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# THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

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## State Administration Council Chairman discusses banking services for economic development



Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing meets the patron of Myanmar Banks Association, its chairman and officials, the chairmen, the vice-chairmen and officials of private banks at the President House in Nay Pyi Taw on 4 February 2021. **PHOTO: OFFICE OF COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF DEFENCE SERVICES**

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF of Defence Services and Chairman of the State Administration Council met with the local bankers at the President House in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday morning.

The meeting was also attended by the members of State Administration Council, the patron of Myanmar Banks Association, its chairman and officials, the chairmen, the vice-chairmen and officials of private banks.

In delivering the speech,

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing explained the reason for meeting on the banking sector as it is pivotal to the economy, which is a driving force for the development of the country.

He also called for the decline of commodity prices with the helps in mass production of goods and creating employment opportunities, regular transaction of businesses in line with the rules and guidelines for COVID-19 which will not be changed unnecessarily.

The Senior General talked on his support to e-banking services not waste time for the customers at the banks, and rumours about demonetizing K5,000 and K10,000 banknotes as the Constitution has guaranteed not to do so.

He also reaffirmed that the Tatmadaw would not change the existing policies on politics, economy, peace and international relations during the term of interim organization.

The Chairman of the State

Administration Council offered assistance to the requirements of the banking sector.

Chairman of the Myanmar Banks Association U Khin Maung Aye and Patron U Thein Tun, Chairman of UAB Bank U Nay Aung, Vice-Chairman of Ayeyarwady Bank Daw Khin Saw Oo, Chairman of Shwe Bank U Kyaw Win discussed the policy reforms in finance, investment, commerce, foreign banking services, improvement of long-term national interest,

reduction of interest rate, permits to use foreign currency in border trade, transformation to digital payment, successful implementation of microloans and insurance, and tax reduction in construction and property markets.

Union Minister U Win Shein and Governor of Central Bank of Myanmar U Than Nyein discussed possible cooperation of the CBM, the MBA and the private banking sector.

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## CBM issues announcement on public rumours about monetary issue

THE Central Bank of Myanmar released an announcement on 3 February to wipe out rumours among the public about the monetary issue and possible closure of banks.

The announcement said, "There were false rumours that K5,000 and K10,000 banknotes would be demonetized and banks would close in relation to the current situations in the country. It was also learnt that some people were worried because of the rumours and were reportedly withdrawing their money from the banks.

The Central Bank of Myanmar has been working hard to stabilize the financial system, and the banks have been providing proper services in accordance with the rules and regulations.

The general public can continue using the banknotes and banking services without any worries, and all the banks have been instructed to provide regular banking services."—MNA

## Tatmadaw True News Information Team: Healthcare services offered at military hospitals

THE Tatmadaw True News Information Team released a statement on 4 February 2021 that healthcare services are offered to all the national people at the military hospitals.

The statement said that some persons who are creating disturbances, aiming to destabilize the administrative mechanism and stability of the State, have incited Civil Disobedience Campaign through social networks, causing failure to perform duties among the health workers.

Doctors have vowed during their convocation that "Health and well-being of the patients will be our own issues as the first priority ; I will practice my profession with conscience and dignity and in accordance with a good medical practice; I will serve my medical profession regardless of nationality, race and social status; and I will maintain the utmost respect for human life".

It is also advised all the health workers not to follow the incitement that can jeopardize the interest of country and people, and keep their professional vows to the public.

The Tatmadaw has received the permission of the State Administration Council to solve the current healthcare problems of people across the nation by the military medics.

Therefore, people can get proper medical treatments at the nearest military hospitals.—MNA

## 136 Myanmar nationals brought back home from Malaysia by relief flight

THE 47<sup>th</sup> relief flight of Myanmar Airways International organized by the Myanmar Embassy in Kuala Lumpur landed at Yangon International Airport bringing back a total of 136 Myanmar nationals including 40 Myanmar citizens who were convicted in Malaysia for various reasons after they were stranded in Malaysia due to the suspension of international flights yesterday evening.

The Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population, and the Ministry of Health and Sports arranged 14-day quarantine at specific places or des-

ignated hotels, followed by the 7-day home quarantine.

The Myanmar Embassy in Kuala Lumpur is working closely with the relevant organizations in Malaysia to bring back Myanmar citizens who have no national verification and who were in detention centres after their citizenship has been identified in accordance with the directives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Myanmar has organized 16 relief flights for repatriation of nationals from Malaysia.—MNA

(Translated by EPPA)

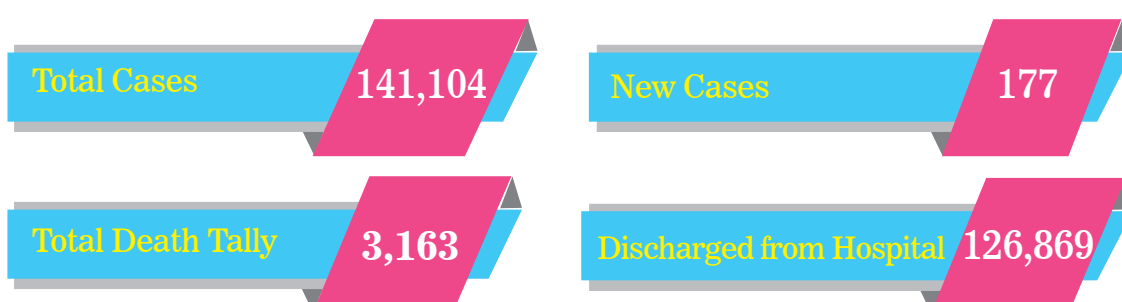


Myanmar returnees undergo immigration process at the Yangon International Airport. PHOTO: MNA

## 177 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 4 February, total figure rises to 141,104

MYANMAR'S COVID-19 positive cases rose to 141,104 after 177 new cases were reported on 4 February 2021 according to the Ministry of Health and Sports. Among these 141,104 confirmed cases, 3,163 died, 126,869 have been discharged from hospitals.—MNA

Updated at 8 pm, 4 February 2021



Daily death toll until 8 pm 4-2-2021

3

Ministry of Health and Sports



## State Administration Council Chairman discusses ...



Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing meets local bankers at the President House in Nay Pyi Taw on 4 February 2021. **PHOTO: OFFICE OF COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF DEFENCE SERVICES**

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In his concluding remark, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing talked on lower international banking interest rates, smooth currency flow for the economic development of the country, capital investments, the importance

of currency policy, recovery of the ailing economy, the assistance of CBM to the local banks, certain losses in border trades, a higher volume of foodstuffs imports, production of import substitutions from livestock and agricultural sector; assistance

to the production of foodstuffs for sufficient domestic consumption, collecting information by Myanmar commercial attaché about foreign markets in respective countries, the assistance of local bankers to be able to produce quality products

for foreign markets, making the best plans for the reduction of interest rate, the requirement of strong domestic currency value and the most appropriate taxation policy as it is the crucial source of state revenue.

The Senior General final-

ly emphasized working for the best taxation policy, financial assistance for increasing local market demand, creating employment opportunities and recovery of declining economy during COVID-19 crisis.—MNA

(Translated by Aung Khin)

## Coordination meeting discusses environmental, forest and mining sectors

THE Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation held a virtual coordination meeting regarding environmental conservation, forest and mining sectors yesterday.

In his opening remark, Union Minister U Khin Maung Yi said Tatmadaw took office after the declaration of the state of emergency and so it needs to carry out the work plans under the instructions of the current government in accordance with the short, mid and long term perspective.

The Union Minister also discussed the delays in implementing plans amid COVID-19 pandemic and better work plans to ease the impacts of country and people.

He then stressed the need to carry out the work plans for the forestry sector in accordance with the forest policy of Myanmar and 30-year national forest master plan, conservation of

forest, ecosystem, biodiversity and forest reserve and 10-year district management plan.

He also emphasized the National Environmental Policy, Myanmar Climate Change Policy and Strategy, National Waste Management Strategy and Action Plan and other plans to measure the water and air quality in Nay Pyi Taw and other regions and States, Natural Resources Management Strategy and reorganization of National Environmental Conservation and Climate Change Central Committee.

He then instructed the necessary things for wood production sector without affecting the environment and for the mining sector to be responsible for mining.

The participants coordinated the discussion, and the Union Minister concluded the meeting.—MNA

(Translated by KTZH)



Union Minister U Khin Maung Yi presides over the virtual coordination meeting on the environmental, forest and mining sectors on 4 February 2021. **PHOTO: MNA**

## 137 courses for diploma, postgraduate in medical education to be conducted

A total of 2,082 trainees will be allowed for 137 courses of diploma and postgraduate at medical universities and related universities under the Ministry of Health and Sports in 2021 academic year.

The applications for these courses shall be submitted commencing 2<sup>nd</sup> week of February.

Sr	University	Diploma	M.Sc	Doctorate	Total
1	Universities of Medicine	7	31	47	85
2	Universities of Dental Medicine	2	10	9	21
3	Universities of Nursing	1	9	1	11
4	Universities of Medical Technology	1	3	3	7
5	Universities of Pharmacy	-	4	4	8
6	University of Public Health	1	2	1	4
7	University of Community Health	-	1	-	1
Total		12	60	65	137



# MoC holds first coordination meeting on future work plans

THE Ministry of Construction organized the first coordination meeting on its works and policies yesterday.

During the meeting, Union Minister U Shwe Lay discussed the effective work plans and objectives of the ministry to conduct in line with the instructions of State Administration Council-led government and current COVID-19 prevention, control and treatment activities.

The Union Minister also stressed the need to implement the projects in line with the law and regulations as the current road/bridge constructions and projects with private sectors will be permitted in accordance with



Union Minister U Shwe Lay chairs the first coordination meeting on the works and policies of the Construction Ministry yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

the policies and procedures.

He also said the department needs to adopt the financial pro-

cedures, rules and regulations and laws in auditing sectors.

The directors of region/

state departments need to accelerate the momentum to implement the works and to sub-

mit their difficulties in a timely manner not to occur delays in state-level projects and other projects jointly conducted by international countries.

Then, the Directors-General of relevant departments made powerpoint presentations regarding their completed works and ongoing plans while the Directors of region/state departments briefed their performance and future work plans.

The Union Minister coordinated the discussion and instructed the necessary things.—MNA

(Translated by KTZH)

# MoEE joins UN Roundtable on Extractive Industries online

PERMANENT Secretary of the Ministry of Electricity and Energy U Than Zaw joined the Extractive Industries, Sustainable Development and the 2030 Agenda in Asia and the Pacific online conference hosted by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) in Bangkok yesterday.

At the conference, the Permanent Secretary said that plans to reduce carbon emission were discussed at the Climate Ambition Summit on 12 December 2020 and, he explained the implementation plan for expansion of carbon sink in Myanmar: to expand the 10% of the country's total area into Protected Area Systems, to continue the con-



MoEE Permanent Secretary U Than Zaw joins the online Extractive Industries, Sustainable Development and the 2030 Agenda in Asia Pacific Conference yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

servation of 0.25 million hectares of forest as public farmland and to conserve the private land in accordance with the Myanmar Reforestation and Rehabilitation Plan from 2017 to 2027.

He added the energy efficiency process of Myanmar,

which is being carried out effectively by setting goals and the plan to distribute Fuel-Efficient Stoves in 2010-2030 to reduce carbon dioxide emissions.

He also discussed the use of about 45% of natural gas, including LNG, 54% of renewable

energy, and 1% of other energy, mainly focusing on using the renewable energy in Myanmar; the aim of the Ministry to have 100% electricity nationwide by 2030; implementation of expanding wind and solar power plants to produce LNG and natural gas

domestically; plan to expand renewable energy to 2,000 MW by 2030 and the active participation of Myanmar as a member in the International Solar Alliance (ISA).

The conference was attended by the representatives from ESCAP and respective countries and discussed the work to reduce fossil fuel consumption, increase the use of clean energy and renewable energy for the development of the Green Growth and Green Economy sector; the socio-economic and environmental development and more employment opportunities in Extractive Industry sector and current policies, strategies and technologies.—MNA

(Translated by EPPA)

# MNA resumes Yangon-Myeik flights



A passenger checks in for the Yangon-Myeik flight. An MNA aircraft is seen receiving passengers for the flight. **PHOTO: MNA**

THE Myanmar National Airlines resumed its Yangon-Myeik flights yesterday, in accordance with the COVID-19 preventive guidelines.

U Tun Hla Aung, the manager of

MNA's branch office in Myeik, said, "The daily flight of Embraer-190 aircraft between Yangon and Myeik will ply for the convenience of passengers. Services will be provided in accordance with the

COVID-19 rules."

Ticket price from Myeik to Yangon is K61,000 per person and it can be purchased at the MNA office in Myeik, and passengers will need COVID-19 free

medical certificate tested in 36-hours before the boarding.

The Air KBZ is also flying between Yangon and Myeik.—Khaing Htoo (IPRD)



Republic of the Union of Myanmar  
State Administration Council  
Order No (23/2021)

8<sup>th</sup> Waning of Pyatho 1382 ME  
4 February 2021

Appointment and Duty Assignment of  
Justices for Supreme Court of the Union

The following Chief Justices of Region High Court are appointed and assigned to the duties of Justices at the Supreme Court of the Union in accordance with Article 419 of the State Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

1. U Myo Maung Chief Justice of the Sagaing Region High Court
2. U Kyi Thein Chief Justice of the Mandalay Region High Court

By order  
Sd/ Aung Lin Dway  
Lieutenant-General  
Secretary  
State Administration Council

Republic of the Union of Myanmar  
State Administration Council  
Order No (24/2021)

8<sup>th</sup> Waning of Pyatho 1382 ME  
4 February 2021

Duty Termination from Justices of  
Supreme Court of the Union

The following Justices of Supreme Court of the Union are terminated from their duties.

1. U Myo Win
2. U Mya Han
3. U Soe Naing
4. U Khin Maung Kyi

By order  
Sd/ Aung Lin Dway  
Lieutenant-General  
Secretary  
State Administration Council

Republic of the Union of Myanmar  
State Administration Council  
Order No (25/2021)

8<sup>th</sup> Waning of Pyatho 1382 ME  
4 February 2021

Appointment and Duty Assignment of  
Union Minister

Dr Daw Thet Khaing is appointed and assigned to the duties of Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement by the State Administration Council in accordance with Article 419 of the State Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

By order  
Sd/ Aung Lin Dway  
Lieutenant-General  
Secretary  
State Administration Council

Republic of the Union of Myanmar  
State Administration Council  
Order No (26/2021)

8<sup>th</sup> Waning of Pyatho 1382 ME  
4 February 2021

Appointment and Duty Assignment of  
Deputy Governors of Central Bank of  
Myanmar

The following persons are appointed and assigned to the duties of Deputy Governors of Central Bank of Myanmar in accordance with Article 419 of the State Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

1. U Win Thaw Deputy Governor
2. Daw Than Than Swe Deputy Governor

By order  
Sd/ Aung Lin Dway  
Lieutenant-General  
Secretary  
State Administration Council

Republic of the Union of Myanmar  
State Administration Council  
Order No (27/2021)

8<sup>th</sup> Waning of Pyatho 1382 ME  
4 February 2021

Appointment and Duty Assignment of  
Deputy Ministers

The following persons are appointed and assigned to the duties of Deputy Ministers for Planning, Finance and Industry in accordance with Article 419 of the State Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

1. U Maung Maung Win
2. Daw Than Than Linn

By order  
Sd/ Aung Lin Dway  
Lieutenant-General  
Secretary  
State Administration Council

## Myanma Thanaka Day to be launched in five townships

MYANMA Thanaka Day will be launched on 26 February in five townships, said Chairman U Kyaw Moe (Ahyardaw) of Myanmar Thanaka Association.

“The five townships which will celebrate the Myanma Thanaka Day are Ahyardaw, Shwebo, Yesagy, Myaing and Pauk townships. Myanma Thanaka Day aims to sustain the traditional culture, to prevent Thanaka cosmetics that are not genuine Thanaka. For all Myanmar people to appreciate Myanma Thanaka,” he added.

The Thanaka day will also include other performances such as offering to Buddha of candles with Thanaka scent, offering to Buddha Thanaka fragrance, pouring fragrant water onto the Buddha Statues, offering Satuditha (charity food) and distributing Thanaka awareness information handouts and stickers.

Likewise, Myanmar submitted Thanaka as a world’s intangible cultural heritage to be nominated by the

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) at the end of March.

“Now, suppose we can prevent the so-called Thanaka cosmetics being sold in the local Thanaka market. In that case, our Thanaka market will be famous and get high demand,” he highlighted.

Thanaka is cultivated mostly in Yinmabin, Kani, Hsalingyi, Ahyardaw, Monywa, Budalin and Chaung-U townships. Among them, Ahyardaw has more acres of Thanaka plantations with over 100,000 acres. Thanaka is sent to Monywa, Mandalay, Yangon and Pakokku townships. Local growers mainly sell Thanaka at pagodas and markets, U Kyaw Moe explained.

Thanaka, a yellowish-white paste made from ground bark, is a natural cosmetic used in Myanmar. Thanaka is a typical face lotion of Myanmar women.

— Hmway Kyu Zin

(Translated by HM)

Trade Mark Ads Call Thin Thin May,  
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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,  
Thein Htwe, Nyi Lin Thu**EDITORIAL SECTION**(+95) (01)8604529,  
Fax - (+95) (01) 8604305**CIRCULATION & DISTRIBUTION**San Lwin, (+95) (01) 8604532,  
Hotline - 09 974424114**ADVERTISING & MARKETING**(+95) (01) 8604530,  
Hotline - 09 974424848  
marketing@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com  
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Due to limitation of space we are only able to publish "Letter to the Editor" that do not exceed 500 words. Should you submit a text longer than 500 words please be aware that your letter will be edited.

## Minbu boasts tourist attraction cultural sites

MINBU Township of Magway Region boasts of its famous cultural areas and tourist attraction sites. The people can make a trip to Shwe Settaw Pagoda, Shin Pin Set Kein Te Pagoda, Dattaw Kone Pagoda, Shin Minbu Pagoda, Auk Kyaung Pagoda and Naga Pwat Taung by cars, horse carts and three-wheeled vehicles.

Shin Pin Set Kein Te Pagoda is one of the famous pagodas in Magway. When the Buddha resided at Zaytawun monastery in Savatthi, He was offered Sandakku Nant Thar Kyaung Taw Yar. Then, He went to Kay Lar Tha Ba Taung, and Thagyarmin (King of celestial) welcomed with couch and bowl made of emerald and Shwe Te temple while Brahma with the white umbrella.

Thagyarmin constructed stone pagoda (Koe Taung Pyae) with the enshrining of Shwe Te temple and erected the stone inscription and also named the pagoda as Set Kein Te. When King Dut-Ta-Baung visited the Sandakku Nant Thar Kyaung Taw Yar in 132ME, he found the spectrum emanating from the Koe Taung Pyae pagoda. Then, the King rebuilt the height of

Shin Pin Set Kein Te Pagoda of Minbu. **PHOTO: U WIN NAING**

pagoda and replaced with new diamond bud. The weather is always full of dark cloud whenever the golden crown umbrella is donated to Shin Pin Set Kein Te Pagoda.

The pagoda is 109ft in

height and located on 200ft compound. There are also booths featuring emerald couch and Thagyarmin, history of , Shin Pin Set Kein Te, Nagayon Pagoda, Sadhabava reclining pagoda, 28 pagodas and 20 small

stupas. Sin Pin Set Kein Te Pagoda is located near the bank of Ayeyawady River at No(1) Ward of Minbu. — U Win Naing (Minbu IPRD), Zeyar Htet (Minbu)

(Translated by KTZH)

## MR reopens circular, passenger trains from Yangon to other regions

MYANMA Railways (MR) resumed its passenger and circular trains from Yangon to other regions, said U Zaw Lwin, the assistant general manager from Yangon Region No. 7 Division.

"We started our train schedule today. All train schedules are resumed, and the trains are running on all regular routes," he added.

The trains will run Yangon-Mandalay, Mandalay-Myitkyina, Yangon-Mawlamyine-Ye-Dawei, Yangon-Pyay, Mandalay-Lashio routes and other routes will be the express trains, passenger and mail trains, passenger and cargo trains, short trip trains. Besides, more circular trains will be added starting from 4 February.

The railway passengers need to follow COVID-19 related instructions issued by the Ministry of Health and Sports. The railway staff will take COVID-19 prevention measures such as checking body temperature and making the sanitizer hand gels used in the

MR resumes its operations in line with the COVID prevention rules. **PHOTO: MYINT MAUNG**

railway stations' entrance gate. Also, MR is conducting to keep two seats for one ticket so that the commuters can keep social distancing,

Before the outbreak of COVID-19, MR was running 156 trains with 168 routes, including 40 express trains, 52 mail trains,

48 cargo trains and 13 short trip trains, and operating a circular train with 21 coaches. To prevent and control the outbreak of COVID-19, MR suspended running of some passenger trains in line with the National Level Central Committee's guidance for COVID-19 preven-

tion, Control and Treatment. Despite the declining number of railway passengers, MR has been operating only six mail trains, four parcel trains and cargo trains and running circular trains with three coaches for 12 routes. — Myint Maung

(Translated by HM)



## Sesame market slightly slides as Chinese New Year Holiday approaches



Myanmar exports about 80 per cent of sesame production to foreign markets. China is the main buyer of Myanmar sesame. **PHOTO: KYAW SWAR HEIN**

THE sesame market is sluggish as Chinese New Year is approaching, and some buyers stop buying. Yet, the price is stable, traders from Mandalay market said.

The market of edible oil crop has been slow-moving from the previous week as the Chinese New Year festival is drawing nearer. It is normal that

the market faces slow-down during that time, said U Zaw Moe, general secretary of Monywa Commodity depot.

At present, the black sesame price dips to K50,000 from K55,000-56,000 per basket, the depot stated.

The prices of white and brown sesame varieties remain stable on the back of domestic

demand. At the same time, there is low demand by foreign market. The price of black sesame seeds (Samone variety) shows downtick.

On 4 February, the FOB prices of sesame stood at US\$2,000-2,100 per tonne of Samone sesame, \$1,250-1,300 per tonne of white sesame and \$1,150-1,200 per tonne of brown

sesame.

Last year, the sesame prices drop by over 20 per cent compared with the prices in the previous years due to the COVID-19 negative impacts. Consequently, the growers do not make large profit this year, a trader from Mandalay market stressed.

Normally, Myanmar exports about 80 per cent of sesame production to foreign markets. China is the main buyer of Myanmar sesame, which is also shipped to markets in Japan, South Korea, China (Taipei), UK, Germany, the Netherlands, Greece, and Poland among the EU countries.

The EU markets prefer organic-farming sesame seeds from Myanmar, said an official from the Trade Promotion Department.

Japan prefers Myanmar black sesame seeds, cultivated under good agricultural practices (GAP), and purchases them after a quality assessment. Black sesame seeds from Myanmar are also exported to South Korea and Japan. Meanwhile, China purchases various coloured sesame seeds from the

country. This year, Japan has not purchased Myanmar's sesame yet.

Sesame is cultivated in the country throughout the year. Magway Region, which has gained a reputation as the oil pot of Myanmar, is the main producer of sesame seeds. The seeds are also grown in Mandalay and Sagaing regions.

Of the cooking oil crops grown in Myanmar, the acreage under sesame is the highest, accounting for 51.3 per cent of the overall oil crop plantation.

The volume of sesame exports has registered at over 96,000 tonnes, worth \$130 million, in the financial year 2015-2016; \$100,000 tonnes, worth \$145 million, in the 2016-2017FY; 120,000 tonnes, worth \$147 million, in the 2017-2018FY; 33,900 tonnes valued \$43.8 million in the 2018 mini-budget period, 125,800 tonnes, worth \$212.5 million in the 2018-2019FY and over 150,000 tonnes of sesame, worth \$240 million in the previous 2019-2020FY, the trade data of Central Statistical Organization indicated.

— Ko Htet

(Translated by EMM)

## Myanmar daily sends 10,000 rice bags to China via Muse land border

By Nyein Nyein

ABOUT 10,000 rice bags are daily exported to China through Muse 105th mile trade zone under the remaining permit quota of 2020, said U Min Thein, vice-president of Muse Rice Wholesale Centre.

When Chinese New Year is approaching, Myanmar is sending about 3,000 rice bags and 7,000 broken rice bags to China per day via Muse border under the remaining permit quota of 2020.

“Public holiday for Chinese New Year will start on 11 February. At present, about 10,000 rice bags are delivered to China,” he added.

Muse trade was suspended on 1 February, but the business returned to normal on 2 February.

“There is nothing changes in border trade for now. Myanmar's Muse border was shut down on 1 February, and trad-

ers cannot go to Kyalgaung and Namhsan areas. Nevertheless, trade went back to normal on the morning of 2 February at 10:30 am,” he elaborated.

Chinese trade partners are waiting for China's rice import permit this year, U Min Thein highlighted.

Rice import permit expired on 31 December 2020. The rice trade has been suspended. Now, they are anticipated for permit grant for 2021.

The rice import permit for 2021 is likely to be granted in early March after the Chinese New Year. The quota of permits is expected to increase this year, traders shared their opinions.

Myanmar exported over 720,000 tonnes of rice and broken rice to foreign countries between 1 October and 15 January of the current 2020-2021 budget year, generating US\$275 million incomes, Myanmar Rice Federation stated.

(Translated by EMM)

## Muskmelon zone to be developed for agro-based tourism in Pauk Inn Gyi

THE plan is underway to develop muskmelon plantation as muskmelon zone and agro-based tourism industry in Pauk Inn Gyi region, which is symbolic as the sea of muskmelon in Chaung-U and Myaung townships in Sagaing region, said U Soe Lwin, the chairman of Region Watermelon and Muskmelon Growers and Exporters Association.

There are more than 10,000 acres of muskmelon plantation in Pauk Inn Gyi region. So, we are carrying out to implement an agro-based tourism industry and be recognized as a muskmelon zone.

There are 30 muskmelon shops on Mandalay-Pakokku Road. We have also planned to penetrate the international market later. The agriculture experts from Thailand, China, Japan and the United States also observed the muskmelon plantations.

Local visitors are allowed to shoot the photos at muskmelon plantations, pick the fruits by themselves, test the fruit taste,

and visit the muskmelon plantations by tractors instead of their vehicles. The place can also offer job opportunities for

50,000 residents on 10,000 acres of farmland, U Soe Lwin added.

— Hmway Kyu Zin

(Translated by HM)



There are more than 10,000 acres of muskmelon plantation in Pauk Inn Gyi region. **PHOTO: HMWAY KYU ZIN**



# Crop Breeding for Drought Resistance

**T**HE increased water shortage and frequent drought in agricultural ecosystems have caused tremendous problems worldwide, owing to the resulted yield losses for many crops.

It is therefore essential to breed water-saving and drought-resistant crops to ensure world food security.

Due to warmer temperatures in the summer, droughts and depleting water supply will likely become more common in Myanmar. The water crisis in rural areas every summer highlights the need for better urban planning and management.

In Myanmar, the drought has delivered a threat to crop production and the needs of those living in rural areas, where over 70 per cent of the country's population resides.

Now is the time for us to teach our farmers about drought tolerant farming techniques to ensure they produce more food and more profit with less water.

Drought is a major agricultural challenge affecting food production, farmers' livelihoods, and costs the government billions of dollars in relief efforts. Without water, no farmer can grow crops.

We need to encourage our farmers to take up different crops and different agricultural techniques, which need less water, and different methods of improving productivity.

But, in some areas, farmers must have the option of learning another trade or business to earn a livelihood.

The dry zone in Myanmar lies within the central portion of the country, home to nearly one-third of Myanmar's total population. According to media reports, temperatures there are projected to rise by up to three degrees Celsius (3° C) after 2040.

According to the Global Climate Risk Index 2020, Myanmar has had the highest weather-related losses in the past two decades, alongside Puerto Rico and Haiti.

According to the Myanmar Climate Change Alliance, which is a body that straddles the United Nations, the government and civil society, the total monsoon period has already decreased from 144 days per year in 1998 to 125 days.

Due to common interests in drought-resistance of different crops, any finding in a crop may provide informative references for another crop.

We welcome any study on drought-resistance in different crops and it would benefit each other.



## THE JOINT UN-LED COVAX INITIATIVE FOR FAIR ACCESS TO CORONAVIRUS-BEATING JOBS

# Key workers in 145 countries to receive COVID-19 vaccines under UN-backed initiative

**KEY** WORKERS and other vulnerable people in 145 countries should receive COVID-19 vaccines in the first half of this year, under the joint UN-led COVAX initiative for fair access to coronavirus-beating jobs, it's been confirmed.

The aim of Wednesday's announcement by the World Health Organization (WHO) and partners, is to help Governments to prepare their vaccine distribution programs, by providing details about which vaccine they can expect to receive, between now and the end of June.

UN Children's Fund UNICEF — which plays a key role in immunization campaigns worldwide — welcomed the development, describing COVAX as the largest vaccine procurement and supply operation ever mounted.



The aim of Wednesday's announcement by the World Health Organization (WHO) and partners, is to help Governments to prepare their vaccine distribution programs, by providing details about which vaccine they can expect to receive, between now and the end of June. COURTESY PHOTO/UN

### Get it right

"We must get this right", said Executive Director Henrietta Fore. "Our country offices will support governments as they move forward with this first wave to ensure that they are ready to

receive the vaccines that require ultra-cold chain (storage).

"This includes ensuring that health workers are fully trained in how to store and handle the vaccines...Many of these doses will go to health workers in urban

areas who are at the highest risk of exposure to COVID-19 infections."

Some 1.2 million doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine which requires ultra-cold chain storage, are to be delivered to 18 countries in the first quarter of the year, out of an agreed total of 40 million.

An additional 336 million doses of the AstraZeneca/Oxford jab are to be lined up for dispatch to nearly all countries that have signed up to the COVAX scheme, from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe — once it has been approved for use by the UN health agency. The total number of doses will cover, on average, 3.3 per cent of the population of the countries benefiting from the scheme.

This will make it possible for governments to protect their most vulnerable citizens — such as front-line health care workers,

the World Health Organization said, along with GAVI, the Vaccine Alliance and the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations.

### 'Ultra-cold' project

Ahead of Wednesday's announcement, UNICEF chief Fore noted that the agency had been getting ready by stockpiling half a billion syringes and working with airlines, governments and other partners to iron out potential supply hiccups.

"This work has already begun", she said. "For example, Bosnia and Herzegovina is one of the countries that will be an early recipient of the Pfizer vaccine, which requires ultra-cold chain storage. UNICEF is providing Bosnia and Herzegovina with eight refrigerators that will be able to store vaccines in tem-

peratures as low as -80 degrees Celsius. The first two refrigerators recently arrived...The rest will follow as soon as possible." In a related development on Wednesday, Fore also announced the signing of a deal securing 1.1 billion doses of COVID-19 vaccines for around 100 countries. The agreement with the Serum Institute of India is for the AstraZeneca/Oxford vaccine and the Novavax vaccine, both of which have yet to receive Emergency Use Listing by the WHO.

Low and middle income countries will pay approximately \$3 per dose, Fore said. "This is great value for COVAX donors and a strong demonstration of one of the fundamental principles of COVAX — that by pooling our resources we can negotiate in bulk for the best possible deals." SOURCE: UN News

## AIR TRAVEL AND CORONAVIRUS MEASURES

# Unprecedented 66% Drop In Air Passengers In 2020: Airlines

**G**LOBAL air passenger traffic plunged by an unprecedented 66 per cent in 2020 due to travel restrictions imposed over the Covid-19 pandemic, an industry group said Wednesday.

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) also warned that the emergence of new, more transmissible variants of the coronavirus were hurting the prospects for recovery this year.

Given that travel restriction applied mostly to international travel, domestic passenger traffic fared better, dropping by 49 per cent, compared to 76 per cent for foreign passenger traffic. The travel restrictions imposed during the first wave of the pandemic saw global passenger traffic fall to just five per cent of its normal level, with airlines forced to park planes on runways because not enough space was available.

While traffic picked up during the summer, in December it was down by 70 per cent, thus finishing out the year below average. IATA, which unites 190 airlines, did not formally lower its outlook for a pick up in traffic this year thanks

to a rollout of vaccines but warned the emergence of new coronavirus darkened the outlook.

"Last year was a catastrophe. There is no other way to describe it. What recovery there was over the Northern hemisphere summer season stalled in autumn and the situation turned dramatically worse over the year-end holiday season, as more severe travel restrictions were imposed in the face of new outbreaks and new strains of COVID-19," said Alexandre de Juniac, IATA's Director General and CEO.

Asia-Pacific airlines' full-year traffic plunged 80.3% in 2020 compared to 2019, which was the deepest decline for any region. It fell 94.7% in the month of December amid stricter lockdowns, little changed from a 95% decline in November. Full-year capacity was down 74.1% compared to 2019. Load factor fell 19.5 per centage points to 61.4%.

European carriers saw a 73.7% traffic decline in 2020 versus 2019. Capacity fell 66.3% and load factor decreased 18.8 per centage points to 66.8%. For the month of December, traffic slid 82.3% compared to December 2019, an



Middle Eastern airlines' annual passenger demand in 2020 was 72.9% below 2019. PHOTO: KARIM SAHIB/AFP/FILE

upturn over the 87% year-to-year decline in November reflecting pre-holiday momentum that was reversed toward the end of the month.

Middle Eastern airlines' annual passenger demand in 2020 was 72.9% below 2019. Annual capacity fell 63.9% and load factor plummeted 18.9 per centage points to 57.3%. December's traffic was down 82.6% compared to

December 2019, which improved from an 86.1% drop in November.

North American airlines' full-year traffic fell 75.4% compared to 2019. Capacity dropped 65.5%, and load factor sank 23.9 per centage points to 60.1%. December demand was down 79.6% compared to the same month a year ago, a pick-up over an 82.8% drop in November reflecting a holiday surge.

Latin American airlines had a 71.8% full-year traffic decline compared to 2019, making it the best performing region after Africa. Capacity fell 67.7% and load factor dropped 10.4 per centage points to 72.4%, by far the highest among regions. Traffic fell 76.2% for the month of December compared to December 2019, somewhat improved from a 78.7% decline in November.

African airlines' traffic fell 69.8% last year compared to 2019, which was the best performance among regions. Capacity dropped 61.5%, and load factor sank 15.4 per centage points to 55.9%, the lowest among regions. Demand for the month of December was 68.8% below the year-ago period, well ahead of a 75.8% decline in November. Carriers in the region have benefitted from somewhat less severe international travel restrictions compared to the rest of the world.

China's domestic passenger traffic fell 30.8% in 2020 compared to 2019. It was down 7.6% for the month of December versus December a year-ago period, which was a deterioration compared to a 6.3% decline in November amid new outbreaks and resulting restrictions.

Russia's domestic traffic fell 23.5% for the full year, but 12% for the month of December, much improved over a 23% decline in November. Full year results were supported by booming domestic tourism over the summer and falling fares.

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 nationals.
3. To work for the emergence of a constitution that is in alignment and harmony with the Democratic Federal Union.
4. All ethnic nationals to work for the preservation and protection of non-disintegration of the Union, non-disintegration of national unity, and perpetuation of national sovereignty.
5. To nurture and develop new generations endowed with high skills and capabilities imbued with strong Union spirit.

## Union Day slogans for 2021 (74<sup>th</sup> 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.



## Myanmar Daily Weather Report

(Issued at 7:00 pm Thursday 04th February, 2021)

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

**FORECAST VALID UNTIL NOON OF THE 5th February, 2021:** Weather will be partly cloudy in Upper Sagaing, Taninthayi Regions and Kachin, Mon States and generally fair in the remaining Regions and States.

**STATE OF THE SEA:** Seas will be moderate in Myanmar waters. Wave height will be about (4-8) feet off and along Myanmar Coasts.

**OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS:** Likelihood of isolated rain in Upper Sagaing Region and Kachin, Shan States.

**FORECAST FOR NAYPYITAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 5th February, 2021:** Fair weather.



NEARLY 2MN DOSES

## North Korea to receive Covid vaccine after making request



North Korea has requested Covid-19 vaccines and is expected to receive nearly two million doses. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

NORTH Korea has requested Covid-19 vaccines and is expected to receive nearly two million doses, according to the Gavi vaccine alliance, part of the WHO-backed Covax programme, although the isolated country has insisted it is virus-free.

It is the first official confirmation that the North has asked for international help, with the country's medical infrastructure is seen as woefully inadequate for dealing with any large-scale outbreak. The Covax scheme, co-led by the Gavi alliance, will distribute 1.99 million doses to the North, according to Covax's interim distribution report released this week.

All countries receiving interim allocations of vaccines "have submitted requests for vaccines", a Gavi spokesman told AFP on Thursday.

The allocations cited in the report "reflect latest estimates of supply and take into account country readiness and regulatory approvals," he added.

According to the report, the North is to receive the AstraZeneca-Oxford jab produced by the Serum Institute of India.

Pyongyang closed its borders in late January last year -- the first country in the world to do so -- in a bid to protect itself against the coronavirus.

**SOURCE: AFP**

MODERNA

## French firm to start making Moderna Covid vaccine next month

A French lab will start producing Moderna's Covid-19 vaccine in March, while another will begin making the vaccine from Pfizer and BioNTech in April, Industry Minister Agnes Pannier-Runacher said Wednesday. President Emmanuel Macron pledged Tuesday that four sites on French soil would begin making coronavirus vaccines soon, as the government draws sharp criticism over an inoculation drive that has started off slowly.

French pride has also taken a hit after its pharma giant Sanofi said its Covid vaccine would not be ready until later this year.

The health crisis has prompted governments to push for more widespread production of vaccines already available,

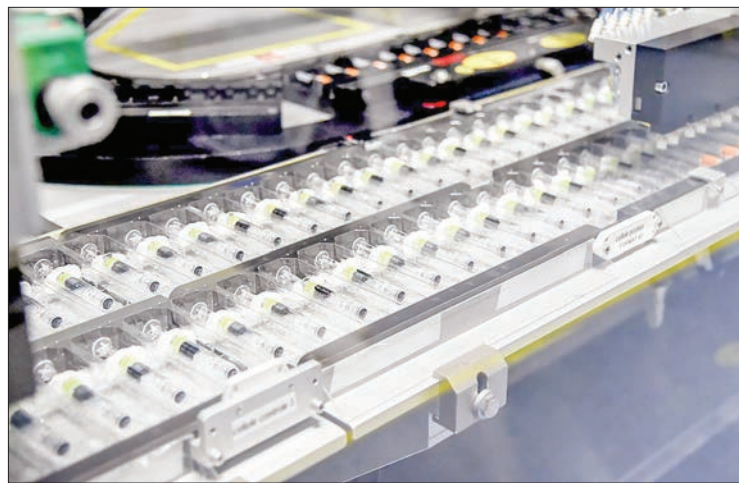
overriding the industry's fierce resistance to sharing intellectual property secrets.

"Production at the first site will begin in March for the Moderna vaccine," at a lab operated by Recipharm, Pannier-Runacher told RTL radio.

"We'll then have a production site running in April for the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine," she said.

"And in May, we should (also) be producing the CureVac vaccine, for which we are waiting for approval," she said, referring to the German biotech firm that could start French production at a lab owned by Fareva.

A French Sanofi lab will start making the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine in the second quarter, even as it pursues research on



A French lab will start producing Moderna's Covid-19 vaccine in March, while another will begin making the vaccine from Pfizer and BioNTech in April. **ILLUSTRATION PHOTO: AFP**

its own jab, as will the French firm Delpharm. Separately, Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian said Russia's Sputnik V vaccine

could be used in France as long as it meets "scientific norms" and European "standards."

**SOURCE: AFP**

10 BIGGEST SLUMS

## Brazil favelas launch bank amid economic hit of pandemic



Elizandra Cerqueira, founder of the Bistro Mains de Marie restaurant, has given out 1.3 million free meals to people who lost their income because of the pandemic. **PHOTO: AFP**

THE economic toll of the coronavirus pandemic has hit especially hard in Brazil's favelas, but the country's 10 biggest slums now have a plan to fight back: they are launching their own bank.

Dubbed the "G10 Bank," the new financial institution is set to open later this month, offering microloans to small business owners struggling to survive the pandemic and debit cards to slum-dwellers excluded from the traditional banking system.

Brazil has the second-highest death toll worldwide in the pandemic, after the United States, with more than 225,000

people killed.

The impact has been especially devastating in the favelas, the crowded jumbles of shacks that are the postcard of poverty in Brazil. Not only have the poor suffered more from Covid-19 in health terms, they have also borne the brunt of the economic impact. Many favela residents work in the informal sector -- jobs such as childcare and housekeeping that disappeared when stay-at-home measures took effect, sending the unemployment rate to a record 14.6 per cent last September.

**SOURCE: AFP**

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Confidence in Covid vaccines on the up

A new report on attitudes around the world towards vaccines suggests people's willingness to be vaccinated is rising.

The report from Imperial College London's Institute of Global Health Innovation finds that 54% of those surveyed would take a vaccine if it was offered to them next week.

This represents an increase from when the same survey was run in November. At the time, just 41% of respondents were willing to be vaccinated.

The survey ran across 15 countries and both rounds featured 13,500 participants.

People in the UK were the most willing to take a Covid jab (78%), while French respondents were the most reluctant of those surveyed (44%).

**SOURCE: AFP**

### Health workers to begin receiving Chinese-made vaccine

Pakistan will begin administering a Chinese-made Covid-19 vaccine to frontline health workers Wednesday, but the country is still months away from a mass roll-out.

Beijing has donated about 500,000 doses of the Sinopharm vaccine -- which has yet to be fully approved by China's health authorities -- with a further million expected by the end of the month. The country of 220 million has recorded more than half a million coronavirus cases, with around 11,000 deaths, but limited testing suggests true figures are likely much higher.

Lawmaker Nausheen Hamid, who leads parliament's health committee, said a first phase of vaccinations would prioritise health workers.

"I can't say with certainty, but we would still need around two months to start a mass vaccination campaign," she added.

The Sindh province health authority said around 100 health workers nationwide had died since the virus reached the world's fifth most populous country last spring.

**SOURCE: AFP**



TOUGHER QUARANTINE RULES

## Scotland to introduce 'managed quarantine' for all arrivals

SCOTLAND will require all arrivals from outside the UK to undergo "managed quarantine", First Minister Nicola Sturgeon said Tuesday, as she criticized the British government's more limited self-isolation travel rules.

Sturgeon told the Scottish parliament the new policy, which is yet to be set out in detail, will begin as soon as possible and is necessary to prevent coronavirus strains from being imported.

The UK government in London announced last week that only travellers coming from 30 countries deemed at "high risk" from Covid-19 variants will have to quarantine in hotels, under ramped-up regulations yet to take effect.

Arrivals from other nations will still be able to enter if they have tested negative for the virus within 72 hours and must still self-isolate at home for specified periods.

"Managed quarantine must be much more comprehensive," Sturgeon said on Tuesday.

"We intend to introduce a managed quarantine requirement for anyone who arrives directly into Scotland, regardless of which country they have come from." However, it was unclear how the new policy would work on a practical level if people arrive into other parts of the UK and travel on to Scotland.

Sturgeon acknowledged Edinburgh, which has responsibility for various domestic policy

areas but not immigration and border enforcement, could not unilaterally implement quarantine on people who arrive into other parts of Britain.

She said her devolved administration would continue to urge UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson's government to adopt a similar approach, and if it did not "to work with us to reduce the risk among people travelling to Scotland".

Britain, which has been the worst hit country in Europe by the pandemic registering more than 106,500 deaths and nearly 4 million cases, has been under strict lockdown measures for weeks.

After record infection levels and daily fatalities earlier this



Scotland will require all arrivals from outside the UK to undergo "managed quarantine", First Minister Nicola Sturgeon said.

PHOTO: AFP/FILE

month, the situation has slowly improved and leaders across the four UK nations -- England, Scotland, Wales and Northern

Ireland -- are mulling loosening restrictions in the coming weeks.

SOURCE: AFP

INTRODUCING THE VACCINE IN 2022

## GSK, CureVac to develop vaccine against Covid variants



The firms aim to have a new vaccine available next year that will offer protection against various variants of Covid-19. PHOTO: STR, THOMAS KIENZLE AFP/FILE

BRITISH pharmaceutical group GlaxoSmithKline and German biotech firm CureVac on Wednesday announced plans to jointly develop a coronavirus vaccine with the potential to counter multi-variants of Covid-19.

"The development programme will begin immediately,

with the target of introducing the vaccine in 2022, subject to regulatory approval," a joint statement said.

GSK will also support the manufacture this year of up to 100 million doses of CureVac's first generation Covid-19 vaccine, it added.

The collaboration, building on an existing relationship, is to develop next generation Covid-19 vaccines "with the potential for a multi-valent approach to address multiple emerging variants in one vaccine".

The pair noted that "the increase in emerging variants with the potential to reduce the efficacy of first generation Covid-19 vaccines requires acceleration of efforts to develop vaccines against new variants to keep one step ahead of the pandemic".

GSK chief executive Emma Walmsley said "next generation vaccines will be crucial in the continued fight against Covid-19".

The value of the new collaboration was put at 150 million euros (\$181 million).

SOURCE: AFP

SAUDI ARABIA

## Entry from 20 countries barred as Covid-19 surges

SAUDI Arabia on Tuesday suspended entry from 20 countries, ranging from some neighbouring states to the United States, in a bid to curb a jump in coronavirus infections.

The interior ministry announced the "temporary suspension" would be effective from 9:00 pm (1800 GMT) on Wednesday,

according to the official Saudi Press Agency. The ban applies to neighbouring Egypt and the United Arab Emirates, and in the wider region, to Lebanon and Turkey.

In Europe, the ban includes Britain, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Portugal, Sweden and Switzerland. Elsewhere, as well

as the US, it applies to Argentina, Brazil, Pakistan, India, Indonesia, Japan, Pakistan and South Africa.

Saudi citizens, as well as diplomats and health workers coming from those countries, will be allowed to enter the kingdom "in accordance with the precautionary measures", it added.

SOURCE: AFP

PORTUGAL

## Full force of third virus wave breaks over Portugal

PORTUGAL, currently feeling the full force of its third wave of the coronavirus pandemic, has appealed for international help to relieve overwhelmed hospital staff.

Prime Minister Antonio Costa has acknowledged that the nation's hospitals are under "gigantic pressure".

The government acted after the country's 24-hour death toll passed the 300-mark and television stations broadcast pictures of ambulances queuing up outside Lisbon's largest hospital.

The socialist administration confirmed late on Monday it had accepted an offer of help from Germany, after an announcement from Berlin that they were sending medics, 150 field hospital beds and respiratory machines.

Portugal is "in a particularly

dramatic situation," said German Defence Minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer. "In such times, solidarity in Europe is indispensable."

Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz said over the weekend that they were willing to take patients into their intensive care units, and the western Spanish region of ExtraMadura, which borders Portugal, offered its help Tuesday.

And the EU's crisis commissioner Janez Lenarcic said in a tweet that they were "closely following the critical situation" in Portugal and stood ready to help if requested. Leaving aside low-populated microstates, Portugal is the country that has been hardest hit by the coronavirus over the past two weeks in terms of the death rate.

SOURCE: AFP



The third wave has hit Portugal the hardest. PHOTO: PATRICIA DE MELO MOREIRA/AFP



## FULL-YEAR OPERATING INCOME RISES

## Nokia boosts profitability but warns of tough 2021

FINNISH telecoms equipment and 5G player Nokia announced on Thursday a fall in net income for 2020 despite a strong fourth quarter, and warned of “meaningful headwinds” this year.

“We saw healthy gross margin and operating margin performance for both (the fourth quarter) and full year 2020,” thanks to a renewed focus on North America and ongoing research and development (R&D) efforts, chief executive Pekka Lundmark said in a statement.

Full-year operating income rose by 5.5 per cent to €2.1 billion, and Nokia’s gross margin



Finnish telecoms equipment and 5G player Nokia announced on Thursday a fall in net income for 2020 despite a strong fourth quarter, and warned of “meaningful headwinds” this year. PHOTO: AFP

increased by 2.5 percentage points to 39 per cent as the firm fought for its share of the tough 5G market.

Shorthand for fifth-generation mobile technology, 5G is expected to pave the way for rapid-fire video downloads and innovations such as fast-thinking self-driving cars.

But despite fourth-quarter growth of 11 per cent in North America, Lundmark said that predicted market share loss there in 5G and 4G, along with price erosion meant the firm’s 2021 outlook remained unchanged, with a seven to 10 per cent operating margin target.

Increased R&D spending will also weigh on the firm’s profitability as Lundmark, who

took over in August, reiterated his pledge to “invest whatever it takes to win in 5G”.

“If everything goes well, 2023 could be the year when Nokia resumes what we call profitable growth,” said Mikael Rautanen, analyst at Inderes. “Like the company has said, it’s a three-year project,” he said.

Nokia said it has signed a total of 145 5G deals and deployed 45 live networks, although sales declined by six per cent for the year “primarily due to network deployment and planning services in Mobile Access”.

SOURCE: AFP



Roche CEO Severin Schwan. PHOTO: FABRICE COFFRINI / AFP

## ANNUAL NET PROFIT RISES 7%

## Roche posts higher profits as COVID tests surge

Swiss pharmaceutical giant Roche, which has been at the forefront of producing coronavirus tests and research into treatments, on Thursday reported higher profits for 2020.

Annual net profit rose seven per cent to 15 billion Swiss francs (€13.9bn), despite the negative effects of exchange rates and a drop in over-the-counter sales, it said in a statement.

Sales were down five per cent overall from the previous year, at 58.3 billion Swiss francs. Analysts surveyed by Swiss agency AWP had forecast sales of 59.7 billion Swiss francs.

Revenues from its diagnostics division jumped

14 per cent, largely due to sales of its COVID-19 tests, which offset a downturn in other tests such as those for diabetes.

“Roche continues to make important contributions to fighting the COVID-19 pandemic,” CEO Severin Schwan said in the statement. “We developed in record time a comprehensive portfolio of diagnostic solutions and entered new partnerships to develop and produce effective COVID-19 medicines.”

For the current year, Roche predicted sales would grow “in the low- to mid-single digit range” at constant exchange rates.

SOURCE: AFP

## NEWS IN BRIEF

## A GLOBAL SHORTAGE

## Mazda expects chip shortage to cut Feb. global output by 7,000 units

MAZDA Motor Corp. said Thursday its global production will be cut by 7,000 vehicles in February from its initial plan, as it will not be able to procure enough chips for key safety and environmental technology amid a global shortage.

The automaker will review its production plan for the fiscal year through March 2021 to factor in the impact of the chip supply crunch, Mazda chief executive Akira Marumoto said at a press conference on its latest earnings report. The February output shortfall is equivalent to 0.7 per cent of its worldwide shipment plan for the current fiscal year. A Mazda spokesman said the company was not sure if the supply shortage would affect production beyond February. SOURCE: Kyodo

## 112 BILLION EUROS

## E-commerce in France grows by 8.5 pct in 2020, says sector federation

THE e-commerce sector in France went up 8.5 per cent year-on-year and reached 112 billion euros (about 134 billion U.S. dollars) in 2020, the Federation of e-commerce and distance selling (Fevad) said on Thursday. While e-commerce only represented 9.8 per cent of retail trade in 2019, it now represents 13.4 per cent, Fevad said in a press release. The federation brings together more than 600 companies and 800 websites in France. “This growth is driven by the increase in sales of products on the internet estimated at 32 per cent up while services are down 10 per cent, under the effect of the sharp drop in travel and leisure activities during the (pandemic) crisis,” said the federation. SOURCE:

## 'UGLY NUMBERS' REFLECT OVER-SUPPLY

## Oil giant Shell follows rivals into huge annual loss



Royal Dutch Shell on Thursday became the latest oil major to reveal huge annual losses as the coronavirus pandemic slashed energy demand and prices in 2020. PHOTO: JUSTIN SULLIVAN/AFP/FILE

ROYAL Dutch Shell on Thursday became the latest oil major to reveal huge annual losses as the coronavirus pandemic slashed energy demand and prices in 2020.

Shell dived into a net loss of \$21.7 billion (€18.1bn) last year as factories shut and planes were grounded. The Anglo-Dutch group’s loss compared with a net profit of \$15.8 billion in 2019, the company said in a statement.

“2020 was an extraordinary year,” said chief executive Ben van Beurden. “We have taken tough but decisive actions,” he said, with Shell having already announced plans to axe up to 9,000 jobs, or more than 10 per cent of its global workforce.

## 'Ugly numbers'

Shell’s results and large job cuts mirrors the situation elsewhere in the energy sector. British rival BP, which is cutting

around 10,000 roles, reported on Tuesday a 2020 net loss of \$20.3 billion. US giant Exxon Mobil suffered a 2020 loss of \$22.4 billion, while for Chevron it was \$5.5 billion. “Recent results from other oil majors paved the way for an uncomfortable read and Shell’s results indeed contain some ugly numbers,” noted Richard Hunter, head of markets at Interactive Investor.

“The pandemic has clearly had a severe impact on performance and the oil price in particular. The dual effect of over-supply and crippled demand as aircraft stood idle, travel reduced to a trickle and manufacturing all but ceased during lockdown, has shown itself in these numbers,” Hunter added. After lockdowns began to spread towards the end of last year’s first quarter, oil prices dropped off a cliff, even briefly turning negative. Prices then rebounded sharply however – and by Thursday the benchmark Brent North Sea oil contract was closing in on \$60 per barrel.

SOURCE: AFP



FULLY ELECTRIC CARS SALES UP 117%

# Electric vehicle sales surge in EU amid COVID slump

DEMAND for electric vehicles soared in the EU last year as buyers took advantage of government subsidies for clean cars aimed at helping manufacturers weather the unprecedented hit from the COVID-19 pandemic, the European Automobile Manufacturers Association (ACEA) said on Thursday.

Some 538,772 fully electric cars were sold across the bloc, up 117 per cent from 2019, while sales of plug-in hybrids more than tripled, to 507,059 from 139,954.

Overall, sales of alternatively-powered cars – including fuels like ethanol or natural gas – made up one-fourth (24.5 per cent) of the market last year, a figure that climbed to 34 per cent for the fourth quarter alone.

“There was a volume effect and prices

fell,” said Eric Esperance, an analyst at the Roland Berger consulting firm. “Once you’ve shifted manufacturing lines to electric, your goal is to sell as many vehicles as possible.” “Starting in 2023, prices are going to come into line with petrol models and subsidies will no longer be necessary,” he added.

Renault’s Zoe hatchback took poll position thanks to strong sales in France and Germany in particular, with nearly 100,000 sold last year on 23 key European markets, according to industry analysis group Jato Dynamics. Tesla’s Model 3 came in second with some 86,000 sold while Volkswagen’s ID3 took third place with nearly 56,000, despite launching only last autumn.

SOURCE: AFP



The Volkswagen ID.3 electric car. PHOTO: JENS SCHLUETER / AFP

FACE-TO-FACE FOCUS

# Davos 2021 summit in Singapore postponed until August

THE World Economic Forum said Wednesday that its annual meeting, which has already been postponed and moved from Switzerland to Singapore, will be pushed back again due to pandemic-related challenges.

The annual gathering of the world’s political, economic and business elite is traditionally held each January in the Alpine village of Davos.

While a virtual meeting of world leaders was held last month, the physical meeting had already been moved due to the Covid-19 crisis and rescheduled to take place in Singapore in May.

But on Wednesday, organisers said it would now be postponed again until August 17-20.

They stressed in a statement that they remained “confident of the measures in place to ensure a safe and effective meeting,” adding that “local transmission of Covid-19 in Singapore remains at negligible levels.”



The annual gathering of the world’s political, economic and business elite is traditionally held each January in the Alpine village of Davos. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

But, they said, “the change to the meeting’s timing reflects the international challenges in containing the pandemic.”

“Current global travel restrictions have made planning difficult for an in-person meeting in the first half of the year,” the WEF said.

“Furthermore, differing quarantine and air transport regulations have increased the lead time necessary to ensure that participants globally can make arrangements to join.”

WEF stressed the importance of its 2021 meeting, pointing out that it

would “be the first global leadership summit to address the challenges of recovering from the pandemic and laying the basis for a more inclusive and sustainable world.”

“It will bring leaders face-to-face to focus on shaping solutions to the most pressing challenges of our times.”

Klaus Schwab, the WEF founder and executive chairman, said the meeting would “provide the place for leaders from business, government and civil society to come together to address the steps for global recovery.”

SOURCE: AFP

“UNEXPLAINED WEALTH ORDER”

# Scottish parliament votes against probing Trump finances

SCOTTISH lawmakers on Wednesday opted not to demand an investigation into former US president Donald Trump’s finances, amid concerns about how he funded the acquisition two golf courses in the country. Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs) voted down a motion calling for the probe into the Trump Organization’s two Scottish golf courses using an “unexplained wealth order”.

The legal instrument requires individuals to explain the source of wealth used to acquire property and other assets in the UK.

Members of the Scottish Green Party who initiated the vote have said there are questions to be answered about how the Trump Organization’s holdings in Scotland were

acquired. “There are serious concerns about how he financed the cash purchases of his Scottish golf courses,” Scottish Greens co-leader Patrick Harvie told The Scotsman newspaper ahead of the vote.

“The government must seek an unexplained wealth order to shine a light on Trump’s shadowy dealings,” he added.

The prospect of the vote sparked a spat between Harvie and Trump’s son Eric, a trustee and executive vice-president of the Trump Organization.

“At a critical time when politicians should be focused on saving lives and reopening businesses in Scotland, they are focused on advancing their personal agendas,” Eric Trump said this week.

SOURCE: AFP

## CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V OSLO TRADER VOY. NO. (050S)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V OSLO TRADER VOY. NO. (050S)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **5-2-2021** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **MITT/TMT** 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 SEALAND MAERSK ASIA PTE LTD**

## CHANGING DISTRIBUTOR OF REGISTERED PESTICIDE

This is a notification of the change of distributor of below pesticides, registered by **Bayer AG**, under the Myanma Pesticide Registration Board, from **JJ-PUN Trading Co., Ltd.** to **Zagro Myanmar Ltd.** Any objection to this change can notify to Joint Secretary, Pesticide Registration Board, Plant Protection Division, West Gyogone, Insein, within 14 days.

Trade Name	Active Ingredient	Reg.Type	Reg. No.
Flint 50 WG	Trifloxystrobin 500g/kg	Full	F2017-1270
Decis 2.5 EC	Deltamethrin 25g/L EC	Full	FF2013-032

Bayer Thai Co., Ltd. (Myanmar Branch)- PH : 01-8382710 (Ext. 40600)

Ministry of Agriculture Livestock and Irrigation  
Department of Rural Development  
Regional Development for Poverty Reduction Phase II  
(Water Supply Sector)  
(Amendment of Deadline for Submission of the Tender)  
Project for JICA ODA Loan (Agreement MY-P17)

- DRD advertisement for Water Supply Project of Thanbyuzayat town, Mon State, was announced in the Myanma Alinn and The Mirror newspapers on 20 January 2021. It was also announced in the Global New Light of Myanmar on 21 January 2021. The Previous deadline for the submission of Tender was on 26 February 2021. We would like to extend the last date of submission as 4 March 2021 (4-3-2021) at 10:00 am local time instead of previous date as 26 February 2021.
- Any further information needs for the Thanbyuzayat Water Supply Tendering Process, Bidders can communicate to DRD Office No.36, Panita Street, Naypyitaw, Tel. number 067-418633, 067- 418655. Email address: drdvsp.oda@gmail.com and pl.hq@drdmyanmar.net during the office hour.

Tender accepting and Evaluation Committee  
Department of Rural Development  
Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation

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NEWS  
IN BRIEF

## PUBLIC SAFETY

## Canada Designates Far-Right Proud Boys As Banned Terrorist Group

CANADA on Wednesday described the far right Proud Boys as a “serious and growing threat” and designated the movement as a banned terrorist organization. Founded in 2016 and present in Canada, the United States and other countries, the Proud Boys played a “pivotal role” in the insurrection at the deadly US Capitol on January 6, the public safety ministry said in a statement. **SOURCE: AFP**

## POLICY UNCHANGED

## U.S. supports one-China policy: state department

THE U.S. Department of State said on Wednesday that it supports the one-China policy. “Our policy has not changed. It has not changed,” State Department spokesman Ned Price said during a press briefing when asked if the Biden administration supports the one-China policy. **SOURCE: Xinhua**

## 'CLEAR MESSAGES'

## Outcry over Navalny crackdown as top EU envoy heads to Moscow

THE outcry grew in Russia over the crackdown on peaceful protesters Thursday as EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell was set to visit the country under pressure to confront Moscow over the imprisonment of opposition figure Alexei Navalny. **SOURCE: AFP**

## "CLOSED SKIES"

## Covid travel ban hits Netanyahu trip to Bahrain and UAE

ISRAELI Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Thursday postponed a planned visit to the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, citing travel restrictions imposed in the battle against coronavirus.

“Despite the importance of the trip to Abu Dhabi and Bahrain, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has decided to postpone the visit at this stage due to the closing of the skies,” an English language statement from the premier’s office said. It did not mention a new date.

A Netanyahu spokesman had written Wednesday on Twitter

that the premier would visit the UAE and “perhaps Bahrain” next week. The two states normalised relations with Israel in a US-backed accord last year.

The planned trip would have been Netanyahu’s first official visit to the Gulf countries since the September signing.

As part of a national coronavirus lockdown, Israel last month banned international flights and closed its land borders.

The closure is due to expire on February 7, but members of Netanyahu’s government were to meet on Thursday to debate a possible extension of “closed



Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had expressed his intention to travel to Abu Dhabi and Manama ahead of the March 23 Israeli elections. **PHOTO: AFP**

skies” and other lockdown measures.

Netanyahu has said the travel ban is a necessary weapon in the “arms race” against coronavirus variants.

Israel has registered over 670,000 coronavirus cases, including close to 5,000 deaths.

It has given at least one of

the two required doses of Pfizer-made vaccine to more than three million people, with about two million getting the second shot -- a pace widely described as the world’s fastest per capita.

Israel hopes to vaccinate its entire over-16 population by the end of March.

**SOURCE: AFP**

## LIMITING STOCKPILES OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS

## US extends New START nuclear treaty with Russia as rifts rise



The Russian army RS-24 Yars ballistic missile system moves through Red Square during a June 2020 military parade marking the 75th anniversary of the Soviet victory over Nazi Germany. **PHOTO: AFP**

US President Joe Biden’s administration Wednesday extended the New START nuclear treaty with Russia by five years, saying

it hoped to prevent an arms race despite rising tensions with Moscow including over its imprisonment of opposition leader Alexei

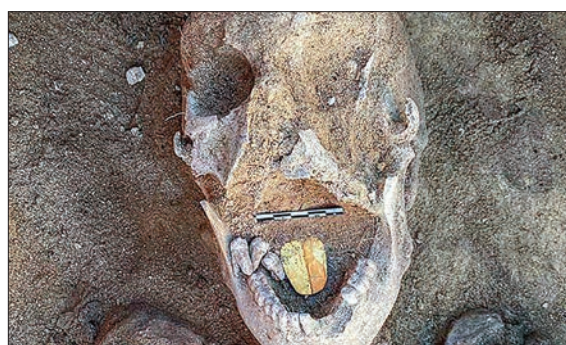
Navalny. One day before the treaty was set to expire, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said the United States was extending

New START by the maximum allowed time of five years.

“President Biden pledged to keep the American people safe from nuclear threats by restoring US leadership on arms control and nonproliferation,” Blinken said in a statement.

“The United States is committed to effective arms control that enhances stability, transparency and predictability while reducing the risks of costly, dangerous arms races.”

Russian President Vladimir Putin signed off on legislation extending the accord on Friday, meaning that the treaty — signed by then-president Barack Obama in 2010 — will run until February 5, 2026. The last remaining arms reduction pact between the former Cold War rivals, New START caps to 1,550 the number of nuclear warheads that can be deployed by Moscow and Washington. **SOURCE: AFP**



A handout picture released by the Egyptian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities on January 29, 2021 shows a 2,000-year-old mummy with a gold foil amulet inside his mouth uncovered at the Taposiris Magna Temple in western Alexandria. **PHOTO: AFP**

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL MISSION

## Egyptian mummies with golden tongues discovered near Alexandria

MUMMIES from around 2,000 years ago with golden amulets in their tongues were discovered in Alexandria, Egypt recently. The information was revealed by authorities on Wednesday and was undertaken by an Egyptian-Dominican archaeological mission working near Alexandria.

“The mission discovered 16

tombs cut into the rock... in the temple of Taposiris Magna, west of Alexandria”, the authorities announced in a statement.

The statement added that such burial techniques were common during the Greek and Roman periods.

Researchers found tombs that contained several mummies in “poor-

ly preserved” condition. The astonishing detail about this discovery is the gold amulets in the shape of tongues found in the mouths of these mummies.

The ministry claims that the gold amulets were placed in the mouths of the dead to allow them to speak in the afterlife. **SOURCE: AFP**



KNOWN FOR PUBLIC GAFFES

## Tokyo Olympics boss refuses to resign over sexist remarks

JAPAN'S gaffe-prone Tokyo Olympics chief apologized on Thursday for making sexist remarks that prompted outrage, but refused to resign and dug a deeper hole when he admitted he didn't "speak to women much".

Yoshiro Mori's comments, in which he said women speak too much in meetings, are the latest headache for organizers already battling public disquiet about the pandemic-postponed Games.

The 83-year-old former prime minister triggered further criticism when he admitted "I don't speak to women much" in a hastily organized press confer-



A former Japanese prime minister, the 83-year-old Yoshiro Mori has a history of making public gaffes. PHOTO: POOL/AFP/FILE

ence called to make his apology. And while Mori said his initial remarks were "inappropriate" he became defensive when

questioned, insisting he had heard complaints that women speak at length.

"Board of directors meetings with many women take a lot of time," Mori said Wednesday, according to the Asahi Shimbun daily.

"When you increase the number of female executive members, if their speaking time isn't restricted to a certain extent, they have difficulty finishing, which is annoying," he was quoted as saying. Mori, who is known for his gaffes, did not dispute the report and told reporters he wanted to "retract" his comments. SOURCE: AFP

BLAZING AT THE PERTH HILLS

## Firefighters hold off bushfire near Australia's Perth

A mammoth effort by Australian firefighters saved homes from an out-of-control bush fire near Perth overnight, the authorities said on Thursday (Feb 4), but warned that strong winds and rough terrain posed an ongoing challenge. At least 81 homes have been destroyed in the blaze at the Perth Hills, on the eastern fringes of Australia's fourth-biggest city, with surveys of areas burned earlier this week adding another 10 to the tally on Thursday. Western Australia State Premier Mark McGowan said the devastation caused was "almost too much to comprehend".

But after "a bleak couple of days", he said, firefighters managed to keep the flames at bay overnight as the blaze threatened homes in more populous areas. "This is a truly remarkable achievement given the ferocity of the fire. And that, as far as we



Firefighters managed to keep the flames at bay overnight as the blaze threatened homes in more populous areas. PHOTO: AFP

know, no additional homes have been lost overnight thanks to the incredible work of our fireys," Mr

McGowan said. Seven firefighters have suffered minor injuries but no deaths have been reported in

the bush fire, which has scorched 10,000ha since it was sparked on Monday. SOURCE: AFP

JOE DIMEO SUSTAINED THIRD-DEGREE BURNS

## 22-year-old gets world's first double hand, face transplant



Joe DiMeo (L: before accident) sustained third-degree burns on over 80 per cent of his body when he fell asleep while driving home from a night shift in July 2018, causing his car to flip over and then explode. PHOTO: AFP

A 22-year-old man from New Jersey who suffered horrific injuries in a car accident has become the

world's first person to undergo a successful face and double hand transplant, his medical team an-

nounced Wednesday.

Joe DiMeo sustained third-degree burns on over 80 per cent of his body when he fell asleep while driving home from a night shift in July 2018, causing his car to flip over and then explode.

Though he was pulled to safety by a passerby, his injuries included amputated fingertips, severe facial scarring, and the loss of his lips and eyelids -- affecting his vision and ability to lead a normal, independent life.

He remained in a hospital burn unit for four months, where he received numerous grafts and

life-saving blood transfusions, and was placed in a medically induced coma for nearly two and a half months.

But DiMeo said he now had a "second chance at life" and offered a message of hope.

"There's always light at the end of the tunnel, never give up," DiMeo said at a press conference organized by NYU Langone Health, which carried out the pioneering procedure that made use of 3D printed cutting-guides.

The surgery was carried out on August 12 of 2020 and lasted approximately 23 hours.

SOURCE: AFP

### NEWS IN BRIEF

INCREASED AID

#### UN still hoping for humanitarian access to Tigray

EVERY member of the UN Security Council called for increased aid during a closed-door meeting Wednesday to discuss the humanitarian situation in the Tigray region of Ethiopia, according to diplomats.

The meeting had been requested by Ireland, Estonia, France, Norway, Britain and the United States.

"Everyone said there should be more humanitarian access," one diplomat said under condition of anonymity, though no official statement was released after the discussions.

There was never meant to be a declaration passed, according to the same diplomat, though another said the idea was abandoned because African members of the council had said they would refuse to vote for one, deeming it unproductive.

SOURCE: AFP

AMAZONIA 1

#### Brazil to launch its first domestically designed observation satellite

BRAZIL is finalizing the details to launch the first Earth observation satellite designed, integrated, tested and operated by the country, said the National Institute of Space Research (INPE) on Wednesday.

The institute, which is responsible for the project, said in a statement that the satellite, named Amazonia 1, will be launched on Feb. 28 from the launch base in Sriharikota, India, and will be the third Brazilian remote sensing satellite in operation.

The previous two, CBERS-4 and CBERS-4A, were developed by Brazil in partnership with China.

Amazonia 1 is a sun-synchronous orbit satellite that will generate images of the Earth every five days, and is capable of observing a range of about 850 km with a resolution of 64 metres.

SOURCE: Xinhua



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



PHOTO: ONE CHAMPIONSHIP

### Lynn Thit (Tgi)

THE third event of the ONE Championship in 2021 named "Unbreakable III" featuring bouts of world-class fighters: will be held at Singapore Indoor Stadium in Singapore on 5 February (tonight). There will be a total of

six fights: five men's bouts plus one main bout of women fighters.

Events will start from 8:30 pm of Singapore Standard Time, according to the ONE Championship.

In the main card of the event, or Women's Atomweight Fight

Stamp Fairtex of Thailand will fight against Alyona Rassohyna of Ukraine.

In the Men's Bantamweight Fight, Shoko Sato of Japan will take on Fabricio Andrade of Brazil.

In the Men's Strawweight Fight, Ryuto Sawada of Japan will face Robin Catalan of the Philippines.

In the Men's Heavyweight Fight, Mehdi Barghi of Iran will fight with Kang Ji Won of South Korea. In the Men's Lightweight Fight, Rahul Raju of India will meet Ahmed Mujtaba of Pakistan. In the Men's Bantamweight bout, Myanmar's Tial Thang will fight against Paul Lumihi of Indonesia.

The ONE Championship: Unbreakable Event III 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.

## Inter seek Fiorentina lift, Juve and Roma battle for third spot



Inter Milan forwards Romelu Lukaku (L) and Lautaro Martinez (R) have scored more goals between them than Fiorentina this season. PHOTO: AFP

MILAN—Antonio Conte's Inter Milan head for Fiorentina on Friday hoping to bounce back from their Italian Cup setback against Juventus and keep pace with title rivals AC Milan.

Inter, two points behind leaders Milan, can provisionally pull ahead of their city rivals who host lowly Crotone on Sunday.

Behind the Milan teams

champions Juventus and Roma go head-to-head for third place.

Inter are reeling after a Cristiano Ronaldo double gave Juve a 2-1 Italian Cup semi-final, first leg win at the San Siro on Tuesday, with the return trip next week.

Inter need a win against 11th-placed Fiorentina to keep their push for a first league title since 2010 on track before a tough

game against in-form Lazio and then a huge Milan derby.

Fiorentina have 22 points from 20 games, their lowest tally since they were relegated in 2002.

However the Tuscans are unbeaten in their last six league meetings at home against Inter who last won at the Stadio Artemio Franchi in February 2014.—AFP ■

## Winning at Chelsea is easy, Mourinho tells Tuchel



Winning at Chelsea is easy, Mourinho tells Tuchel. PHOTO: AFP

LONDON—Tottenham boss Jose Mourinho has piled pressure on new Chelsea manager Thomas Tuchel by insisting it is easy to win trophies at Stamford Bridge.

Mourinho won three Premier League titles and enjoyed FA Cup and League Cup success in two spells in charge at Chelsea.

Although the Portuguese coach was sacked twice by demanding Chelsea owner Roman Abramovich, Mourinho is adamant the financial backing available to Blues bosses means silverware should not be hard to come by.

That might not be welcome advice for former Paris Saint-Germain manager Tuchel, who will go head to head with Mourinho when

Chelsea visit Tottenham on Thursday.

The German will be taking charge of his third Chelsea match since replacing the sacked Frank Lampard last week.

"I don't think it's very difficult to coach at Chelsea because I was champion three times, (Carlo) Ancelotti was champion, Antonio Conte was champion," Mourinho told reporters on Wednesday.

"It cannot be very, very difficult because we win titles there.

"I believe Chelsea always has great players and great squads and good coaches are happy to work with these clubs and with players that give you a very good opportunity to be successful and to win titles.—AFP ■

## Australian Open boss 'confident' event will go ahead despite COVID-19 case

MELBOURNE—Australian Open chief Craig Tiley said he was "absolutely confident" the tournament will start next week despite a fresh coronavirus case that halted warm-up tournaments and forced hundreds of players and officials into isolation on Thursday.

The case, a worker at one of the Melbourne tournament's designated quarantine hotels, has caused yet more chaos before the year's first tennis Grand Slam, which has already been delayed three weeks over coronavirus problems. But Tiley said the Open

would start as scheduled on Monday, and that there were no plans to cancel. Play was suspended at six warm-up tournaments in Melbourne on Thursday.

"We're absolutely confident the Australian Open will go ahead," Tiley told reporters. "The plan is to continue to play tomorrow as planned. If we have to go through this again, we'll go through this again.

"We have three and a half weeks of tennis to play and we'll go in as scheduled."—AFP ■