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Monday, 1 February 2021

Agriculture with tidal irrigation in Bago to become travel destination



Officials from Bago Region are making a field trip to the Sittoung River in Kawa Township on 29 January 2021 to develop a new agri-tourism destination at the location. **PHOTO: HEIN HTET (BAGO)**

OFFICIALS from Bago Region have planned to develop a new agri-tourism destination at the estuary of Sittoung River in Kawa Township, Bago Region.

Members of Myanmar Tourism Entrepreneurs Association and departmental officials led by Bago Region Minister for Planning and Finance U Nyunt

Shwe made a field trip to the estuary of Sittoung River on 29 January 2021 for the development of a new agri-tourism destination.

“This area is prosperous for becoming a tourist destination due to the agriculture with tidal irrigation. A location suitable for the destination will be submit-

ted to the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism”, the Region Minister U Nyunt Swe said.

“If the development of the tourist destination is approved, individual income of the locals will increase. Tourism, the smoke-free industry, has long-term benefits for increasing the country’s GDP”, he added.

The field trip is part of the implementation of the decision made at the meeting between the Union Minister for Hotels and Tourism and relevant regions/states, districts and townships on nature tourism and agri-tourism. —Hein Htet (Bago) *(Translated by Kyaw Zin Tun)*

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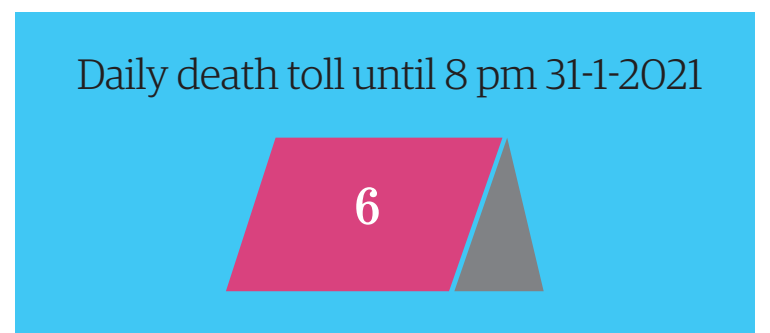
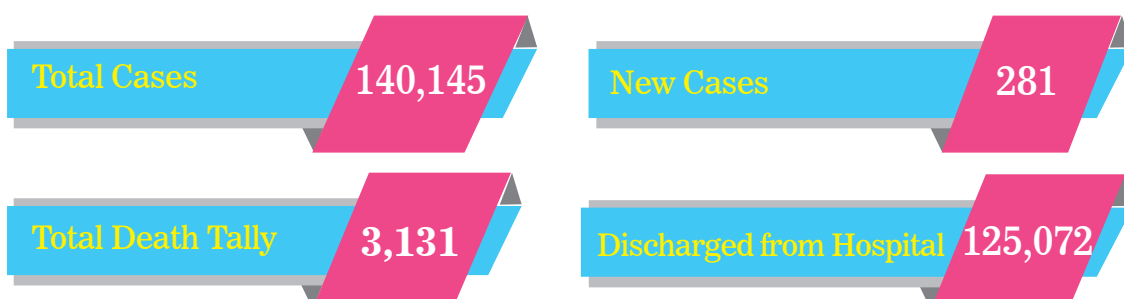
Salay Yoke Sone Monastery with variety of fascinating woodcarvings

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281 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 31 January, total figure rises to 140,145

MYANMAR'S COVID-19 positive cases rose to 140,145 after 281 new cases were reported on 31 January 2021 according to the Ministry of Health and Sports. Among these 140,145 confirmed cases, 3,131 died, 125,072 have been discharged from hospitals.—MNA

Updated at 8 pm, 31 January 2021



Ministry of Health and Sports

“People are the key”

Third Pyithu Hluttaw to elect Speaker, Deputy Speaker on first day meeting today

THE Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the Pyithu Hluttaw will be elected on the first day of the first regular session of the third Hluttaw on 1 February 2021.

The first-day meeting of the first regular session of the third Pyithu Hluttaw will be held at 10 am, and will include the agendas of assumption of the Chair by the Chairperson, Making the Affirmation and signing of the Affirmation by the Chairperson, and

Welcoming remarks by the Chairperson.

The next agendas of the meeting are making the affirmation and signing of the Affirmation by the Pyithu Hluttaw Representatives, Submission of the list of absentees and obtaining the decision of the Pyithu Hluttaw, Announcement to the Agenda for the 1st day meeting of the Pyithu Hluttaw, Election of the Speaker of Pyithu Hluttaw, Election of the Deputy Speaker, Making the Affirmation and signing of the

Affirmation by the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker in the presence of the Chairperson, Handing over of the Chairmanship by the Chairperson to the Speaker of Pyithu Hluttaw, opening address by the Speaker of Pyithu Hluttaw, and conclusion of the meeting.

These are just agendas, and the itineraries of the meeting may be changed. — MNA

(Translated by Kyaw Zin Tun)

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

1. The contribution of cash for COVID-19 Vaccination Fund can be made via the website of the Ministry of Planning, Finance and Industry (<http://www.mopfi.gov.mm>) in the following ways.

- (a) MPU Debit/Credit Card of local banks
- (b) Visa/Master Credit of local banks
- (c) Visa/Master Debit & Credit Card of foreign banks
- (d) Mobile Wallets such as CB-pay, KBZ-pay,

OK\$ through QR Code (more mobile wallets will be available)

- (e) Internet/mobile banking App of KBZ, CB, AYA, UAB and MAB (more internet/mobile banking Apps will be available)
- (f) Over-the-counter at Supermarkets such as City Mart, Marketplace, Sein Gay Har, Aeon, Orange; mini-marts and convenience stores such as Denko Mini Market, Fun Fun Mart, ABC and Oasis; Mobile Wallet agents such

as M-Pitesan, True Money and MyTelPay; Mobile Phone shops such as Any Call, e-City, Lu Gyi Min and My Fone; Wai Yan Electronics Sale Centre; the shops available Near Me logo.

2. Therefore, cash contribution can be made at the above-mentioned platforms electronically, in addition to the branches of Myanmar Economic Bank and Myanmar Agricultural Development

Announcement on fund establishment to purchase COVID-19 vaccines

1. The National-Level Central Committee on Prevention, Control and Treatment of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) on 30-12-2020 formed a Fund Management Sub-committee on the Purchase of COVID-19 Vaccines. The sub-committee has opened the COVID-19 Vaccination Fund at the Myanmar Economic Bank in Nay Pyi Taw as follows:

- (a) Fund for purchase of COVID-19 vaccines (Foreign Currency Account No. EDC 600012). The bank account will be initially deposited with USD250 million, equivalent to about K338 billion from State-funding.
- (b) Fund for purchase of COVID-19 vaccines (Myanmar Currency Account No. OA 013733). The bank account is initially deposited K1 billion (K1,000 million) from State-funding.

2. Therefore, organizations and people (local/ foreign countries) who want to contribute cash donation for the purchase of vaccines, can donate any type of foreign currency to the COVID-19 Vaccination Fund (Foreign Currency Account No. EDC 600012) at the Myanmar Economic Bank (Nay Pyi Taw), and can donate Myanmar Kyat to the COVID-19 Vaccination Fund (Myanmar Currency Account No. OA 013733).

3. The potential well-wishers can contact the following phone numbers:
Director-General (067 3410156)
Treasury Department (067 3410158)

Ministry of Planning, Finance and Industry

Myanmar seamen brought back home by relief flight

THE relief flight of Myanmar Airways International, organized by the Myanmar Embassy in Seoul and Dragon Tun Co, flew from Seoul, Republic of Korea to Yangon yesterday evening, in bringing back Myanmar citizens who were stranded in foreign countries.

The group of 122 Myanmar seamen included 75 persons from the ROK, 3 from USA, 9 from Viet Nam, 2 from Singapore, 2 from New Zealand, 1

from Liberia, 2 from Egypt, 9 from Spain, 4 from Brazil, 8 from Greece, 2 from Peru, 3 from Indonesia, 1 from the Netherlands, and 1 from Iceland.

The Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population, the Ministry of Health and Sports and the Yangon Region government arranged 14-day quarantine at specific places or designated hotels, followed by the 7-day home quarantine. To bring back the Myanmar citizens

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

(Translated by TTN)



Myanmar returnees are seen at the Yangon International Airport on 31 January 2021. **PHOTO: MNA**



We will do whatever is required in order to ensure that our economy will be back to the normal mode

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.

(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 COVID-19 vaccination programme of Myanmar on 29 January 2021)

Union Minister Dr Myo Thein Gyi gives lecture in School Management Capacity Building Course

THE School Management Capacity Building Course No. (1/2021) for founders and administrators of private schools was conducted via online by the Education Management Training Centre (Yangon), which is under the Department of Basic Education, yesterday morning.

During the training, Union Minister for Education Dr Myo Thein Gyi said that school founders and principals are leaders in their organizations and called on school principals to work hard to be good leaders admired by teachers and students.

The Union Minister said that enhancing education is a long-term task, and the private sector will be encouraged in the education sector, reiterating what the State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi said in the New Year.

During the capacity building course, the Union Minister discussed UNESCO research reports: "Learning to be: the world of education Today and Tomorrow", "Learning: the treasure within", "Global Education Monitoring Report 2017/18: Accountability in Education", and

"The Digital Transformation of Education: Connecting Schools Empowering Learners."

He also discussed OECD research reports: "Trends Shaping Education 2019", and "Future of Education and Skills 2030: OECD Learning Compass 2030".

Research reports delivered by AHK Myanmar (in cooperation with Roland Berger and Myanmar Survey Research), The Education Commission and The World Bank are also discussed in the session.

He said that the school enrollment rate has increased because of the implementation of education reform in line with the National Education Strategic Plan 2016-2021.

The Ministry of Education is collaborating with other stakeholders in order for ethnic children to learn their relevant ethnic languages (as local curricula) in their areas, according to the Union Minister. The ministry also trained teachers in teaching methodologies and learning methodologies.

In collaboration with education stakeholders, the ministry

also drafted the National Education Strategic Plan 2021-2030, according to the Union Minister. Myanmar Private Schools

Association Chairperson U Nay Oke (St Paul) expressed thanks to the Union Minister and the trainers.

A total of 823 people participated in the training.—MNA
(Translated by Maung Maung Swe)



Union Minister Dr Myo Thein Gyi gives lecture at the School Management Capacity Building Course via videoconferencing on 31 January 2021. PHOTO: MNA

COVID-19 Call Centre opens daily

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

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

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Phaunggyi, Aikalaung electrical substations officially opened



Yangon Region Chief Minister U Phyo Min Thein inspects the Aikalaung power substation in Taikkyi Township, Yangon Region on 31 January 2021. **PHOTO: MIN HTET**

YANGON Region Chief Minister U Phyo Min Thein officiated opening ceremonies of Phaunggyi electrical substation in Hlegu Township and Aikalaung substation in Taikkyi Township, Yangon Region, held at the substations on 31 January.

The substation projects have been carried out by the Yangon Electricity Supply Corporation.

The ceremony was attended by Yangon Region Chief Minister U Phyo Min Thein, Yangon Region Hluttaw Speaker U Tin Maung Tun, Yangon Region Hluttaw Deputy Speaker U Lin Naing Myint, Yangon Region Minister for Electricity, Industry and Transportation Daw

Nilar Kyaw, regional ministers, Amyotha Hluttaw MPs, Pyithu Hluttaw MPs, regional MPs, the Chairperson of the Yangon Electricity Supply Corporation and the residents.

Yangon Region Chief Minister U Phyo Min Thein, Yangon Region Hluttaw Speaker U Tin Maung Tun and Yangon Region Minister for Electricity, Industry and Transportation Daw Nilar Kyaw officially opened the 33/11 kV 5 MVA Phaunggyi substation in Hlegu.

Yangon Region Chief Minister U Phyo Min Thein and his entourage also visited the 33/11 kV 5MVA Aikalaung substation in Taikkyi Township and officially launched the substation.

A total of six 33 KV substations have been built with government funding during the 2020-2021 financial year, and the two substations are completed now.

The other four substations are Nyaungnapin substation in Hmawbi Township, Ngasutaung substation in Hlegu Township, Nyaung Lan substation in Kayan Township and Okpo substation, and they will also be officially opened soon, according to the Yangon Region Chief Minister.

The Chief Minister said that the government is working hard to provide electricity to 55 per cent of the country in 2020-2021, 75 per cent of the country in 2025 and 100 per cent in 2030.

He continued that there was a 33/11kV 10 MVA substation in Phaunggyi in the past, and now an additional 5MVA substation has been built, so the substations will cover 13 villages in the area (850 households). These substations can also provide electricity to the additional transformers installed at the COVID-19 Treatment Centre (Phaunggyi).

The Aikalaung area in Taikkyi Township was previously supplied with electricity from the Tawlati substation that is about 17 miles away from the area, so there was voltage instability and long power outage in that area. After building an additional substation, more than 3,074 households in 40 villages in the area will be able to access stable electricity, said the Chief Minister.

In Taikkyi Township, two 33/11 kV 5MVA substations were built in the 2019-2020FY with the regional government's funds, and 57 villages have been provided with electricity. In the 2020-2021FY, a 33/11 kV 5MVA substation was built and 47 villages have been provided with electricity, according to the Chief Minister.

Yangon Region MP U Tin Shein expressed thanks to all stakeholders for building the substations.

Then, Yangon Region Chief Minister and his entourage officially opened Aikalaung substation in Taikkyi and inspected the substation.—Maung Sein Lwin (Translated by Maung Maung Swe)

Rain with strong wind destroy houses in Myanaung

HEAVY rains with strong wind yesterday destroyed houses in two wards and two village tracts in Myanaung Township.

A total of 37 people: 22 males and 15 females were affected by the unseasonal rains and strong wind as roofs of six houses were collapsed and three houses were destroyed and no human or animal casualties were reported, according to the Myanaung Township General Administration Department.

The unseasonal rains and strong winds started around 3 pm and the strong winds torn roofs of houses in No 1 and No 2 Wards of Kanaung, Myanaung

Township. In turn, another two wooden houses with corrugated iron roof were collapsed as trees fell on them in Myanaung Township.

Next, heavy rains plus strong wind in Nwet Gyi Theik Village, Kywe Tae Kone Village Tract, Myanaung Township blew off roofs and destroyed houses.

A bamboo house with thatched roof in Pazon Chaung Village, Ngarpiseik Village Tract was also destroyed by the strong wind, according to the local authorities.—Win Bo (Myangaung)

(Translated by Kyaw Zin Lin)



Police and rescue persons clear the havoc in Myangaung, after the heavy rain and strong winds yesterday. **PHOTO: WIN BO (MYANAUNG)**

Tamu border still close amid COVID-19 impacts

KALAY-Tamu border between Myanmar and India has not lifted its restriction yet amid the coronavirus impacts, said Chairperson U Hla Maung of Kalay-Tamu Border Chamber of Commerce.

The cross-border trade between Myanmar and India has stopped since 10 March 2020. The Tamu border trade was supposed to resume in January, and however, in fact, it is still not back to normal due to the travel difficulties caused by the pandemic. The reopening of the border post would depend on the spread of the virus, and border crossing will be allowed in line with health guidelines.

Myanmar conducts border trade with neighbouring India through Tamu, Reed, and Htantlang land border crossings. Border trade via Tamu is estimated at US\$60 million per year.

India closed the border checkpoints in Mizoram and Manipur on account of COVID-19, and traders were reeling under the outbreak's negative impact. Now, the exports through Reed border dramati-

cally soared despite the slump in Tamu border trade.

Between 1 October and 22 January in the current financial year, trade values were registered at over \$19.44 million at Tamu post and \$73.897 million at Reed. There was no trade recorded at the Htantlang border.

According to data, over the past three and half months since October, the India-Myanmar trade jumped to \$93.337 million from \$44.98 million recorded in the year-ago period on account of a strong export figure at Reed post released by the Ministry of Commerce.

Myanmar exports mung beans, pigeon peas, green grams, areca nuts, ginger, saffron, turmeric, bay leaves, fishery products, fruits, and vegetables to India.

At the same time, it imports pharmaceuticals, oil cakes, electronic appliances, motorbikes, steel and other construction machines and building materials from the neighbouring country. —Ko Khant

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

Myanmar to export 800 tonnes of honey to EU market this year



A beekeeper inspects a beehive for honey production in Magway. PHOTO: ZAYYATU (MAGWAY)

MYANMAR is preparing for 800 tonnes of honey export to the European Union market in the current financial year 2021-2022, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

EU traders proposed Myanmar's honey due to its organic production. Myanmar started to adopt Good Beekeeping Practices (GBP) in 2016. The EU gave the go-ahead to Myanmar's honey to penetrate its market.

Arise Plus Myanmar Trade-Related Assistance project implemented by the International Trade Centre and the Department of Consumer Affairs under the Ministry of Commerce are contributing

to the sustainable growth of the honey market, suggestions to penetrate EU market and implementation of GBP, Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) and Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP).

The project covers eight honey purifying factories and provides the know-how of food safety systems. Additionally, it also helps improve manufacturing quality control in production stages, ensure the honey is free from pests, pesticide and chemical residues, improve GMP in a value-adding chain, link with international buyers and upgrading the laboratory with the assistance of EU.

Myanmar's honey is ex-

ported annually to the United States, Canada, South Korea, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, China and Japan. The beekeeping business could help reduce the poverty rate in rural areas by creating more job opportunities, officials said. There are over 900 registered beekeepers in Myanmar. The country produces over 7,000 tonnes a year and yearly ships 30,000 tonnes to foreign markets. A tonne of honey fetches US\$1,700-1,900, said the beekeepers. Myanmar's honey is required to be extracted by the European honey bee (*Apis mellifera*) for exports to the EU. It is sent to both domestic laboratory and international laboratories to test pesticide and chemical residue if needed.

Myanmar has nine processing factories in Nay Pyi Taw, Mandalay, Yangon and Sagaing regions and Shan State. Of them, a state-owned factory is offering purifying and packaging service for the small-scale honey traders, and the remaining eight factories are processing honey for the domestic market as well as exports.

Myanmar produced 10,875.81 tonnes of honey during the past three financial years from 2013-2014 to 2015-2016, of which 8,471.24 tonnes were exported. —Htet Myat

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

AMATA to debut in equity market on 12 March

AMATA Holding Public Co, Ltd (AMATA) will be listed on Yangon Stock Exchange (YSX) on 12 March 2021, and its share trading will be made on the same day, YSX notified on 29 January.

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

AMATA is the very first hotel and tourism business to be listed in the equity market. The base price of AMATA will be announced on the YSX website one working day before the listing date.

On 18 July 2018, the company issued a prospectus in which 596 investors held 497,598 shares at an offering price of K5,000 per

each unit.

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

AMATA owns 99.99% share from United International Group Co., Ltd and 51% shares from Myanmar Ballooning Co., Ltd.

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

On 29 January 2021, the share prices of FMI were closed at K9,900 per unit, MTSH at

K3,900, MCB at K8,200, FPB at K22,000, TMH at K2,700 and EFR at K3,600 respectively. Usually, over K60 million worth shares were traded on the exchange every day. The COVID-19 impacts cool down the market at present.

The stock markets worldwide have reported their largest declines since the 2008 financial crisis. Similarly, the local equities market is also scared by the COVID-19 crash, a market observer points out.

People are now putting money in savings, rather than investing during the COVID-19 crisis, he added.

YSX will hold an online webinar on 5 February to enhance corporate governance reform process for Myanmar companies and improve the credibility of the capital market in Myanmar, in cooperation with the Securities and Exchange Commission

of Myanmar under the guidance of Ministry of Planning, Finance and Industry.

Next, the Securities and Exchange Commission of Myanmar (SECM) has allowed foreigners to invest in the local equity market from 20 March 2020. The foreign shareholding amount stood at 4,502,679 shares of four listed companies (FMI, MTSH, TMH and EFR) on the exchange as of January-end 2021.

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

The YSX was launched three years ago to improve the private business sector. It disseminates rules and regulations regarding the stock exchange and knowledge of share trading through

stock investment seminars. The stock exchange has also sought the government's support to get more public companies to participate in the stock market and help more institutional investors, such as financing companies, investment banks, and insurance companies, to emerge.

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

According to the annual report released by the exchange, a total of K12.6 billion worth of 1.87 million shares by six listed companies were traded on the Yangon Stock Exchange (YSX) in 2020, a significant drop compared to 2019.

Over 2.4 million shares from five listed companies, valued K13.39 billion, were traded on the exchange in 2019. —Ko Htet

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

THE MESSAGE

Xi congratulates Nguyen Phu Trong on election as Vietnam's communist party chief

GENERAL Secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee Xi Jinping on Sunday sent a message to Nguyen Phu Trong, congratulating him on election as the general secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV) Central Committee.

In the message, Xi said he is glad to hear that Trong has been elected as the general secretary of the CPV Central Committee, and would like to extend warm congratulations to him, and through him to the new CPV central leadership, on behalf of the CPC Central Committee and in his own name.

Since its 12th National Congress, the CPV, under the strong leadership of the CPV Central Committee headed by Trong, has strengthened party building and led the Vietnamese people to a series of achievements in the cause of socialist construction

and reform, Xi said, adding that the successful convention of the 13th National Congress of the CPV has started a new journey in Vietnam's socialist modernization.

Xi said he believes that under the leadership of the new CPV Central Committee headed by Trong, new greater achievements will be made in the various causes of the CPV and Vietnam.

China and Vietnam are friendly socialist neighbors and also a community with a shared future of strategic significance, said Xi.

Xi said he attaches great importance to relations between the two parties and between the two countries, and stands ready to work with Trong to enhance strategic communication, promote traditional friendship, deepen exchanges and cooperation in various fields, and promote the cause of socialism.



Vietnam President and Communist Party General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong addressing the opening session of the 13th National Congress. PHOTO: VIETNAM NEWS AGENCY/XINHUA

In so doing, he added, they will jointly steer the China-Vietnam comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership along the path of sustained, healthy and stable development, bring more benefits to the people in both countries, and make posi-

tive contributions to promoting regional and global peace, development and win-win cooperation.

Xi said he sincerely wishes Trong new achievements in his noble post.

SOURCE: XINHUA

DOWNPLAYING EXPECTATIONS

WHO probe team visits Wuhan market at heart of first virus outbreak

A team of WHO experts investigating the origins of Covid-19

visited a market in Wuhan on Sunday where one of the first

reported clusters of infections emerged over a year ago.

Members of the group arrived at Huanan seafood market -- which has been sealed since January last year -- driving into its barricaded premises as guards quickly blocked others from entering, according to AFP journalists at the scene.

With the fieldwork element of a trip in its early stages, World Health Organization officials have already downplayed expectations of finding the source of a virus which has killed more than two million people and devastated the global economy.

On Sunday, the WHO team arrived at the Huanan market as part of a long-planned trip now

closely monitored by the Chinese authorities.

The experts did not take any questions and the sprawling market remains boarded up.

Earlier this week, state media outlet Global Times published a report downplaying the importance of Huanan as an early epicenter of the virus, claiming "subsequent investigations" have suggested the market was not the source of the outbreak.

Chinese authorities have relentlessly pushed a positive narrative of heroism and decisive, swift action in their fight against the coronavirus that has spurred an economic recovery and kept deaths down to 4,636.

SOURCE: AFP



Members of a WHO team investigating the origins of Covid-19 arrived at the closed Huanan Seafood wholesale market in Wuhan on Sunday. PHOTO: AFP

TWO DEMONSTRATIONS

Brussels police move to block anti-lockdown demos

POLICE in the Belgian capital said Sunday they have detained scores of people in a bid to prevent two banned demonstrations against measures to curb the spread of the coronavirus.

"We are above 200 arrested at the moment," mainly around the rail stations in Brussels, a police spokesman said around midday. Police evacuated one square in front of the main rail-

way station, where some of the protesters were football supporters from Belgian clubs.

Dozens of people, responding to calls on social media for protests against measures to check the coronavirus, also began gathering at the Atomium, a landmark building in Brussels.

"We remind you that there is no authorisation to come and demonstrate this Sunday," the

Brussels police said in a Tweet.

"Those people who still intend to demonstrate in Brussels today will be approached, dissuaded from staying and if necessary" detained, it said.

Belgium has registered one of the highest death rates in the world during the coronavirus pandemic, but restrictions closing bars and restaurants since October along with a nighttime

curfew have brought infection and hospital cases down in the past two months.

The country last week banned non-essential trips in and out of the country until March 1.

Belgium's neighbour the Netherlands was rocked by anti-curfew riots last week.

SOURCE: AFP

NEWS
IN BRIEF

HEALTH MINISTRY

South Africa orders 20 million Pfizer vaccines

SOUTH Africa has secured 20 million doses of the Pfizer/BioNTech coronavirus vaccine, the health ministry said Sunday.

Africa's worst virus-hit country has yet to begin vaccinating its population against Covid-19, stirring criticism over slow procurement and lack of strategy. A first shipment of AstraZeneca/Oxford jabs produced in India is due to arrive on Monday, with injections expected to start two weeks later. Health Minister Zweli Mkhize told The Sunday Times newspaper that 20 million additional vaccines had been ordered from US drugmaker Pfizer.

"These vaccines are secured and awaiting manufacturers to submit final agreements with details of delivery dates and exact amounts," said Mkhize, quoted in an article on Sunday. The new Pfizer order will complement 12 million vaccine doses from the WHO-backed Covax facility, nine million Johnson & Johnson shots and 1.5 million AstraZeneca/Oxford vaccines -- pushing the total supply secured so far to over 40 million.

SOURCE: AFP

STRAINED HOSPITALS

Germany sends aid and doctors to Portugal

GERMANY is sending medical personnel and equipment to Portugal to ease the pressure on local hospitals, which are on the verge of collapsing.

Spiegel reports that 27 doctors and first responders will fly to Portugal and stay for three weeks. Field hospital beds and ventilators are amongst the equipment on board.

The Portuguese government had requested direct help from Germany. The virus mutation first detected in Britain has been spreading rapidly, and Portugal is currently recording over 800 infections per 100,000 inhabitants.

70% of hospital staff in Portugal is said to be infected with coronavirus.

SOURCE: AFP

Study: COVID-19 infection can substantially harm men's ability to reproduce



A member of a medical team takes a swab to test for the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), at a medical clinic in Tripoli, Libya. PHOTO: AFP

RESEARCHERS revealed in a recently published study that men who contract the COVID-19 coronavirus may be at increased risk of infertility, due to damaged sperm cells, according to the journal *Reproduction*.

"The viral disease - which has swept the globe, claiming nearly 2.2 million lives can cause increased sperm cell death, inflammation and so-called oxidative stress," researchers reported.

"These effects on sperm cells are associated with lower sperm quality and reduced fertility potential," said Behzad Hajiza-

deh Maleki - a doctoral student of the Justice Leipzig-University in Germany - AFP reported.

"Although these effects tended to improve over time, they remained significantly and abnormally higher in the COVID-19 patients, and the magnitude of these changes were also related to disease severity."

The more severe the disease, the bigger the changes, he added.

The male reproductive system "should be considered a vulnerable route of Covid-19 infection and declared a high-risk organ by the World Health

Organisation," Maleki said.

Experts not involved in the study welcomed the research, but cautioned that more was needed before drawing hard and fast conclusions.

"Men should not be unduly alarmed," noted Alison Campbell, director of embryology of the CARE Fertility Group in Britain.

"There is currently no definitive evidence of long-lasting damage caused by COVID-19, to sperm or male reproductive potential," she told the London-based Science Media Centre.

SOURCE: AFP

REVIEWING FORCE PROTECTION PROTOCOLS

Pentagon pauses plan to give Covid vaccine to Guantanamo detainees

THE Pentagon said Saturday it was putting on hold a plan to give Covid vaccines to terror detainees at Guantanamo, following an outcry as the United States struggles to deliver jabs to frontline workers and vulnerable elderly Americans.

"No Guantanamo detainees have been vaccinated," Pentagon spokesman John Kirby tweeted. "We're pausing the plan to move forward, as we review force protection protocols. We remain committed to our obligations to keep our troops safe."

The Navy base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba houses detainees in the US "war on terror," including top Al-Qaeda figure

and alleged 9/11 attack planner Khalid Sheikh Mohammed.

The Department of Defense told US media earlier in the week that it would offer vaccines to its detainees and prisoners, to be administered "on a voluntary basis." Backlash came from Republican lawmakers including the party's top congressman, Kevin McCarthy.

"President Biden told us he would have a plan to defeat the virus on day 1. He just never told us that it would be to give the vaccine to terrorists before most Americans," he said on Twitter.

Added New York congresswoman Elise Stefanik: "It is inexcusable and un-American that

President Biden is choosing to prioritize vaccinations for convicted terrorists in Gitmo over vulnerable American seniors or veterans."

The United States has been the world's hardest-hit country by the coronavirus pandemic, in absolute terms, with 436,000 deaths and nearly 26 million cases.

President Joe Biden has pledged to vaccinate 100 million Americans in his first 100 days in office, but so far the country's mass inoculation drive has been beset by stumbles, including a shortfall in vaccines and widespread technical difficulties for eligible Americans trying to make appointments.



The main gate at the Guantanamo prison in Cuba. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

According to health officials, the US has so far administered just under 30 million of

the nearly 50 million doses distributed in the country.

SOURCE: AFP

ONE OF THE WORLD'S RICHEST MEN

Mexico tycoon Carlos Slim leaves hospital after Covid bout



Carlos Slim and his family, who control mobile telecom giant America Movil, are worth an estimated \$58.5 billion. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

MEXICAN telecoms billionaire Carlos Slim, one of the world's richest men, has been discharged from hospital and is doing well after a bout with Covid-19, a source close to his family said Saturday.

The 81-year-old tycoon "has been at home since January 28 and is in very good health," the source with the Slim family's Grupo Carso told AFP.

On Monday Slim's son, Carlos Slim Domit, announced on Twitter that his father was being treated for Covid-19 and had only mild symptoms.

"He's very well. He is mak-

ing very good progress with Covid-19 after more than a week of minor symptoms," Slim Domit wrote at the time.

Slim and his family, who control mobile telecom giant America Movil, are worth an estimated \$58.5 billion, according to *Forbes* magazine, making him Latin America's richest man.

Through his foundation, he is helping to fund joint production in Mexico and Argentina of the coronavirus vaccine developed by AstraZeneca and the University of Oxford for distribution in Latin America.

Slim's infection came a day

after Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador announced he had tested positive for Covid-19. On Friday Lopez Obrador said he still has the disease but "the critical phase is passing."

Mexico has officially registered around 1.8 million coronavirus cases and more than 155,000 deaths, one of the world's highest fatality tolls.

Both new infections and deaths have set daily records this month, leaving hospitals overwhelmed and patients struggling to find treatment.

SOURCE: AFP

Beat Leprosy, End Stigma and Advocate for Mental Well-Being

AS coronavirus cases will have come down following the vaccination programme, we need to intensify specific health care services which are infected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Majority of workforce from the health sector have to deployed for the COVID-19 since the second wave in our country and this situation has affected several bacterial and viral disease like malaria and tuberculosis, and screening and identification of leprosy cases.

The World Leprosy Day which falls on 31st January has reminded us to increase the public awareness of the leprosy and to make efforts for an end to ongoing discrimination and stigmatization.

Progress is being made in the fight against leprosy worldwide, but millions are still affected by the disease, and many sufferers have to contend with social exclusion.

The World Leprosy Day which falls on 31st January has reminded us to increase the public awareness of the leprosy and to make efforts for an end to ongoing discrimination and stigmatization.

According to a survey in 2018, the leprosy rate in Myanmar was 0.39 per 1,000 people. Although our country has seen a decrease in number of leprosy cases has declined nationwide, an estimated 2,000 cases continue to be reported every year.

Leprosy is curable through treatment via drugs, and the treatment in the early stages can prevent disability among the affected people. However, if remained untreated, leprosy can cause progressive and permanent damage to the skin, nerves, limbs, and eyes.

It shows how important is the health care services in timely manner for the patients.

The regional World Health Organization said in its statement on 31 January, that the implementation of WHO's soon-to-be-launched Global Leprosy Strategy 2021-2030 will mark a bold new era in our battle against leprosy, which will no longer focus on the elimination of leprosy as a public health problem at the national and sub-national levels, but rather on achieving zero leprosy infection and disease, zero disability, and zero leprosy-related stigma and discrimination at all levels.

To do that, the Strategy aims to drive sustained reductions in the world's 23 high-burden countries, while interrupting transmission in countries that currently report very few cases. Just 35% of leprosy-endemic countries globally report the availability of counselling services for persons affected by leprosy, highlighting the need for targeted action, according to WHO.

A vaccine is not a solution for leprosy but social improvements and leprosy-related health care services can bring the leprosy to an end.

In accordance with this year's theme: Beat Leprosy, End Stigma and Advocate for Mental Well-Being, we need to step up efforts for dissemination of knowledge on leprosy among the people so that people have the right attitude towards leprosy patients and better healthcare services for the leprosy patients.



HOW WILL THERE BE FAIR AND EQUITABLE ALLOCATION OF LIMITED SUPPLIES?

WHO urges effective and fair use of COVID vaccines

With COVID-19 vaccines currently in scarce supply, the head of the World Health Organization (WHO) on Friday pressed governments to prioritize inoculation of health workers and older persons, and to share excess doses with other nations.

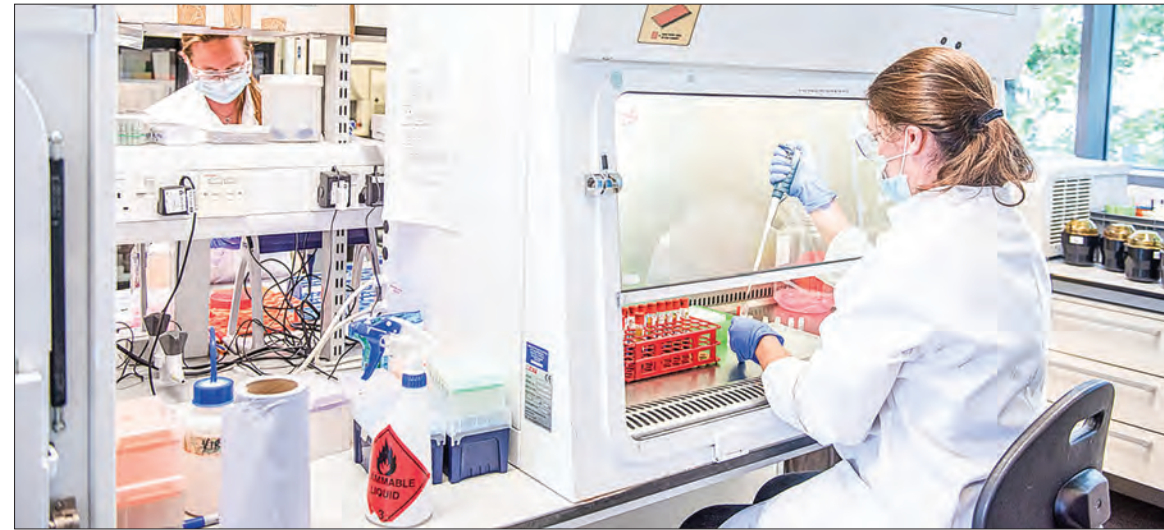
"More vaccines are being developed, approved and produced. There will be enough for everyone", said Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the WHO Director General, speaking in Geneva.

"But for now, vaccines are a limited resource. We must use them as effectively and as fairly as we can. If we do that, lives will be saved."

New 'window of opportunity'

Saturday will mark a year since the UN agency first sounded the alarm over the new coronavirus disease, declaring it a public health emergency of international concern.

COVID-19 cases worldwide have surpassed 100 million, and Tedros said more cases were reported in the past two weeks than during the first six months of the



A team of scientists at Oxford University's Jenner Institute and Oxford Vaccine Group is making progress towards the discovery of a safe, effective and accessible vaccine against coronavirus. PHOTO: UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD/JOHN CAIRNS

pandemic.

"A year ago, I said the world had a 'window of opportunity' to prevent widespread transmission

of this new virus. Some countries heeded that call; some did not", he told journalists.

"Now, vaccines are giving us

another window of opportunity to bring the pandemic under control. We must not squander it."

Turning point in history

The pandemic has exposed and exploited inequalities, the WHO chief noted.

"There is now the real danger that the very tools that could help to end the pandemic - vaccines - may exacerbate those same inequalities", he said.

"Vaccine nationalism might serve short-term political goals. But it's ultimately short-sighted and self-defeating."

Tedros underscored again, that the pandemic will not be over until it ends everywhere.

"The world has come to a critical turning point in the pandemic", he said. "But it's also a turning point in history: faced with a common crisis, can nations come together in a common approach?"

He urged governments to vaccinate health workers and older

people, and to share excess doses with the COVAX Facility, the global mechanism working to ensure equitable access and distribution, "so other countries can do the same".

EU export ban 'not helpful'

WHO has expressed concern over new European Union (EU) measures to control export of COVID-19 vaccines, announced on Friday.

This is "a very worrying trend", said Dr Mariângela Simão, the agency's Assistant Director-General for Drug Access, Vaccines and Pharmaceuticals, responding to a journalist's question.

She explained that medicines and vaccines can contain components that come from across the world.

SOURCE: UN News

COVID VACCINE ROLLOUT URGENT AS NEW STRAINS TAKE HOLD

COVID-19 vaccines rolled out in 73 countries, territories; 86.5M doses so far injected

THE international spread of more infectious coronavirus strains has made inoculating a maximum number of people as quickly as possible more urgent than ever, experts say.

Vaccines are already being rolled out across 73 countries or territories, with more than 86.5 million doses administered so far, including 26 million in the United States and 22.7 million in China according to an AFP tally Thursday.

But with concerns mounting that new strains could evade immunity protection from either prior infection or immunization, the global vaccine drive needs to be fast and flexible if it is going to stay one step ahead of the virus.

How many vaccines?

Developing a vaccine in normal times can take a decade, but the pandemic has dramatically accelerated research, manufacture and approval, helped by the huge sums of money invested in the process.

As a result drugmakers worldwide have defied predictions by finalizing several vaccines within a year of the virus emerging.

On Friday, The European Medicines Agency (EMA) approved, for all adults, the vaccine developed by Oxford University

and the biotech firm AstraZeneca.

The EMA had already given the green light to jabs from Pfizer/BioNTech - which has been distributed in the European Union since late December - and Moderna.

Britain, which began its rollout in early December with the Pfizer/BioNTech jab, is also now administering the AstraZeneca/Oxford two-dose vaccine.

The United States has been immunizing with Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna vaccines since December.

In Russia, inoculations with its own Sputnik V vaccine started even before the completion of last-stage Phase 3 trials.

Companies in China - where the pandemic began more than a year ago - have also seen their vaccines administered months before trials had finished. Sinopharm and Sinovac are among the most advanced.

Israel is leading the immunization drive and about a third of its population has already received at least one dose.

Concerns have been deepening over rich nations hogging vaccine supplies. The World Health Organisation said Thursday that Africa can expect to see 30 percent

of its population immunized by the end of this year.

India - home to the world's largest vaccine manufacturer, the Serum Institute - has embarked on a form of vaccine diplomacy, gifting millions of doses to its neighbors.

How well do they work?

Different vaccines have different strong points.

The Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna vaccines are so-called messenger RNA (mRNA) vaccines, based on a new technology previously untested in a real-world situation.

They use an inert snippet of genetic code from the coronavirus to trigger an immune response in the body that can repel the active virus.

These both reported efficacy rates above 90 percent, but they are expensive and must be stored and transported at ultra-cold temperatures - minus 20 degrees Celsius for Moderna, and minus 70C for Pfizer.

Many of the other vaccines are variants of the method used for flu jabs, based on a virus that has been killed and rendered harmless.

Of these the Oxford/AstraZeneca jab reported 90 percent efficacy for a subset of people who



An exhibitor shows a 3D model of inactivated COVID-19 vaccine antigen to visitors at the booth of SINOVAC in the special area for public health and epidemic prevention in the comprehensive exhibition area of the 2020 China International Fair for Trade in Services (CIFTIS) in Beijing, capital of China, Sept 5, 2020. PHOTO: XINHUA

got a half-dose followed by a full dose, and a lower success rate of about 60 percent when two full jabs were given.

At three euros (four dollars) a dose it is cheaper than others, and the only vaccine made on a not-for-profit basis, putting it more easily in reach for developing and poor nations. It can also be stored in a normal refrigerator at about 4C.

The Russian vaccine was also claimed to be more than 90-percent effective, but the underlying data has yet to be published.

US biotech firm Novavax said

Effective against new variants?

The major question now is how these vaccines will keep up with a virus that is changing as it spreads across the planet.

Several worrying new variants have emerged in recent months, initially detected in Britain, South Africa and Brazil and now spreading internationally.

These all have mutations to the virus' spike protein, which enables it to latch onto human cells and drive infections.

British authorities say the strain circulating there - and now in dozens of other countries - is more contagious and potentially also more deadly.

But 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."

Pfizer/BioNTech this week said early tests suggest their vaccine retains its effectiveness against mutations in both the strains found in Britain and South Africa, though it said there was slightly reduced against the latter.

SOURCE: Agence France-Presse

Union Day Objectives 74th Anniversary of Union Day - 2021

1. To work on the Union Peace Conference - 21st Century Panglong, till the success of the internal peace process is achieved.
2. Development of the socio-economic life of the ethnic 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.

Union Day slogans for 2021 (74th Anniversary)

1. Equal opportunities and equal responsibilities, living in a peaceful, prosperous and stable Union.
2. Unity is strength, solidarity is power That is the heart of the Union.
3. Many fruits sprouting from one stem, this is our brotherhood of the Union.
4. Our Union built with brotherhood, Never forget Union day.
5. Drinking the same water, living on the same land, we are Union nationals of the same blood.

U Myint Thu concurrently accredited as Ambassador of Myanmar to the Swiss Confederation

The President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has appointed U Myint Thu, Permanent Representative of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar to the United Nations, Geneva, concurrently as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar to the Swiss Confederation.—MNA

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DIFFERENT PATH

Macron gambles by saying 'non' to lockdown



French President Emmanuel Macron is reported to have been concerned about the impact of another lockdown after nearly a year of restrictions, as well as a deep recession. **PHOTO: LUDOVIC MARIN AFP/FILE**

FRENCH President Emmanuel Macron has gambled by not imposing a third national lockdown to contain Covid-19 -- against ex-

pectations and the advice of his most senior scientific advisers.

The 43-year-old leader opted to tighten existing restrictions on travel and shopping at a cabinet meeting on Friday after a week in which his government appeared to be preparing the public for new stay-at-home orders.

The move keeps France on a different path to its biggest neighbours Britain and Germany at a time when the more contagious UK variant of the disease is spreading rapidly across Europe.

"Everything suggests that a new wave could occur because of the variant, but perhaps we can

avoid it thanks to the measures that we decided early and that the French people are respecting," Health Minister Olivier Veran told the *Journal du Dimanche* (JDD) newspaper on Sunday.

He said that, unlike in other countries, the number of new coronavirus cases had barely increased last week, while other indicators -- such as traces of the virus detected in waste water -- were also reassuring.

The French government put in place a strict night-time curfew after a second lockdown ended in December, while deaths of around 250 a day are currently

less than a quarter of the number in Britain or Germany.

Macron was reported to have been concerned about the impact of another lockdown on a country struggling with the mental health consequences of nearly a year of restrictions, as well as a deep recession.

"Even when the path is narrow, you need to take it," the JDD reported Macron as telling ministers at the meeting on Friday.

"When you're French, you have everything you need to succeed providing you dare to try."

SOURCE: AFP

NEWS IN BRIEF

ISRAEL

Ultra-Orthodox defy Israel lockdown for rabbi's funeral

THOUSANDS of ultra-Orthodox Jews defied Israel's coronavirus restrictions to attend a rabbi's funeral on Sunday, prompting Defence Minister Benny Gantz to demand the community's repeated breaking of lockdown rules must end.

A huge crowd, many not wearing masks, packed the streets in Jerusalem for the funeral of 99-year-old Rabbi Meshulam Dovid Soloveitchik, head of the influential Brisk yeshiva, or religious educational institute.

Soloveitchik died earlier on Sunday.

Israel's ultra-Orthodox, or haredim, have been at the centre of the country's struggles to control the spread of coronavirus, with some groups flagrantly defying lockdown rules, especially concerning school and synagogue closures.

Police seeking to enforce the lockdown have in recent days clashed with haredim in Jerusalem's Mea Shearim neighbourhood and in Bnei Brak near Tel Aviv.

While police were on hand for the rabbi's funeral, they did not act to disperse crowds, an AFP photographer said. — SOURCE: AFP

SCRAMBLING TO CURB

Tokyo logs nearly 40,000 COVID-19 cases in January, doubling from previous month

JAPAN'S capital Tokyo logged nearly 40,000 new COVID-19 cases in January, marking a record that doubled the number of infections in the previous month, figures released by the metropolitan government showed on Sunday.

The data revealed the significant increase in infections before Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga declared the country's second state of emergency in the capital and surrounding prefectures on Jan. 7, asking people to avoid unnecessary outings and calling on restaurants and bars to shorten opening hours.

The metropolitan government reported 633 new COVID-19 cases in the capital city on Sunday, bringing the total number in January to 39,664 and the cumulative figure to 99,841. The figure of January compares to 19,245 in December.

Although the COVID-19 infections have gradually shown signs of abating under the state of emergency, the capital city's medical system remains overwhelmed.

Meanwhile, Suga has been criticized for the government's lack of effective measures to maintain a sound medical system as cases of COVID-19 patients not being admitted to hospitals and later dying at home have occurred.

SOURCE: XINHUA

DEMANDING THE END OF LOCKDOWNS

Protesters disrupt coronavirus vaccination site in Los Angeles

PROTESTERS briefly disrupted a coronavirus vaccination distribution center at Dodger Stadium in Los Angeles, US media reported Saturday.

Several dozen people carrying signs demanding the end of lockdowns and promoting anti-vaccination conspiracy theories gathered at the entrance to the site, one of the largest in the US, social media posts showed.

"There appears to be only about 30 protestors total. It's not clear why they've shut off the whole facility," tweeted social media user Mikel Jollet.

Officials shut the site down for nearly an hour, US media reported, citing fire department officials -- though the Los Angeles police department later insisted that the site had not been shut down and that all the vaccines would be distributed.

The incident represents just the latest challenge to the vaccine rollout in the US, which



Representative image Photograph. **PHOTO: AFP**

has the highest number of cases and deaths in the world from Covid-19.

More than 26 million people have been infected and 439,000 have died in the country since the start of the pandemic, a tally kept by Johns Hopkins University showed Saturday.

President Joe Biden has pledged to have 100 million people

vaccinated within his first 100 days -- but the rollout began slowly under former President Donald Trump.

Los Angeles county, where Covid-19 cases have surged this winter, is currently only vaccinating frontline medical workers and people aged 65 and over.

SOURCE: AFP

ISRAEL

5,000 vaccine doses to be sent to Palestinians

ISRAEL'S defence ministry said Sunday that it would send 5,000 coronavirus vaccine doses to the Palestinian Authority to inoculate medical personnel, following global calls for Israel to ensure Palestinians are vaccinated.

"I confirm we are going to send 5,000 vaccines to medical teams in the Palestinian Authority," a spokesperson for Defence Minister Benny Gantz told AFP.

The Jewish state has

launched an aggressive coronavirus vaccine campaign on Israeli territory, an effort widely regarded as the world's fastest per capita.

More than three million of the country's nine million people have received the first of two required jabs of the Pfizer vaccine.

Vaccinations have not yet begun in the West Bank, a Palestinian territory under Israeli military occupation since the

1967 Six Day War.

The Palestinian Authority, based in the West Bank city of Ramallah, has not publicly asked for Israel's help procuring vaccines against the virus.

The PA has however announced procurement agreements with four vaccine providers, including the makers of Russia's Sputnik V.

SOURCE: AFP

OUT OF SIGHT, NOT OUT OF MIND

Pope dedicates world day to 'forgotten' grandparents

POPE Francis on Sunday announced a Catholic Church-wide celebration of grandparents and the elderly, to be marked each year in July.

"Grandparents are often forgotten," the 84-year-old said as he led the weekly Angelus prayer from the Apostolic Palace, adding that "old age is a gift".

"Grandparents are the link between generations, to pass on to the young the experience of

life and faith."

The Argentine pontiff said the World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly would be held on the fourth Sunday of July each year.

Francis will preside over the evening mass on July 25 at St Peter's on the first World Day, subject to coronavirus restrictions, the Vatican said.

SOURCE: AFP



Pope Francis on Sunday announced a Catholic Church-wide celebration of grandparents and the elderly, to be marked each year in July. PHOTO: AFP

NEWS IN BRIEF

HORRIFIC FIND

Mexico identifies four of 19 bodies found burned near US border

MEXICO has identified at least four of the 19 bodies found shot and burnt near the US border, prosecutors said Saturday.

Two Guatemalans -- believed to be migrants -- and two Mexicans were identified by their DNA after authorities discovered the bodies on January 22, the prosecutor's office in the northern state of Tamaulipas said in a statement.

It said members of the Interior Ministry's national search commission had been added to the investigation for "greater transparency", in collaboration with the foreign ministry and the Guatemalan embassy in Mexico.

"It was determined that 16 correspond to the male sex, one to the female sex, and two are pending clarification" due to the severity of the burning, the prosecutors said.

SOURCE: AFP

LONG-RUNNING PROTEST CAMPAIGN

India's Modi vows to pursue reforms after deadly farmer riot

INDIA will push on with sweeping agriculture reforms, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said Sunday, as he criticised last week's deadly riot in the capital following a long-running protest campaign by farmers.

Thousands flooded New

Delhi on Tuesday, driving tractors from border camps where they have been holding sit-ins since November 26; but the rally turned into a rampage which left one person dead and hundreds of police injured.

Modi called the farmers' as-

sault on a historic fort an "insult to the national flag.

His government have insisted that the agriculture sector needs to be modernised, but farmers fear the deregulation laws will place them at the mercy of big corporations that already dominate other industries.

In his first public comments on Tuesday's events, Modi stressed that the government remained "committed to modernising agriculture".

"The efforts of the government shall also continue in the future," the Indian leader said in his regular monthly radio address on Sunday.

"On January 26, seeing the insult of our tricolour, the country was very sad," he added.

The demonstrators swarmed the 400-year-old World Heritage-listed Red Fort on Tuesday, raising religious and farm union

flags, though they did not remove the national flag from the top of the monument.

Modi's comments came as police arrested at least one journalist and filed complaints against others, stoking fears of a media crackdown over the reporting of the protests.

Mandeep Punia, who writes for the English-language Caravan magazine, was detained on Saturday at Singhu, one of the main protest sites.

He was photographed being taken to court on Sunday, where he is expected to be charged on unknown offences, local media reported. Since Tuesday, at least five complaints have been registered against Indian journalists and an opposition Congress member of parliament on several allegations, including sedition and criminal conspiracy.

SOURCE: AFP



India's prime minister says the government will push on with agricultural reforms, despite a long-standing protest by farmers. PHOTO: AFP

DISAGREEING OVER LEGAL STRATEGY

Trump impeachment lawyers leave team: US media

SEVERAL of former US president Donald Trump's impeachment lawyers have left his team a little over a week before his trial, US media reported Saturday.

CNN cited unnamed sources as saying that five lawyers -- including two who were thought to be leading the team -- had parted ways with the Republican billionaire after disagreeing over his legal strategy.

Trump had wanted the lawyers to continue his baseless claims of mass election fraud rather than focus on the legality of convicting a president after he has left office, CNN said, adding that he was "not receptive" to discussion.

The lawyers included Butch Bowers and Deborah Barbier, expected to lead Trump's defense, CNN and other outlets reported, saying it had been a "mutual decision."--SOURCE: AFP

'UNJUST MAJORITY DECISION'

Daniel Pearl's family to challenge Pakistan murder acquittals

THE family of American journalist Daniel Pearl will challenge an order by Pakistan's top court to release a British-born militant acquitted of masterminding his kidnapping and brutal murder in 2002.

The Supreme Court on Thursday upheld the acquittal of Ahmed Omar Saeed Sheikh and three other men last year, triggering outrage from the United States.

Pearl was the South Asia bureau chief for The Wall Street Journal when he was abducted and beheaded by jihadists in Karachi in January 2002 while researching a story about Isla-

mist militants.

"The Pearl family intends to file a review petition against the illegal and unjust majority decision," parents Ruth and Judea Pearl said in a statement that was tweeted by the murdered journalist's friend and former Wall Street Journal colleague Asra Nomani.

They join both the federal government and Sindh provincial government -- of which the city of Karachi is the capital -- in launching a plea for the latest verdict to be reviewed.

Lawyers for Pearl's family have argued that Sheikh played a crucial role in organising the abduction and detention of the



Ahmed Omar Saeed Sheikh during his trial in 2002. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

journalist before ordering his captors to kill him.

Defence lawyers, however,

say he was a scapegoat and sentenced on insufficient evidence

SOURCE: AFP

NEW BLUEPRINT

Electric cars, fewer cows in New Zealand's climate change plan

NEW Zealand unveiled a blueprint Sunday to phase out petrol-powered cars while its dairy industry, a key pillar of the economy, must slash cow numbers under the ambitious plan to be carbon neutral by 2050.

The changes are among a raft of recommendations presented to the government by the Climate Change Commission on steps New Zealand must take to drastically reduce greenhouse gas emissions and address

climate change.

Commission chairman Rod Carr acknowledged the advice was ambitious but said it was realistic and made a clear case for "immediate and decisive" action.

"As a country, we need transformational and lasting change to meet our targets," he said.

"There are a few actions that are critical to meeting our targets: electric vehicles, accelerated renewable energy generation, climate-friendly

farming practices and more permanent forests, predominantly natives."

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said the document, which will now go out for public consultation, showed the impact of the reforms would not be an economic burden.

"The cost of action on the economy is not as great as many have previously thought. In fact, action on climate change is an economic opportunity for New Zealand," she said.

SOURCE: AFP



New Zealand has unveiled an ambitious blueprint to phase out petrol-powered cars to combat climate change. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

SWEDISH COVID NURSE

Swedish film festival offers nurse an isolated, island cinema for a week

A front-line Swedish nurse is getting some Covid downtime with a week of private screenings of the Gothenburg film festival, in a former lighthouse off the country's west coast.

More than 12,000 candidates from 45 countries applied to watch the festival's films in almost near isolation on an island 400 kilometres (250 miles) from Stockholm. The prize is a week viewing as many of the festival's 70 premieres as they like in a hotel in the former Pater Noster Lighthouse. But they will be in isolation and will have no access to their own computer or laptop.

The bright-red lighthouse, built on a tiny island off Sweden's west coast in 1868, is surrounded by a scattering of squat, red buildings originally built to house the lighthouse keeper's family. It can only be reached by boat or helicopter, depending on the weather. After a series of interviews and tests, festival organisers chose emergency nurse and film buff Lisa Enroth for the prize, in keeping with the 2021 festival's theme, Social Distances. Before boarding a small speedboat out to the island on the clear, chill winter's morning, Enroth said she had applied not only out

of her love for the cinema, but also to seek respite from her hectic work as an emergency nurse during the pandemic.

"It has been hectic, so it's a nice opportunity just to be able to land and to reflect over the year," she said.

Months working amid Covid crisis

Sweden, which has taken a light-touch approach to the pandemic compared to its neighbours, has been facing a stronger than expected second wave of the virus. So far, more than 11,500 people have died from Covid-19 across the country.—SOURCE: AFP

THE REPUBLIC OF THE UNION OF MYANMAR
MINISTRY OF ELECTRICITY AND ENERGY
MYANMA OIL AND GAS ENTERPRISE
(INVITATION FOR OPEN TENDER)
(31/2020-2021)

- Open tenders are invited for supply of the following respective Service in Myanmar Kyats.

Sr No.	Tender No.	Description	Remarks
(a)	MOGE-C001/2021	3D Seismic Data Interpretation, Reservoir Characterization, Geological Study and Potential Evaluation Services for Onshore Block RSF-1	Ks
- The Open Tender forms including Description of Materials / Qty with details specifications and Tender Terms & Conditions can be available during office hours commencing from 1 February 2021 at the Finance Department, Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise, No. (44) Complex, Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar.
- 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**.
- Tender Closing Date & Time – **1-3-2021, 12:00 pm**

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

HOUTH MILITIA

Saudi says Houthi-fired projectile lands near hospital in border city

SAUDI Civil Defense announced on Saturday that a projectile landed near a hospital in the border city of Jazan, the Saudi Press Agency (SPA) reported.

Mohammed AL Ghamidi, spokesman of the civil defense, said the projectile was launched by the Houthi militia in Yemen, adding no injury or damage was reported, according to SPA.

Meanwhile, the Saudi-led coalition announced the interception of a bomb-laden drone in Yemen flying toward the kingdom. It was the latest in a series of missile and drone attacks that targeted areas in Saudi Arabia, mainly its border cities. Most of the attacks were foiled before reaching the targets.

SOURCE: AFP

ANTI-GOVERNMENT DEMONSTRATIONS

Navalny allies plan fresh protests despite crackdown

Allies of jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny prepared for a fresh round of anti-government demonstrations on Sunday despite authorities ramping up pressure on the opposition with arrests and criminal

probes.

Navalny aides have called for the new nationwide rallies to demand the opposition leader's release from jail where he is awaiting trial, set to start on February 2.—SOURCE: AFP

Invitation for Bids

Date: 1st February 2021

Loan Agreement No: MY-P4 dated 5 September 2014, MY-P21 dated 1 March 2017 and MY-P31 dated 31 March 2020

1. The Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has received a loan from Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) for Yangon Mandalay Railway Improvement Project Phase I. The Bid is invited by Myanma Railways as follows:

Invitation for Bid	Description:	Issuing Date	Closing Date & Time	Non-refundable Document Fee
IFB No: MR/BD/108D	Electric Power Works for Ywathagyi Depot	1 st February 2021	23 rd March 2021, 2:00pm	USD 1,000

- The Eligible Bidders who have good working record in Myanmar are invited for the detailed design, fabrication, supply of materials, equipment and plant, erection of plant and equipment, supervision, commissioning, testing and remedying any defect therein of the Electric Power Works for Ywathagyi Depot.
- A complete set of the Bidding Documents may be purchased and inspected by interested Bidders upon submission of a written application to the Tender Office in the Supply Department of Myanma Railways at No.(315/317), Corner of 51st Street and Merchant Street, Botahtaung Township, Yangon, Myanmar, Telephone: +95-1 8292968, 95-9-5191309 Facsimile number: +95-1 8291994 during office hours from 9:30 a.m to 4:30 p.m on Monday to Friday (except public holidays).
- Bid must be submitted to the address above mentioned on or before the closing date and time.
- Technical Bids will be opened on 23rd March 2021 at 2:00 p.m at the office as stated above.

Managing Director,
Myanma Railways, Ministry of Transport and Communications
Nay Pyi Taw Railways Station Compound, Pobbathiri Township, Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar.
Telephone: +95-67 77024, Facsimile number: +95-67-677164
Email address: dgmplan.rail@mrt.gov.mm, dgm.planning.mr@gmail.com (not for submission but for clarification)

11-NATION FREE-TRADE BLOC

Britain will apply to join Asia-Pacific free-trade bloc in the wake of Brexit



Vietnam's Trade Minister Tran Tuan Anh (L) and Britain's International Trade Secretary Liz Truss finalised a free trade pact which will see 99 per cent of tariffs eliminated once it is fully implemented. PHOTO: AFP/NHAC NGUYEN

BRITAIN will apply to join a massive 11-nation free-trade bloc of Asia-Pacific countries, it announced Saturday, weeks after leaving the European single

market with its departure from the EU. International Trade

Secretary Liz Truss will formally request Monday for Britain to join the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), a market representing half a billion people and roughly 13.5 percent of the global economy.

The CPTPP application will come one year after Britain left the European Union following more than forty years of membership -- and after five years of complex trade discussions.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said the potential new partnership would "bring enormous

economic benefits for the people of Britain".

"Applying to be the first new country to join the CPTPP demonstrates our ambition to do business on the best terms with our friends and partners all over the world and be an enthusiastic champion of global free trade," he said.

Negotiations between the UK and the partnership -- which represents 11 Pacific Rim nations including Australia, Canada, Chile, Japan, Mexico and Vietnam -- are expected to start this year, the trade department said.

But opposition Labour party shadow internation-

al trade secretary Emily Thornberry questioned the lack of transparency surrounding the pact.

After five years of debate over Brexit trade agreements, she said people would question the British government's decision "to rush into joining another one on the other side of the world without any meaningful public consultation at all."

"At present, Liz Truss cannot even guarantee whether we would have the right to veto China's proposed accession if we join the bloc first," she said.

SOURCE: AFP

TRADING ACTIVITY

China factory activity slows slightly on new Covid-19 wave

FACTORY activity in China slowed slightly in January, official data showed Sunday, as the country rushed to stamp out a recent coronavirus wave in northern China.

The purchasing managers' index (PMI), a key gauge of manufacturing activity, came in at 51.3 this month, as the world's second-largest economy tightened Covid-19 precautions ahead of the Lunar New Year.

The figure was slightly below December's reading of 51.9, although still above the 50-point mark separating growth from contraction.

"Recently, local clusters of the epidemic

emerged successively in many places across the country, and the production and operations of some enterprises were temporarily affected," said National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) senior statistician Zhao Qinghe.

Zhao added that the period around the Lunar New Year is traditionally an "off-peak season" for the manufacturing industry.

The latest data indicated that the business climate remains weak for small firms, although domestic consumption picked up ahead of the festive period.

SOURCE: AFP

SWEEPING SCOPE?

Biden, Democrats seek ambitious hike in US minimum wage

WHEN President Joe Biden unveiled a \$1.9 trillion stimulus proposal earlier this month, few were surprised by the plan's hefty price tag or sweeping scope.

More striking was Biden's inclusion of a measure to more than double the federal minimum wage to \$15.

The move, backed by leading Democrats including left-wing Senator Bernie Sanders, establishes the fight for higher wages as a top priority for the new administration, potentially leading to one of Washington's boldest adjustments in US social and labor policy in decades.

The fate of the initiative -- which so far lacks

support from Republicans -- will help determine whether Biden delivers on a core pocketbook issue as US income inequality widens during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Sanders, a former presidential candidate, called the current federal minimum wage of \$7.25 an hour a "starvation wage" as he unveiled the proposal for an increase in Congress.

The senator said he hopes Republicans "will understand the severity of the crisis," but added that Democrats should be prepared to enact the policy on a narrow party-line vote. Such an increase would boost wages for more than 32 million US



growing number of states and cities have already enacted a wage hike at the urging of the "Fight for \$15" movement launched by fast-food workers in the early 2010s.

PHOTO: AFP/FILE

workers, according to the Economic Policy Institute, a progressive think tank.

The Sanders bill proposes "a significant increase in the minimum wage," Ben Zipperer, an

economist at the institute, told AFP. "Unfortunately, we have quite a big hole to dig out of in terms of providing what low-income workers need."

SOURCE: AFP

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V AEGEAN EXPRESS VOY. NO. (203N/S)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V AEGEAN EXPRESS VOY. NO. (203N/S)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **1-2-2021** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **TMIT/MIP** where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

Phone No: 2301185

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

M/S CONTINENTAL SHIPPING LINES

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V ALS SUMIRE VOY. NO. (1040W/E)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V ALS SUMIRE VOY. NO. (1040W/E)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **1-2-2021** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **MITT/MIP** where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

Phone No: 2301185

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:
M/S OCEAN NETWORK EXPRESS (S'PORE)
PTE LTD

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V MTT SENARI VOY. NO. (003N)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V MTT SENARI VOY. NO. (003N)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **1-2-2021** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **HPT** where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

Phone No: 2301185

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

M/S REGIONAL CONTAINER LINES

The photo shows Salay Yoke Sone monastery-turned-to-museum.



Salay Yoke Sone Monastery with variety of fascinating woodcarvings



The photo shows a building with a tiered roof.



IT is thought that it is already known to all the monastery dating back to 1,244 Myanmar era emerged with the start of prosody describing “Aung Kyaw Hla Win with a variety of woodcarvings”. Yes, it is. It is the world-famous Yoke Sone Monastery situated in Salay Township, Magway Region, Myanmar.

A-nyar region, which means upper reaches of Ayeyawady river, has a wealth of Yoke Sone monasteries of which Salay Yoke Sone Monastery has gained global popularity. Salay Yoke Sone Monastery is famous for its age-old existence and every description of mysterious sculptural works. Unlike other Yoke Sone monasteries having woodcarvings depicting the episodes of 550 Jataka stories, its sculptural wood designs distinctly portray facial expressions of the characters involved in the woodcarvings.

Salay Yoke Sone Monastery starts

By Thiha Lulin (Travel Blogger)
TRANSLATED BY HTUT HTUT (TWANTAY)

to appear

Salay Yoke Sone Monastery was constructed in 1244 Myanmar era in the late period of Konebaung dynasty. It would be in 1882 Christian era. It was built by U Pho Kyi, a world-famous catechu merchant and wife Daw Shwe Thet and was donated to U Guna, assistant Sayadaw of Thudhama religious sect for residence. King Thibaw issued a formal diplomat note to extract teaks necessary for the construction of Yoke Sone Monastery from the State-owned forest with tax exemption.

In those days, official permission was usually granted to construct the monastery appropriate to morals, knowledge and power of the Sayadaw who will reside. It was in Konebaung

period. The permitted model for U Guna, assistant Sayadaw of Thudhama religious sect contained four stairs. The monastery looked like a house with the royal design where the royal prince resided. In general, if the royal princes of those days became a king, their residences were usually donated to members of Sangha. The permission was granted to construct the house just like the one the royal prince resided in spite of being newly built.

All the timber was felled from the edge of Rakhine mountain range, and Yoke Sone Monastery was built by the carpenters and architects from Tanyaung (Sanyaug) village. It was learnt that all the materials related to the iron smelting including smithy were transferred and the responsible persons made arrangement for the design of iron the architects wanted to cast. One and a half to thirteen inches nails in size are cast at the monastery.

Salay Yoke Sone Monastery was built with



The photo shows ancient artefacts displayed at the monastery.



The photo shows thrones.

a total of 154 long timber logs, and each can be put around by one's arm in term of the circumference. Big and long timber logs can be impressively seen until now. Salay Yoke Sone Monastery is 154 feet in length and 76 feet in width. The hostels are as follows:

- (1) Hostel with a tiered roof
- (2) Sanu Hostel
- (3) Hsaunghla Hostel (Zetawun Hostel)
- (4) Hsaungma (Yuan Hostel)

felt great admiration. The construction of Yoke Sone Monastery was completed in 1254 Myanmar era (1892 Christian era).

Yoke Sone Monastery with variety of woodcarvings

The woodcarvings hanging in the whole surface of the northern frontage of Yoke Sone Monastery gained global popularity. These woodcarvings depicted the episodes of 550 Jataka stories and

tion of Yoke Sone Monastery, Myanmar king was arrested by the British, under the British rule, the Sayadaw of Thudhama religious sect was accused of social problems and brought to a trial as a witness where his reputation was blemished. When the case was over, the Sayadaw disappeared from the monastery without informing anyone until his death. For that reason, no one could explain the original idea and ambition of the Sayadaw.

ernment public holidays. Previously the entrance fee was fixed at K500 per adult, but now no entrance fee. The entrance fee for a foreigner is fixed at K5,000.

The visitors will be amazed by an abundance of woodcarvings depicting the episodes of Jataka tales along with the exterior scene of Yoke Sone Monastery. Along with the picture of U Pho Kyi, a donor of the monastery, fascinating displays of ancient artefacts discovered in and around Salay, Buddha images, sculptural objects, pots, stones, traditional handicrafts, thrones, palm-leaf inscription and Parabaik can be seen at Yoke Sone Monastery. According to the historical records, U Pho Kyi and his wife donated 45 sculptural images, ancient artefacts, palm-leaf inscriptions and Parabaiks to U Guna, the Sayadaw of Thudhama religious sect.

Salay ancient research museum in the back scene of Salay Yoke Sone Monastery

A small brick building located in the back of Salay Yoke Sone Monastery is an ancient research museum. It isn't thought to be the one like this. On display inside



- (5) Khone Hostel
- (6) West Hostel (Bawga Hostel)

There are roofless balconies and passageways around the hostels. Passage pillars are covered with sculptural pieces made with sandstones to prevent them from water erosion. The creation of brick stairs is a kind of appreciation. Railings are decorated with stuccoed mythical animals. Carved mythical animals are opened-mouth, and closed-mouth ones and each two of carved mythical animals are created. It was learnt that formerly, there were cook-houses at the back of Yoke Sone Monastery. In those days, the monasteries had cook-houses capable of supplying energy for enabling the Sayadaws to reside round the clock. Now they look as if they fell into ruin. The first-ever presiding Sayadaw of Yoke Sone Monastery was U Guna for whom King Mindon and Seintone Queen

Dhammapada not from the start to end, only the plot the creator liked and guessing the idea of the Sayadaw is also something interesting.

Unlike the other Yoke Sone Monasteries as mentioned before, it can be said the woodcarvings seem more precious as their facial expressions are sculpted in a thorough way. Those who created sculptures were famous sculptors U Shan and U Shwe Pyae. There were formerly a quite number of sculptures, but now only 26 sculptures have been left, some were lost and some stolen.

These sculptures were the works created from the Yadanabon period, and they were called woodcarvings with dramatic style. It was difficult to exactly reveal the idea of the original Sayadaw of Thudhama religious sect as the woodcarvings described each plot from the Jataka stories. In fact, just before finishing the construc-



The photo shows fascinating fine arts on the beautiful door.

Yoke Sone monastery-turned-to-museum

Salay Yoke Sone Monastery existed for long since the last periods of Myanmar kings and British colonial administration has now turned to the museum, becoming a place of interest attracting local and foreign travellers. It is kept open from 9:30 am to 4:30 pm except for Mondays and gov-

are a lot of historical heritages such as a package of palm-leaf inscriptions with handwritten script by Salay U Ponnya, packages of palm-leaf inscriptions made with gold and other ancient artefacts discovered in and around Salay.

Raphael Success joins Shan United for one-year loan

By Lynn Thit (Tgi)

According to the team's statement, Nigerian striker Akwa Raphael Success recently signed a year contract with Shan United Football Club.

The 22-year-old striker played for Ayeyawady United in 2019 and 2020 seasons.

The striker scored ten goals for the club in 2019 Myanmar National League season, and then he became a top scorer after scoring 16 goals in 2020 Myanmar National league season.

"Currently, Shan United is the best team in Myanmar, making excellent preparations for the coming season.

It's my dream to play the international game like the AFC Champions League, and I've prepared my best for the very first international competition of my career," said Raphael Success.

"What I noticed when I started playing here was the tough and aggressive play of the opponents. Everything was challenging for me. They know I'm a right-footer and try their best not to let me score goals. I know how passionate Shan United supporters are. They are lovely. I'll try to make them happy, and I wish we could play in front of the supporters," he added.

Shan United has already completed transfers of Thiha Zaw, Soe Lwin Lwin, Kyaw Zin Lwin and Than Paing.



Nigerian striker Akwa Raphael Success (left) receives his Shan United jersey after signing a one-year contract with the football club. **PHOTO: SUFC**

Marseille match postponed after fans attack training ground

MARSEILLE — Marseille's game against Rennes in France's Ligue 1 on Saturday (Jan 30) was postponed after hundreds of angry supporters broke into the club's training ground in a violent protest.

"Given the incidents this afternoon at the Olympique de Marseille training ground, the game between OM and Rennes is postponed to a later date," the French league (LFP) said in a statement posted on its website.

The fans, who were demonstrating against the club leadership and the team's poor recent run of results, assembled in the afternoon in front of Marseille's La Commanderie training

ground, throwing smoke bombs and firecrackers.

"300 OM supporters violently attacked police officers present to secure La Commanderie," local police in France's Bouches-du-Rhone department tweeted, adding that they immediately sent reinforcements "to put an end to the damage" and saying they had made 25 arrests.

Later, they added that seven police officers were injured in the incidents.

Sports daily L'Equipe reported that Marseille's Spanish defender Alvaro Gonzalez was struck on the back by a projectile as he went to confront the supporters.—AFP ■



Marseille hit out at a "frenzy of violence" as their game against Rennes in France's Ligue 1 on Saturday was postponed after hundreds of angry supporters broke into the club's training ground and caused widespread damage in a protest. **PHOTO: AFP**

La Liga chief accuses Fifa president of supporting European Super League

MADRID — La Liga chief Javier Tebas has accused Fifa president Gianni Infantino of supporting the launch of a break-away European Super League despite world football's governing body being officially opposed to the project.

In an interview with AFP, Tebas called on Infantino to deny he is in favour of the controversial breakaway competition that would transform the landscape of European football.

Tebas claims Infantino has been "working on" and "encouraging" its formation and said Fifa's president could even be given a role with the new league once it is set up.

When contacted by AFP, Fifa referred to its statement on Jan 21, which was signed by Infantino and said "such a competition would not be recognised by either Fifa or the respective confederation".

Fifa added any club or player partic-



La Liga president Javier Tebas has accused FIFA president Gianni Infantino of supporting the European Super League project. **PHOTO: PIERRE-PHILIPPE MARCOU/AFP/FILE**

ipating would be banned from competitions organised by Fifa, such as the World Cup, although it is unclear if such a move would be legal.

Yet Tebas believes Infantino is in favour of a Super League and has even been helping clubs to organise it.—AFP ■

Venus, Ostapenko make winning starts in Australia

MELBOURNE — Ageless Venus Williams opened her 2021 season with a 6-1, 6-3 thrashing of Arantxa Rus Sunday, while former top 10 players Jelena Ostapenko and Caroline Garcia also scored wins.

Williams, 40, showed few signs of having spent 14 days in quarantine in her first-round romp at the Yarra Valley Classic, grinding down her Dutch opponent in 65 minutes — an amazing 27 years after making her professional debut.

The tournament is one of two WTA events being played concurrently at Melbourne Park as players prepare for the Australian Open Grand Slam starting on February 8. Former Australian Open semi-finalist Danielle Collins needed 75

minutes to secure her first victory of the year, a 6-3, 6-3 triumph over Belgian Ysaline Bonaventure in the same event.

Collins is back at the site of her best career major run, which saw her upset former champion Angelique Kerber en route to reaching the final four in 2019.

American Shelby Rogers also progressed, thanks to a 6-2, 7-5 win over No.12 seed Fiona Ferro, the first ranked player to fall, while Anastasija Sevastova proved too strong for Madison Brengle. In a battle between former top five players, 2017 French Open champion Ostapenko triumphed over Sara Errani 4-6, 6-3, 6-1 in the first round of the Gippsland Trophy, charging back after losing the first set.—AFP ■