oil is expected to rise spirally, and the changes in demand and supply of crude oil in the world will bring some challenges to our coming new offshore projects.

The Union Government is committed to providing a level playing field that would encourage a greater diversity of international standards, responsible investment, including through the use of open, transparent and competitive tender processes.

Our investment-related reforms are designed to attract responsible and quality investment. To overcome the impacts of the pandemic and counter the investment headwind, we must strengthen transparency and governance.

The new Myanmar Economic Recovery and Reform Plan (MERRP) will further strengthen Myanmar's investment enabling environment over the coming years.

Meanwhile, other stakeholders in the energy sector are urged to seek investment opportunities in infrastructures such as building terminals, plants, laying pipelines and building and maintaining storage tanks for LNG to power projects. Besides, there are investment opportunities for domestic investors in providing services to safety and environmental conservation related to private oil wells and small-scale refinery plants.

To support economic recovery, the private oil and gas industry needs to take steps focusing on job opportunities and sustainable growth in line with the new normal.



World lost equivalent of 255 mn jobs in 2020: UN

THE coronavirus pandemic took a huge toll on global jobs last year, the United Nations said Monday, with the equivalent of more than a quarter of a billion lost.

In a fresh study, the UN's International Labour Organization (ILO) found that a full 8.8 per cent of global working hours were lost in 2020, compared to the fourth quarter of 2019.

That is equivalent to 255 million full-time jobs, or "approximately four times greater than the number lost during the 2009 global financial crisis," the ILO said in a statement.

"This has been the most severe crisis for the world of work since the Great Depression of the 1930s," ILO chief Guy Ryder told reporters in a virtual briefing.

Since surfacing in China just over a year ago, the virus has killed more than 2.1 million people, infected tens of millions of others and hammered the global economy.

The UN labour agency explained that around half of the lost working hours were calculated from reduced working hours for those remaining in employment.

But the world also saw "unprecedented levels of employment loss" last year, it said.



Hundreds of people queue outside an Australian government welfare centre, Centrelink, in Melbourne on March 23, 2020, as jobless Australians flooded unemployment offices around the country after Prime Minister Scott Morrison warned the coronavirus pandemic would cause an economic crisis akin to the Great Depression. **PHOTO: AFP**

Official global unemployment shot up by 1.1 per cent, or 33 million more people, to a total of 220 million and a worldwide jobless rate of 6.5 per cent last year.

Lost talents, skills

Ryder stressed that another 81 million people did not register as unemployed but "simply dropped out of the labour market".

"Either they are unable to work perhaps because of pandemic restrictions or social obligations or they have given up looking for work," he said.

"And so their talents, their skills, their energy have been lost, lost to their families, lost to our society, lost to us all."

The lost working hours last year shrank global labour income by a full 8.3 per cent, the ILO said.

That amounts to a drop of

some \$3.7 trillion, or 4.4 per cent of overall global gross domestic product (GDP), it added.

The emergence of several safe and effective vaccines against Covid-19 has raised hopes that the world will soon be able to rein in the pandemic.

But the ILO cautioned that the prospects for a global labour market recovery this year are "slow, uneven and uncertain".

The organization pointed to the uneven impact the crisis had had on the world's workers, affecting women and younger workers far more than others.

Globally, employment losses for women last year stood at five per cent, compared with 3.9 per cent for men.

Women are more likely to work in the harder-hit sectors of the economy, and also have taken on more of the burden of, for instance, caring for children forced to stay home from school.

'Lost generation'

Younger workers were also far more likely to lose jobs, with employment loss among 15-24-year-olds at 8.7 per cent globally, compared with 3.7 per cent for older workers.

Many young people also put off trying to enter the labour market given the complicated conditions last year, the ILO found,

warning that there was truly an "all too real risk of a lost generation".

Monday's report also highlighted the uneven impact on different sectors, with accommodation and food services the worst affected, showing a drop in employment of more than 20 per cent.

By contrast, employment swelled in the information and communication fields, as well as in finance and insurance.

Looking forward, the ILO called on countries to provide particular support to the hardest-hit groups and sectors, and also to sectors likely to be able to generate numerous jobs quickly.

It stressed the need for more support to poorer countries with fewer resources to promote employment recovery.

The report sketched out three recovery scenarios for 2021, depending on support measures provided at the national and international level.

The pessimistic scenario saw an additional 4.6-per cent drop in working hours, and even the most optimistic scenario anticipated that working hours would contract by a further 1.3 per cent this year, corresponding to 36 million full time jobs. —AFP

President's Office continues announcement of illegal drug arrests, seizures action on tip-offs

THE Office of the President issued Press Release 3 /2021 yesterday, publicly announcing the Ministry of Home Affairs' arrests and seizures in the fight against illicit drug trafficking up till 23 January 2021.

The ministry made the arrests, acting on information, sent to the Drug Activity Special Complaint Department of the Office of the President as of 23 January. The full text of the press release will be reported in the 27 January issue of *The Global New Light of Myanmar*.—GNLM

Appointment of Ambassador of Pakistan agreed on

The Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has agreed to the appointment of Mr Muhammad Amjad Aziz Qazi as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to the Republic of the Union of Myanmar in succession to His Excellency Dr Khalid Hussain Memon.

Mr Muhammad Amjad Aziz Qazi was born in 1969. He holds a degree of Bachelor of Science (Electrical Engineering). He joined the Foreign Service of Pakistan in 2001. He has served at the Headquarters as the Section Officer, the Deputy Chief of Protocol and the Director. He was assigned in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan Missions in Copenhagen (2004-2008), Brussels (2011-2014) and Pretoria (2014). He has been serving as Minister at the Embassy of Pakistan in Paris since August 2016. He is married. — MNA

Common drug colchicine brings hope to Covid fight: Canadian research

A major clinical trial in Canada shows that an inexpensive anti-inflammatory drug called colchicine can significantly reduce the risk of complications and death from Covid-19, bringing "important hope" to sufferers, the lead researcher said Sunday.

Jean-Claude Tardif, head of the Montreal Heart Institute (ICM), led the study named "Colcorona", whose preliminary results were published Friday evening.

The complete results will be made public "as quickly as possible", he said during an interview with AFP.

Q: What are the main conclusions of your study, conducted on 4,488 patients throughout the world since March 2020?

A: The Colcorona study provided convincing results of a more than 20 per cent reduction in hospitalizations or deaths related to

Covid-19 with colchicine, compared to the placebo... When dealing with patients who have had a test that officially proves their Covid-19 diagnosis, the result with colchicine is even better; that is, a reduction of 25 percent in hospitalizations, 50 percent in need for a ventilator and 44 percent in deaths.

The hypothesis behind the study was that the reason patients develop complications from Covid is the exaggerated inflammatory response that a patient's white blood cells develop in reaction to the virus... Our intuition was that by using a drug like colchicine to reduce this exaggerated inflammatory reaction, known as "cytokine storms," could prevent complications.

Q: Why do you think the results are so important in the global fight against the pandemic?

A: Colchicine is a powerful



(FILES) In this file photo taken on September 16, 1998 a pharmacist presents the drug Colchicine, which is a therapeutic trial against cystic fibrosis launched this week in France, according to Professor Gérard Lenoir (pediatrics, Necker hospital, Paris). **PHOTO: AFP**

anti-inflammatory drug that has been known for a very long time, it was discovered 150 years ago.

gout, an inflammatory arthritis, and pericarditis among others.

The beauty of the study's results is that colchicine is already available in pharmacies, since it is used safely and inexpensively for many diseases... Our discovery won't just be useful in France, Canada and the US and G8 countries, but (also in) developing nations, poor countries, Africa, Asia will quickly benefit from inexpensive colchicine, which is taken orally in tablet form.

Our results bring important hope for patients, healthcare systems and governments. Finally, we are providing part of a significant solution to reduce hospitalizations and eventually reduce congestion in the hospital system.

Q: Scientists are waiting now for the complete results of your study, when do you plan to publish them?

A: We are submitting the manuscript to a major scientific journal today (Sunday). I obviously can't presume the publication date, the journal will do its work, it's one of the biggest journals in the world. We will share the rest of the results as fast as possible, possibly even before the final publication (in the journal). We are convinced that our results are conclusive, convincing and can be used immediately to benefit patients.

There will probably be a rapid review by regulatory agencies, EMA (European Medicines Agency), Health Canada in Canada, the FDA in the US, who will quickly review the data... Now I think that doctors don't have to wait for this regulatory review by the agencies... Doctors, health practitioners, will be able to prescribe it immediately because it is already available. —AFP



Myanmar Daily Weather Report (Issued at 7:00 pm Monday 25 January, 2021)

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

FORECAST VALID UNTIL AFTERNOON OF THE 26 January, 2021: Light rain are likely to be isolated in Taninthayi Region. Degree of certainty is (60%). Weather will be partly cloudy in Upper Sagaing Region and Kachin State and generally fair in the remaining Regions and States.

STATE OF THE SEA: Seas will be slight to moderate in Myanmar waters. Wave height will be about (4-7) feet off and along Myanmar Coasts.

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

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 26 January, 2021: Generally fair weather.

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 26 January, 2021: Generally fair weather.

FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 26 January, 2021: Generally fair weather.

CLIMATE

Kerry 'regrets' US absence from climate fight



Nominated Special Presidential Envoy for Climate John Kerry participates as US President-elect Joe Biden speaks during a cabinet announcement event in Wilmington, Delaware, on 24 November 2020. **PHOTO: AFP**

NEW US climate envoy John Kerry said he regretted his country's absence from the fight against climate change under Donald Trump, at an online summit of world leaders on Monday.

President Joe Biden's point-man on the issue committed the United States to efforts to make communities more resilient to the effects of climate change, the focus of the meeting hosted by the Netherlands.

German Chancellor Angela

Merkel, French President Macron and British Prime Minister Boris Johnson also pledged their support for the cause in video statements to the Climate Adaptation Summit.

"Three years ago scientists gave us a pretty stark warning. They said we have 12 years within which to avoid the worst consequences of climate change," Kerry said in his video statement.

"Now we have nine years left and I regret that my country has

been absent for three of those years."

Under Trump the United States pulled out of the Paris climate agreement, and one of Biden's first moves in office after his inauguration on January 20 was to rejoin.

"President Biden has made fighting climate change a top priority of his administration. We have a president now, thank God, who leads, tells the truth and is seized by this issue," said former secretary of state Kerry.

"So we're proud to be back, we come back, I want you to know, with humility, for the absence of the last four years, and we'll do everything in our power to make up for it."

The aim of the summit -- the first of its kind to focus on dealing with the effects of climate change rather than its causes -- is to produce an "adaptation action agenda".

This will help communities, especially the poorest and most vulnerable, to cope better with effects such as rising sea levels, extreme weather and crop failure.

SOURCE: AFP

FRAUD

Former VW boss's fraud trial pushed back over Covid-19

FORMER Volkswagen chief Martin Winterkorn's trial over the car giant's emissions-cheating scandal has been postponed until April due to the coronavirus pandemic, a German court said Monday.

Winterkorn, 73, and four former colleagues had been due to stand trial on fraud charges over their role in the so-called dieselgate affair from February.

But the pandemic "makes the postponement of the start of the main hearing to a date in the spring seem appropriate", according to the court in Brunswick, near VW's headquarters in Wolfsburg.

Winterkorn's trial will now begin on April 20 and is expected to wrap up in 2023.

Volkswagen sank into a quagmire of legal problems over revelations in September 2015 that it had installed devices in 11 million diesel vehicles worldwide to make them seem less polluting in lab tests than they actually were on the road.

Winterkorn resigned days after the revelations while de-

nying any personal wrongdoing.

The scandal plunged one of the main pillars of German industry into the biggest crisis in its history.

The carmaker has already paid out more than 30 billion euros (\$36 billion) in fines, legal costs and compensation to car owners -- mainly in the United States.

Last year, it paid nine million euros to settle market manipulation charges against current chief executive Herbert Diess and supervisory board chair Hans Dieter Poetsch.

No senior executive has been convicted in Germany so far in connection with the scandal.

However, the first trial of a VW leader linked to dieselgate opened in Munich in September 2020.

Rupert Stadler, former CEO of VW subsidiary Audi, along with other executives and engineers, are on trial over fraud charges, with hearings scheduled until December 2022.

SOURCE: AFP

WEATHER

Cyclone Eloise leaves hundreds homeless in Mozambique

A tropical cyclone that hit central Mozambique this weekend has displaced thousands of people and caused severe flooding in an area battered by two deadly cyclones in 2019, response teams and aid agencies said. Cyclone Eloise made landfall in the early hours of Saturday, bringing high-speed winds followed by torrential rain over the port city of Beira, capital of Mozambique's Sofala province, and the adjacent Buzi district. Almost 7,000 people have been displaced and over 5,000 houses destroyed or damaged in the area, the UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said Monday, citing preliminary government figures.

National emergency response teams on Sunday confirmed six fatalities and 12 serious injuries -- numbers expected to rise as the scale of the damage is fully assessed in coming days.

SOURCE: AFP

THREAT TO HUMANITY

480,000 killed by extreme weather this century: analysis

ALMOST half a million people have died in natural disasters linked to extreme weather events in the last 20 years, according to a new assessment of the direct threat posed to humanity by climate change.

The mortality burden of climate-related catastrophes such as storms, flooding and heatwaves is overwhelmingly borne by developing countries.

At the start of the Climate Adaptation Summit, held virtually this year due to the pandemic, the think tank Germanwatch calculated that these disasters have cost the global economy a staggering \$2.56 trillion this century.

An analysis of more than 11,000 extreme weather events showed nearly 480,000 fatalities

since 2000, with Puerto Rico, Myanmar and Haiti the worst hit countries, it said.

Under the 2015 Paris climate deal, wealthier nations are supposed to provide \$100 billion every year to help poorer states mitigate temperature rises and adapt to the changing climate.

But recent research suggests the true amount of funding available to developing countries for climate action is vastly lower.

Germanwatch's Global Climate Index examined the impact of two decades of extreme weather events, particularly the 2019 storm season, which produced hurricanes and cyclones that devastated parts of the Caribbean, east Africa and south Asia.

"This shows that poor vul-



A fallen electricity pole is pictured in a residential area following a fire amidst extreme heat wave in the village of Mevo Modi'im, in central Israel on May 24, 2019. **PHOTO: AFP**

nerable countries face particularly great challenges in dealing with the consequences of extreme weather events," said co-author

David Eckstein.

"They urgently need financial and technical assistance."

SOURCE: AFP

EXTREME E

Button follows Hamilton, Rosberg into Extreme E

JENSON Button has joined Lewis Hamilton and Nico Rosberg in entering a team for the inaugural Extreme E season but unlike his fellow Formula One world champions he will also be behind the wheel.

The announcement follows the unveiling of the 41-year-old British driver as a senior adviser to his ex-Formula One team, Williams, last week.

Competitors in Extreme E will race electric SUVs in five

extreme environments around the world to highlight the impact of climate change and human activity on some of world's most remote locations.

The aim is also to promote sustainability and the adoption

of electric vehicles. The teams will feature one male and one female driver.

Button, who has founded the JBXE team, said: "I caught the off-road bug a few years back and I absolutely loved it." — AFP

CONFLICT

Yemen rebels, supporters protest US 'terror' listing

THOUSANDS of Yemen's Huthi rebels and their supporters protested in Sanaa on Monday after the US blacklisted the group as "terrorist", a move aid groups have warned could put millions of civilians at risk.

Washington is reviewing the designation by the Trump administration, which came into effect the day before Joe Biden took office and sparked fears of further catastrophe in the war-torn country.

The Huthis, who have controlled Sanaa since 2014, marched along with their sympathisers, carrying signs reading "America is the mother of terrorism!"

"Who is killing the Yemeni people?" they chanted. "America!"

Huthi official Ahmed Sharafeddine, who took part in the demonstration, told AFP the US designation would backfire.

"It will only give us more

strength and unity," he said.

Another protestor said that the protest was "a reflection of the steadfastness" of Yemenis.

The United Nations says the situation in Yemen is the world's worst humanitarian disaster.

Twenty-two aid groups working in the country said Sunday that even with exemptions for humanitarian work, the designation would have "serious implications" and disrupt their ability to deliver assistance to parts of Yemen where people are most in need.

The groups also warned that the listing would hit commercial deliveries of vital food, fuel and medicines as well as making it "even more difficult" to make money transfers and pay staff salaries.

The Iran-aligned Huthis seized the capital Sanaa in 2014 and much of northern Yemen, sparking a Saudi-led intervention the following year to prop



Supporters of Yemen's Huthi movement gesture as they chant slogans during a demonstration against the outgoing US administration's decision to designate the Iran-backed rebels as terrorists, in the capital Sanaa on January 20, 2021. PHOTO: AFP

up the internationally recognized government.

The conflict has since left tens of thousands dead and millions displaced.

According to the UN, more than three million people have been displaced and close to 80 per cent of the Yemen's 29 million

people need of some form of aid for survival.

Antony Blinken, Biden's pick for secretary of state, said at his confirmation hearing that he would "immediately" review the Trump administration's labelling of the insurgents.

SOURCE: AFP

BORDER

India and China suffer new casualties in border flareup

INDIAN and Chinese troops fought a new brawl on their contested Himalayan border that left injuries on both sides, officials said Monday, highlighting the fraught state of relations between the giant neighbours.

The fighting on January 20 came six months after a pitched battle which left at least 20 Indian troops dead as well as an unknown number of Chinese

casualties. The world's two most populous nations have since become embroiled in a diplomatic showdown over their geographical and political differences.

India's military played down the latest skirmish as a "minor face-off" at Naku La pass, which connects Sikkim state with Tibet on the Chinese side. An Indian military statement said the clash was "resolved by local command-

ers as per established protocols".

Government sources said five Indian troops and 15 Chinese forces were injured when a Chinese patrol was forced back.

China's foreign ministry, however, said it had "no information" on the incident.

Foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian said Chinese troops "dedicated themselves to safeguarding the peace and

tranquillity" of the border region. "China urges India to work in the same direction." China's defence ministry said in a joint statement with their Indian counterparts released later on Monday that the ninth round of disengagement talks -- which have been held since mid-last year -- were "positive", but did not address the latest incident.

SOURCE: AFP

PROTEST

Dozens detained protesting against Nepal parliament's dissolution



Protesters from the civil society and police clash during a demonstration against the dissolution of the country's parliament in Kathmandu on January 25, 2021. PHOTO: AFP

POLICE used batons and water cannon Monday to disperse hundreds of people protesting in

Kathmandu against the dissolution of Nepal's parliament.

Political tensions have been

rising in the Himalayan nation since Prime Minister K.P.Sharma Oli dismissed the legislature in December, accusing members of his Communist Party of non-cooperation. Oli has called elections for April and May, but protests have spread across the country of 28 million people.

Police said they arrested 26 demonstrators who gathered near the prime minister's residence to call Oli's move "unconstitutional" and demand the reinstatement of parliament.

Police spokesman Basanta Bahadur Kunwar told AFP the 26 were detained after a clash as demonstrators moved towards a restricted area near the residence. Police used batons and

water cannons to disperse the crowd of about 500, witnesses said. Several were injured.

"We were moving forward peacefully to demonstrate.. but (the police) used force on us without any warning," said journalist Narayan Wagle, who participated in the protest, as he later addressed a crowd.

The Oli government came to power in 2018 with a two-thirds majority, aiming to end years of instability and short-lived governments made worse by a devastating earthquake in 2015.

The government has since weathered accusations of corruption and criticism of its handling of the coronavirus pandemic.

SOURCE: AFP

NEWS IN BRIEF

US-CHINA

US warships conduct exercises in South China Sea

A US aircraft carrier group sailed into the South China Sea on a so-called "freedom of navigation" exercise, the first routine operation in the region under new President Joe Biden.

Led by the USS Theodore Roosevelt, the carrier strike group entered the area Saturday, the US Indo-Pacific Command said, the same day Taiwan reported multiple Chinese jets and bombers had flown into its air defense zone.

SOURCE: AFP

UNREST

Israel arrests 10 as ultra-Orthodox protest lockdown

TEN people were arrested in Israel after clashes between security forces and ultra-Orthodox citizens, police said Monday, amid disturbances that saw a bus torched in protest against coronavirus restrictions.

The clashes broke out late Sunday in several ultra-Orthodox districts, including Bnei Brak near Tel Aviv and Mea Shearim in Jerusalem, where residents protested against lockdown measures.

SOURCE: AFP

RESIGNATION

Spain health minister to leave office as virus infections soar

SPAIN'S Health Minister Salvador Illa will step down on Tuesday to stand in Catalonia's regional election, the government said, as a resurgence of coronavirus infections swept the country.

Spain is among Europe's hardest-hit nations and Illa has been the face of the country's battle against the pandemic.

SOURCE: AFP

UPDATE

Coronavirus: Latest global developments

HERE are the latest developments in the coronavirus crisis:

US tightens borders

President Joe Biden re-imposes a travel ban on most non-US citizens who have been in Britain, Brazil, Ireland and much of Europe and extends the ban to South Africa.

Mexico president infected

Mexican president Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador is infected but says his symptoms are mild and that he feels optimistic.

Quarter billion jobs lost

The UN's International Labour Organization says the pandemic took a "massive" toll on the global labour market last year with the equivalent of more than a quarter of a billion jobs lost.

Australia approves Pfizer

The Pfizer jab becomes the first vaccine to get the green light

in Australia with doses expected in late February.

Pasteur drops out

France's Pasteur Institute is abandoning its vaccine project saying the first trials had showed it was "less effective than hoped."

S. Africa strain in N. Zealand

New Zealand's first case in more than two months has been identified as the South African variant. The woman who had been in Europe tested positive 10 days after completing two weeks in isolation.

Russian influencer ban

Russian social media star Serkey Kosenko is kicked out of Bali and banned from returning for at least six months for holding a party that broke virus rules.

'The inequality virus'

In a report entitled "The inequality virus", Oxfam says

the pandemic marks the first time since records began that inequality is rising in virtually every country at the same time.

FFP2 masks mandatory

Austria is among the first European countries to make FFP2 masks mandatory, with medical-grade masks now required for those over 14 on public transport and in shops, hospitals and medical practises.

Hong Kong lockdown lifted

Hong Kong lifts its first neighbourhood lockdown after officials who went door to door to test some 7,000 people found just 13 cases.

Clinical trial

A major clinical trial in Canada shows an inexpensive anti-inflammatory drug called colchicine can reduce the risk of complications and death from the virus.



A scientist works on samples at a laboratory in Athens, on January 18, 2021. PHOTO: AFP

Nearly 100 million cases

At least 2,129,368 people have died of coronavirus since the outbreak emerged in China in December 2019, according to an AFP tally from official sources.

More than 99,144,232 cases of coronavirus have been registered.

The US has suffered the highest death toll with 419,220

fatalities, followed by Brazil with 217,037 and India with 153,470.

The number of deaths globally is broadly under-estimated. The toll is calculated from daily figures published by national health authorities and does not include later revisions by statistics agencies.

SOURCE: AFP

VACCINE

AstraZeneca denounces 'me first' approach to Covid jabs

THE boss of British drugs giant AstraZeneca, which with Oxford University has produced a Covid vaccine, denounced Monday a "me first" approach by some countries to obtaining doses.

AstraZeneca chief executive Pascal Soriot, speaking at a virtual event for the Davos World Economic Forum, also attacked a lack of global preparation for the

deadly coronavirus pandemic.

The arrival of ground-breaking Covid-19 vaccines could have been grounds for celebrating, "but it unfortunately wasn't because there was a little bit of 'me first' behaviour", Soriot said.

"Globally, it is fair to say we could and should have been better prepared for this pandemic," he added. Soriot noted however

that "things are changing and international collaboration is emerging" over the coronavirus that has claimed the lives of more than two million people.

"There are many good examples of tremendous public-private collaboration actually in many countries," he said.

Going forward, "the first thing to do is to invest in prevention and early detection and early treatment", Soriot added.

He noted that among the world's most industrialized countries, only three per cent of health expenditure is spent on prevention.

"Twenty per cent of this 3.0 per cent... is spent on immunisation and early detections of disease. "So, essentially, we kind of tend to wait for people to become sick to try to address that, as opposed to early detecting (of) disease and preventing it."

SOURCE: AFP



Vials of the Oxford-AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccine are pictured ahead of doses being given to residents at the Belong Wigan care home in Wigan, northwest England, on January 21, 2021. PHOTO: AFP

VACCINES AGAINST NEW VARIANTS

Moderna says Covid vaccine effective against UK, S. Africa variants

US biotechnology firm Moderna on Monday said lab studies showed its Covid-19 vaccine would remain protective against variants of the coronavirus first identified in the United Kingdom and South Africa.

But out of caution, the company will test adding a second booster of its vaccine -- to make three shots in total -- and has begun preclinical studies on a booster specifically for the South African variant.

"We are encouraged by these new data, which reinforce our confidence that the Moderna COVID-19 Vaccine should be protective against these newly detected variants," said Stephane Bancel, Moderna's CEO. "Out of an abundance of caution and leveraging the flexibility of our mRNA platform, we are advancing an emerging variant booster candidate against

the variant first identified in the Republic of South Africa into the clinic." To study the impact of the existing vaccine, called mRNA-1273, Moderna took blood samples from eight people who had received two doses of the vaccine, and two primates that had also been immunized.

For the B.1.1.7 variant, first identified in the UK, there was no impact on the level of neutralizing antibodies -- which bind to the virus and prevent it from invading human cells -- that were produced by the shots. But for the South African variant, B.1.351, there was a sixfold reduction in the neutralizing antibody level.

Even so, it remained above the quantity that was shown to be protective in earlier tests on primates that were infected on purpose.

SOURCE: AFP

CONCERNS OVER FAKE NEWS

Zimbabwean government concerned over increase in fake COVID-19 media reports

THE Zimbabwean government on Monday expressed its concern over the increase in fake news on both mainstream and social

media at a time when the country is grappling with the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Permanent Secretary in the

Ministry of Home Affairs and Cultural Heritage Aaron Nhepera said it was unacceptable and unethical to publish such false-

hoods. His remarks came in the wake of false reports on social and mainstream media alleging the death and illness of some

senior government and ruling ZANU-PF officials due to COVID-19.

SOURCE: XINHUA

ASIAN STOCK

Most Asian markets rise with eyes on US stimulus push

ASIAN markets mostly rose Monday, rebounding from a sell-off at the end of last week as investors keep tabs on the progress of Joe Biden's new US economic rescue package.

However, while vaccinations and long-term optimism about the economic outlook are providing support, sentiment remains

weighed by concerns about surging virus infections and a new, more deadly strain.

Lawmakers in Washington are getting to work on the \$1.9 trillion stimulus proposal from the new president, with some suggesting they could pass something before the Senate holds an impeachment trial of Donald Trump, which starts in

the week beginning February 8. But it will likely face headwinds from Republicans who think another massive outlay comes too soon after the \$900 billion spending package passed at the end of last year.

"Noises from Washington DC suggest that President Biden's honeymoon won't extend to Senate Re-

publicans handing over 10 votes to ease the package through on a 60-40 majority," said OANDA's Jeffrey Halley. The Federal Reserve will also hold its first meeting under the Biden administration this week, with investors looking for clues about its plans for monetary policy. Hong Kong led the gains, rallying more

than two per cent, after the government lifted a strict weekend lockdown in one part of the city, while Tokyo, Shanghai, Seoul, Sydney, Wellington and Manila also posted healthy gains. Taipei, Singapore and Jakarta all fell. London, Paris and Frankfurt all rose at the open. The rollout of inoculations continues to provide

support to equities as investors look towards a return to normal life. "Vaccine breakthroughs make it likely that life will become more functional again at some point in 2021, resulting in higher GDP growth and more robust corporate earnings," said Axi strategist Stephen Innes.

SOURCE: AFP

ETF PURCHASE RISKS

BOJ minutes show ex-chief factored in ETF purchase risks in 2010

FORMER Bank of Japan Governor Masaaki Shirakawa stressed the need to take unconventional steps to help underpin the economy in October 2010 but cautioned that the decision to purchase exchange-traded funds would entail risks, meeting minutes showed Monday.

The BOJ decided on its first-ever purchase of ETFs, which are riskier in terms of price volatility than assets the bank had previously bought, at a policy meeting on Oct. 5 of the year under what it called "comprehensive monetary easing." "It means that we cannot make up for possible losses with (money in) our pocket, but would pass the burden on to the public," Shirakawa said in warning other BOJ policy members of the risk if stock prices fell and other assets it bought lost value, according to the minutes.

SOURCE: KYODO

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V JIAN HUI

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V JIAN HUI VOY. NO. (2012)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **26-1-2021** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **MITT** where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

Phone No: **2301928**

**Shipping Agency Department
Myanmar Port Authority**

Agent For:
**M/S ELDER TRIUMPHANT SHIPPING LINES
PTE LTD**

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V ISEACO GENESIS VOY. NO. (113N/S)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V ISEACO GENESIS VOY. NO. (113N/S)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **26-1-2021** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **AWPT** where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

Phone No: **2301185**

**Shipping Agency Department
Myanmar Port Authority**

Agent For:
M/S NEW GOLDEN SEA LINES

Invitation For Open tender No.(1/2021)

1. Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation, Department of Mines invites to submit the tender quotation sale open tender of (3041.638) Metric Tons, average metal content (Ni- 35.94 %, Fe-62.19 %) (17) Lots of Ferro Nickel by United States Dollar as follow,
(a) Ferro Nickel (500) MT (2) Lots, Tagaung Taung, Mine Site
(b) Ferro Nickel (200) MT (5) Lots, Tagaung Taung, Mine Site
(c) Ferro Nickel (100) MT (10) Lots, Tagaung Taung, Mine Site
2. Base price of Ferro Nickel shall be based on the London Metal Exchange Nickel average price in the month prior to the month of tender opening and the iron ore price 300 U.S. dollar per metric ton. The highest proposal amount (Premium amount added to the LME price and deduction of transportation and handling expenses) shall be winning tender.
3. Tender Closing Date and Time is 23-2-2021, (14:00) PM and Opening Tender is (15:00) PM.
4. Tender documents are available from the Mineral Development Division, Department of Mines, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation, Office Building No. (19), Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar. If you need detailed information, please can be inquired at telephone no. (+95) 67- 3409378, 67- 3409372 within the Office hours.

Tender Committee
Department of Mines

Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation

Invitation For Open tender No.(2/2021)

1. Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation, Department of Mines invites to submit the tender quotation sale open tender of (5008.574) Metric Tons, (21) Lots of Cathode Copper by United States Dollar as follow,
(a) Cathode Copper (108.574) MT (1) Lot, Yangon, Eden Warehouse
(b) Cathode Copper (100) MT (5) Lots, Yangon, Eden Warehouse
(c) Cathode Copper (200) MT (5) Lots, Yangon, Eden Warehouse
(d) Cathode Copper (200) MT (7) Lots, Monywa, Mine Site
(e) Cathode Copper (500) MT (2) Lots, Monywa, Mine Site
(f) Cathode Copper (1000) MT (1) Lot, Monywa, Mine Site
2. Base price of Cathode Copper (Eden Warehouse, Yangon) shall be based on the London Metal Exchange Copper price on the date of tender opening. The highest proposal amount shall be winning tender.
3. Base price of Cathode Copper (Mine Site, Monywa) shall be based on the London Metal Exchange Copper price on the date of tender opening. The highest proposal amount (Premium amount added to the LME price and deduction of transportation and handling expenses) shall be winning tender.
3. Tender Closing Date and Time is 23-2-2021 (14:00) PM and Opening Tender is (15:00) PM.
4. Tender documents are available from the Mineral Development Division, Department of Mines, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation, Office Building No.(19), Nay Pyi Taw and details can be asked to (+95) 067 3409378 and 067 3409372 within the Office hours.

Tender Committee
Department of Mines

Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation

Transferred Distributor for Registration Pesticides

Distribution and registration processes of below pesticides registered by Fertiagro Pte Ltd will have been transferred from Farmer's GOAL Company Ltd. to Myanmar Agro Eagle Company Limited. Any Objection regarding to this transfer can notify at Myanmar Pesticide Registration Board, Plant Protection Division, Gyogone (West), Insein Township within (14) days starting from this announcement.

No.	Trade Name	Active Ingredients	Reg. Type	Reg. No.
1.	Ferti-Azote 32.5% SC	Azoxystrobin 20% + Difenconazole 12.5% SC	Provisional	P2019-4786
2.	Ferti-Quinpyra	Pyrazosulfuron-ethyl 3% + Quinclorac 47% WP	Provisional	P2020-4981
3.	Ferti-Cloben	Bensulfuron-methyl 6% + Quinclorac 34% WP	Provisional	P2020-4982
4.	Ferti-Xo 20% WP	Bismethiazol 20% WP	Provisional	P2020-5009
5.	Ferti-Snail 70% WP	Niclosamide-olamine 70% WP	Provisional	P2020-5039
6.	Ferti-Sulfan 20% EC	Carbosulfan 20% EC	Provisional	P2020-5076
7.	Ferti-Fenofuron	Ethoxysulfuron 2.1% + Fenoxaprop-P-ethyl 6.9% OD	Provisional	P2020-5107

Myanmar Agro Eagle Company Limited
Tel: 09 43142882

Trade Mark Ads

Call Thin Thin May,

09251022355,09974424848

SCHOOLING

UK govt under pressure over continued schools' closure

THE UK government faced growing pressure on Monday to detail a strategy to reopen schools in England, following a backlash from lawmakers about reports they could remain closed for months.

A dozen MPs from Prime Minister Boris Johnson's ruling Conservatives have warned publicly that pupils risk becoming the pandemic's "forgotten victims" and demand schools fully reopen sooner. The group -- which includes former Cabinet minister Esther McVey and Graham Brady, head of an influential committee of Conservative lawmakers -- backed a parents' pressure group campaign on the issue.

"We need to get our children learning again - with clarity from @educationgovuk and an education routemap out of the coronavirus," Conservative MP Rob Halfon, chairman of parliament's watchdog education committee, said on Twitter.

"The engine of government should be directed towards opening our schools. We face an epidemic of educational poverty and mental health otherwise."

However, Halfon's bid to force a government statement on the issue in parliament Monday failed after House of Commons Speaker Lindsay Hoyle opted



(FILES) Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson (C) participates in a workshop with children from the Richard Avenue Primary School prior to chairing a cabinet meeting at the National Glass Centre at the University of Sunderland, in Sunderland, northeast England on January 31, 2020. PHOTO: AFP

against selecting his urgent question on the issue.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson is widely expected to address the matter later this week, and confirm that students will not return to classrooms after the mid-February half-term break as ministers had once hoped.

Johnson closed schools to all but the children of key workers

this month as Covid-19 infections surged across the country, largely due to the emergence of a more contagious virus variant in recent months.

Quarantine hotels

The dramatic spike in cases through December has led to unprecedented levels of hospitalizations and fatalities from coronavirus, with Britain now ap-

proaching 100,000 deaths during the pandemic.

Although the number of new cases has begun to fall this month, Health Secretary Matt Hancock declined Sunday to guarantee schools would be back by Easter in early April, noting that infection rates would need to come down further.

The UK government sets education policy in England.

The sector is handled by the devolved administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, where schools have also been shut. Meanwhile, the government is also being urged to beef up its borders policy amid fears other new virus strains could be imported. Ministers have for weeks been mulling whether to require all incoming travellers to isolate in hotels, and a decision is expected within days.

Earlier this month, the UK scrapped its "travel corridors" from countries with lower case-loads following the emergence of new variants, and now asks arrivals to show negative Covid-19 tests and then self-isolate.

But following calls for even stricter curbs, senior ministers are on Tuesday due to discuss requiring arriving travellers to pay to quarantine at a designated hotel to ensure they are following the self-isolation rules.

It comes as border rules were being tightened around the world.

The United States on Monday was set to reimpose a ban on most non-US citizens who have been in Britain, Brazil, Ireland and much of Europe from visiting, as well as adding South Africa to the list.

SOURCE: AFP

RUSSIA

EU mulls response to Russia's Navalny crackdown

EU foreign ministers met on Monday to debate their response to Russia's arrest of Alexei Navalny and crackdown on demonstrators, as pressure grows to impose sanctions on the Kremlin.

The diplomats from the 27 nations are meeting in Brussels for a busy day of talks ranging from Europe's relations with new US President Joe Biden to efforts to salvage the Iran nuclear deal.

But the arrest of Russian President Vladimir Putin's most prominent critic Navalny and detention of thousands of protesters will be one of the thorniest issues.

"I think the EU needs to send a very clear and decisive message that this is not acceptable," Lithuanian Foreign Minister Gabrielius Landsbergis said as he arrived for the meeting. European diplomats told AFP that

ministers do not expect to agree on sanctions on Monday despite a push from some capitals to take a tough line. Brussels is expected to hold off until Navalny goes to court in early February to see if the Kremlin puts him behind bars for an extended term.

The anti-corruption campaigner is facing three-and-a-half years in jail for breaching the conditions of an earlier suspended sentence while recovering in Germany from a near-fatal poisoning with a Novichok nerve agent. His arrest on returning to Russia unleashed a wave of protests on Saturday that saw baton-wielding riot police detain more than 3,500 people. While sanctions appear unlikely for now, the EU's foreign policy chief Josep Borrell will face pressure to abandon a trip to Moscow pencilled in for next month. Borrell labelled the arrests a "disproportionate use of force" and wrote on Twitter that Monday's meeting would discuss the EU's "next steps".

SOURCE: AFP



Police detain a protester during a rally in support of jailed opposition leader Alexei Navalny in downtown Moscow on January 23, 2021. PHOTO: AFP

CRIME

Italy urges Egypt to cooperate in student murder probe

ITALIAN President Sergio Mattarella on Monday urged Egypt to cooperate with prosecutors seeking to try four Egyptian security officers over the torture and murder of an Italian student in Cairo.

In a statement marking five years since Giulio Regeni went missing on January 25, 2016, the head of state called for a "full and adequate response" to the Italian investigation.

The mutilated body of Regeni, a 28-year-old PhD student researching the sensitive topic

of trade unions in Egypt, was found on the outskirts of Cairo days after he disappeared. His death sparked outrage in Italy and strained diplomatic relations between the two countries, with Italy's government accusing Egypt of failing to cooperate. Prosecutors in Rome formally requested a trial in absentia last week for four Egyptian security officers on charges of kidnapping, conspiracy to murder and grievous bodily harm, with a preliminary hearing set for April 29.— SOURCE: AFP

DIPLOMACY

Greece, Turkey open first crisis talk since 2016

GREECE and Turkey bowed to EU and NATO pressure on Monday and opened the first direct talks in nearly five years over their explosive eastern Mediterranean standoff.

The Istanbul meeting is

not expected to make major headway after the two NATO neighbours' gunboats collided in August as their dispute over energy and borders threatened to spiral out of control.

SOURCE: AFP

ECONOMIC FORUM

Xi to open virtual Davos forum as virus-hit West struggles

CHINESE President Xi Jinping was on Monday slated to open an all-virtual World Economic Forum, with his country still appearing on track to emerge stronger from the coronavirus pandemic that continues to wreak havoc elsewhere.

Monday's schedule reflects the global economic picture, with Xi headlining as European policymakers -- including European Central Bank chief Christine Lagarde and French and German economy ministers Bruno Le Maire and Peter Altmaier -- discuss "restoring economic growth".

US President Joe Biden will be absent from the week-long online gathering as he tackles urgent and daunting challenges at home.

The January 2020 WEF, which took place in its usual Swiss Alpine resort of Davos, saw the global elite just starting to worry about a pandemic that had surfaced in China a month earlier.

A year on, the coronavirus is leaving a mounting death toll, upending economies and depriving millions of people of work.

And initial optimism about a swift, smooth vaccine rollout ending the pandemic has ebbed in the face of distribution hiccups and new virus variants.

But China and other Asian countries are making a strong comeback in 2021 from the virus that hit them first.

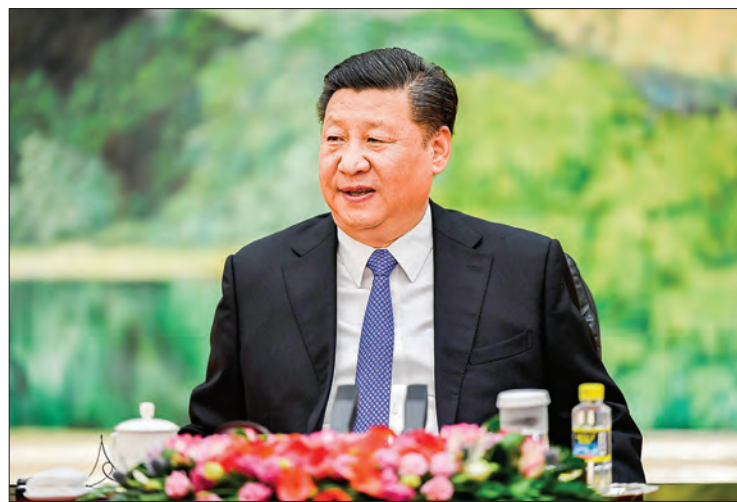
'Rebuild Trust'

In virtual format because of the pandemic, this week's event is titled: "A Crucial Year to Rebuild Trust".

The big names from Europe will be German Chancellor Angela Merkel, French President Emmanuel Macron and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, who heads the European Union executive.

Biden will not appear at the virtual Davos, which has never been a fixture on the White House calendar -- even if the new administration has pledged to revive a multilateral foreign policy after four years of Donald Trump's "America First" approach.

Trump stopped in at Davos twice, with the real estate billionaire enjoying mixing with the



(FILES) Chinese President Xi Jinping speaks with World Economic Forum head Klaus Schwab (not pictured) during their meeting at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on 16 April 2018. PHOTO: AFP

global business elite.

Biden is nevertheless having appear John Kerry, the special climate envoy who will be welcomed after the new Democratic president brought Washington back into the Paris climate accord, as well as his top advisor on Covid-19, Anthony Fauci.

Showing up from Asia are China's and South Korea's presidents as well as the prime ministers of India and Japan.

Following the first virtual session, Davos will move in May

to Singapore, far from the luxury Swiss ski resort where it has taken place since it was launched in 1971, the brainchild of German professor Klaus Schwab.

The stated reason for the change is health and safety, as the city-state has recorded just 29 Covid-19 deaths.

And a virtual forum is not particularly attractive for the world's well-heeled movers and shakers, who value huddles behind closed doors in fancy hotels over meetings in formal settings.

SOURCE: AFP

PANAMA

Indonesia seizes Iranian and Panamanian tankers

INDONESIA has seized an Iranian tanker and Panamanian vessel suspected of illegally transferring oil in the Southeast Asian nation's waters, authorities said Monday.

The crude oil tankers -- Iranian-flagged MT Horse and Panamanian-flagged MT Freya -- were spotted Sunday off Kalimantan, Indonesia's section of Borneo island, and were later seized after

the crew failed to respond to radio calls, authorities said.

The crew were suspected of a string of violations, including failing to display the vessels' national flags, turning off their identification systems to avoid detection and illegally transferring oil, the Indonesian Maritime Security Agency said.

"We seized the two foreign

tankers yesterday and the investigation is ongoing," said agency spokesman Wisnu Pramandita.

"The crews are being questioned."

Iran has previously been accused of trying to conceal its oil sales to avoid crippling US sanctions.

In October, the administration of former US president

Donald Trump slapped fresh sanctions on Iran's oil sector over sales to countries including Syria and Venezuela.

The move was part of a broader bid to end all of Iran's key oil exports, seeking to choke off all cash sources for the regional nemesis of US allies Saudi Arabia and Israel.

SOURCE: AFP

PARLIAMENT

Vietnam's ruling Communist Party kicks off congress

VIETNAM'S ruling Communist Party began a nine-day party congress with a preparatory meeting on Monday, with all eyes on General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong's continued leadership.

There is talk of a rare third term for Trong as Vietnam under his leadership has kept the coronavirus pandemic under control with fewer than 2,000 cases and managed to see its economy grow 2.91 per cent last year.

The Communist Party con-

gress, held every five years, is the Southeast Asian country's biggest political event.

About 1,600 delegates are converging on the capital Hanoi for the 13th party congress due to be held until Feb. 2. The delegates will select about 200 Central Committee members, who will then pick party leadership members. The general secretary sits atop the hierarchy.

Trong, 76, is serving his second term after becoming general secretary in 2011. He has

been concurrently serving as Vietnam's president since 2018.

Party rules limit the number of a general secretary's term to two. So for Trong to serve a third term, either the rules must be changed or an exception be made.

Among the officials mentioned as Trong's possible successors are Tran Quoc Vuong, a 67-year-old permanent member of the Central Committee's Secretariat, and Nguyen Xuan Phuc, 66, who is Vietnam's prime

minister.

Information regarding the leadership personnel has been treated as a state secret, with both the party and government keeping a tight leash on it. Local media has not reported on specifics of the selection process.

The delegates will begin full-fledged discussions on Tuesday. They are expected to discuss not just personnel matters but also strategies for political, diplomatic and economic affairs.

SOURCE: KYODO

NEWS IN BRIEF

ECONOMIC FORUM

N. Korean diplomat defected to S. Korea in 2019: media

A North Korean diplomat defected to South Korea in 2019 while serving as the acting head of the North's embassy in Kuwait, South Korean media reported Monday.

The Maeil Business Newspaper said Ryu Hyun Woo defected with his wife and children and has explained he decided to do so to provide his children with a better future.

SOURCE: KYODO

Nine trapped Chinese miners confirmed dead, one still missing

CHINESE rescue workers have found the bodies of nine more miners after an explosion a fortnight ago, local officials said Monday, raising the death toll to 10.

It comes a day after 11 miners were pulled out alive from the mine in eastern Shandong province where the blast struck. One miner remains unaccounted for.

SOURCE: AFP

S. Korean left-wing party chief sacked for sexual harassment

THE head of a left-wing South Korean political party that has championed gender equality was sacked Monday for sexually harassing one of his own MPs, a prominent rights campaigner.

Kim Jong-Cheol was chairman of the Justice Party, which with six representatives is the third-largest in the South Korean parliament, and was stripped of his position after admitting harassing Jang Hye-yeong, the party said in a statement.

SOURCE: AFP

Phone Myint Kyaw wins Yu Le Hui Club Open Championship



Phone Myint Kyaw (left) seen with his first prize after the final match of the Yu Le Hui Club Open Championship in Kun Shan City, China on 24 January. PHOTO: KO AR TI FACEBOOK PAGE

MYANMAR'S nine-ball and eight-ball professional player Phone Myint Kyaw (alias) Ko Arti won the Yu Le Hui Club Open Championship which was held in Kun Shan City, China from 19 to 24 January 2021.

In the final match the Championship, Myanmar Pool player Phone Myint Kyaw defeated Chinese player Guo Jian Wu by (11-9) and secured the first prize.

Phone Myint Kyaw reached the final game by passing different stages and met with Chinese pool professional players.

In the Round of 32 Stage, Phone Myint Kyaw beat Chinese pool player Ma Hai Tao by 10-2.

Next in the Round 16 Stage, Phone Myint Kyaw met with defending 9-ball World Champion Zhan Lon Ling from Taiwan. After hours of turf play, Phone Myint Kyaw made another victory with 10-8 points to reach the

quarter final stage.

In the quarter-final, Phone Myint Kyaw faced Chinese Pool player Mi Le. The quarter-final was a difficult one for the Myanmar player, but finally, he managed to shape 10-7 victory to go to the semi-final.

The semi-final became an easy game for Phone Myint Kyaw, and he defeated Chinese player Mao Ke Xing by 10-3 to advance to the final game.

After the tourney, Phone Myint Kyaw has expressed his feeling about the game.

"I could not concentrate well over the final game, but luckily I did it with comeback action. I did my best to claim the first prize no matter what was the situation. I'll try better in the next tourneys. Much thanks to my fans in Myanmar", Phone Myint Kyaw said.

Lynn Thit (Tgi)

Chelsea sack manager Frank Lampard

CHELSEA sacked manager Frank Lampard on Monday after a poor run of results left them languishing in mid-table in the Premier League.

The Stamford Bridge club said it had been a "very difficult decision" to part ways with the 42-year-old, who is the club's record goal-scorer.

"We are grateful to Frank for what he has achieved in his time as head coach of the club," Chelsea said in a statement.

"However, recent results and performances have not met the club's expectations, leaving the club mid-table without any clear path to sustained improvement."

The club's Russian owner Roman Abramovich said: "This was a very difficult decision for the club, not least because I have an excellent personal relationship with Frank and I have the utmost respect for him.

"He is a man of great integrity and has the highest of work ethics. However, under current circumstances we believe it is best to change managers."

Former Paris Saint-Germain boss Thomas Tuchel, who was abruptly sacked by the French champions in December, is in line to take over, reports said.

Chelsea are struggling in ninth place in the Premier League



(FILES) In this file photo taken on January 03, 2021 Chelsea's English head coach Frank Lampard reacts to their defeat on the pitch after the English Premier League football match between Chelsea and Manchester City at Stamford Bridge in London. PHOTO: AFP

table, 11 points behind leaders Manchester United.

They have lost five of their past eight Premier League matches after a good start to the season.

Lampard signed a three-year deal in 2019 and despite a transfer ban, led them to the FA Cup final and a fourth-place finish in his first managerial campaign at Stamford Bridge.

But a huge outlay of around £220 million (\$300 million) on new players including Ben Chilwell and German attackers Kai Havertz and Timo Werner has failed to translate into improved results.—AFP

Mali, Cameroon qualify as Zimbabwe player subbed after 149 seconds

MALI and hosts Cameroon secured African Nations Championship quarter-finals places and a Zimbabwe player was substituted 149 seconds into the first half as Group A ended Sunday.

A Demba Diallo goal on 11 minutes gave Mali a 1-0 victory over Zimbabwe in coastal city Douala and first place in Group A with seven points from three matches.

Cameroon, who hope to become the second host nation after Morocco to win the competition for home-based players, drew 0-0 with Burkina Faso to finish runners-up with five points.

Burkina Faso came third with four points while three losses meant Zimbabwe failed to collect even one point for the first time in five appearances at the tournament.

On Saturday, Mali will face the Group B runners-up in Yaounde while Cameroon make a 246-kilometre (153 miles) journey to Douala for a meeting with the Group B winners the same day.

Twice champions the Democratic Republic of Congo top Group B with four points ahead of the final round Monday with Libya (three points), Niger (two) and Congo Brazzaville (one) all in contention.

While the Malians and Cam-

eroonians celebrated advancing to the knockout stage and the Burkinabe lamented missing several scoring chances, Zimbabwean Qadr Amin was the focus of much attention.

When Zimbabwe were awarded a free-kick about 30 metres from Malian goalkeeper Djigui Diarra, Amin stood along designated set-piece specialist Tatenda Tavengwa.

But as Tavengwa prepared to shoot at goal, Amin darted forward and fired the free-kick wide to the apparent fury of Croatia-born Zimbabwe coach Zdravko Logarusic.

With just two minutes and 29 seconds gone in the opening half, the electronic substitutes' board was raised by the fourth official, indicating that Amin would be replaced by Ian Nekati.

A dejected Amin walked off having made unwanted history as the Zimbabwean to spend the least time on the pitch before being substituted in a Nations Championship match.

Logarusic was successful at the last Nations Championship in 2018, guiding outsiders Sudan to third place behind champions Morocco and runners-up Nigeria.—AFP



Zimbabwean coach Zdravko Logarusic shouts instructions to his players from the touchline during the opening match of the African Nations Championships (CHAN) football match between Cameroon and Zimbabwe at Stade Ahmadou Ahidjo in Yaounde, Cameroon, on January 16, 2021. PHOTO: AFP