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## State Counsellor makes public speech on COVID-19 vaccination programme of Myanmar

**A**S all the people know already that we began the COVID vaccinations the other day. The first vaccinations were given to our healthcare personnel and volunteers who are providing healthcare services on the frontlines. We started programmes in every state and region. I also went to have a look. That was in Nay Pyi Taw. At the vaccination site in Nay Pyi Taw, our Union Minister for Health Dr Myint Htwe rolled up his sleeves and bravely accepted a jab. He said he felt no pain. Not only did he feel no pain, when I asked him just now he said he did not have any negative side effects. However, among the healthcare personnel who were vaccinated, about one third said that they had slight aches, chills, or some sort of fever about 12 hours after being vaccinated; but this is not in a serious way. Just for some time. After that, they were all right.

This is natural when you receive some sort of vaccination;



for example, flu. When you receive a flu shot, you feel this sort of reaction—some sort of aches and pain. You feel muscle pain, a slight chill, some slight tremors, and somewhat feverish. This is to be expected. Up to now,

we have not seen any serious incidents. That is why we will proceed with this programme in a systematic way. I am always reminding you. I don't know if you have become a little fed up with my reminders. However,

the reason why I have to keep reminding is that this is just the first dose. There will be a second dose. We can say that you have attained protection only after the second dose. When we say a second dose, there are

four weeks during the interval; that is 28 days. Those who were vaccinated on the 27<sup>th</sup> will get their second doses on the 24<sup>th</sup> next month, I think. That means after four weeks. We can assume that they are protected only after the second dose.

The manner in which we receive these vaccines depends on the countries which are providing us with these vaccines. We are also purchasing these vaccines. There are those who are donating vaccines also. However, we will get only when they give us. We will be receiving on a regular basis month by month. We will be vaccinating all our people. We have estimated that we will be able to provide vaccinations to the people. We have made preparations to do this. At the same time, when we say we are protecting the people from the COVID-19 disease, we are giving protection not only for the virus. We have to think of the related impacts of the disease;

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## Announcement of Union Election Commission to Voters

(28 January 2021)

1. The Union Election Commission has peacefully and successfully organized the 2020 General Election under the five norms of free, fair, transparent, credible and reflecting the will of the people, and invited the participation of relevant stakeholders with the elections.
2. To ensure accurate voter lists, the UEC also worked together with the Ministry of Office of Union Government, the General Administration Department and the Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population in voter list collecting processes, and monthly updated the lists. The initial voter lists were published at the sub-commission offices of UEC in respective ward/village-tracts for three weeks from 25-7-2020 to 14-8-2020. It was also announced that applications of Form 4 could be filed to ask for correction of voter list that included ineligible voters (the dead, underage and repeated voters), for the unnamed voter in the list through Form 3 and for correction of voter information in the list through Form 4-C.
3. After cancellation, addition and correction based on the information from Form 3, Form 4 and Form 4-C, the second version of voter lists were published from 1-10-2020 to 14-10-2020. The web application findyourpollingstation.uec.gov.mm was developed to be able to check the voter lists, and the mobile application findyourpollingstation.apk was launched for downloading from the Google play store. The PDF format of these voter lists was transparently distributed to the election candidates in respective townships and political parties, asking for their cooperation in collecting the accurate voter list.
4. Addition of the voter lists—for those who returned from abroad, who could not return to their permanent residence and (if) who were not included in the eligible voter list during the COVID-19 outbreak—was carried out in line with the laws. Moreover, the voter lists of Tatmadaw personnel and their family members sent by the respective commands/commanders were added into the eligible voter lists without making any scrutiny.
5. Due to the outbreak of COVID-19 during the election period, the UEC made some announcements, under its power and the provisions of Hluttaw election laws, as per Article 27 of the Union Election Law, saying that 'The commission

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# Announcement of Union Election Commission to Voters

## (28 January 2021)

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- may make the required bylaws, rules, guidelines, procedures, notifications, orders or directives in implementing the provisions in this law'; Article 54 of the respective Hluttaw Election Law said that 'The Commission may take measures as may be necessary for the successful holding of free and fair election'; Article 90 also mentioned that 'In implementing the provisions of this Law the Commission may make rules, procedures, orders and directives as may be necessary. The directives were made into public announcements, and the copies were sent to the Union-level organizations.
6. It was also informed on 30-9-2020 to the Hluttaw candidates, and the voters about their rights to get the copies of election documents in line with the laws ahead of the elections, and the requests for document copies were legally approved. After the elections, the relevant election sub-commission ensured confidentiality of electoral documents which included personal information of relevant persons, such as their signature, name, father's name, mother's name, birthday, national scrutiny card number, current address and permanent address to secure their personal freedom and security of citizens.
  7. The advance voting processes were also carried out in line with the laws and bylaws of Hluttaw. After the voter signed the single and original Form 1 for voting on the election day, the election office has to send it, together with other forms in the sealed packages, to the township election commissions. The township sub-commissions have to keep the documents safely.
  8. Some Hluttaw candidates and voters have submitted their complaints to the Union Election Commission in seeking legal judgements on their losses in relation to the previous elections. A total of 287 complaints—94 cases from the voters and 193 cases from the Hluttaw candidates— were filed to the UEC. The ongoing cases of controversial voter lists were also included in the complaints. The UEC has also formed electoral tribunals to investigate the complaints.
  9. The electoral tribunals are now investigating the complaints. Those who filed the complaints can report and demand on their losses. Based on the results from electoral tribunals, the election sub-commissions, if necessary, will scrutinize the electoral documents, including the voter lists which are maintained confidentiality, in accordance with the laws and bylaws.
  10. The Tatmadaw True News Information Team has pointed out that there might be some overlapped voter lists of elderly persons, very young persons, underage persons and the dead in cross-check among the townships. However, these persons could not cast their votes many times in a single day. In addition, there were travel restrictions amid COVID-19 outbreak; it was impossible to go to other towns for voting, indelible ink that cannot be removed until one week, the process of election sub-commissions carried out the guidelines of polling-station officers and members to check the voter lists and personal information such as the name, father's name, age, date of birth, and address, etc.
  11. Eligible voters cannot lose their voting rights although they do not have national scrutiny card. There are many persons who do not have national scrutiny in the country. Therefore, the Hluttaw election laws do not prescribe that those who do not have the national scrutiny card are not valid to cast the vote. However, the persons who have reached 18-year of age are the eligible voters. If someone can prove themselves as the citizen with 18-year of age, they are allowed for the voting.
  12. There were some inaccuracies of voter lists in the referendum of 2008 Constitution, and in 2010 and 2015 General Elections. Some flaws in voter lists in the recent elections could not happen irregularities in the election. Vote results were announced after counting each ballot paper in the presence of election sub-commission members, polling station officers and members, Hluttaw candidates and election representatives, polling station representatives of the candidates and their assistants, election observers, news media and members of civil service societies. The number of secured votes for each candidate was approved by signing Form 16. The numbers of secured votes were also published at the respective polling stations. Township election sub-commissions recorded the number of secured votes for the Hluttaw candidates in Form 19 in front of the public. The documents were signed by the candidates, the election representatives, the respective election sub-commissions and the witnesses. The election sub-commissions of regions and states announced the elected candidates. The approvals were made in accordance with the electoral processes.
  13. Moreover, the approved results were published at the polling stations/sub-commissions. The processes were carried out in line with the law to be able to announce the elected Hluttaw candidates officially.
  14. The Union Election Commission is a Union-level organization which has an independent power to manage the electoral process. As per provision 402 of State Constitution and Article 11 of the Union Election Commission Law, the UEC is the Union-level organization which has the power and privileges in matters related to the elections. No law has given the authority to UEC to work together with the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, or the government for negotiation and to find solutions. The sovereign power is derived from the voters who elected the candidates in the elections. The State Constitution has also mentioned that 'The Sovereign power of the Union is derived from the citizens and is in force in the entire country'. And that, any person or any organization cannot overrule the decision of voters by making any negotiation. If any changes were made on the results, it would be tantamount to breaching the State Constitution, the Union Election Commission Law and Hluttaw election laws, opposing to the expectation of voters.
  15. The case of election irregularities and frauds can be reported to the election tribunal for its decision in line with the legal rights. If the independent decisions of tribunals are not accepted, appeals and amendments can be submitted to the UEC which will then make judgements on the cases.

*Union Election Commission*

## Myanmar nationals abroad brought back home by relief flights



Myanmar returnees are seen at the Yangon International Airport on 28 January 2021. **PHOTO: MNA**

THE 21<sup>st</sup> relief flight of All Nippon Airways (ANA) organized by the Myanmar Embassy in Tokyo landed at Yangon International Airport yesterday bringing back the Myanmar nationals and Myanmar seamen who were stranded in Japan due to the suspension of international flights.

The relief flight of Myanmar Airways International (MAI) organized by the Myanmar Embassy in Dhaka landed at Yangon International Airport yesterday repatriating 3 Myanmar nationals who were stranded in Bangladesh.

Another relief flight of Myanmar Airways International (MAI) organized by the Myanmar Embassy in Riyadh bringing back a total of 117 Myanmar nationals stranded abroad landed at Yangon International Airport yesterday evening.

The 117 Myanmar nationals are 2 from Saudi Arabia, 9 from Qatar, 4 from Bahrain,

84 from the UAE, 3 from Egypt, 1 from Israel, 9 from Sri Lanka, 1 from Mozambique, 3 from Senegal and 1 from Malawi.

The Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population, the Ministry of Health and Sports and the Yangon Region government provided them with proper medical tests and arranged 14-day quarantine at specific places or designated hotels, followed by the 7-day home quarantine.

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

*(Translated by Ei Phyu Phyu Aung)*

## Please take care of your health



I say that we will get the full benefits of the vaccines, but at the same time, we still do not know all the details about the effectiveness of these vaccines. This is a trial period for the entire world. We are experimenting. These vaccines are being tested. How effective are the vaccines? How long will they be effective? So far, we cannot say for sure. So, please take care of your health even after vaccination. Be careful. Do not take the situation lightly. We have to try hard to get into the habit of living with care. Moreover, in the meantime, the people who have yet to be vaccinated need to be especially careful.

**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)**

## State Counsellor makes public speech on COVID-19 vaccination programme of Myanmar

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especially the economic impacts. We have to look at the negative economic consequences on the lives of our people.

In this regard, the financial relief that our Union government has been giving out to the people to the best of our ability, to protect them from COVID has become quite substantial at this moment. To give a rough figure, it is about one thousand billion from the loan. After that another one thousand billion from the rotating fund. Then over fifty billion from the natural disaster relief fund. In total, we have spent over one thousand six hundred billion. We will spend more as needed. We will do whatever is required in order to ensure that our economy will be back to the normal mode. Yesterday when I went to take a look at the vaccination programme being conducted I felt very happy. I felt happy because we were able to begin

this vaccination programme. This means we have begun the process of providing protection to our whole country. We have begun with the healthcare personnel; I am feeling happy for this also. This is in a way of showing our thanks and recognition to the healthcare personnel for their contributions and services. By giving them first priority in the vaccination programme, we are showing them how vital they are for our citizens at this time. We wanted to give them recognition for this fact. Saying “thanks” from the lips is easy to do. Saying “thanks” again and again from the lips is easy. I feel very satisfied that we have been able to show our thanks with our deeds. At this time, I wish to express my appreciation again to all the healthcare personnel and volunteers who are providing their services on the frontlines.

I wish to thank our people because they have been able

to successfully overcome COVID-19 up to this stage. I said very often that ‘People are the key’ because they have been able to overcome the COVID-19 challenge stage by stage. We cannot succeed in anything without the participation of the people. We have seen a gradual improvement in COVID containment measures. But I think the improvement is quite slow. The number of confirmed cases is hovering around 400 for some days. The figure declined below 300 some days ago but surged again to more than 400. It is expected the figure will go downward gradually. It is important to maintain a declining trend. I especially want to encourage the people in Yangon for the declining number of cases. This improvement has lessened our anxiety greatly. Yangon has a dense population. However, this declining rate has been an encouragement to us because the

population is dense and therefore, infection spread is easy. However, we need to maintain this improvement. Therefore, let me remind you all once again to wear masks, wash hands regularly and practice social distancing. Although the social distancing is set at 6-ft apart, I saw it was not being followed during the vaccination programme I visited the other day.

Some persons, especially media personnel, did not stay even 6 inches apart from each other. They worked very tightly. I wish to warn that this situation can cause infection. People who received the first dose of vaccination need to maintain vigilance. It would be such a huge waste of vaccines if they became infected with COVID-19 between the first and second doses, and the first dose would be in vain. It is important to note that the country had to bear huge expenditures. As the availability of vaccine is not

easy, it is very valuable. We don't want to see even a single dose of vaccine wasted. I want people to be fully aware of this fact. The vaccination programme will continue in prioritized order in some places with dense population and with stay-at-home order. I expect public participation in this process. People are working for the country and the security of the country. Our country will have security and achieve progress only if our people are healthy and wealthy. Therefore, now that we are going to get vaccinations, it is not only good for our health, but it will also be a great relief for us. That is why I want all the people to participate and cooperate for the success of the vaccination programme. Never forget ‘People are the key’. May our people have peace of mind and tranquillity.

*(Translated by Kyaw Myaing, Aung Khin)*

## Tatmadaw releases statement on ceasefire, eternal peace

THE Office of Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services released a statement on the ceasefire and eternal peace in the country on 28 January 2021.

The full text of statement said—the Tatmadaw ceased all military operations from 1 to 31 January 2021 in all areas, excluding the places where groups declared by the State as terrorist groups are active, to carry out Covid-19

prevention, containment and treatment measures with accelerated momentum and for the success and effectiveness of the processes for restoring eternal peace in the Republic of the Union of Myanmar. In addition, the Peace Talk Committee of the Tatmadaw was established for the effectiveness of the endeavours for peace.

All military operations of the Tat-

madaw except from defending the Union and administrative affairs will be suspended in the said areas from 1 to 28 February 2021 to enable ethnic armed organizations (EAOs) to continue peace dialogues with the Tatmadaw for eternal peace, to smoothly carry out the peace processes and to smoothly implement COVID-19 prevention, containment and treatment measures.

Therefore, the Tatmadaw urged the stakeholder organizations and individuals to effectively use the suspension period of the Tatmadaw's military operations to fulfil the people's desire for the prosperity and socio-economic development of the Union and taking a right democratic path and to continue the peace dialogues for restoring eternal peace. —MNA



VP U Henry Van Thio discusses future plans to address problems with water resources

**V**ICE-PRESIDENT U Henry Van Thio chaired the 13th meeting of National Water Resources Committee at the Ministry of Transport and Communications yesterday to discuss the future plan for the conservation of water resources.

At the meeting, the Vice-President said that the committee was reformed in 2016 and worked together with the relevant ministries and organizations to lessen monsoon floods and drought in the hot season.

He also called for the ministries and region/state governments to solve the shortage of drinking water and agricultural water in the coming summer, the implementation of remaining decisions in previous meetings and taking seriousness on the future plans.

The Vice-President also urged the respective ministries and region/state governments to continue working closely in water resources management, conservation of watershed areas, illegal excavation of gold, other minerals, precious stones, and production and extraction of gravels and sands.

He continued to say about monsoon plantation, prevention of water pollution, control of debris, wastewater and plastics in the water resources.

The National Water Resources Committee has joined with global and regional organizations, as well as with the partner countries, to develop water resources.

Myanmar hosted the 3rd Asia-Pacific Water Summit in 2017. The conference released a document entitled 'Yangon Declaration' which was also discussed for implementation at



Vice-President U Henry Van Thio speaks during the Meeting of National Water Resources Committee at the Ministry of Transport and Communications in Nay Pyi Taw on 28 January 2021. **PHOTO: MNA**

the 8th World Water Forum that took place in Brazil in March 2018.

The design of boat rowing in Inlay Lake was recognized as the World Water Day logo in 2019.

The national committee is working for the enactments of 'National Water Law' and the 'National Water Resources Committee Law'. The draft version of the first law is being discussed by members of Water Law Task Force and relevant personnel, while the second law is being finalized with the participation of relevant ministries and the recommendations of the Office of Union Attorney-General.

According to the 2019 interim-census, about 81.7 per cent of households in Myanmar have to rely on the basic (lowest) level of household water services. Among them, 41.4 per cent of them acquire safe and clean drinking water which also covers 63.8 per cent of the population in cities and 32.7 per cent in rural areas; Among the

families in the city areas, only 3.7 per cent of the population are consuming the surface water from the sources of river, creek, reservoirs, lake, canal and irrigation facilities, while 15.8 per cent of rural people are relying on the surface water for drinking.

The Vice-President stressed the needs to collect nationwide data on the norms for water distribution, discard of sewage water, collection of rainwater at homes, factories and buildings, the total volume of surface and underground water and the amount of consumption.

Union Minister for Transport and Communications U Thant Sin Maung, the deputy chairman of the committee, reported on the sandbanks in Thanlwin River in Kayah State, floods and bank erosions in Ayeyawady River, Chindwin River and other water outlets mounting silt in Setyoekya creek in Rakhine state, removing slimes from the river mouth in Thandwe, implementation of

the Ayeyarwady Integrated River Basin Management Project, the timely establishment of system information data centre, the electronic navigation charts for 1,000 km of the waterway between Yangon and Mandalay, and availability of clean drinking water.

Acting Director-General U Win Hlaing, the joint-secretary of the committee, from the Directorate of Water Resources and Improvement of River Systems, presented the ongoing works and the future plans of the committee and Dr Khin Ni Ni Thein, the secretary of the consultant team, explained the works of their team.

Union Ministers Lt-Gen Ye Aung, Dr Aung Thu, U Ohn Win and U Win Khaing, Deputy Ministers U Tin Myint, Dr Min Ye Paing Hein, U Soe Aung, Yangon Mayor, ministers of region/state governments, Deputy Mayor of Nay Pyi Taw, permanent secretaries, the directors-general and officials discussed water resource developments, works

for clean water and agricultural water, environmental conservation, conservations of watershed areas and natural water sources, environmental conservation, examination of water quality, removing discarded materials from water resources, works for greening environments in dry zones, reduction of water pollution caused by the excavation of natural resources, relations of water resources to energy and electricity sectors, hydropower electricity, strategic plans for the management of strategic and infrastructural projects, relief assistance to the natural disasters, reduction of flood-related damages, conducting research on water resources, cooperation with international organizations, prevention of bank erosion and the future plans.

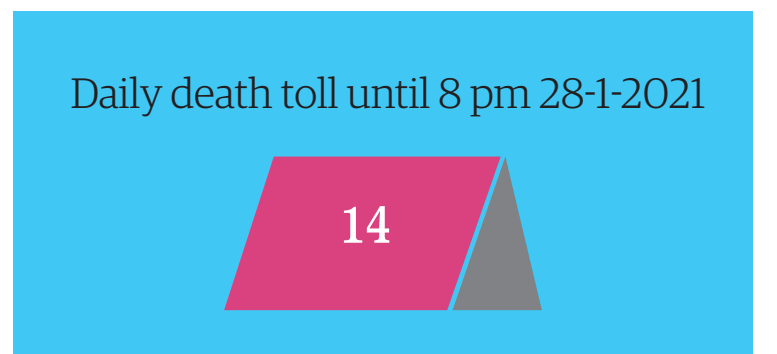
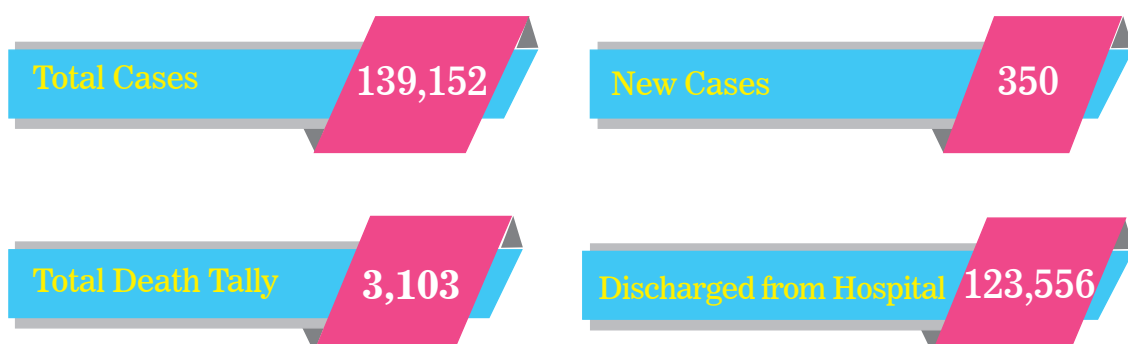
The Vice-President coordinated the discussions and made a concluding remark, with saying appreciation to the reports of participants at the meeting.—MNA

(Translated by Aung Khin)

350 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 28 January, total figure rises to 139,152

MYANMAR'S COVID-19 positive cases rose to 139,152 after 350 new cases were reported on 28 January 2021 according to the Ministry of Health and Sports. Among these 139,152 confirmed cases, 3,103 died, 123,556 have been discharged from hospitals.—MNA

Updated at 8 pm, 28 January 2021



Ministry of Health and Sports



# IPRD celebrates 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary in Nay Pyi Taw

THE Information and Public Relations Department under the Ministry of Information held its 30th anniversary at its headquarters in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

Union Minister for Information Dr Pe Myint, Deputy Minister U Aung Hla Tun, Permanent Secretary U Myo Myint Maung, departmental heads and officials attended the ceremony. Regions/states IPRD officers and staff members participated in the celebration via videoconferencing.

Speaking at the event, the Union Minister said that an organization or an enterprise has become valuable by serving for the public and the efforts of the department were getting appreciated by the public, saying to make better plans to offer best things to the public.

During the 30 years, it is time to reconsider what should be done better for the people. The IPRD is a department which has a direct relationship with the people and so it should still serve for the public, seek advice and carry out in line with the advice of people.



Union Minister Dr Pe Myint speaks at the 30th anniversary event of the Information and Public Relations Department in Nay Pyi Taw on 28 January 2021. PHOTO: MNA

It is necessary to be more careful about having good impacts in serving with positive intention, he added.

He highlighted the children's literature festival and Youth All-round Development Festival organized by the department, stressing the important role of libraries and librarians in public services, including public talks.

He appreciated IPRD for its participation in the successful celebration of 100th anniversary of Myanmar film industry by cooperating with the relevant

departments and organizations, and for the establishment of Film Development Centre and Film Studio, urging the department to keep making stronger efforts in broadcasting news for the public.

The Union Minister presented the best performance award to Kyaukse District Office, the second prize to Mandalay District Office, the third prize to Hpa-an District Office and the special awards to Gangaw District Office, southern Yangon District Office, Kyaukse District Office, Haka District Office, Monywa

District Office and Taunggyi District Office.

Deputy Minister U Aung Hla Tun gave awards to township level offices. Permanent Secretary U Myo Myint Maung gave awards to the winners of the photo contest, and Director-General U Ye Naing presented awards to the winners of the documentary contest.

IPRD's Director-General U Aye Kywe presented awards to the winners of the photo contest and civil services award winners, NPE's Managing Director

U Thet Swe presented literary award winners, and PPD's Acting Director-General U Ko Ko Naing presented awards to winners of broadcasting news on Public Library Facebook Page.

A documentary entitled "Pearl Anniversary while Moving Forward to Serve the People" was then played.

The ceremony was concluded after an award winner on behalf of other winners expressed thanks for presenting the awards.—MNA (Translated by Khine Thazin Han)



## PRC donates \$0.4 mln for NRPC

THE People's Republic of China made a donation of US\$ 0.4 million to the National Reconciliation and Peace Centre at the Ministry of State Counsellor Office in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

The Centre's secretary and Deputy Minister for the Office of the State Counsellor U Khin Maung Tin, the Directors-General, Chinese Ambassador to Myanmar Mr Chen Hai and delegation participated in the event.

Chinese Ambassador Mr Chen Hai first explained the purpose of the donation for NRPC and presented the cash to the Deputy Minister for the Office of the State Counsellor U Khin Maung Tin. The deputy minister returned certificate of honour to the Chinese Ambassador.

The ceremony was concluded after the deputy minister expressed thanks for the donation.—(Translated by Kyaw Zin Tun)

Deputy Minister U Khin Maung Tin accepts the PRC's donation of US\$0.4 million for NRPC handed over by Chinese Ambassador Mr Chen Hai in Nay Pyi Taw on 28 January 2021. PHOTO: MNA

## Union Gov't, NCA Signatory EAOs organize informal meeting virtually

AN informal meeting between the Union Government and the signatories of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement was held virtually yesterday.

The meeting was participated by Peace Commission's Secretary Lt-Gen Khin Zaw Oo (Rtd), Hluttaw MP U Pyone Cho (a) U Htay Win Aung, advisory board members U Hla Maung Shwe and U Moe Zaw Oo, the Ministry of the State Counsellor Office's Director-General U Zaw Htay, NCA Signatory EAOs representatives Sao Sai Ngern (RCSS), U Myo Win (ABSDF), Dr Lian

Hmung Sakhong (CNF), Pado Saw Tar Do Hmu (KNU), Saw Mra Raza Linn (ALP), Khun Myint Tun (PNLO), Saw Sein Win (DKBA), Saw Kyaw Nyunt (KNU/KNLA-PC), Kya Solomon (LDU) and Nai Ong Ma Nge (NMSP).

The representatives of the Union Government and the signatories of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement discussed matters relating to the ongoing peace process and holding of the two sides' bilateral dialogues.

Informal meetings between the Union Government and the



Union Government and NCA Signatory EAOs hold informal meeting virtually on 28 January 2021. PHOTO: MNA

signatories of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement will be

held at least one time monthly, according to the meeting yes-

terday. —Myo Myint (MNA) (Translated by Kyaw Zin Tun)



## MoE minister discusses early grade math, reading assessments

UNION MINISTER for Education Dr Myo Thein Gyi participated in the virtual meeting over presenting the findings and ongoing work plans of Early Grade Mathematics Assessment and Reading Assessment (EGRA/EGMA) yesterday.

The Union Minister said all should participate in EGRA/EGMA to improve the reading, writing and mathematics skills of primary level children. Only such a move can be sure for the children to gain the chance for lifelong learning and 21st-century skills.

He also discussed the importance of EGRA/EGMA in improving the 21st-century skills in addition to science and basic computer skills, financial, culture and civics.

According to the annual result, the reading ability of children can be known, and there are also children who cannot even read, and so it is important to



Union Minister Dr Myo Thein Gyi participates in the virtual meeting on Early Grade Mathematics Assessment and Reading Assessment on 28 January 2021. **PHOTO: MNA**

carry out the practical work plans for these children by conducting training regarding with the teaching methods or syllabus to

the teachers.

He appreciated the efforts of headmasters/headmistress and teachers of primary schools,

township education officers, district education officers, regions/states education officers and other officials of Basic Educa-

tion Department, Education Research, Planning and Training Department, The World Bank, UNICEF and other partner organizations for participating in South East Asia Primary Learning Metrics-SEA PLM report and EGRA/EGMA report.

The Union Minister highlighted the need of plans not to occur school drops and to learn in poverty, and cooperation between teachers and parents for the children in their learning for reading, writing, mathematics, science, computer, financial, culture and civics.

Mr Saurav Dev Bhatta, Senior Economist and Education Team Leader of the World Bank briefed their assessment for EGRA/EGMA while other participants discussed the findings in EGRA/EGMA, Early Grade Teaching Manual, Early Grade Teaching Intervention and further work plans. — MNA (Translated by Khine Thazin Han)

## MoEA holds meeting over virtual celebration of Ethnic Culture Festival 2021



Union Minister Nai Thein Lwin attends the meeting on virtual celebration of Ethnic Culture Festival 2021 in Nay Pyi Taw on 28 January 2021. **PHOTO: MNA**

THE Ministry of Ethnic Affairs held a coordination meeting on the successful holding of the 3rd Ethnic Culture Festival 2021 to promote ethnics culture and tourism industry in Nay Pyi Taw according to the COVID-19 health guidelines yesterday.

The Ethnic Culture Festival 2021 will be held virtually via MRTV, NRC, Web portal, Web programme and Facebook in accordance with the health guidelines of the Ministry of Health and Sports due to the COVID-19 crisis this year.

Pre-celebration of the festival will be broadcast on 12 February. The festival will be opened on 26 February and concluded on 12 March. The exhibitions at the festival will be arranged being divided into 14 main sections -- Kachin, Kayah, Kayin, Chin,

Bamar, Mon, Rakhine and Shan states and 6 self-administered zones/regions.

Union Minister for Ethnic Affairs Nai Thein Lwin urged the Ethnic Affairs ministers in respective states and regions to collaborate with Myanmar Ethnic Entrepreneurs Association on necessary support for the exhibitions according to their ethnic groups and video clips of the regional contents.

He added the necessity to send video clips in a timely manner and pay special attention to the COVID-19 guidelines when conducting live broadcasts.

He called for participation in the discussion to support the peace and social development activities of ethnic nationalities, to help increase local products and to promote the tourism industry.

He said the lasting peace of the Union and development of ethnic nationalities are mutually

beneficial and he called on all ethnic nationalities to work together in unity and in the spirit of Union.

Afterwards, the Union Minister handed over the cash assistance of K50 million for the successful celebration of the third Ethnic Festival to the secretary-general of the Festival Organizing Committee.

Deputy Minister U Hla Maw Oo, Social Affairs Minister for Chin State government, Ethnic Affairs ministers for the respective regions and states, officials from the self-administered zones/regions, the Permanent Secretary, Directors-General, Deputy Directors-General and responsible persons from the Myanmar Ethnic Entrepreneurs Association participated in the discussion.

The meeting was concluded after the remarks of the Union Minister.—MNA (Translated by Ei Phyu Phyu Aung)

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

- 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.
  - MPU Debit/Credit Card of local banks
  - Visa/Master Credit of local banks
  - Visa/Master Debit & Credit Card of foreign banks
  - Mobile Wallets such as CB-pay, KBZ-pay, OK\$ through QR Code (more mobile wallets

- will be available)
- Internet/mobile banking App of KBZ, CB, AYA, UAB and MAB (more internet/mobile banking Apps will be available)
- 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.
  - Therefore, cash contribution can be made at the above-mentioned platforms electronically, in addition to the branches of Myanmar Economic Bank and Myanmar Agricultural Development Bank and other local private banks.
- Ministry of Planning, Finance and Industry*



# Marble Entrepreneurs Association to be established

THE marble entrepreneurs association will be organized to fix the same marble prices in the post-COVID-19 period, said U Soe Win, marble businessperson of Sagyin Village in Madaya Township of Mandalay Region.

The entrepreneurs discussed to form the association containing at least 20 members who have licences. The marble can be sold at the same prices after forming such an association.

“We will organize marble entrepreneurs association to designate the same prices in the post-COVID-19 period. Currently, the transaction goes online. Although the sale is good, there are still difficulties in some orders. If we form the association, such issues can be solved. The members must have licences, and we will not accept the non-licence holders. Currently, there



Marble stones are carved to make marble sculptures. PHOTO: MIN HTET AUNG



A man is making a marble Buddha statue. PHOTO: MIN HTET AUNG

are more than 60 licence holders. There are also more than 300 small marble businesses which produce marble Buddha statues in our Sagyin Village. The business people need to apply for licences,” he said.

The association will also cooperate with the officials of the tourism sector to improve

the tourism industry by implementing the tour destinations in Sagyin Village. They will also submit proposals to the relevant departments to form the marble entrepreneurs association.—Min Htet Aung (Mandalay Sub-Printing House)

(Translated by Khine Thazin Han)

## Health workers receive first dose of COVID-19 vaccine



Sumprabum Township. PHOTO: KHADAY (IPRD)



Chipwe Township. PHOTO: YEIN YAW (IPRD)



Tanai Township. PHOTO: WAH WAH (IPRD)



Nawngkhio Township. PHOTO: HTWE NGE (IPRD)



Mongpan Townsip. PHOTO: SAN MYINT (IPRD)



Monghkat Township. PHOTO: KO MOE HDEY



# Act now to provide clean, safe water to people

**S**AFE drinking water is a human right and essential during and post COVID-19 crisis. We must do more to ensure safe water sources for the people.

According to the 2019 Interim census, about 81.7 per cent of families in our country get their drinking water from low-est drinking water services, and of them, about 41.4 per cent get drinking water from high and safe drinking water services.

About 63.8 per cent of urban population and about 32.7 per cent of the rural population get access to safe drinking water.

About 3.7 per cent of the urban population draws surface water from rivers, dams, lakes and irrigation facilities for their basic needs and drinking water while 15.8 per cent of the rural population turns to over ground water for drinking water.

Not all water users are equal. It speaks of some communities in urban areas who have found themselves without potable water for years at a time.

Statewide testing for emerging contaminants in all public water sources should be carried out to ensure the safety of the public's drinking water because their water is not tested for them and to take steps to limit and eliminate our exposure to them.

To ensure all the people have safe drinking water; the regional and state governments need to take tougher measures to ensure the safety of the public's water sources.

It means they must take actions to prevent any activities such as illegal mining in rivers and unsystematic sewage management systems as they are polluting our rivers on which people are also relying for drinking. Besides, we must effectively tackle the problems of unsafe drinking water from some

drinking water providers including unregistered ones.

Preventive measures are always less costly than remedies. When groundwater and surface water are polluted it is not something that can easily be fixed.

To help all the country's people get access to safe drinking water, it is required to collect nationwide data related to safe drinking water supply such as standards for water supply and waste management, rain water storage for drinking at houses, factories and buildings and usage of underground water and water from rivers, dams and lakes.

Besides, there is an urgent need to complete the drafting of the National Water Law and linking it with existing laws, rules and regulations.

Getting access to clean and safe water is a basic human right for all.

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## VACCINE WORKS AGAINST MUTATIONS

# Pfizer/BioNTech say vaccine effective against UK, S.Africa virus mutations

*The results, while preliminary and not peer reviewed, are the latest to suggest that vaccines can protect against the strains*

**T**HE vaccine made by Pfizer and BioNTech appears to retain its effectiveness against coronavirus mutations in worrying new variants that have emerged recently in Britain and South Africa, the firms said Thursday.

Several new variants—each with a cluster of genetic mutations—have sparked fears over an increase in infectiousness as well as suggestions that the virus could begin to elude immune response, whether from prior infection or a vaccine.

Pfizer/BioNTech, which had previously said it was unlikely that the strain originally found in Britain could escape vaccine protection, said Thursday that early tests suggest their immunisation would be similarly protective against the variant in South Africa.

### Emerging variants

In a statement, the two companies said these preliminary findings "do not indicate the need for a new vaccine to address the



Two scientists prepare a sequencing machine at the Wellcome Sanger Institute, in Hinxton, England, last August. PHOTO: DAN ROSS / WELLCOME SANGER INSTITUTE / AFP

emerging variants".

They said they are "prepared to respond" if a new strain is shown to be able to evade the immunity of the vaccine, adding that they can produce updates to

their job if needed.

The statement comes after US biotech firm Moderna this week announced that lab studies suggest its vaccine should protect against the variants first found in

the United Kingdom and South Africa.

The latest Pfizer/BioNTech research, which has not yet been peer reviewed, was carried out by researchers from Pfizer and the

University of Texas.

The authors compared the antibodies of 20 people who had received two doses of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine during clinical trials with lab-engineered sets of mutations present in the variants that emerged in Britain and South Africa.

### 'Escape' fears

The new variants—along with another linked to Brazil—have mutations to the virus' spike protein, which enables the virus to latch onto human cells and therefore plays a key role in driving infections.

One mutation in particular—known as E484K and found in the South Africa and Brazil strains but not the one in Britain—has experts particularly worried about immunity "escape".

The study found that the antibodies were able to neutralize all the sets of mutations tested.

It noted that the effect was "slightly lower" against three mutations in the variant found in South Africa, including E484K.

But the firms said that it was

"unlikely to lead to a significant reduction in the effectiveness of the vaccine".

They said they were looking to test against the full set of mutations in the spike protein of the variant that emerged in South Africa.

A study released last week by researchers in South Africa, which has also not yet been peer reviewed, tested the variant found there against blood plasma from recovered COVID-19 patients.

They found that it was resistant to neutralizing antibodies built up from prior infection, but said more research was needed into the effectiveness of other parts of the immune response.

Daily global deaths from COVID-19 topped 18,000 for the first time Wednesday, with vaccines seen as the only real chance of returning to some form of normality.

The German firm BioNTech had already said the messenger RNA technology means it could update the vaccine against new variants within weeks.

SOURCE: AFP

## CONTROVERSY OVER PFIZER VACCINE VIALS

# Five Or Six Doses? Confusion Over Pfizer Vaccine

**T**HE United States (US) pharmaceutical giant Pfizer, which is manufacturing the COVID-19 vaccine developed by Germany's BioNTech, now considers each vial contains six doses compared to five previously.

The difficulty in obtaining that sixth dose in practice means many countries are at loggerheads with Pfizer and facing a drop in supply.

### How Many Doses?

Until recently, each vial of the BioNTech-Pfizer vaccine was considered to officially contain five doses. After being thawed, the contents of each vial are diluted with 1.8 millilitres (ml) of saline solution, creating a total of 2.25 ml of injectable solution. With each

dose 0.3 ml, in theory there are just over seven doses. But theory and practice are different. Medical personnel are unable to measure so precisely the doses to get seven doses they can inject into people.

But they found they could – with the right equipment – reliably get six doses out of the vials.

Both European Union (EU) and United States (US) regulators now consider that the vials contain six doses and have authorized the use of the sixth dose.

However, the European Medicines Agency (EMA) noted that this sixth dose depends on the availability of specific syringes.

### Doses Not Vials

Pfizer has revised higher its

production target for this year from 1.3 billion doses to 2 billion. While part of that reflects plans to further increase output, it also reflects the effect of the label change on vials.

Pfizer said its contracts specify the delivery of a certain number of vaccine doses and not vials.

This means customers are now receiving fewer vials than they did before regulators approved the change.

### Niche' Syringes

But in order to obtain that sixth dose a special medical syringe is required with a low "dead space". The dead space is the amount of the product left in

the syringe when the plunger is completely pushed down.

To get the sixth dose of the BioNTech-Pfizer vaccine, syringes with very low dead spaces are needed, but medical device manufacturer Becton Dickinson (BD) says there is a supply crunch for them.

"Low dead space syringes are niche products and there has... traditionally been minimal market demand based on health care provider needs," a company spokesman said.

Manufacturing capacity of these syringes is limited and it will take time to boost production.

Many vaccination centres in France have not received low dead space syringes and are find-



A nurse administers the Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine at the NHS Louisa Jordan temporary hospital in Glasgow, Scotland on 23 January, 2021. PHOTO: AFP

ing it difficult to obtain a sixth dose with regular syringes.

If Pfizer delivers fewer vials "we'll vaccinate fewer people than planned" initially, warned Du Cote de la Science, a group of French doctors and researchers who have sought to influence the public debate in France about the pandemic.

### Governments On Their Guard

Pfizer's decision sparked an outcry in Belgium. Retirement homes hoping to step up their vaccination campaign thanks to using the sixth dose in vials are now receiving fewer vials than initially promised, one director said.

SOURCE: AFP

## Union Day Objectives 74<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Union Day - 2021

1. To work on the Union Peace Conference – 21<sup>st</sup> Century Panglong, till the success of the internal peace process is achieved.
2. Development of the socio-economic life of the ethnic nationalities.
3. To work for the emergence of a constitution that is in alignment and harmony with the Democratic Federal Union.
4. All ethnic nationalities 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.



## Myanmar Daily Weather Report (Issued at 7:00 pm Thursday 28 January, 2021)

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

**FORECAST VALID UNTIL NOON OF THE 29 January, 2021:** Light rain or thundershowers are likely to be isolated in Taninthayi Region and Rakhine State. Degree of certainty is (80%). Weather will be partly cloudy in the remaining Regions and States.

**STATE OF THE SEA:** Seas will be moderate in Myanmar waters. Wave height will be about (5-8) feet off and along Myanmar Coasts.

**OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS:** Likelihood of isolated light rain or thundershowers in Bago, Yangon, Ayeyawady, Taninthayi Regions and Kachin, Shan, Kayah States.

**FORECAST FOR NAYPYITAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 29 January, 2021:** Partly cloudy.

**FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 29 January, 2021:** Partly cloudy.

**FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 29 January, 2021:** Generally fair weather.

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

Kyaw Myaing

**EXECUTIVE EDITOR**

Aung Khin

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

Nyein Nyein Ei,

**PHOTOGRAPHER**Kyaw Zeya Win @ Phoe Khwar  
Kyaw Zeya**COMPUTER TEAM**Thein Ngwe, Zaw Zaw Aung,  
Kay Khaing Win,  
Sanda Hnin, Zu Zin Hnin,  
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subscription@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com

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**Mya Nandar govt employee housing opens for in-service employees**

THE opening ceremony of Mya Nandar government employee housing was held in the morning of 28 January at its housing compound.

The government employee housing contains 476 apartments which are intended to be provided for in-service government employees. It is located in Ward 73, Dagon Myothit Seikkan Township, Yangon Region.

At the opening ceremony, the Yangon Region Chief Minister U Phyo Min Thein and Regional Hluttaw Speaker U Tin Maung Tun formally opened the ceremony, pressing the button to unveil the signboard. Then, the Chief Minister gave a thankful speech regarding the opening ceremony of the housing.

The rental housing project was implemented in the 2018-2019 financial year by the Department of Urban and Housing Development, Ministry of Construction under the supervision of the Yangon region government. "The rental housing was constructed to provide affordable housing for in-service civil servants staff in Yangon region. We will rent the housing apartment for them. The staff who are still in service have to apply for the apartments through their re-



Picture shows the buildings at Mya Nandar Government Employee Housing in Dagon Myothit (Seikkan) Township, Yangon Region. **PHOTO: SUPPLIED**

lated departments. The Yangon region government will formulate a policy and select from among the applicants. The civil service personnel can rent and stay in those apartments while they are on duty in the Yangon region. If they are transferred, they have to return to the apartment within two months. If they are retired or die, the units are to be returned within four months," said U Myint Naing, deputy director-general

from the Department of Urban and Housing Development, Ministry of Construction.

The rental charges of the apartment will be 3 per cent of the salary of the civil staff and 5 per cent of the salary if they are the officers.

The eight buildings containing five-storey apartments was implemented with spending of K4.99 billion from the union capital fund in 2018-2019FY. It was implemented on 5.34-

acre plots of land at the corner of Shweli and Mya Nandar Roads. The new six buildings and infrastructure were also constructed in the 2019-2020FY, with spending of K5.21 billion from Yangon region government-approved fund.

Now, a total of 18 buildings with 476 apartments were constructed with spending of K10.2 billion. — Myint Maung Kyaw ■

(Translated by Hay Mar)

**ACCIDENTS / FIRES****Over 30 killed in more than 120 YBS accidents in 2020**

By Nyein Nyein

THERE were a total of 127 YBS traffic accidents in Yangon in 2020 with 37 deaths and 151 injuries, according to the Yangon Region Transport Authority (YRTA).

In 2019, there were 155 YBS traffic accidents, resulting in 56 deaths and 214 injuries. Therefore, the number of YBS traffic accidents declined, and the death cases also decreased in

2020 compared to the same period of 2019.

Besides, YRTA will attempt to ensure better services to the commuters and prevent the outbreak of the accidents that threaten the lives of the passengers, said U Hla Aung, the joint secretary of YRTA.

At present, YBS buses are running daily in COVID-19 period depending upon the number of passengers and the YBS drivers' participation. But,

daily YBS bus operations have dropped in the pandemic period, resulting in a decline in passengers' number. Before the COVID-19 outbreak, the YBS carried 1.8 million people a day sharply declined to 70,000 after the country found its first COVID-19 case on 23 March. However, the number rose again to 250,000 per day in October 2020.

According to the official data of 26 January, about 3,500 YBS buses from 106 YBS bus

lines are running their operations as usual, which is more than three-fourths of all YBS city buses and carried about 650,000 commuters. Before the outbreak of COVID-19, more than 100 bus lines are running in Yangon region. Additionally, more than 6,000 YBS buses are registered with YRTA. Over 4,500 buses are running daily in Yangon region, providing services to approximately 1.8 million passengers. ■

(Translated by Hay Mar)

**230 cases of fire reported in Yangon in 2020**

ACCORDING to Yangon Region Fire Services Department, a total of 233 cases of fire accidents were reported in Yangon region in 2020, claiming nine people's lives and causing the damages amounting to approximately K2,906.3228 million.

During the period, fire

outbreaks were mostly caused by negligence accounting for 112 cases, followed by 92 electrical fires and ten stove fires. The nine cases of outbreaks of fire are attributed to arson with eight natural fires, one forest fire and the cause of last one fire case still under

investigation.

Fire outbreaks killed nine people and injured 20 others in Yangon region in 2020. The fire also destroyed 248 houses, two factories and 13 warehouses. Last year's fire outbreaks rendered 461 people homeless, said U Thein Myint, the deputy

director from Yangon Region Fire Services Department.

Myanmar Fire Services Department is carrying out the awareness campaign and taking the fire prevention measures to reduce fire outbreaks. — Aung Thura ■

(Translated by Hay Mar)



# Black bean price drops in domestic market

By Nyein Nyein

MYANMAR black bean price has dropped in the domestic bean market because of India's bean procurement system, said U Min Ko Oo, the secretary of Myanmar Pulses, Beans and Sesame Seeds Merchants Association (MPBSSMA).

Although the black bean touched a high of K1,152,500 per tonne at the end of October 2020 because there was a demand from India, the price fell to about K950,000 per tonne on 28 January.

U Min Ko Oo also said that the main thing is India's bean procurement system. India began setting an import quota on beans in August 2017 to protect its local farmers. India's purchasing system is based on the quota system. The bean is highly demanded while India sets up the quota and issues the licences to the bean companies. At that time, the price of beans has increased.



Beans and pulses are displayed in bags at a shop in Mandalay. PHOTO: MIN HTET AUNG

After that, the price of beans will plunge while the quota is almost completed. The demand has also declined. It means that India controls its bean purchasing volume with its quota system.

On 1 October, the Ministry of

Commerce and Industry of India issued a notification to purchase 150,000 tonnes of black beans instead, and the import deadline is March 2021. The licence will be equally granted for India's companies.

Currently, Myanmar has already exported nearly 100,000 tonnes of black beans. The remaining 50,000 tonnes of beans will continuously be exported, according to MPBSSMA.

The new harvested black

bean started entering the market. The black bean yielded around 400,000 tonnes annually and will be exported mainly to the India market. Similarly, Myanmar has also produced about 50,000 tonnes of pigeon peas yearly and exported them primarily to the India market.

Since 2017, India has been setting import quota on beans, including black beans and pigeon peas.

Myanmar has to export black beans and pigeon peas under a quota system and limit period.

Consequently, there is no guarantee that we could get the prevailing market price next year; the market observers shared their opinion. Following no assurance of black beans and pigeon peas in the markets, the association suggested on the end-October that the local farmers grow black-eyed beans more.

(Translated by Hay Mar)

## YGEA holds coordination meeting for gold exports to Japan

THE work coordination meeting regarding gold exports to Japan and appraisal was inaugurated at the One-Stop Service Centre (OSSC) on 5th floor of UMFCCL on 28 January, Yangon Region Gold Entrepreneurs Association (YGEA) stated.

At the coordination meeting, Taw Win Myint Company conducted appraisals of the gold and jewellery which are designated for exports to Japan via air freight. The appraisal team assessed 13 gold items including earrings, rings, pendants and other designs at the OSSC.

Myanmar's gold export paused after a change in the payment system, and now it has returned to normal from July 2020.

As per the notification released by the Ministry of Commerce, starting from April, the international remittance for gold purchase has changed from Telegraph Transfer (TT) to Letter of Credit (LC). As a result of this, payment can take about two months, cost banking service changes by two sides, and increase the charges for security matter in transportation. Meanwhile, gold trading in the international market has also come to a stop due to volatile prices, said YGEA Chair U

Myo Myint.

The YGEA have already submitted a request for the resumption of the TT payment system to the Ministry of Commerce.

Gold and other pieces of jewellery are primarily purchased by Japan and the ROK, and other tourists also buy them, the YGEA stated.

Myanmar gave greenlight to gold exports and imports in January 2018, with the aims to eradicate illegal trade, earn revenue for the country and maintain the market's stability.

The local gold market has become sluggish as the pandemic shut down the events like wedding and traditional festivals, gold traders pointed out.

As the gold price is fast to spike yet slow to fall in the domestic market, the sellers exceed the buyers in the domestic gold market, traders said.

At present, the old gold scrap and jewellery are refined into the pure gold bar. The raw material has not come from gold mining as the transportation restriction halted gold mining, U Myo Myint elaborated.

Myanmar's gold price is related to global rates. The domestic gold price rose to K1,336,000 per tical (0.578 ounces, or 0.016

kilogrammes) on 6 January 2021 when the gold price rallied to US\$1,944 per ounce.

On 28 January 2021, the price showed downtick with K1,316,600 per tical while gold price slid into \$1,837 per ounce in the global market.

The daily transaction of 50 visses (a viss equals 1.6kg) of gold were earlier seen in the market. Now, about 5-10 visses are rarely traded per day, according to YGEA.

According to gold traders, the domestic gold was priced with the minimum rate of K1,216,500 (1 July) and the maximum rate of K1,296,500 (27 July). The price moved in the range of, K1,286,500 on 13 August and K1,332,500 on 7 August. The local gold reached the lowest level of K1,310,500 (2 September) and the highest level of K1,314,000 (1 September). In October, the rate ranged between K1,307,800 (30 October) and K1,316,500 (21 October). The rate fluctuated between the highest of K1,312,000 (16 November) and the lowest of K1,278,000 (28 November). In December, the pure yellow metal priced moved in the range of 1,275,000 (1 December) and 1,333,000 (28 December). — GNLM (Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

## Rice export targeted at 2 mln tonnes this FY as summer paddy cultivation drops

By Nyein Nyein

MYANMAR has targeted to export 2 million tonnes of rice in 2020-2021 (Oct/Sept) fiscal year, down from 2.5 million tonnes last fiscal year as summer paddy cultivation drops, said U Ye Min Aung, Chairman of Myanmar Rice Federation (MRF).

Weather changes affected irrigation water resource availability on agriculture.

"The water resource in reservoirs and lakes sharply dropped because of weather changes. Consequently, the decrease in irrigation water availability scaled-down the acreage of summer paddy. Last FY, Myanmar shipped about 2.5 million tonnes of rice to external markets. This year, we expect approximately only 2 million tonnes in exports," he elaborated.

During Q1 of the present FY (1 October to 31 December 2020), Myanmar exported over 270,000 tonnes of rice via a border and over 370,000 tonnes through sea trade to the foreign markets, totalling about 600,000 tonnes of rice. The country shipped over 800,000 tonnes through maritime trade and over 130,000 tonnes via border to foreign trade partners

in the corresponding period of last FY, with an estimated volume of 900,000 tonnes.

As a result of this, the figures showed a drop of 300,000 tonnes of rice in exports. Additionally, the high price in the domestic market and instability of foreign exchange rates are contributing factors to the slump in exports, MRF Chair U Ye Min Aung continued.

"The main reason why Myanmar's rice export falls is the price gain in the domestic market and forex trading. A US dollar has pegged at around K1,300 in recent days. The instability in the forex market affects the export sector. That could pose difficulties to the exporters. The federation has also reported this to the government. The instability in the exchange rate is the important factor of the trade balance of the country. It also has direct impacts on all the export sector, including livestock and fishery products beyond agricultural export," he stressed.

Myanmar generated over \$800 million from rice exports in the previous FY2019-2020 ended 30 September, with an estimated volume of over 2.5 million tonnes. (Translated by Ei Myat Mon)



A DRIVERLESS PUBLIC TRANSPORT NETWORK

# Singapore launches new self-driving bus trial

SINGAPORE has moved a step closer to a driverless public transport network with the launch of a new trial of self-driving buses.

Orderly and high-tech, the Asian city-state has become a testbed for self-driving vehicles and has developed home-grown technology while inviting foreign companies to trial their own.

In a three-month trial launched this week, passengers can book a bus ride through an app that takes them around Singapore's Science Park, a high-tech business hub, during off-peak hours.

The charge is just Sg\$0.20 (\$0.15).

It is not the first self-driving bus trial in the city but is the first to charge a fee.

Singapore's first trial of self-driving buses came in 2015, while a trial of driverless road sweepers was launched earlier this year.



Singapore has become a testbed for self-driving vehicles. PHOTO: AFP

Despite the technology on the buses, a driver is still at the wheel to take control if necessary and must drive the bus manually along part of the route.

Khor Jing Qian, a 23-year-old student who took the bus to attend a scholarship interview on

Wednesday, said the journey, which took about 10 minutes, was "convenient and easy".

"It was unnatural to see the bus driver not driving, but I've heard of these kinds of technologies, I've seen them before, so I think this is quite an innovative

thing and definitely the way forward," he told AFP.

The shuttles are also operating in another area of the city on a fixed schedule as part of the same trial, according to a statement from the Ministry of Trade and Industry.

SOURCE: AFP

AIR TRAVEL

# American Airlines reports \$8.9 bn 2020 loss on pandemic hit

AMERICAN Airlines reported an \$8.9 billion loss for 2020 on Thursday due to the coronavirus, but said it expects a rebound to begin later in 2021.

The big US carrier reported a fourth quarter loss of \$2.2 billion, compared with profits of \$414 million in the year-ago period following another big drop in travel demand.

American's red-ink report comes on the heels of earlier releases from rivals Delta Airlines and United Airlines that show an industry in turmoil after restrictions to contain Covid-19 were enacted across the globe, shutting down or sharply reducing travel. "Our fourth-quarter financial results close out the most challenging year in our company's history," said American Airlines Chief Executive

Doug Parker.

"As we look to the year ahead, 2021 will be a year of recovery. While we don't know exactly when passenger demand will return, as vaccine distribution takes hold and travel restrictions are lifted, we will be ready." American's fourth-quarter revenue fell 64 percent to \$4.0 billion following much lower ticket sales. Annual revenues dropped 62 percent to \$17.4 billion.

Like other carriers, American has trimmed its capital budget, retired older aircraft, deferred delivery of new planes and reduced headcount through early retirement.

These efforts have reduced daily cash burn to \$30 million in the fourth quarter from almost \$100 million in April.

SOURCE: AFP

THE REPUBLIC OF THE UNION OF MYANMAR  
MINISTRY OF ELECTRICITY AND ENERGY  
MYANMA OIL AND GAS ENTERPRISE  
(INVITATION FOR OPEN TENDER)  
(30/2020-2021)

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(a)	DMP/L-212(20-21)	Electrical Accessories for Oil and Gas Fields (11) Groups / (117) Items	Ks
(b)	DMP/L-213(20-21)	Electrical Spares for CNG Station (2) Groups	Ks

2. The Open Tender forms including Description of Materials / Qty with details specifications and Tender Terms & Conditions can be available during office hours commencing from 29 January 2021 at the Finance Department, Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise, No. (44) Complex, Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar.

3. The interested Bidders should submit the **Technical Specifications with Original Bid Bond and Commercial Quotation in each separate sealed envelopes** on which to be addressed to the Managing Director, Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise and should reach in Tender Box of the Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise not later than **12:00 pm on 1 March 2021**.

4. Tender Closing Date & Time – **1-3-2021, 12:00 pm**

Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise  
Ph No. + 95 67 - 411206

### 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

NUMBER ONE

# Toyota becomes top-selling global auto maker

JAPAN'S Toyota reclaimed the title of world's top-selling automaker in 2020, according to data released by the firm on Thursday, pushing Volkswagen into second place for the first time in five years. Toyota said it had sold 9.53 million vehicles around the world last year,

overtaking the 9.3 million sales made by its German rival.

The Japanese giant took the lead despite a decline in global sales of more than 10 percent as the auto industry suffered the effects of the coronavirus pandemic.

SOURCE: AFP

### 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



IMPACT ON ECONOMICS

# Fed's Powell warns economic outlook still 'highly uncertain'

THE fate of the US economy depends on the course of the pandemic and the Covid-19 vaccine rollout, but the outlook is nonetheless "highly uncertain", Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell said Wednesday.

"A resurgence in recent months of Covid-19 cases, hospitalizations and deaths is causing great hardship for millions of Americans and weighing on economic activity and job creation," the central bank chief said.

He said government spending programs have helped support the economy, but the United States needs to recover at least nine million jobs to reach the goal of full employment. **SOURCE: AFP**

A TUMULTUOUS YEAR

## Gold demand shrinks in 2020 on virus fallout: industry



Gold prices struck a record high last year, but demand plunged as jewellery sales were impacted by lockdowns and economic uncertainty. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

GOLD demand shrank 14 per cent last year as the coronavirus pandemic sparked record falls in jewellery purchases and as strong investor interest sent prices to all-time highs, industry data showed Thursday. Overall demand for the precious metal hit the lowest level since the global financial crisis in 2009, at 3,759.6 tonnes, the World Gold Council (WGC) said in its annual report. At the same time, gold prices hit record highs above \$2,000 an ounce, with the commodity benefitting from its status as a haven investment in times of economic uncertainty.

"Jewellery demand in 2020 dropped to its lowest annual level on record, decimated by the combination of the global pandemic -- with its resultant market lockdowns -- and record high gold prices at a time of economic slowdown," the WGC said. Demand for gold jewellery slumped 34 per cent to a record-low 1,411.6 tonnes from 2019. "In a tumultuous year for the gold market, investment was one of the notable positives," the report added. Total annual gold investment hit a record 1,773.2 tonnes, 40 per cent higher than in 2019, thanks to the popularity of exchange-traded funds, which allow investment outside of futures market. "Record inflows into gold ETFs clearly showed the strength of investor demand for gold worldwide at a time of heightened risk and uncertainty, ultra-low interest rates, fiscal expansion and economic slowdown," the Council said. **SOURCE: AFP**

PANDEMIC WORRIES

## Big eurozone banks face loans risk from virus: ECB

THE eurozone's big banks have successfully weathered the coronavirus crisis so far but could now be exposed to major losses on their loan portfolios, the European Central Bank said Thursday. The ECB said that "deteriorating economic conditions" due to the coronavirus outbreak "slowed the pace of the ongoing reduction in non-performing loans".

In addition, there was "also an embedded level of distress in loan books that is not yet fully evident". Combined with "the phasing-out of several support measures in 2021", this exposure increases the "risk of cliff effects" and the ECB advised banks to follow guidance on precautionary steps. The ECB said that compared to the global financial crisis of 2008-09, euro area banks began 2020 with "significantly higher capital levels and far greater resilience to economic deterioration". **SOURCE: AFP**

### Tender Notice

For Consultancy Services and Field Investigation works for Geotechnical, Topographic, Hydrographic and MetOcean Surveys Of Kyaukphyu Special Economic Zone Deep Sea Port Project

RFP No.: KPSEZ-DSP-RFP-2021-001  
Posting Date: January 25, 2021

**Background**

Kyaukphyu Special Economic Zone Management Committee and Kyaukphyu Special Economic Zone Deep Sea Port Co., Ltd. (the "Concessionaire") entered into a Concession Agreement for the latter to carry out the conceptualization, design, build, finance, operation, maintenance and transfer of a deep sea port facility comprising the Yanby Island terminal, the Made Island terminal, a bridge connecting the two islands and an approximately 15km access road to the Kyaukphyu Special Economic Zone Industrial Park in Kyaukphyu District, Rakhine State, Myanmar (the "Project"). CITIC Consortium Myanmar Port Investment Limited (the "Client"), the leading shareholder of the Concessionaire, is authorized to carry out the Preliminary Geotechnical & Topographic Survey (the "Work") of the Project on behalf of the Concessionaire. The purpose of this Tender Notice is to invite the bids for the execution of the Work and enable the interested bidders to obtain the RFP Documents.

**Scope of Work**

The specific objective of the Work is to obtain the geological, topographic, hydrological and meteorological information as well as other features of the Project site by technical means of engineering geological exploration, geotechnical experiment, topographic survey, bathymetric survey, meteorological and hydrological data collection and observation, etc., so as to provide requisite information and parameters for subsequent Project planning and design.

The scope of Work mainly consists of the followings:

- Geotechnical Investigation,
- Topographic Survey,
- Geophysical Survey,
- Hydrographic Survey (bathymetric)
- MetOcean studies and data gathering

**Application Procedures**

1. Send an expression of interest letter to the E-mail address stated-below
2. Transfer a non-refundable fee of USD 2,000 (Two Thousand US Dollars) to the following bank account to purchase the electronic version RFP Documents, which will be available for download through a web link provided by the Client after its confirmation of the remittance.

**Application Deadline:**

Interested bidders should submit their application and purchase RFP Documents by **February 8, 2021, 15:00pm Myanmar time.**

**Client's information:**

Address: No. (B-02-01), Golden City Business Center, CMA Old Building, Yankin Road, Yankin Township, Yangon, Myanmar.

Contacts: Mr. Zhu Xuyang (Email: zhuxy20@citic.com ; Tel: +95-9-979331299, +86-13522748848)  
Mr. Yan Xiaoxian (Email: yanxx2@citic.com ; Tel: +95-9-445339138, +86-13811615808)

Bank Account: 694271050401 (SWIFT CODE: KWHKHKHH) at CHINA CITIC BANK INTERNATIONAL LIMITED (Bank Code: 018).

**Notice and Disclaimers:**

1. This Tender Notice can also be found on the following websites:
  - [www.citicmyanmar.com](http://www.citicmyanmar.com)
  - [kpsez.org](http://kpsez.org)
  - Facebook Account: CITIC Myanmar
  - [www.myantrade.gov.mm](http://www.myantrade.gov.mm)
2. Formal bids or proposals shall be submitted as per the detailed requirements listed in the RFP Documents.
3. The Client bears no responsibilities and/or liabilities for any cost or expense incurred by bidders in preparation or delivery of bids.
4. Further details on the RFP process is included in the documentation to be obtained through the above process.
5. An online briefing meeting is planned and the arrangements will accordingly be advised to the successful applicants.

### Tender Notice

For Environmental and Social Impact Assessments (ESIAs) Of Kyaukphyu Special Economic Zone Deep Sea Port Project

RFP No.: KPSEZ-DSP-RFP-2021-002  
Posting Date: January 25, 2021

**Background**

Kyaukphyu Special Economic Zone Management Committee and Kyaukphyu Special Economic Zone Deep Sea Port Co., Ltd. (the "Concessionaire") entered into a Concession Agreement for the latter to carry out the conceptualization, design, build, finance, operation, maintenance and transfer of a deep sea port facility comprising the Yanby Island terminal, the Made Island terminal, a bridge connecting the two islands and an approximately 15km access road to the Kyaukphyu Special Economic Zone Industrial Park in Kyaukphyu District, Rakhine State, Myanmar (the "Project").

CITIC Consortium Myanmar Port Investment Limited (the "Client"), the leading shareholder of the Concessionaire, is authorized to carry out the Environmental and Social Impact Assessments (ESIAs) (the "Work") of the Project on behalf of the Concessionaire. The purpose of this Tender Notice is to invite the bids for the execution of the Work and enable the interested bidders to obtain the RFP Documents.

**Scope of Work**

The specific objective of the Work is to provide consultancy services and field investigation to carry out Scoping, Investigation and Reporting of the Project's EIA process, in accordance with the Myanmar EIA Procedures and other applicable laws, to obtain the Environmental Compliance Certificate.

**Application Procedures**

1. Send an expression of interest letter to the E-mail address stated-below
2. Transfer a non-refundable fee of USD 2,000 (Two Thousand US Dollars) to the following bank account to purchase the electronic version RFP Documents, which will be available for download through a web link provided by the Client after its confirmation of the remittance.

**Application Deadline:**

Interested bidders should submit their application and purchase RFP Documents by February 8, 2021, 15:00pm Myanmar time. Client's information:

Address: No. (B-02-01), Golden City Business Center, CMA Old Building, Yankin Road, Yankin Township, Yangon, Myanmar.

Contacts: Mr. Zhu Xuyang (Email: zhuxy20@citic.com ; Tel: +95-9-979331299, +86-13522748848)  
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  - [www.citicmyanmar.com](http://www.citicmyanmar.com)
  - [kpsez.org](http://kpsez.org)
  - Facebook Account: CITIC Myanmar
  - [www.myantrade.gov.mm](http://www.myantrade.gov.mm)
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5. An online briefing meeting is planned and the arrangements will accordingly be advised to the successful applicants.



## FROM PRISONER TO PRESIDENT

## Once-jailed populist Japarov sworn in as Kyrgyz president

POPULIST Sadyr Japarov was sworn in as president of ex-Soviet Kyrgyzstan Thursday, completing a remarkable transformation from prisoner to president in just a few months. Japarov, 52, was serving jail time on hostage-taking charges before being freed during a political crisis over a parliamentary vote in October, beginning a dizzying rise to the top job.

He won a January 10 presidential election by a landslide with close to 80 per cent of the vote. Japarov on Thursday swore to “preserve the integrity of the people and the security of the country” as he placed his hand on the Kyrgyz constitution, which is set to be overhauled in the coming months. Voters chose a presidential form of government over a parliamentary model in a referendum held in parallel to the presidential vote. A Kyrgyz cab-



Sadyr Japarov wearing the national Kalpak felt hat waves to supporters during a rally in Bishkek on January 8. PHOTO: AFP

inet official said Japarov would make his first foreign trip as president to Russia, where hundreds of thousands of Kyrgyz live and work. Japarov called the exodus a “tragedy” at his inauguration ceremony.

“I, like all patriots of the country, dream that Kyrgyzstan will become economically developed, dynamic, strong and free,” Japarov said. “A country where

human rights are observed, where there is a dictatorship of law, and youth look to the future with optimism.” Japarov’s “dictatorship of law” comment parrots the famous catchphrase of Russian leader Vladimir Putin. Yet Moscow has taken a dim view of political upheavals in the mountainous country of 6.5 million that looks to next-door China for loans and investment. SOURCE: AFP

## WALTER LUEBCKE CASE

## Verdict due in murder of German pro-migration politician

A German court is due Thursday to deliver its verdict in the trial of a neo-Nazi accused of murdering pro-migration politician Walter Luebcke, a killing that shocked the country and highlighted the growing threat of right-wing extremism.

Federal prosecutors say the suspect, 46-year-old Stephan Ernst, was motivated by “racism and xenophobia” when he alleg-

edly shot Luebcke in the head on June 1, 2019, in what is believed to be Germany’s first far-right political assassination since World War II. The conservative politician was found dead on the terrace of his home near the central city of Kassel the next day, with an autopsy showing he was shot at close range. Summing up its case in December, the prosecution called for a life sentence for

Ernst. It also sought nine years and eight months for co-defendant Markus Hartmann whom it accuses of being an accessory in the killing and who allegedly helped Ernst in weapons training.

Luebcke, 65, belonged to Chancellor Angela Merkel’s conservative CDU party and headed the Kassel regional council in the western state of Hesse.

SOURCE: AFP

## FEARS OF MASSIVE OIL SPILL

## UN inspection of abandoned oil tanker off Yemen delayed until March

A UN mission to inspect a long-abandoned fuel tanker off the coast of Yemen, which threatens to rupture and cause a massive oil spill, has been pushed to March, the body said Wednesday.

“We’ve hit a few delays with international shipping that were beyond our control and had some back and forth on signing documents, which has now been resolved,” UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric told reporters.

“For now, we think we can get there by early March. From our side we are doing everything possible to stick to that timeline and deploy the mission,” he said.

In November, Yemen’s Huthi rebels confirmed they had given the green light for a mission to assess the FSO Safer fuel tanker,



Oil tanker threatens to explode or spill more than a million barrels of oil in the Red Sea. PHOTO: AFP

which the UN initially planned for late January or early February.

The Iran-backed Huthis -- who control much of Yemen’s

north after a war that erupted in 2014 -- had previously denied access.

Sticking to the new timeline

## CONCESSIONS

## West Bank settlers pressure Netanyahu ahead of March vote

JEWISH settlers in the Israeli-occupied West Bank are demanding concessions from Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu ahead of a March general election which could hinge on a battle for right-wing votes.

While most countries consider all Israeli settlements in the West Bank illegal, Israel broadly divides them into two categories: government-recognized settlements and so-called wildcat outposts.

In the former, Israel aims to provide similar services -- water, electricity and the like -- as it does to citizens within its internationally agreed borders.

Wildcat settlements, often ramshackle collections of portacabins set up by hardline religious nationalists deep inside the West Bank, generally have no connection to the Israeli grid.

Some outposts have been

given retrospective authorization in the past, particularly by Netanyahu-led governments.

As another Israeli election nears, pro-settler groups are using tactics including a hunger strike outside Netanyahu’s Jerusalem office to demand recognition for another 70 wildcat outposts, home to some 25,000 of the 650,000 settlers in east Jerusalem and the West Bank.

Yossi Dagan, an influential settler leader who staged a week-long protest fast outside the premier’s office this month, insisted that distinguishing between types of settlements was “absurd”.

“There is no logical reason why 25,000 Israeli citizens do not have the same rights as others, it’s not a political question, it’s a question of social rights,” he said.

SOURCE: AFP



Work only started on the Jordan Valley settlement outpost of Kedem Arava in 2017, around the time US president Donald Trump took power. Four years on, it is home to some 40 families. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

“will depend on continuous facilitation by the Ansar Allah authorities,” Dujarric said, using the official name of the Huthi movement.

“We have communicated to the authorities our concern over several logistical issues that remain pending,” he added. “We urgently need to resolve these issues in the next several days to avoid missing the window for timely deployment.”

The UN’s announcement comes just two days after new US President Joe Biden’s administration suspended his country’s designation of the Huthis as a terrorist group until February 26.

Dujarric said the UN was reviewing the situation concerning the US terrorist designation “to

ensure that non-staff contractors are not inadvertently exposed to legal risks by participating in the mission.”

Humanitarian groups argue that they have no alternative but to deal with the Huthis, who amount to a government in much of Yemen, including the capital Sanaa.

The 45-year-old fuel vessel, abandoned near the western port of Hodeida since 2015, has 1.1 million barrels of crude on board, and a rupture or explosion would have disastrous environmental and humanitarian consequences.

Apart from corrosion to the aging vessel, essential work to curb explosive gases in its storage tanks has been neglected.

SOURCE: AFP



SENIOR CLERIC ADVISES

## Pope to meet top Shiite cleric Sistani on Iraq visit: cardinal

POPE Francis is to meet top Shiite cleric Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani during the first-ever papal visit to Iraq in March, a senior Catholic cleric told AFP on Thursday. Louis Sako, patriarch of Iraq's Chaldean Catholic Church, said it would be a "private visit" between the two religious figures "without formalities."

Sako said he hoped the two figures would sign the document on "human fraternity for world peace," an inter-religious text condemning extremism that Pope Francis signed with the leading Sunni cleric, the grand imam of Al-Azhar, Sheikh Ahmed al-Tayeb, in 2019.

Pope Francis is set to be in Iraq from March 5 to 8, with visits planned to the capital Baghdad,

the northern city of Mosul and Ur, where Abraham is said to have been born.

Iraq once counted more than 1.5 million Christians, but the community has been ravaged by successive conflicts.

Following the US-led invasion of 2003, sectarian warfare prompted followers of Iraq's multiple Christian denominations to flee and attacks by the Islamic State group in 2014 further hit all minority communities. Now, an estimated 400,000 Christians remain in Iraq. Many have expressed hope that the Pope's visit will highlight the challenges facing the community, including prolonged displacement and little representation in government.

SOURCE: AFP

OBITUARY

## U Kyaw Thein Zan

68 years

Managing Director, K.T.Z Company Limited  
Executive Committee Member, Myanmar Chamber of Commerce for Pharmaceutical & Medical Device

With great sadness, we announce the loss of U Kyaw Thein Zan, residing at No. 32, Manawhari Road, Dagon Township, Yangon, beloved son of (U Mya Aung & Daw Khin Kyi), beloved brother of Dr. U Kyaw Thet & Daw Aye Aye Khaing, (U Kyaw Tint Swe) & Daw Tin Tin Hla, beloved uncle of Dr. Naing Lin Htike, Consultant, Nephrology, Midsouth Nephrology Consultant Group & Dr. Yadana Kyaw, Consultant, Pulmonary and Critical Care, Baptist Memorial Hospital, Mississippi and Tennessee, U Kyaw Kyaw Myint (Director, K.T.Z Company Limited) & Daw Suzan Tun, U Than Win Soe & Daw Htet Htet Aung (Managing Director, Manawhari Pharma Company Limited), U Ye Zarni Htun (Founder, Logic Prime Co., Ltd) & Daw Thiri Kyaw (K.T.Z Company Limited), beloved grandfather of Mg Thuta, Ma Lin Yadanar Htike, Ma Amara Myat Chel passed away peacefully at 5:10 am on January 28, 2021. The funeral will start from the time of 10 am, and the remains will be cremated at 11:45 am on January 30, 2021 at Yay Way Cemetery, Yangon.

Bereaved Family

AGRICULTURAL LAW REFORM

## Indian farmers scrap march on parliament after riots

INDIAN farmer unions have scrapped next week's planned march on parliament against new agricultural laws, as rifts emerge after violent protests in New Delhi left one person dead and almost 400 police injured.

Thousands of farmers running riot on tractors on Tuesday was a major embarrassment for the government, but also for the 42 unions representing the farmers, who have mostly condemned the vi-

olence.

Late Wednesday their main umbrella group said that the planned march on parliament on February 1 -- when the government presents the budget -- had been pushed back, although nationwide rallies were still planned on Sunday. Farmers have been camped outside New Delhi for two months demanding that the new laws be scrapped, because they fear they will leave them at the mercy of big

corporations. Two roads blocked by the protestors for weeks were cleared late Wednesday as two unions withdrew from the protest, each blaming other groups for Tuesday's events.

"I am so ashamed and sad about (Tuesday) that I announce an end to our 58-day-long sit-in protest at this (Delhi) border," one union leader, Bhanu Pratap Singh, announced on Wednesday.

SOURCE: AFP



Thousands of Indian farmers, many on tractors, breached police barricades to launch a protest march in Delhi. PHOTO: AFP

EXTREMISTS "EMBOLDENED"

## US issues terror alert over anti-government extremists



More than 150 people, including members of armed extremist groups, have been arrested since Trump supporters stormed the US Capitol on January 6, 2021. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

THE US Department of Homeland Security declared a nationwide terrorism alert Wednesday, citing the potential threat from domestic anti-government extremists opposed to Democrat Joe Biden as president. Extremists "emboldened" by the deadly January 6 assault on Congress by angry supporters of former president Donald Trump could undertake attacks against elected officials and government facilities, the alert said.

The warning came as authorities in California charged a Trump supporter and follower of a far-right militia group with possession of five home-made pipe bombs, alleging he intended to attack Democrats. The National Terrorism Advisory System Bulletin said the threat of attacks could persist for weeks, in the wake of Biden's January 20 inauguration and the storming of the US Capitol. "Information suggests that some ideologically-mo-

tivated violent extremists with objections to the exercise of governmental authority and the presidential transition, as well as other perceived grievances fueled by false narratives, could continue to mobilize to incite or commit violence," the Department of Homeland Security said. Some security worries surround the impeachment trial of Trump beginning in the second week of February.

SOURCE: AFP



## Can Odegaard allow Arsenal to move on from Ozil?

LONDON—Martin Odegaard arrives at Arsenal on loan from Real Madrid for the rest of the season to far less fanfare that the excitement which welcomed Mesut Ozil from the Spanish capital seven-and-a-half years ago.

Unlike Odegaard, Ozil had proved himself one of the world's best playmakers during his time at the Santiago Bernabeu before being squeezed out amid a glut of Galactico signings and a need to recoup a £42.5 million (\$58

million) transfer fee.

Yet, after the German's stay at the Emirates finally ended on Sunday with a long-awaited move to Fenerbahce, the Gunners have turned to Odegaard as the short-term solution to a dearth of creativity in midfield.

Ozil had long since been cast aside by manager Mikel Arteta. The 32-year-old had not played since March despite being one of the highest earners at the club on a reported £350,000 a week. —AFP ■



New Gunner: Martin Odegaard has joined Arsenal on loan from Real Madrid. PHOTO: JAVIER SORIANO/AFP

## Sheffield Utd boss Wilder coy on survival hopes after shocking Man Utd

LONDON —Chris Wilder is wary of claiming “an incredible escape is on” after he became the first Sheffield United manager to taste victory at Manchester United for 48 years.

The Blades' 2-1 win on Wednesday put a huge dent in United's hopes of winning their first Premier League title since 2013 and gave them a huge morale boost in their battle to avoid relegation.

But Wilder's side are still 10 points away from safety after securing just their second win in 20 league matches this season.

United manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer will hope the Blades can make it three when they visit table-topping Manchester City on Saturday.

City, chasing their third Premier League title in four seasons, lead United by a point and have a game in hand.

“It's a long time to wait for a win at Old Trafford and it's a special result, and a special performance,” said Wilder.

“I'm not saying an incredible escape is on but I want to show what we are about.”—AFP ■



Sheffield United's English midfielder Kean Bryan heads the ball to score the opening goal during the English Premier League football match between Manchester United and Sheffield United. PHOTO: AFP

## ONE Championship: Unbreakable II Fights to be launched tonight

Lynn Thit (Tgi)

THE second event of the ONE Championship this month named “Unbreakable II” featuring bouts of world-class fighters: will be held at Singapore Indoor Stadium in Singapore on 29 January (tonight).

There will be a total of six fights: five men's bouts plus one bout of women fighters and the event will run from 8:30 pm of Singapore Standard Time.

In the main card of the event or ONE Championship Heavy Weight Mixed Martial Arts fight, Mauro Cerilli of Italy will take on Abdulbasir Vagabov of Russia.

In the Flyweight fight of Mixed Martial Arts, Daichi Takenaka of Japan will fight against Ivanildo Delfino of Brazil.

In the Bantamweight bout of Mixed Martial Arts, Chen Rui of China will take on Kwon Won IL of South Korea.

In the Light Heavyweight bout of Kickboxing, Mihajilo Kecojevic of Serbia will take on Beybulat Isaev of Russia.



PHOTO: ONE CHAMPIONSHIP

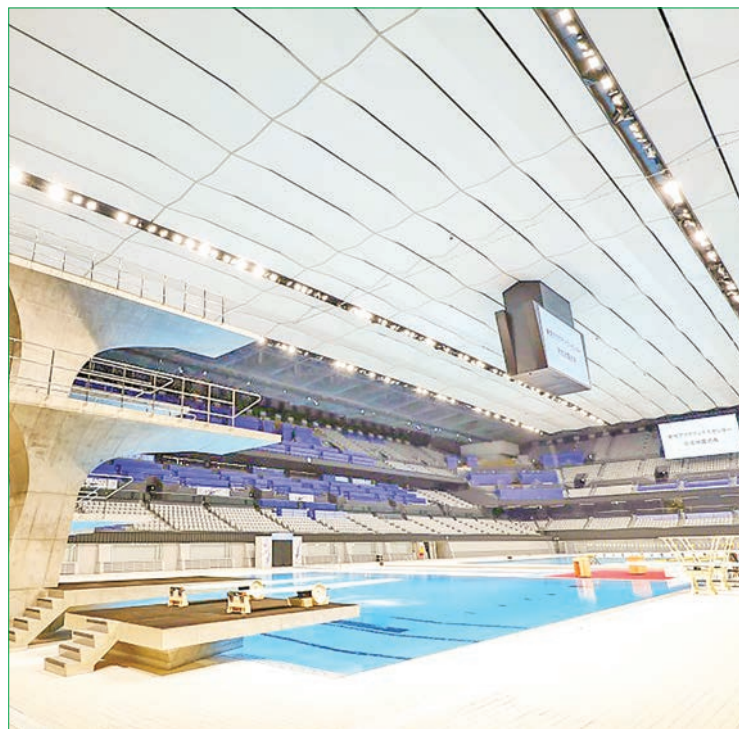
In the women's fight of Mixed Martial Arts, Sovannahry EM of Cambodia will face Chio Jeong Yun of South Korea.

In the Heavyweight bout of Mixed Martial Arts, Alain Ngalani of Hong Kong will fight against Oumar Kane of Senegal.

The ONE Championship:

Unbreakable Event II will be broadcast live free on ONE Super Application and ONE Championship YouTube Channel, according to the statement with the ONE Championship. The first two fights will also be streamed live on ONE Championship Facebook page, officials stated.

## Tokyo Olympic test event postponed over virus restrictions



An artistic swimming qualifier that was to be the first Tokyo Olympic test event of 2021 has been postponed because of virus restrictions. Tokyo Aquatics Centre pictured on Oct. 24, 2020. PHOTO: KYODO

TOKYO—The first Tokyo Olympics test event of 2021 has been postponed because of travel restrictions under Japan's coro-

navirus state of emergency, organizers confirmed Thursday.

The artistic swimming event will double as the sport's

final qualifier for the virus-postponed Games. It was due to be held on March 4-7 in Tokyo but will now take place two months later.

Tokyo 2020 organizers said a decision to delay it had been taken for reasons including “ensuring the fairest possible conditions for athletes to participate” and ongoing entry restrictions in Japan.

The qualifier has now been rescheduled for May 1-4 at the Tokyo Aquatics Centre.

Tokyo 2020 said other qualifying events in Japan, including the Diving World Cup in April and marathon swimming in May, would go ahead as planned.

The first test event of 2021 is now the Paralympics wheelchair rugby on April 3-4.

Japan's borders are currently closed to almost all foreigners, with Tokyo and other parts of the country under a state of emergency until at least February 7.—AFP ■