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THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

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Pyidaungsu Hluttaw resumes with convening 15th regular session, discusses ODA loan from Poland

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw holds the first day meeting of its 15th regular session at the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Hall in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

PYIDAUNGSU Hluttaw began the 15th regular session yesterday, with an extended greeting by its Speaker U T Khun Myat.

In his opening remark, U T Khun Myat said the MPs to have better views and opinions for the future Union through mutual respects and understanding in friendly discussions as the term of second Hluttaws is about to reach four-year anniversary in coming days, expecting cooperation in respective duties in line with relevant laws and bylaws.

He also called for submitting proposals of development programme for the remaining areas, out of the approved 324 townships, as 113 areas have presented it.

The Speaker advised cooperation of MPs in fulfilling requirements for the country and people by overcoming possible challenges and accomplishment of building a democratic federal union and lasting peace.

The Speaker also informed the Hluttaw about receiving the bills signed by 351 Pyidaungsu Hluttaw MPs, including Chairman of Joint Committee on Amending the 2008 Constitution U Tun Aung (a) U Tun Tun Hein (MP of Nawnghkio constituency).

Deputy Governor of the Central Bank of Myanmar U Soe Min explained about reports on implementing monetary policy and status of financial stability between April and September 2018. The Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker invited the names of MPs who want to discuss the reports.

The Deputy Governor also reported on the circulation of 1,000-Kyat new currency notes with better quality paper and high security to prevent counterfeit notes after seeking approval from the Union Government in line with Articles 65 and 66 of the Central Bank of Myanmar.

The new currency notes with the picture of Bogyoke Aung San were released to public on 7 January 2020 to mark the Independence Day of the country.

The Deputy Governor also asked for approval of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw as it is required to meet the Article 66 of the Central Bank of Myanmar.

The Speaker then announced approval of Hluttaw for the new currency notes.

Union Legal Aid Board Secretary U Khin Zaw reported on the activities of his board in the past six months and implementation of its eight policies, including providing legal supports regardless of race, faith, belief, age, genders and nationalities.

The Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker invited the names of MPs who want to discuss the report.

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw MPs also discussed the issue sent by the President for taking ODA loan Euro 50 million from the Government of Poland to implement a project for debris recycling in Yangon municipal area.

The motion was approved by MP Daw Ei Ei Pyone from constituency 8 of Ayeyawady Region and MP U Nay Kyaw from Dagon Myothit (East) constituency.

The issue was also discussed by the other MPs — Dr Tin Tin Win from constituency 5 of Bago Region, Daw Aye Mya Mya Myo from Kyauktan constituency, Naw Hla Hla Soe from constituency 10 of Yangon Region, U Khin Cho from Hlaingbwe constituency and U Nyan Linn from Shwepyitha constituency.

The Speaker concluded the first day meeting after announcing the remaining discussions to be continued on the following meetings of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw.— Mawsi, Myo Thu Hein ■

(Translated by Aung Khin)

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Pyithu Hluttaw

Pyithu Hluttaw convenes first day meeting of 15th regular session

THE 15th regular session of Second Pyithu Hluttaw began yesterday morning, with the welcoming speech of its Speaker U T Khun Myat.

The session is scheduled for discussing 13 bills, tabling 3 motions and raising 217 asterisked questions.

Speaker U T Khun Myat extended a greeting on the first day, saying the needs of efforts to conform with the democratic norms during the period of fledgling democratic transition and the crucial role of MPs in laying a stronger foundation for the country.

He also urged the MPs to work their best for prosperity of the country and people as the Hluttaw have been mandated to draft the laws, and to carry out their duties in line with Hluttaw laws and bylaws.

"As the term of Second Hluttaw is about to reach four years, the MPs are advised to review advantages and weakness of previous sessions in building capacity of the legislative estate," the Speaker added.

"The MPs need to perform regional development tasks of relevant constituencies to gain the trusts of public, while they are working for legislations and checks and balances."

Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker U T Khun Myat. **PHOTO: MNA**

The Speaker continued saying that the Hluttaw MPs are responsible for ensuring the Hluttaws as a stronger legislative pillar and for promoting democratic practices among common people and he advised that questions, motions and bills should benefit to the people.

Speaker U T Khun Myat announced the record of Pyithu Hluttaw on the oversea visit of MP Daw Mi Kun Chan from Paung constituency to Thailand for a workshop on gender issues from 13 to 16 January.

The Speaker also informed the Hluttaw about an extension of Complaints and Appeals Committee , which was formed on 22 February 2019, to one more year when the committee expires on 23 January 2020.

Asterisked Questions

MP Dr Khin Soe Soe Kyi from Pyay constituency asked about prevention plans for bank erosions along Nawin creek near the villages of Pyay Township.

Deputy Minister for Transport and Communications U Kyaw Myo replied that the plans will be implemented on the basis of allocated budgets and technical assistance of Directorate of Water Resources and Improvement of River Systems.

MP Dr Than Aung Soe from Minhla constituency asked about the sale of railway tickets online system like for express buses.

Deputy Minister U Kyaw Myo replied that the proposed plan might be carried out commencing 2023-2024 financial year after the completion of Yangon-Mandalay railway upgrading project level (2), with the use of real-time information system.

MP Dr Sein Mya Aye from Dala constituency asked about designing urban development plans in Dala Township and timing of decision on policy by the Ministry of Construction and Yangon Region government.

Deputy Minister for Construction Dr Kyaw Linn explained that the plans will be coordinated by the ministry, the local government, MPs and relevant stakeholders, matching with the data collected by the Yangon Region government.

MP Dr Lin Lin Kyaw from Myitta constituency asked for upgrading major rural roads in his constituency to tarred or concrete roads.

Deputy Minister Dr Kyaw Linn replied that the project will be implemented on the available budgets of Mandalay Region in 2020-2021 financial year.

MP U Bone Myint Aung from DaikU constituency asked for paving concrete on a road between two villages in his constituency, MP Daw Ni Ni May Myint from Taungup constituency for construction of a creek crossing bridge in her constituency.

Deputy Minister Dr Kyaw Linn also replied these questions.

Discussions for Industrial Zone Bill

In conclusion, the Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker announced the receiving of Industrial Zone Bill sent by the Amyotha Hluttaw with recommendations and called for submitting the names of MPs who want to discuss the bill.

The 15th regular session of Hluttaw will be convened on 30 January for the second day meeting .— Aye Aye Thant (MNA) ■

(Translated by Aung Khin)

Amyotha Hluttaw

Amyotha Hluttaw holds first day meeting of 15th regular session

THE Second Amyotha Hluttaw convened its 1st day meeting of 15th regular session yesterday, with an opening speech of Speaker Mahn Win Khaing Than, urging the MPs to perform the works of respective committees in line with laws, bylaws and regulations and the requirements of checks and balances on administrative and legislative estates, in addition to regular functions of the Hluttaw.

MP Dr Win Myint from Bago Region constituency 11 asked for promoting a basic education middle(branch) school to a middle school level in Kantharyar Village of Minhla Township.

Deputy Minister for Education U Win Maw Tun replied that it is not included in the prioritized plan of the ministry in this year as the school has only 144 children, and a nearest high school (branch) is located within one-mile distance from the village.

Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker Mahn Win Khaing Than . **PHOTO: MNA**

MP U Bwe Khein from Chin State constituency 3 asked for promoting a basic education upper primary school to a middle school (branch) in Thantlang Township.

The Deputy Minister replied that it is not included in the prioritized plan for this academic year as the school has only 127 children and it is located only in a 6-furlong distance from a high school.

MP U Kyaw Kyaw Win from Rakhine State constituency 8 asked about upgrading a basic education primary school (branch) to a primary school in Aungtharyar village in Maungtaw Township, and construction of a two-storey building at the Mawrawadi Middle School.

The Deputy Minister answered that although the school has only 55 primary school children, it will be allowed for promotion in 2020-2021 academic year, and also agreed on construction of a new school building.

MP U Myint Naing from Rakhine State constituency 5 asked about 2020 matriculation exam for the students who are away from Kyauktaw Township for some reasons and about certificates for these external students; MP U Htein Win from Ayeyawady Region constituency 4 about removal of living quarters of Township Fire Services Department from the land of No 5 Basic Middle School.

The Deputy Minister also replied to the questions.

Amyotha Hluttaw Bill Committee member Daw Kyein Ngei Mun read out the committee's report on amending bill for Myanmar Medical Council Law, sent by the Pyithu Hluttaw with recommendations.

MP U Aung Thein from Bago Region constituency 12 submitted a bill for lawyer's council and advocates to the Amyotha Hluttaw for discussions, and MP U Thein Lwin from Kachin State constituency 10 expressed his support on the bill.

The Hluttaw also unanimously decided to discuss the bill which will be handled by its bill committee.

The Amyotha Hluttaw will convene its second day meeting on 30 January.—Aung Ye Thwin and Soe Win Tun ■

(Translated by Aung Khin)

Ministry of Health and Sports speeds up efforts againts 2019 Novel Coronavirus

THE Union Minister for Health and Sports, Dr Myint Htwe, organized a coordination meeting for increasing preventive measures against the 2019 novel coronavirus in hospitals across Yangon Region at the University of Medicine 1, Yangon, yesterday morning.

Dr Myint Htwe said it is important to carefully monitor international travelers entering Myanmar and to respond early to suspected symptoms even if they were not present during inspection upon arrival. He said transferring patients and separating them into different rooms must be done with strict adherence to regulations.

He said it is important to cooperate on this with relevant ministries and organizations, in addition to relaying information back and forth between them. He said the discussions made at this meeting must be disseminated to all the medical superintendents across the nation.

The Union Minister said medical and public health sectors need to set up an information exchange network swiftly. He said a central committee and working committees must be formed for effective implementation and there must be synchronized coordination and collaboration between the relevant departments and officials.

Next, attendees explained the spread of the 2019 Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV), statements released by the World Health Organization and international health organizations, the Ministry of Health and Sport's increased monitoring efforts at international entry/exit gates, spreading guidelines, preparations for systematic transference of suspected patients according to standard procedures, and preparing separate rooms for these patients in hospitals.

Union Minister Dr Myint Htwe addresses the coordination meeting for increasing preventive measures against the 2019 novel coronavirus in hospitals across Yangon Region in Yangon yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

They also discussed disseminating health announcements and awareness to the public, connecting with relevant ministries, monitoring travelers from areas where the virus has spread for symptoms that emerge later so as to contain the virus from spreading, and preparations regarding medical supplies and finances. The medical superintendents and their vice superintendents then discussed the various matters.

Later in the afternoon, the Union Minister attended the notifying meeting at the Yangon Region Public Health Department which focused on facilitating cooperation between personnel from the hotel, travel and transportation sectors and private hospitals in monitoring the virus.

Speaking at the meeting, the Union Minister said if international points of entry can be effectively monitored then suspected patients and carriers of the virus can be identified earlier, and they are working hard to do so. He said recent WHO announcements the 2019 Novel Coronavirus has am incubation period of two weeks and thus, travelers who didn't show any symptoms upon arriving in Myanmar may develop them during the incubation period.

The Union Minister said early identification, treatment and containment of the virus is critically important and is not like the noncommunicable diseases such as hypertension, diabetes and heart attacks as it is contagious and thus requires the cooperation of all relevant organizations and every citizen as well. He said the role of hotel businesses, hotel and guesthouse staff, companies and tour guides is important. He said airline passengers will only be allowed to enter Myanmar if they systematically fill out the ministry's health declaration form and the duty to disseminate this information effectively to international airlines lies on the Ministry of Transport and Communications.

The Union Minister said international travelers have to fill in the address of their hotel or residence during their visit to Myanmar in the health declaration form. He said the staff at these residences should swiftly contact the designated health departments if their guests display symptoms of the virus and hospitals need to respond quickly as well.

The Union Minister instructed that vinyls and posters showing how to spot virus symptoms should be supplied to hotels and guesthouses immediately and private hospitals that accepts patients suspected of 2019 novel coronavirus should strictly follow rules and regulations and contact designated hospitals quickly.

He said a 24-hour hot line will be set up so that citizens can contact their township health departments for suspected cases of the virus. He said stickers showing how to identify symptoms will also be put up on public buses and asked officials to cooperate on this matter.

The Union Minister said the cooperation of hotel staff, tour guides, the general public and travelers in the early stages will greatly help prevention and containment of the virus. He said WHO and international health groups are continuing to study the natural history of the disease.

He said that while WHO has not declared the situation one of international public health concern, they have advised containment and eradication of the disease to be sped up and the ministry has planned to do so. He said the public can view authentic news on the subject on the internet pages of WHO, US CDC, international health ministries and China's official websites.

The Union Minister advised the public to compare news sources with reliable sources and think rationally. He said the ministry will cooperate with China and the rest of the world to monitor and contain the spread of the 2019 Novel Coronavirus and urged everyone to assist as well.

Next, Director Dr Tun Tin of the Central Epidemiology Unit explained preparations put in place for monitoring and responding to the virus and the latest news from WHO, while Director Dr Than Naing Soe explained the processes to disseminate information on disease protection and spreading to the public.

Attendees then raised questions and public health officials and lab technicians answered to them.— MNA

(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)

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UN Special Envoy lands in Nay Pyi Taw

THE UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy on Myanmar, Ms Christine Schraner Burgener, arrived in Nay Pyi Taw by flight at 7:25 pm yesterday.

She was welcomed at Nay Pyi Taw International Airport by officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. — MNA

(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)

Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Union Election Commission
Notification 34/2020

3rd Waxing of Tabodwe, 1381ME
(27 January, 2020)

Six Pyithu Hluttaw Defence Services Personnel representatives substituted

According to a request made in accordance with Section 33 of the Pyithu Hluttaw Election Law to substitute six Defence Services Personnel Representatives who are parliamentarians, the Union Election Commission has scrutinized and substituted the following six Pyithu Hluttaw representatives shown on the left column under the Notification 1/2016 of the commission dated 18-1-2016, the Notification 8/2017 of the commission dated 16-5-2017 and the Notification 61/2018 of the commission dated 15-5-2018 with those shown on the right column.

The Defence Services Personnel Representatives of Pyithu Hluttaw to be substituted were nominated by the Commander-in-Chief of the Defence Services in the second Multi-party General Election held on 8 November 2015.

(1)	BC 24920 Lt-Col Kyaw Zeya	BC 20177 Brig-Gen Win Moe
(2)	BC 28161 Lt-Col Zaw Tun Oo	BC 20331 Brig-Gen Thet Tun Aung
(3)	BC 31225 Lt-Col Aung Zin Min	BC 21349 Col Kyaw Kyaw Min
(4)	BC 24218 Major Sein Tun	BC 23708 Col Aye Lwin
(5)	BC 20313 Major Than Win	BC 23712 Col Aung Kyaw Myo
(6)	BC 30105 Major Zin Myo Latt	Navy 1369 Commodore Aung Zaw Hlaing

(Hla Thein)
Chairman
Union Election Commission

Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Union Election Commission
Notification 35/2020

3rd Waxing of Tabodwe, 1381ME
(27 January, 2020)

Four Amyotha Hluttaw Defence Services Personnel representatives substituted

According to a request made in accordance with Section 33 of the Amyotha Hluttaw Election Law to substitute four Defence Services Personnel Representatives who are parliamentarians, the Union Election Commission has scrutinized and substituted the following four Amyotha Hluttaw representatives shown on the left column under the Notification 2/2016 of the commission dated 18-1-2016, the Notification 25/2017 of the commission dated 30-10-2017 and the Notification 168/2018 of the commission dated 6-11-2018 with those shown on the right column.

The Defence Services Personnel Representatives of Amyotha Hluttaw to be substituted were nominated by the Commander-in-Chief of the Defence Services in the second Multi-party General Election held on 8 November 2015.

(1)	BC 33520 Major Kyaw Moe Thwin	Air 1914 Brig-Gen Zaw Myint San
(2)	BC 31774 Lt-Col Tin Tun Aung	BC 20808 Brig-Gen Nay Myo Aung
(3)	BC 42548 Major Zarni Htet Aung	BC 45454 Major Win Min Tun
(4)	BC 23048 Major Zawana	BC 39221 Major Zaw Tun

(Hla Thein)
Chairman
Union Election Commission

Thai camera crew films segments of 'Around the World' in Myanmar

FILM crew from Thai TV series 'Around the World' filmed ongoing renovation projects of historic buildings around Sule Pagoda and on Pansodan Road in downtown Yangon yesterday.

From 21 to 26 January, the crew also filmed people going about their daily lives, Yoogane shop in Myanmar Plaza, renovations of buildings in 41st Street of Botahtaung Township and 35th Street of Kyauktada Township, renovations of back alleys in 41st Street, and lethwei boxing bouts to commemorate Kayin New Year in Mayansu Village of Pantanaw Township, Ayeyawady Region.

In addition, they will continue to film Yangon's National Library and scenery. The filming will be shown on the TV series 'Around the World' on Thai TV channel 'PPTV HD 36'. — Kyaw Swar Thein (FDC)

(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)

Workshop in Ngapali focuses on strategy for improving tourism

THE workshop on 'Comprehensive Strategy for a Responsible and Sustainable Tourism Development for Rakhine State 2020-2030' was held at Amazing Ngapali Resort in Thandwe District from 25 to 26 January, 2020.

The opening ceremony of the workshop on 25 January was attended by the Chairman of the Rakhine State Tourism Committee and Chief Minister U Nyi Pu, Rakhine State ministers, committee secretary and Director U Ye Aung Moe of Sittway Rakhine State Directorate of Hotels and Tourism, department officials, Hluttaw representatives, technical experts, officials from domestic and international affiliated groups, hotel and travel entrepreneurs, local residents and invited guests.

Firstly, the Chief Minister explained the Rakhine State Minister for Finance, Tax, Planning and Commerce received assistance from UNDP and domestic technical experts to organize this workshop. He then conferred certificates of honor on all persons who helped organize the workshop. Next, Director Mr Graham Leith Harper of Plastic Asia Travel Association (PATA) discussed on 'Achieving Sustainable Tourism Development', UNDP Chief Technical Advisor Mr Singay Dorji discussed 'Environment and Social Management for a Responsible and Inclusive Tourism', and Senior Associate U Win Min of Myanmar Centre for Responsible Business (MCRB) discussed 'Opportunities and Challenges for Sustainable Tourism Development in Rakhine State'.

Afterwards, U Ye Aung Moe explained travel sector of Rakhine State, boosting regional tourism and future prospects and Daw Lin Lin, main consultant on the strategy, explained the designing and implementation of the strategy.

The workshop will cover six topics of interest including 'Tourism Planning & Product Development', 'Tourism Legal Framework Development', 'Tourism Infrastructure Development & Tourism Financial Development', 'Tourism Human Resource Development', 'Social & Environmental Responsibility in Tourism Development', and 'Positioning, Branding, Marketing of Rakhine State'. — MNA *(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)*

Union Minister Dr Myint Htwe signs condolence book for President of Czech Senate of Parliament

Union Minister Dr Myint Htwe signs book of condolences for President of the Senate of the Parliament from the Czech Republic Mr Jaroslav Kubera at Embassy of Czech Republic in Yangon yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

UNION Minister for Health and Sports Dr Myint Htwe signed the condolence book for Mr Jaroslav Kubera, the President of the Senate of the Parliament from the Czech Republic, at its embassy in Yangon yesterday afternoon.

Mr. Jaroslav Kubera passed away at the age of 73.—MNA

(Translated by Aung Khin)

Status of license verification for printing, publishing, news agencies

THE Ministry of Information had received approval from the Union government and announced the Printing and Publishing Enterprise Bylaw with Notification No. 48/2014 on 10 October 2014. All applications for licenses will be reviewed and issued in adherence to this bylaw.

During the meeting of the ministry's management committee on 20 January 2020, applicants made between 2 December 2019 to 10 January 2020, including 4 new printing businesses, 1 new newspaper, a journal and two magazine businesses for publishing, and 30 for general purposes, to a total of 34, and 11 news agencies were all approved for licenses.

Since the announcement of the bylaw on 10 October 2014, the ministry has issued licenses to 1,616 printing businesses, 2,794 publishing businesses and 272 news agencies, to a total of 4,682 entities, so far. — MNA

(Translated by Zaw Htet Oo)

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Republic of the Union of Myanmar Union Election Commission Notification 36/2020

3rd Waxing of Tabodwe, 1381ME
(27 January, 2020)

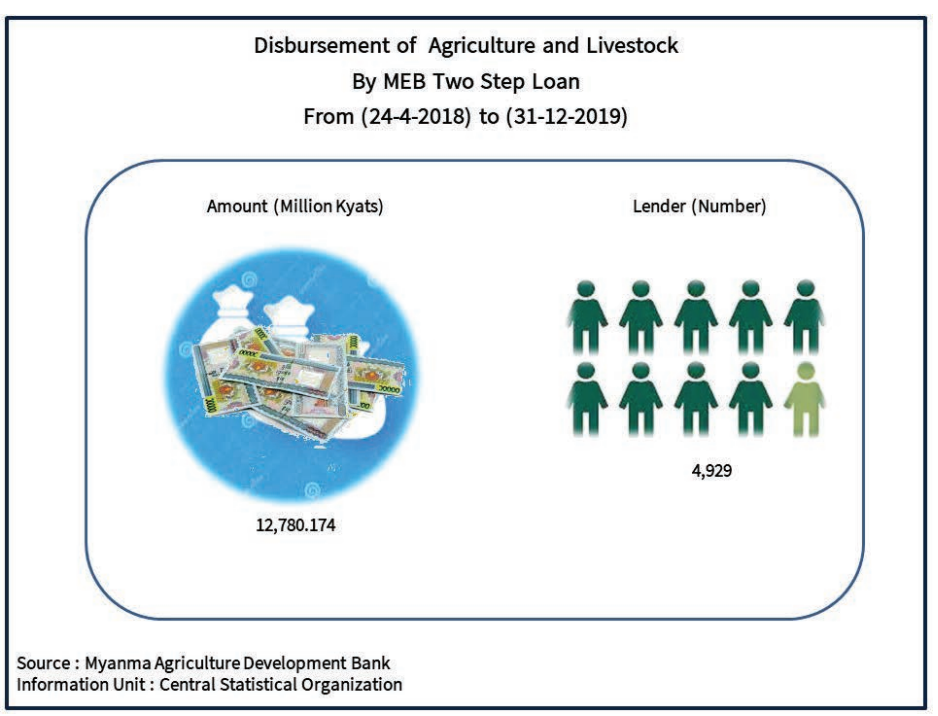
Seven Defence Services Personnel representatives from Region and State Hluttaw substituted

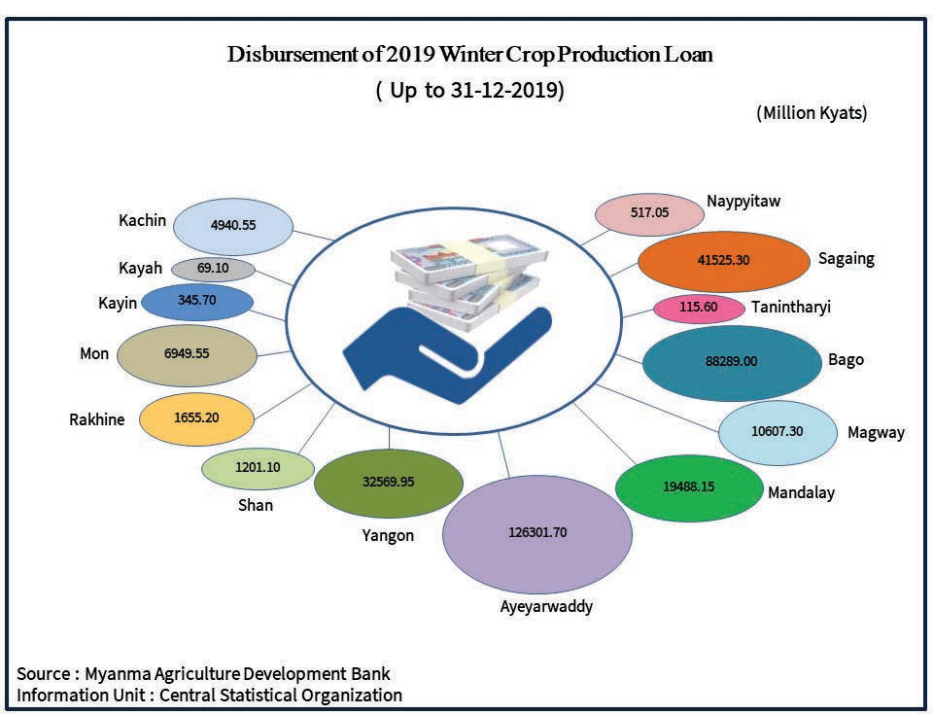
According to a request made in accordance with Section 33 of the Region Hluttaw or State Hluttaw Election Law to substitute seven Defence Services Personnel Representatives who are parliamentarians, the Union Election Commission has scrutinized and substituted the following seven Region Hluttaw and State Hluttaw representatives shown on the left column under the Notification 26/2017 of the commission dated 30-10-2017, the Notification 27/2017 of the commission dated 1-11-2017, the Notification 63/2018 of the commission dated 15-5-2018 and the Notification 169/2018 of the commission dated 6-11-2018 with those shown on the right column.

The Defence Services Personnel Representatives of Region Hluttaw or State Hluttaw to be substituted were nominated by the Commander-in-Chief of the Defence Services in the second Multi-party General Election held on 8 November 2015.

Chin State Hluttaw		
(1)	BC 66590 Capt Aung Kyaw Thet	BC 48180 Capt Khaing Lwin Htoo
Sagaing Region Hluttaw		
(2)	BC 48195 Capt Ye Mon Kyaw	BC 66238 Capt Zin Ko Maung
Taninthayi Region Hluttaw		
(3)	BC 48746 Capt Kyaw Swar Win	BC 48797 Capt Nyi Nyi Zaw
(4)	BC 66183 Capt Wai Moe Naung	BC 48448 Capt Kyaw Si Thu
Mandalay Region Hluttaw		
(5)	BC 36430 Major Phyo Thiha Kyaw	BC 42381 Major Zaw Myo Wai
Mon State Hluttaw		
(6)	Navy 4192 Lt-Cmdr Myat Thura Khaing	Navy 4243 Lt-Cmdr Wai Lin Aung
Shan State Hluttaw		
(7)	BC 34706 Major San Lin Kyi	BC 39132 Major San Lin Tun

(Hla Thein)
Chairman
Union Election Commission





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Sharing experiences on provisional measures of ICJ to be broadcast

THE Myanma Radio and Television, the Myanma Radio and the MRTV Facebook will broadcast sharing experiences of Myanmar delegation members, who heard provisional measures of the International Court of Justice (ICJ), after the 8 pm weather news on 28 January (Tuesday).

The talk will be participated by the delegation members U Kyaw Tint Swe, Union Minister for the Office of the State Counsellor, Permanent Secretary of Union Attorney-General's Office Dr Thida Oo, Director General of Ministry of Foreign Affairs U Chan Aye, Legal Advisor (Myanmar delegation member) U Kyaw Tin and U Ko Ko (YIT). — MNA

(Translated by Aung Khin)

Myanmar hosted 4.4 mln tourists in 2019; Mandalay records over 680,000 visitors

OF the 4.4 million tourists who visited Myanmar last year, more than 680,000 travelers headed to Mandalay Region, according to data released by the Mandalay Region Directorate of Hotels and Tourism.

In 2018, Mandalay welcomed 492,097 tourists, while the country received more than 3.5 million visitors, as per data from the department.

Famous tourist destinations in the region include U Bein bridge, Taungthaman Lake, world heritage site Kuthodaw Pagoda, Myanansankyaw - the Golden Palace, Mahamuni Pagoda, Mandalay Hill, and other ancient buildings and pagodas. Myanmar's intangible cultural heritage — its ten most well-known arts and crafts — proved to be another attraction for tourists. Travelers also flocked to historical buildings and pagodas in the old capital, Innwa (Ava), and the UNESCO cultural heritage site, Bagan.

Tourists visit Kuthodaw pagoda which is one of the famous pagoda in Mandalay. **PHOTO: THAN ZAW MIN**

The regional Directorate of Hotels and Tourism is drawing up some projects, in collaboration with the regional government and tourist operators, to boost tourism in Mandalay Region this year.

Tourist arrivals in Mandalay Region were registered at 75,727 in 2010, 99,016 in 2011, 160,975 in 2012, 219,518 in 2013, 242,566 in 2014, 306,432 in 2015, 385,031 in 2016, and 483,784 in 2017, according to data provided by the regional department. —Than Zaw Min (IPRD)

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

MIC rejecting proposals in view of environmental impact: official

By Nyein Nyein

THE Myanmar Investment Commission (MIC) is rejecting project proposals that could have a negative impact on the environment, said U Thant Sin Lwin, Secretary of the Commission.

"We are not just seeking investments, but responsible business. We rejected two proposals last week," he said.

"The MIC is permitting only responsible businesses, and proposals with environmental and social impacts have been dismissed. Those kinds of projects are screened by the proposal assessment team as per the Myanmar Investment Law. Enterprises are notified whether their proposals have been accepted or not within 15 days of submission," he said.

"The MIC has set an FDI (Foreign Direct Investment) target of $5.8 billion in the current financial year. In the past three months, Myanmar has received nearly $1.5 billion in FDI (approximately $500 million per month over three months). If investments grow steadily this year, they might reach around $6 billion. The MIC intends to reach the FDI target. However, we are prioritizing responsible businesses," he added.

Between 1 October and 10 January, FDI of $1.547 billion flowed into the country, including expansion of capital by existing enterprises and investments in the Special Economic Zone. According to a press statement issued by the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration (DICA), 77 foreign enterprises have obtained permits from the MIC and endorsements from regional and state Investment Committees in the current fiscal, bringing in a capital of $1.35 billion.

During October-December, Myanmar received large investments from Hong Kong, Singapore, and China. Fifty foreign countries invested in 12 sectors. The power sector accounted for 26.15 per cent of the total investments, and 14.07 per cent of the total FDI flowed into the manufacturing sector, as per data from DICA.

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

Write for us

We appreciate your feedback and contributions. If you have any comments or would like to submit editorials, analyses or reports please email **ce@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com** with your name and title.

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.

FDI tops $2 bln in four months

WITH 23 foreign investment projects pulling in more than US$433 million into the country this week, the total foreign direct investment for the first four months of the current fiscal has crossed $2 billion, according to the Myanmar Investment Commission.

The investments were announced during a press conference yesterday in Yangon.

According to a press statement issued by the MIC after the meeting, the commission has permitted $2,156.205 million in foreign investment and Kyat 748,311.061 million, including $134.469 million, in domestic investment from Myanmar citizens between 1 October and 24 January in the 2019-2020FY.

The 23 foreign investment projects approved this week would create 11,951 jobs for Myanmar citizens, the MIC stated.

At the meeting, U Thant Sin Lwin, Secretary of the Myanmar Investment Commission and Director-General of the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration, provided details on the permitted enterprises and their endorsement under the Myanmar Investment Law.

By the end of December, 2019, Singapore, the People's Republic of China, Thailand, Hong Kong, and the United Kingdom were the countries with the largest investments in Myanmar.

The top sector for investments was oil and gas, which accounted for 27 per cent of foreign fund inflows, followed by the power sector (26.15 per cent), and the manufacturing sector (14.07 per cent).

Fourteen reporters representing local media and two reporters from the international media attended yesterday's press conference. —GNLM

Maritime trade up $1 bln current fiscal year

PHOTO: PHOE KHWAR

THE value of Myanmar's maritime trade for the period between 1 October and 17 January in the 2019-2020 financial year totaled US$8 billion, an increase of over $1 billion compared to the year-ago period, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

While maritime exports were valued at $3.23 billion, imports were registered at $4.87 billion. Compared to the same period in the 2018-2019 FY, imports were higher by $407 million, while exports registered an increase of $632 million.

Meanwhile, the value of trade through the border gates was estimated at $3.18 billion, an increase of $676 million.

The country's total external trade reached $11.29 billion, which was higher than the $9.57 billion recorded in the year-ago period.

Myanmar exports agricultural products, fishery products, minerals, livestock, forest products, finished industrial goods, and other products, while it imports capital goods, consumer goods, and raw industrial materials. The country currently has nine ports involved in sea trade. Yangon Port is the main gateway for Myanmar's maritime trade, and includes the Yangon inner terminals and the outer Thilawa Port. —Mon Mon (Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

Workers gathering and scooping unhusked rice into sacks at their farm in Ayeyawaddy Region.
PHOTO: PHOE KHWAR

Agro exports touch $1 bln in current FY

MYANMAR'S exports of agricultural products between 1 October and 17 January in the 2019-2020 financial year rose to US$1 billion from $940 million in the corresponding period of the 2018-2019FY, which reflects an increase of $141 million, according to trade figures released by the Ministry of Commerce.

In the export sector, the agriculture industry performed the best, along with the natural gas sector.

The chief items of export in the agricultural sector are rice and broken rice, pulses, corn, and rubber. Fruits and vegetables, sesame, dried tea leaves, sugar, and other agro products are also exported to other countries.

Myanmar primarily exports agro products to China, Singapore, Malaysia, the Philippines, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka. However, the export market remains uncertain due to unsteady global demand.

According to the Myanmar Rice Federation, quality control and food safety are key to the promotion of exports. Therefore, improved agricultural practices need to be developed.

Additionally, the country requires specific export plans for each agro product, as they are currently exported to external markets based upon supply and demand. Contract farming systems, and involvement of regional and state agriculture departments, exporters, traders, and some grower groups are required in order to meet production targets, said an official from the Agriculture Department.

Myanmar faces slower access to market information, which sometimes poses obstacles in the market, said officials.

The Commerce Ministry is working to help farmers deal with challenges, such as high input costs, procurement of pedigree seeds, high cultivation costs, and erratic weather conditions. —Ko Htet ■

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

Marine businesses in Chindwin River basin not interested in insurance: MI

MARINE businesses in the Chindwin River basin have shown a lack of interest in marine insurance, said U Tin Maung Than, regional Manager of Myanma Insurance (Sagaing Region).

"Some vessels are linked with private insurance businesses. Myanma Insurance has been facing difficulties persuading them to buy marine cargo insurance and marine hull and machinery insurance. We are still trying to convince them. Most of the marine businesses along the Chindwin basin do not have insurance," said U Tin Maung Than.

When state-owned cargo is transported on the Chindwin River basin, it is insured, he said. "But, private entrepreneurs choose private insurers over MI. Small businesses do not even insure cargo as the volume loaded on vessels is low," he added. — Win Oo (Zeyartine)

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

Ferries mooring on the Chindwin River in Sagaing Region. **PHOTO: WIN OO (ZEYARTINE)**

28 JANUARY 2020
THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

To handle coronavirus, vigilance is key

THE World Health Organization, South-East Asia, has urged countries in the region to remain vigilant and increase readiness to rapidly detect any case of importation of the new coronavirus and prevent its spread. It has asked for focusing all efforts on readiness, guided by whatever is known about the new viral strain.

The Myanmar health authorities are also scaling up surveillance at international airports and border gates.

However, symptoms of coronavirus appear about two weeks after infection, according to the World Health Organization. This means our thermal scanners can detect the travelers with higher temperature but would not be able to detect every traveler infected with the 2019 Novel Coronavirus. The symptoms may appear after the travelers move from an outbreak area to a hotel or guest house or home.

> We would like to urge visitors, especially from the countries affected by the outbreak, to fill the Health Declaration Form thoroughly to ensure effective surveillance in fighting the disease.

In such a situation, health professionals at private hospitals, clinics, and hospitals would be the first persons to examine suspected cases, and they are playing a crucial role in quickly responding to infected patients, in accordance with the directives and guidelines laid by the Ministry of Health and Sports.

Besides, cooperation between people and health professionals is very important to prevent infections as coronavirus can spread easily.

Meanwhile, the role of those working in the tourism industry, including at hotels and guest houses, is also important from the surveillance point-of-view. The workers should remain vigilant and report suspected cases to the health authorities in a timely manner.

We would like to urge visitors, especially from the countries affected by the outbreak, to fill the Health Declaration Form thoroughly to ensure effective surveillance in fighting the disease.

As in the case of any new virus, much remains to be understood about coronavirus. The WHO has prepared an interim guidance on case detection, testing, clinical management of cases, infection prevention and control during healthcare, home care for people suspected to have contracted the virus, and guidance on reducing transmissions.

The WHO is working with countries in the region to roll out these guidelines; prioritizing reviewing and building capacities for laboratory diagnostics, including referral of specimens and diagnosis; planning training in case management, specimen collection and transportation, and infection prevention and control; providing logistics support, and communicating risks and promoting desired behavior in the community.

Though the new coronavirus is being called the Novel Coronavirus 2019, it has not been declared a public health emergency of international concern (PHEIC) by the Emergency Committee of the International Health Regulation, which met last week. Its risk was assessed to be 'high'.

The health authorities are keeping a close watch on the situation in the country, and we all should continue to be vigilant and be prepared to contain and prevent the virus from spreading any further.

■ ■ ■

Interview with health officials on Wuhan coronavirus

In response to the emergence of the novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) in Wuhan City of China, Myanmar officials especially the Ministry of Health and Sports are vigilant to prevent and contain any case of the novel coronavirus at states and regions public, health departments, airports, harbours and border gates, with extra attention given to checkpoints that border with China.

The following are excerpts from interviews with health officials Dr Tun Tin and Dr Than Naing Soe where they explain the processes of the health ministry in responding to the Wuhan coronavirus.

INTERVIEW BY: Shin Min
PHOTO: Htein Nan Naw

Dr Tun Tin (Director)
(Central Epidemiology Unit)

Q: What can you tell us about the cases of pneumonia occurring in China that has been circulating in the media recently?

A: The virus has been spreading in Wuhan City between December 2019 and January 2020. Initial reports from the Wuhan Municipal Health Commission said they could not identify this strain of virus but they did say it was connected to a seafood market in Wuhan. It was closed down on 1 January and the surrounding area was cleaned. The World Health Organization then announced on 7 January that the virus is a new strain of the coronavirus family.

Permanent Secretary Dr Thet Khaing Win delivers the speech at the meeting concerned with the prevention of 2019 Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) at the Ministry of Health and Sports on 8 January 2020. **PHOTO: MNA**

Q: Can you explain about the measures taken to prevent and control the spread of the virus in Myanmar.

A: The Public Health Department have always implemented monitoring activities at international airports, docks and border gates to prevent the entry of SARS, MERS, Zika and the Ebola virus, and we will continue to do so. In fact, we had increased efforts in existing prevention and quarantine processes before WHO made their announcement on 5 January, 2020.

Dr Tun Tin (Director).

Dr Khin Khin Gyi (Deputy Director).

International media reported on 3 January that a pneumonia-causing virus had been spreading in China and authorities could yet to identify it. We responded to it as quick as we could and a team led by the deputy director-general of disease eradication and the Mandalay Region public health head official went to monitor the situation at Mandalay Airport.

We increased monitoring for flu and fever symptoms, planned to operate separate patient rooms and worked together with airport authorities and airlines to sent suspected passengers to the nearest hospital on time.

There are direct flights from Wuhan to Mandalay Airport twice a week and, as a result, we installed an additional fever scanner at the airport on 7 January to aid our monitoring efforts.

When WHO announced on 7 January that the pathogen responsible for the sickness in China was the Novel Coronavirus, the Ministry of Health and Sports uploaded health announcements regarding winter pneumonia awareness on their website at https://www.mohs.gov.mm, their Facebook page, Myanmar CDC Facebook page (https://web.facebook.com/MyanmarCDC/) and the Facebook page of the Health Information Promotion Division on 8 January. We also held a coordination meeting to effectively address the situation.

On 9 January, a team led by the director of communicable diseases traveled to Mandalay Airport and enhanced monitoring processes, meeting with airline officials, and discussing with Mandalay Region Health Department to appoint full-time health officers at the airport.

Similarly, a team led by the deputy-director general of disease eradication traveled to Yangon International Airport and its docks on 11 January, while the director of communicable diseases led a team to Nay Pyi Taw International Airport on 14 January to boost the disease monitoring processes there. The same team visited the 1000-bed general hospital in Nay Pyi Taw the next day and discussed setting up separate patient rooms with the medical superintendent.

We have uploaded prevention techniques and true news sources for the public on the ministry's website (www.mohs.gov.mm) and Facebook page, and Myanmar CDC's Facebook page from 18 to 22 January as well.

Q: What are other countries doing to protect themselves from the pneumonia virus in China?

A: Countries that neighbour China, such as Hong Kong, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand, Russia and Viet Nam monitor passengers entering their airports and docks for virus symptoms, especially direct flights from Wuhan. The US and EU are also performing necessary health checks on passengers coming on direct flights from Wuhan Airport.

Dr Khin Khin Gyi (Deputy Director)
(Central Epidemiology Unit)

Q: WHO said the coronavirus is the cause of the pneumonia cases happening recently. Can you tell us a bit more about that?

A: Coronavirus is the name for a family of viruses that cause illnesses ranging from the common cold to more severe respiratory diseases such as pneumonia, SARS, MERS, kidney failure and even death.

Coronaviruses are common in many different species of animals and rarely transmit to or between humans. However, some strains can infect humans and the people who have it pass on the quickest to their family or caretakers who live in close proximity to them.

Coronaviruses that never used to infect people but have evolved to do so are called novel coronavirus. MERS and SARS are examples of novel coronaviruses that have transmitted from animals to humans. They cause severe respiratory symptoms and deaths upon people.

Symptoms of the 2019 novel coronavirus include high fever, headaches, coughing, chest pain and difficulty breathing. Severe viruses can cause respiratory and kidney failure, hardening of the lungs, damages to the respiratory system and intestines, sepsis and death.

Q: Does the coronavirus transmit from people to people?

A: While some coronaviruses can be transmitted from person to person, there is still concrete evidence that the 2019 novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) has spread through this method. SARS and MERS were caused by respiratory infections, the new virus is still being studied to figure out if it follows the same method.

WHO announced on 15 January that the novel coronavirus has limited human to human transmission as it is most frequently transmitted from the person who has it to some of the medical staff looking after them.

Q: Is there any relation between the SARS and MERS viruses and the recent coronavirus?

A: According to lab tests, the SARS virus that hit China in 2002 was transmitted to humans through the civet cat while the MERS virus that spread throughout Saudi Arabia in 2012 was transmitted from camels. As global disease monitoring becomes more advanced, we are able to see more transmissions of coronaviruses.

Recent lab tests show that while the 2019 novel coronavirus is different from MERS and SARS, it is similar in having a high transmission rate from animals to humans. It is still being monitored and diagnosed.

Q: Can the novel coronavirus be protected through vaccines?

A: There are still no vaccines for the novel coronavirus yet, nor a precise cure. But effective treatment can be administered depending on the person's health condition.

Q: What's the global statistic regarding this new virus?

A: According to WHO's announcement on 23 January, there are 581 cases of the virus, with 574 people in China having the virus, 4 in Thailand, and 1 each in Japan, South Korea and the US.

Q: And how many cases have been fatal?

A: Chinese authorities have announced that lab results show 17 people have died from the virus in Wuhan, as of 23 January. The majority of deaths are elderly people and those with chronic illnesses. That's why they need to give extra attention to medical guidelines.

Q: Have any cases of the virus popped up in Myanmar?

A: There have been no cases of the virus when we last checked on 24 January. We are using thermal scanners to monitor all passengers at airports and border gates also have thermal scanners and non-contact thermometers to look out for signs and symptoms of the virus.

Q: What is WHO doing to address this virus?

A: WHO held a meeting of the Emergency Committee convened the International Health Regulations (IHR) (2005) from 22 to 23 January, 2020. They decided it was still too early to declare the situation a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) and decided to continue further investigations and containment procedures.

WHO's standard recommendations for the general public to reduce exposure to and transmission of a range of illnesses are as follows, which include hand and respiratory hygiene, and safe food practices:

- Frequently clean hands by using alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water;
- When coughing and sneezing cover mouth and nose with flexed elbow or tissue – throw tissue away immediately and wash hands;
- Avoid close contact with anyone who has fever and cough;
- If you have fever, cough and difficulty breathing seek medical care early and share previous travel history with your health care provider;
- When visiting live markets in areas currently experiencing cases of novel coronavirus, avoid direct unprotected contact with live animals and surfaces in contact with animals;
- The consumption of raw or undercooked animal products should be avoided. Raw meat, milk or animal organs should be handled with care, to avoid cross-contamination with uncooked foods, as per good food safety practices.

(This interview was conducted on 24 January 2020)

(Translated by Pen Dali)

■ ■ ■

2020, 73rd Anniversary Union Day National Objectives

1. All ethnic nationals to preserve and protect for non-disintegration of the Union, non-disintegration of National Unity and Perpetuation of Sovereignty.
2. To work on the peace process till success is achieved based on Union spirit.
3. To strive with the collective strength of all ethnic nationals for rule of law, a fair justice system and the security and safety of all citizens.
4. To prevent/protect all people from the danger of narcotic drugs as a national duty and thereby uplift their standard of living.
5. Emergence of a Constitution which will be in alignment with a genuine Democratic Federal Union.

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

THE Office of the President issued Press Release No 4/2020 yesterday, publicly announcing the Ministry of Home Affairs' arrests and seizures in the fight against illicit drug trafficking up till 25 January.

The ministry made the arrests, acting on information, sent to the Drug Activity Special Complaint Department of the Office of the President as of 25 January.

The full text of the press release will be reported in the 29 January issue of *The Global New Light of Myanmar*.—GNLM

Myanmar Daily Weather Report

(Issued at 4:00 pm Monday 27th January, 2020)

BAY INFERENCE: Weather is a few cloud over the South Bay and generally fair over the Andaman Sea and elsewhere over the Bay of Bengal.

FORECAST VALID UNTIL MORNING OF THE 28th January, 2020: Light rain are likely to be isolated in Kachin State. Degree of certainty is (60%). Weather will be partly cloudy in Upper Sagaing and Taninthayi Regions, Northern Shan State and generally fair in the remaining Regions and States.

STATE OF THE SEA: Sea will be slight to moderate in Myanmar waters. Wave height will be about (5-7) feet in Deltaic, off and along Rakhine Coast and about (4-6) feet in Gulf of Mottama, off and along Mon-Taninthayi Coast.

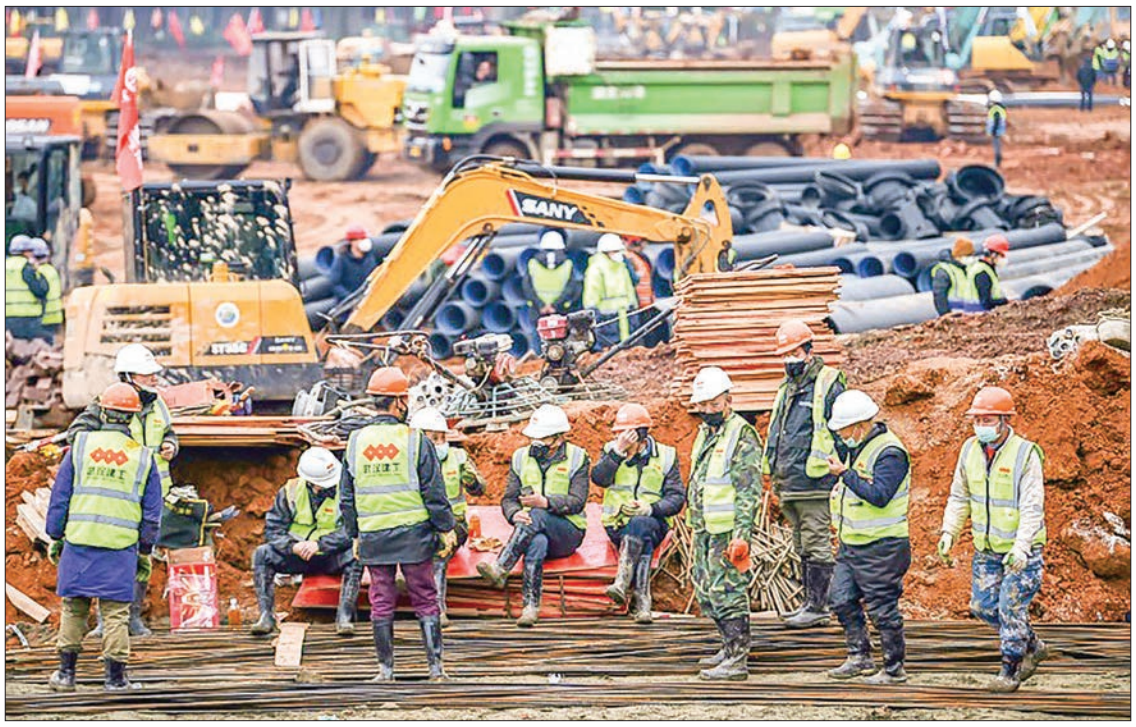
OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Decrease of night temperatures in Naypyitaw, Bago and Yangon Regions, Shan, Kayah and Kayin States.

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 28th January, 2020: Fair weather.

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 28th January, 2020: Fair weather.

FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 28th January, 2020: Fair weather.

China races against the clock to build virus hospitals



China is racing to build hospitals to treat a rapidly growing number of patients stricken by a deadly virus. **PHOTO: AFP**

WUHAN (China)—Hundreds of workers are toiling around the clock at the site of a field hospital that China is racing to build within days to treat a rapidly growing number of patients stricken by a deadly virus.

The outline of a floor began to take shape and electrical switchboards were already up on Monday when AFP reporters visited the site of the facility, dubbed "Fire God Mountain", being built in Wuhan, the central city where the coronavirus first emerged.

It is one of two makeshift hospitals that Chinese authorities are rushing to build within a fortnight in the city of 11 million people to relieve medical facilities swamped with patients waiting for hours to see doctors.

Work to build Fire God Mountain started Friday and is due to be ready to receive patients on February 3, according to state media. The second one, named "Thunder God Mountain", will be ready for use on February 5.

The construction workers all wore masks as mandated by the authorities for the entire population of the city, which has been under lockdown since Thursday.

They are checked for fevers when they arrived by bus and again during their breaks.

They worked around a forest of excavators and trucks bringing in prefab material at the site on the southwestern side of the city.

"We have to work fast to combat the epidemic," a worker in his 30s, who refused to give his name, told AFP.

He said he worked nine hours per day, "sometimes less, sometimes more. It depends on what they need".— AFP

2 men arrested for alleged smuggling of drugs concealed in tabletops

TOKYO— Two men have been arrested after they allegedly tried to smuggle stimulants concealed in two tabletops from the United Arab Emirates, police said Monday.

Taiki Yamazaki, 32, a member of the Kyokuto-kai organized crime syndicate, and Mamoru Katsumata, 32, an executive of a freight shipper, were arrested last Thursday and have denied the charges against them, according to the police. The tables were sent on a flight to Tokyo's Haneda airport from Dubai on Dec. 23 and inspected by Tokyo customs on Jan. 17. The stimulants were found after powder was seen on screws attaching the tops to the legs of the tables, they said.

The tabletops weighed about 400 kilograms in total.

Investigators replaced the tables with different cargo and arrested the men at a warehouse in Shizuoka Prefecture, central Japan, when they received the shipment, the police said.—Kyodo News

Two tables, in which stimulants were concealed, that were confiscated by Tokyo customs and shown to the press on 27 January 2020. **PHOTO: KYODO NEWS**

Gunmen kill 13 in central Nigeria attack

JOS (Nigeria)— Unknown gunmen have killed 13 people in an attack in central Nigeria, the police said Monday, in an area known for ethnic clashes.

A local resident said the assailants opened fire late Sunday on a bar where people were drinking beer in the village of Kwatas, 80 kilometres (50 miles) south of the city of Jos.

"Thirteen persons lost their lives while five persons were critically injured and are receiving treatment," regional police spokesman Ubah Agaba said.

The reasons for the attack were not immediately clear.

Central Plateau state is part of Nigeria's so-called middle-belt that divides the mainly-Muslim north from the predominantly Christian south.

Deadly clashes between nomadic Fulani herders and farmers over land, grazing and water have plagued the area for years.

Local resident Usman Hardo said that some hamlets where Fulani live were burnt down following the attack.

State governor Simon Lalong said his "heart again bleeds" for the victims of the latest killings as he called on the security forces to find those responsible.

"We do not need another circle of bloodshed," he said in a statement.

Aid group Mercy Corps said in May last year that violence between farmers and pastoralists in Nigeria had "contributed to more than 7,000 deaths in the past five years".

Attacks in remote areas often go unreported but the authorities in Plateau state insist the bloodshed has decreased following reconciliation efforts between the communities.

Gunmen on January 8 killed 12 people in a village some 25 kilometres away from the scene of the latest incident. — AFP

Republic of Congo's debt a third higher than IMF estimate: NGO

BRAZZAVILLE (Congo) —The Republic of Congo's debts could be a third greater than was estimated last year when the IMF gave the country its fourth bailout, an anti-corruption group said Monday.

Its public debts "could exceed $12.5 billion" (11.34 billion euros) because of previously undisclosed liabilities by its national oil company, the SNPC, the Global Witness said.

The figures are potentially "catastrophic", it said.

SNPC -- the Societe Nationale des Petroles du Congo -- has at least $2.7 billion in previously undisclosed debts to oil majors, including Total, Chevron and Eni, it said after analysing a trove of documents.

"This represents a 50-percent increase since 2010. A further $606 million is owed to a consortium of banks led by the pan-African conglomerate Ecobank, secured against oil," Global Witness said.

Global Witness said the SNPC's debts could end up on the state's books.

If so public debt, which hit 119 percent of GDP in 2016 and then fell to 86 percent, would balloon to as much as 115 percent.

During the country's belt-tightening years from 2015-2018, public spending dropped by more than half, citizens went without pension payments and hospitals were chronically under-resourced.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) last July granted Congo, a major oil exporter, a credit line of $448.6 million after its economy was battered by a years-long slump in the price of crude.

Congo has been unable to repay its creditors on agreed terms and timetables since 2015 at least.

The IMF postponed payment of a second tranche of $48 million in December.

"Our analysis raises serious questions about where Congo's oil money has gone," said Global Witness's Natasha White.

"It portrays an oil sector skewed in favour of foreign oil companies, including Total, Chevron and Eni, and reveals major red flags for corruption.

"This warrants close scrutiny — particularly from the IMF."

Global Witness said its analysis was based on SNPC accounts and oil contracts made public in 2018 and 2019 under the conditions of the IMF bailout.—AFP

Nine people dead in Kobe Bryant helicopter crash: official

LOS ANGELES (United States) — Nine people were killed in the helicopter crash which claimed the life of NBA star Kobe Bryant and his daughter, Los Angeles officials confirmed on Sunday.

Los Angeles County Sheriff Alex Villanueva said eight passengers and the pilot of the aircraft died in the accident.

"There were no survivors... There were nine people on board the aircraft, the pilot plus eight individuals," Villanueva said.

Early reports on Sunday said five people had been on board the helicopter when it crashed in foggy weather in the Los Angeles suburb of Calabasas.

Authorities said firefighters received a call shortly before 9:37 am about the crash, which caused a brush fire on a hillside.

Los Angeles County Fire Chief Daryl Osby said firefighters had to hike to the site with medical equipment and hose lines to extinguish the blaze.

Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti confirmed that Bryant's 13-year-old daughter Gianna was among the victims.

"L.A. is grieving with the Bryant family over the loss of Gianna, who perished with her father and friends in today's tragedy," Garcetti wrote on Twitter.

Smoke rises from the site of a helicopter crash in Calabasas, California on January 26, 2020 that killed nine people including NBA legend Kobe Bryant. **PHOTO: AFP**

Gianna was one of Bryant's four children with his wife Vanessa.

The retired NBA star, 41, and Gianna were flying to a game his daughter was expected to play in when their helicopter crashed, according to US reports.

Local media said the other victims included another player and a parent.

Orange Coast College confirmed that its baseball coach, John Altobelli, 56, was on board the helicopter.

CNN said Altobelli's wife, Keri, and one of their two daughters, Alyssa, were also aboard the chopper.

Villaneuva told reporters the authorities would not identify the victims pending notification of family members and identification from the coroner's office.

"It would be extremely disrespectful to understand your loved one has perished and you learn about it from TMZ," Villanueva said, referring to the celebrity news website that first broke the news about the crash. "That is just wholly inappropriate so we are not going to be going there. We are going to wait until the coroner does their job."

The National Transportation Safety Board said it was dispatching an 18-person team to California to help with the investigation into the crash.

"Our team will be looking at the history of the pilot and whatever crew was on board," said Jennifer Homendy, a member of the NTSB.

"We will be looking at maintenance records of the helicopter. We will be looking at records of the owner and operator of the helicopter and a number of other things."

She added that the helicopter was a Sikorsky S-76B that has a black box which investigators will seek to recover. —AFP ■

Portuguese hacker says he is behind Angola corruption leaks

Rui Pinto is described by his lawyers as a 'very important European whistleblower'. **HOTO: AFP**

LISBON (Portugal) — Lawyers for a Portuguese computer hacker said on Monday he was responsible for revealing the dealings of Angolan billionaire Isabel dos Santos, a corruption scandal with fallout across Europe and Africa.

The hacker, Rui Pinto, handed over a hard drive "containing all data related to the recent revelations concerning Ms. Isabel Dos Santos's fortune" to a whistleblowing organisation in 2018, his lawyers said.

The tycoon daughter of former Angolan president Jose Eduardo dos Santos now faces a slew of corruption allegations stretching across Angola's state oil and diamond industries and banks — all of which she has denied in interviews from London.

Rui Pinto — described by his lawyers as a "very important European whistleblower" — is also behind the so-called Football Leaks, a series of stories about financial dealings and transfers involving clubs in Europe's top leagues.

The football revelations, which first appeared in 2015 and were eventually published in Germany's Spiegel and other European outlets, sparked criminal investigations in countries including Britain and France.

Pinto, 31, was extradited from Hungary last March over allegations that he hacked into the systems of investment fund Doyen Sports and tried to blackmail them in return for not publishing information he had taken.

His lawyers have argued that Pinto— currently in pretrial detention in Portugal — willingly stopped the blackmail attempt and turned whistleblower, publishing the documents rather than profiting personally. But a Portuguese court decided on January 17 to go ahead with his trial on a total of 90 charges.—AFP ■

Salvini's League loses bid to topple Italy govt in regional vote

BOLOGNA (Italy)—Italy's populist leader Matteo Salvini failed to win a key regional election and topple the country's fragile coalition government, official results showed on Monday.

The defeat was a major rebuff of Salvini and his far-right League, which had hoped to score a historic upset and force snap elections in the regional vote in Emilia Romagna, but a high turnout favoured the incumbent centre-left candidate.

The Democratic Party's (PD) Stefano Bonaccini won 51.36 percent of the vote against the anti-immigrant League candidate Lucia Borgonzoni's 43.68 percent, according to official results released by the interior ministry on Monday.

The wealthy centre-north region of Emilia Romagna has been a stronghold of the Italian left for over 70 years, but while left-wing values still hold sway in its cities, the right had rallied serious support in towns and the countryside.

The League's defeat now makes it harder for the party to win other key upcoming regional elections, such as Tuscany and Puglia, where it hopes to sway voters to the right.

Editorialist Stefano Polli wrote in La Repubblica that Salvini will have to change his strategy if he hopes to prevail: "Even if the man doesn't seem capable of any other strategy besides rallies and TV talk shows".

Pre-election polls in Emilia Romagna had showed the League neck-and-neck with the PD, which governs Italy in coalition with the anti-establishment Five Star Movement (M5S).

Turnout in the key region was almost double at around 67 percent compared with 37 percent in 2014, potentially thanks to the support of the anti-populist youth-driven Sardines movement.

In the smaller southern region of Calabria, the candidate of former premier Silvio Berlusconi's Forza Italia, Jole Santelli, won handily with 55.71 percent of the vote.—AFP ■

Matteo Salvini's far-right League had hoped to score an historic upset and force snap elections in the regional vote in Emilia Romagna. **PHOTO: AFP**

Billie Eilish dominates the Grammys as music world mourns Kobe

LOS ANGELES (United States) — Pop iconoclast Billie Eilish cleaned up at the Grammys on Sunday, winning five awards, as the music world mourned the loss of LA's hometown basketball hero Kobe Bryant with a series of emotional tributes.

Eilish, 18, swept the "big four" prizes -- Album of the Year, Song of the Year, Record of the Year and Best New Artist -- in an industry acknowledgement of her wave-making role as the new reference point for pop's future.

"What's next? I don't know -- be in this moment is all I'm thinking about," Eilish told reporters backstage.

Lizzo -- one of her main competitors, who won three awards -- kicked off the glitzy gala at the Staples Center by dedicating it to Bryant, in the very arena where the NBA icon made history with the Los Angeles Lakers.

US singer-songwriter Billie Eilish poses in the press room with the awards for Album Of The Year, Record Of The Year, Best New Artist, Song Of The Year and Best Pop Vocal Album during the 62nd Annual Grammy Awards on 26 January 2020, in Los Angeles. **PHOTO: AFP**

"Tonight is for Kobe," shouted the 31-year-old twerking flautist, hours after his death in a helicopter crash was confirmed. His 13-year-old daughter and seven others also died in the incident.

Lizzo then launched into an eye-popping medley performance of her top hits that set the tone for the night. She handed over to host Alicia Keys, who offered another love letter to Bryant's memory: "We're all feeling crazy sadness right now. Earlier today, Los Angeles, America and the whole wide world lost a hero."

"And we're literally standing here heartbroken in the house that Kobe Bryant built," said Keys, before launching into a soulful rendition of "It's So Hard to Say Goodbye (To Yesterday)" with the group Boyz II Men.

"He would want us to keep the vibrations high," Keys later said, before singing a humorous yet soothing opening monologue at the piano. A mushrooming crowd of people, many of them in tears, gathered near the arena to mourn the 41-year-old Bryant. Flags were flying at half-mast.

'Lift each other up'

But the show went on, with an understated performance from Eilish who thanked her fans -- and fellow nominee Ariana Grande -- in accepting her haul of trophies.

"Mainly I think the fans deserve everything," she said, standing alongside her brother Finneas O'Connell, who shared in her Grammy glory while also winning his own producing and engineering awards.

"I feel like they have not been talked about enough tonight because they're the only reason any of us are here at all. So thanks to the fans."

And she gave a shout-out to Grande, who despite five nominations went home empty-handed, saying that Grande's "thank u, next," had been a lifesaver for her.

"I think it deserves more than anything in the world, I love you so much," Eilish said.

Lil Nas X took home two Grammys for his pop culture phenomenon "Old Town Road," while Lizzo won three out of her eight nominations. "This whole week, I'd be lost in my problems, stressed out -- and then in an instant all of that can go away and your priorities really shift," the 31-year-old superstar said, alluding to Bryant's death.

"Let's continue to reach out, hold each other down and lift each other up."

The veterans were not shut out -- Lady Gaga won two Grammys for her soundtrack for the hit film "A Star Is Born," and one went to Beyonce, who nabbed the prize for best music film for "Homecoming."— AFP ■

Two children infected by novel coronavirus recovering

NANNING—Two children aged two and 10 who were infected by the novel coronavirus are recovering and in stable condition in southern China's Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region.

The two-year-old girl surnamed Zhong flew to Nanning, the regional capital, on Jan. 21 with her mother from Wuhan, the center of the novel coronavirus epidemic, and developed a fever the next day. She was confirmed to have been infected by the disease at the Hechi City People's Hospital. After isolated treatment, her fever symptoms disappeared three days ago, and her lungs have no pathological changes, said Wei Qing, a respiratory doctor, adding that she sleeps and eats normally.

Those who had close contact with her have not shown infection symptoms.

Another 10-year-old girl surnamed Dong and her mother were both tested positive for the novel coronavirus after they came to Quanzhou County in Guangxi from Wuhan on Jan. 18.

The two are receiving treatment in a hospital in the city of Guilin. The girl showed no obvious symptoms of high fever or pneumonia after two days of observation, said doctors. — Xinhua ■

Afghanistan launches polio vaccination targeting 9.1 mln children

KABU—The Afghan Public Health Ministry launched a nationwide campaign on Monday to give polio vaccination dose to 9.1 million children under the age of five, the ministry said in a statement.

The five-day campaign started on Monday in 30 of the country's 34 provinces. Due to harsh weather, the anti-polio drive will not be conducted in central Bamyan and Daykundi provinces and western Ghor and Badghis provinces.

The drive was launched as 29 polio cases were detected in Afghanistan in 2019.

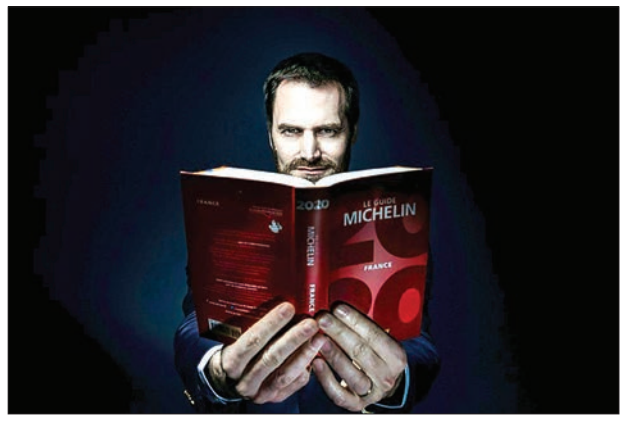
The ongoing insurgency and conflicts have been hindering the efforts to stamp out the infectious disease in the mountainous country as 1.2 million children from areas inaccessible to vaccination teams will miss the ongoing vaccine drive.

Afghanistan and the neighboring Pakistan are the only two countries in the world that polio cases are reported every year, according to the statement. — Xinhua ■

France Michelin Guide overshadowed by shock downgrade

PARIS (France) — It is the annual event that has accomplished chefs quaking in their toques: Monday's 2020 edition of the Michelin restaurant guide for France reveals the winners and losers of its coveted ratings stars. This year's edition of the so-called gastronomy "bible" caused a stir even before its official release, when it was revealed Michelin has stripped renowned chef Paul Bocuse's flagship restaurant of one of its three stars.

The red guide, which can make or break culinary reputations, angered many in the industry by downgrading the iconic Auberge du Pont de Collonges -- the oldest three-starred restaurant in the world created by Bocuse, nicknamed the "pope" of French cuisine.



Gwendal Poullenec, director of the Michelin Guide, insists stars are not 'inherited' but must be 'earned every year'. **PHOTO: AFP**

He died in 2018

But Michelin boss Gwendal Poullennec defended the move by insisting stars are not "inherited", and "must be earned every year".

"We obviously understand the emotion that the loss of a star can provoke, but there is no exceptional treatment," he told AFP.

"All establishments are evaluated anonymously by our inspectors every year... whether you are an iconic chef or a young chef who takes the risk of being plunged into debt by opening a restaurant." Poullennec told AFP no other three-starred restaurants ran the risk of being downgraded in this year's guide.

According to Michelin, restaurants are selected on four criteria: the quality of the ingredients used, mastery of flavour and cooking techniques, the personality of the chef reflected in their cuisine, and lastly value for money and consistency between visits.

One star denotes "high quality cooking", two stars "excellent cooking", and three stars "exceptional cuisine".

Cooking under pressure

Of 30,000 restaurants listed worldwide, only about 130 have attained the highest distinction. Critics say the process has rendered Michelin stars untenable as more and more diners baulk at spending a fortune on a meal. A handful of French restaurateurs have in recent years relinquished their prized three-star status because of the stress of being judged by Michelin inspectors.—AFP

Shikoku Electric not to appeal injunction over Ikata nuclear plant

MATSUYAMA (Japan) — Shikoku Electric Power Co. said Monday it will not appeal a high court injunction banning the operation of the trouble-hit No.3 reactor of the Ikata nuclear power plant in western Japan for the time being.

"It is not the right time to appeal the injunction," Shikoku Electric President Keisuke Nagai told Ehime Gov. Tokihiro Nakamura, head of the local government hosting the plant, as he apologized for a series of problems including temporary loss of power at the plant on Saturday.

However, in a meeting with Nakamura in Matsuyama, Nagai said the company still sees some problems in the decision handed down by the Hiroshima High Court on Jan. 17.

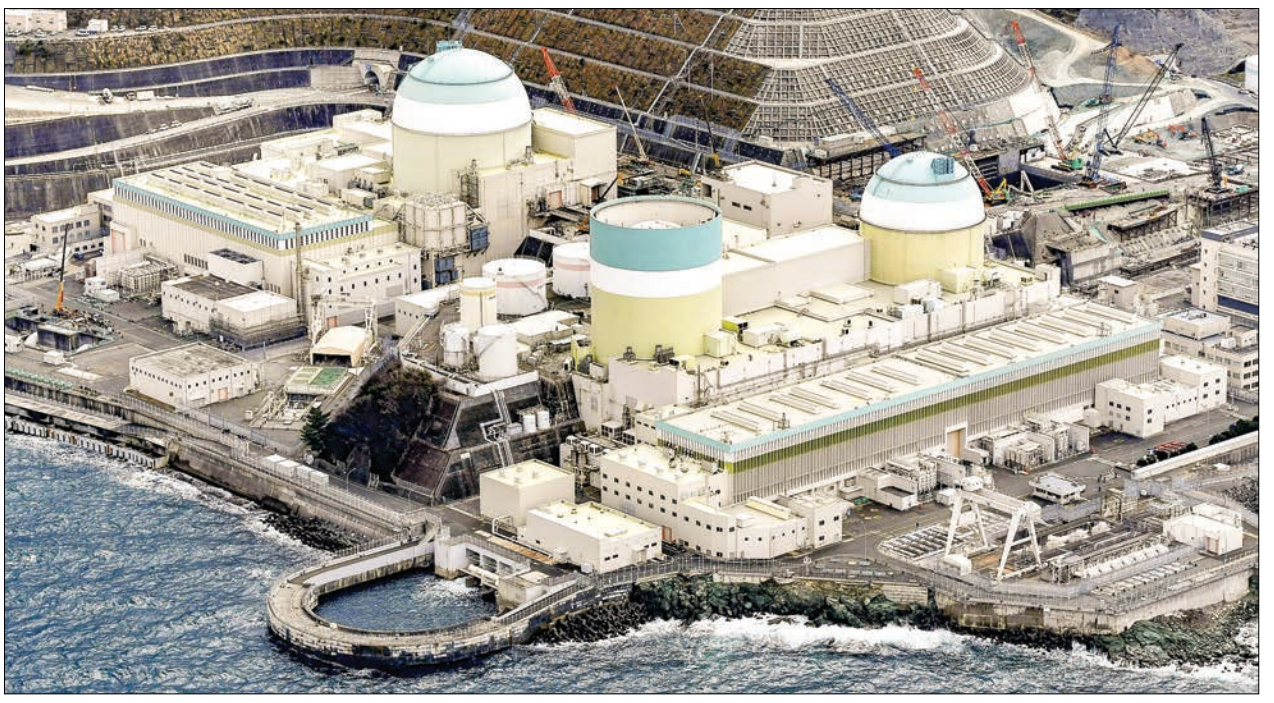
The court ordered the utility to suspend operation of the reactor in the town of Ikata, Ehime Prefecture, determining the operator's and the Nuclear Regulation Authority's rules and risk assessment for a possible disastrous eruption of Mt. Aso, about 130 kilometers away, are inadequate.

The No. 3 unit, currently not in operation due to a regular checkup, restarted operations in 2018 under stricter safety regulations introduced after the 2011 Fukushima nuclear crisis led to a nationwide halt of nuclear power plants.

The injunction dealt a blow to the Japanese government's bid to bring more reactors back online.

On Saturday afternoon, the nuclear plant was hit by a blackout while a periodic inspection of the No.3 unit was under way.

Power was restored in about 10 seconds as an emergency diesel generator and others were activated, but Shikoku Electric revealed "almost all power sources were temporarily lost."



File photo taken Jan. 13, 2020, shows (from L) Nos. 3, 1 and 2 reactors of the Ikata nuclear power plant in Ehime Prefecture, western Japan. The Hiroshima High Court on Jan. 17 ordered its operator Shikoku Electric Power Co. to suspend the No. 3 reactor. **PHOTO: KYODO NEWS**

That was not the only recent problem at the nuclear power station.

On Jan. 12, a control rod was mistakenly removed from the reactor and remained outside for about seven hours during maintenance work including the country's first removal of spent mixed-oxide fuel.

The rod, which controls the fission rate of the nuclear fuel, was accidentally lifted out of the containment vessel when the upper part of the apparatus that holds fuel assemblies in place was lifted by crane.

On Jan. 20, a signal indicating a fall in nuclear fuel in a spent fuel pool was emitted.

Shikoku Electric said Saturday it has suspended regular checkups of the reactor, under way since 26 December, in the wake of the series of the problems. —Kyodo News

Spent MOX nuclear fuel removal starts, 2nd case in Japan

TSURUGA (Japan)— Operations have started to remove a rare type of spent fuel made of plutonium-uranium mixed oxide from a nuclear reactor in central Japan, its operator Kansai Electric Power Co. said Monday.

The removal of MOX fuel rods from the No. 3 reactor at a plant in Takahama, Fukui Prefecture, is the second such case in Japan, following one conducted at the Ikata nuclear plant in the western Japan prefecture of Ehime earlier this month. Kansai Electric plans to take out by Wednesday eight of 28 MOX fuel rods, which had been used at the reactor since December 2010, it said.

The eight MOX fuel rods will be replaced by uranium fuel.

The Osaka-based company said it plans to remove a further 73 uranium fuel rods at the reactor, which is now under a regular checkup.

Kansai Electric said it will store the spent MOX fuel rods temporarily in a cooling pool at the plant, as Japan has no reprocessing facilities for them despite government and power companies' plans to reuse plutonium extracted by reprocessing the spent fuel.— Kyodo News

File photo from May 2019 shows the No. 3 reactor at Kansai Electric Power Co.'s Takahama nuclear power plant. **PHOTO: KYODO NEWS**

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V NORDPANTHER VOY. NO. (004W)

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V NORDPANTHER VOY. NO. (004W) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 28-1-2020 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of MITT where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S SEALAND MAERSK ASIA PTE LTD
Phone No: 2301185

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V CHERRY VOY. NO. (004N/S)

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V CHERRY VOY. NO. (004N/S) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 28-1-2020 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of 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.

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S SAMUDERA SHIPPING LINE
Phone No: 2301185

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V BLPL TRUST VOY. NO. (2001S/2002N)

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V BLPL TRUST VOY. NO. (2001S/2002N) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 28-1-2020 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of AIPT 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.

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S BLPL SHIPPING LINE
Phone No: 2301185

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V VIET THANG-136

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V VIET THANG-136 VOY. NO. (01) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 27-1-2020 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of TMIT-2 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.

SHIPPING AGENCY DEPARTMENT
MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
AGENT FOR: M/S GLOBAL MARS SHIPPING
Phone No: 2301185

Global concerns grow as China virus spreads

WUHAN (China)—The rapid spread of a deadly virus in China caused growing global alarm on Monday, with Germany advising citizens to avoid the country, Mongolia closing its border and other nations racing to evacuate citizens trapped at the epicentre of the health emergency.

The coronavirus has now killed 81 people and infected more than 2,700 across China, with cases found in around a dozen countries as far away as France and the United States.

In a sign of the mounting official concern, Premier Li Keqiang visited ground-zero to oversee containment efforts in Wuhan, a city of 11 million people where the disease emerged late last month.

The government has sealed off Wuhan and other cities in Hubei province, effectively trapping tens of millions of people, including thousands of foreigners, in a bid to quarantine the virus that struck amid the Lunar New Year holiday.

The Communist government decided to extend the holiday, initially due to end on January 30, for three days to limit population flows as it battles the outbreak.

China's National Health Commission said that in addition to 2,744 confirmed infections nationwide, up 769, there were nearly 6,000 suspected cases and over 30,000 people under observation. **PHOTO: AFP**

Twenty-four new deaths were confirmed in Hubei on Monday, and the southern island province of Hainan reported its first fatality, bringing the nationwide toll to 81.

More than 700 new infections were confirmed, while the number of suspected cases doubled over 24 hours to nearly 6,000.

The youngest infected patient was a nine-month-old baby being treated in Beijing.

In Wuhan, construction workers raced against the clock to build two field hospitals within days to relieve overcrowded hospitals swamped with people waiting hours to see doctors overwhelmed by the influx.

Global fears spread

In Germany, Foreign Minister Heiko Maas said the government was holding crisis talks with health experts to discuss the spread of the virus.

"Travellers should consider delaying or cancelling any unnecessary trips to China," Maas said.

Landlocked Mongolia, which is heavily dependent on trade with China, closed the border with its huge neighbour to cars.

Schools and universities will be shut until March 2, while public gatherings involving sports and entertainment are also suspended, Vice Prime Minister Enkhtuvshin Ulziisaikhan said.

Malaysia on Monday has banned visitors from Wuhan and its surrounding Hubei province.

On Sunday, Paris cancelled a parade for the Lunar New Year, celebrated by the city's large Chinese community, as a precaution, according to Mayor Anne Hidalgo. The US, France and Japan are among countries looking to evacuate their citizens from Wuhan.

A US-bound flight is scheduled to leave Wuhan on Tuesday with consular staff and some American citizens. France plans to fly citizens out of the city in the middle of this week. Spanish Foreign Minister Arancha Gonzalez said Madrid is working with Chinese authorities to repatriate about 20 Spaniards. Germany is also considering the possible repatriation of its citizens in Wuhan. "I'm getting more concerned everyday," Do Quang Duy, 32, a Vietnamese masters student in Wuhan, told AFP.

World Health Organization chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus headed to Beijing for discussions with Chinese officials. But the WHO last week stopped short of declaring the outbreak a global emergency, which could have prompted international trade or travel restrictions. —AFP

Sheena Bora was strangulated to death, says AIIMS forensic expert

NEW DELHI (India)— An All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) expert, who carried out medical examinations on the skeleton remains of Sheena Bora, on Monday said that they have established that the 23-year-old woman was strangulated to death.

"We had constituted a medical board to carry out the examination and it has summed up its report. It has concluded that the cause of death is 'aphasia' as a result of manual or ligature strangulation," Dr Sudhir Gupta, head of forensic team at AIIMS, told ANI. Dr Gupta is also the chairman of the medical board set up to carry out the tests on the skeletal remains of Sheena Bora that had been exhumed by the police in 2015.

"The CBI had requested us to give a holistic opinion into the Sheena Bora murder case. It already has the first post mortem report and was having second deliberations in Mumbai by Nayar hospital," Dr Gupta said.

He said that the medical exams indicate that the skeleton remains belonged to Sheena Bora as various parameters including height, age and sex are consistent with the case history.

Talking about how the medical team came to the conclusion that the woman was strangulated, Dr Gupta said: "Since the body was not intact, we had to use the theory of exclusion and negation."

"We concluded the cause of death on the basis of the theory of exclusion and negation, circumstantial evidence collected by the CBI, eyewitnesses, along with national and international literature, which suggest the theory of negation in an established way," he added.

Dr Gupta said that this deposition will help the court understand the chain of events in Sheena Bora's murder, and added that it was a case of criminal homicide because "there were clear signs of destruction of the body".

In 2012, Indrani Mukerjea along with her then-husband Peter and her former husband Sanjeev Khanna allegedly murdered her daughter Sheena over a financial dispute.

The alleged crime was uncovered three years later in 2015.

Indrani came to the notice of police after her driver, Shyamvar Rai, who was arrested in another case in August 2015, revealed the murder plot.

The police then arrested Indrani Mukerjea, Sanjeev Khanna and the driver for the alleged murder. Peter Mukerjea was put behind bars later for allegedly being involved in the murder. Peter and Indrani are now divorced. — ANI

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Cambodia reports 1st case of new coronavirus infection

PHNOM PENH— Cambodia on Monday reported its first confirmed case of the deadly new coronavirus that has been rapidly spreading from the central Chinese city of Wuhan.

Health Minister Mam Bunheng told a press conference that the virus was detected by the Pasteur Institute in a 60-year-old Chinese man who arrived from Wuhan on last Thursday.

The minister said three family members who accompanied him tested negative for the virus.

Besides Cambodia and mainland China, confirmed cases of infection have been recorded in Australia, Canada, France, Hong Kong, Macau, Malaysia, Japan, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, the United States and Viet Nam. —Kyodo News

A check-in counter at Beijing international airport is deserted on Jan. 27, 2020, as China bans all group travel abroad from the same day amid the outbreak of a new pneumonia-causing coronavirus that has spread overseas. **PHOTO: KYODO NEWS**

Bolton says Trump wanted to tie Ukraine aid to probe: report

WASHINGTON (United States) —Former national security advisor John Bolton alleges in a book draft that President Donald Trump wanted to freeze Ukrainian military aid until Kiev investigated his political rivals, *The New York Times* reported Sunday.

Democrats quickly seized on the report to press demands that Bolton and other key people in the Trump administration be called testify in Trump's impeachment trial.

Citing Bolton's unpublished manuscript, *The Times* wrote that Trump told Bolton he wanted to keep frozen $391 million in aid to Ukraine, until Kiev officials helped with a probe into his Democratic rival Joe Biden.

Trump was impeached last month for abuse of power and obstruction of Congress. House of Representatives prosecutors have spent the three days laying out a detailed case that Trump withheld military aid to Ukraine and a White House meeting to pressure his Ukrainian counterpart to open an investigation into political rival Joe Biden and the former vice president's son Hunter, who served on the board of a Ukrainian gas company.

Citing Bolton's unpublished manuscript, The Times wrote that Trump told Bolton he wanted to keep frozen $391 million in aid to Ukraine, until Kiev officials helped with a probe into his Democratic rival Joe Biden. **PHOTO: AFP**

A key point of Trump's impeachment defense has been that there was no quid-pro-quo. Trump's team has maintained that the holdup in aid was separate from his requests for an investigation into the Bidens. Bolton's reported assertion in the manuscript would undercut this.

The Democrats want key Trump administration officials to testify, including Bolton and acting chief of staff Mick Mulvaney, in the belief that they know a lot about Trump's dealings with Ukraine. Bolton has said he is willing to testify if subpoenaed.

In response to *The Times*' report, the lead House manager in the trial, Adam Schiff tweeted that Trump had "blocked our request for Bolton's testimony."

"Now we see why: Bolton directly contradicts the heart of the President's defense," Schiff wrote.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said that Senate Republicans' refusal to hear Bolton or other witnesses and documents is "now even more indefensible."

"The choice is clear: our Constitution, or a cover-up," she said.

Senate minority leader Chuck Schumer urged Senate Republicans to call for witness testimony during the impeachment trial.

But Republicans, who hold a 53-47 edge, have shown little inclination to break ranks with a president who has a history of lashing out ferociously at his perceived enemies.

Sixty-seven senators, a two-thirds majority, are needed to remove Trump from office.— AFP

Three rockets hit US embassy in protest-hit Iraqi capital

BAGHDAD (Iraq)—Three rockets slammed into the US embassy in Iraq's capital on Sunday in the first direct hit reported after months of close calls, as thousands of protesters kept up anti-government sit-ins across the country.

The attack marked a dangerous escalation in the spree of rocket attacks in recent months that have targeted the embassy or Iraqi military bases where American troops are deployed.

None of the attacks has been claimed but Washington has repeatedly blamed Iran-backed military factions in Iraq.

On Sunday, one rocket hit an embassy cafeteria at dinner time while two others landed nearby, a security source told AFP.

A senior Iraqi official told AFP at least one person was wounded, but it was not immediately clear how serious the injuries were and whether the person was an American national or an Iraqi staff member working at the mission.

The US embassy did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

The US State Department called on Iraq late Sunday to "fulfil its obligations to protect our diplomatic facilities".

The attack took place earlier in the day than usual, with AFP reporters hearing the booms on the western bank of the river Tigris at precisely 7:30 pm (1630 GMT).

Iraqi Prime Minister Adel Abdel Mahdi and Speaker of Parliament Mohammed Halbusi both condemned the incident, saying it risked dragging their homeland into war.

Iraq has already been dragged into a worrying tit-for-tat between the United States and Iran over the last month.

A similar attack on a northern Iraqi base killed an American contractor, and the US retaliated with a strike on an Iran-backed faction known as Kataeb Hezbollah.

Less than a week later, a US drone strike killed Iranian general Qasem Soleimani outside the Baghdad airport -- prompting Iran to fire ballistic missiles at an Iraqi base where US troops are stationed.

Iraqis have been protesting since early October against a government deemed corrupt and incompetent. **PHOTO: AFP**

'Only for you, Iraq!'

Some 5,200 Americans are stationed in Iraq to lead the global coalition fighting the Islamic State militant group, but the US strike on Baghdad has rallied top Iraqi figures around a joint call to order them out.

Vehemently anti-American cleric Moqtada Sadr organised a mass rally in Baghdad on Friday, where thousands of his supporters called for American troops to leave.

Sadr had previously backed separate anti-regime protests sweeping Iraq's capital and south, even though he controls the largest bloc in parliament and top ministerial posts.—AFP

US feds, states could join forces on Google probes: report

US federal and state investigators could link up on Google probes, the Wall Street Journal reports. **PHOTO: AFP**

WASHINGTON (United States) —The US Justice Department and state attorneys general are meeting this week for talks on their concurrent investigations into possible anti-competitive practices by Google, *the Wall Street Journal* reported Sunday.

The Journal said the talks could eventually lead to the two groups joining forces as their investigations progress.

The Justice Department and the state attorneys general have not so far shared investigative materials from their respective probes, but officials said that could change.

At least seven state attorneys general have been invited to the meeting, according to the Journal, which cited people familiar with the matter.

A focus of the probes is Google's dominant position in the online advertising market, the report said.

Another subject of scrutiny, it said, is possible anti-competitive behavior by Google in its Android operating system.

The meeting is likely to include discussions of those issues as well as the scope of the investigations and how the work might be divided among them, the Journal said.

Neither the Justice Department nor the state attorneys general commented on the report, nor did Google.

Google dominates the US market for online advertising with a 36 percent share, compared to 19 percent for Facebook.

Facebook is under investigation by the Federal Trade Commission's consumer protection bureau, which is looking into the impact on competition of the company's acquisitions of Instagram and WhatsApp.—AFP

Police Maj-Gen Myo Swe Win delivers speech at the awards ceremony of the 32nd Police Chief Track and Field Championship at the Kyaikasan ground on 27 January. **PHOTO: MPF**

Awards ceremony held for 32nd Police Chief Track and Field Championship

THE finals of the 32nd Police Chief Track and Field Championship and an awards ceremony were held yesterday at the Kyaikasan ground in Yangon.

Officials from the Myanmar Police Force (MPF) and their families, the Deputy Chief of MPF Police Maj-Gen Myo Swe Win, athletes, and sports enthusiasts attended the event.

At the event, Police Maj-Gen Myo Swe Win delivered a speech and presented awards to the winners of competitions. The championship was claimed by the traffic police force team.

Thirty teams from the departments of the Myanmar Police Force competed in the championship, which was held from 25 to 27 January, with the aim of encouraging a new generation of athletes, according to the Myanmar Police Force. —GNLM

2020 MPT MNL U19: Hantharwady United beat Shan United 2-1

HANTHARWADY United claimed a 2-1 victory over Shan United in the MPT Myanmar National League (U-19) 2020 match held yesterday at the South Dagon stadium.

The goals for Hantharwady United were scored by Sithu Kyaw at the 56th minute and Sithu Aung at the 85th minute, while the goal for Shan United was scored by Kam Htar Ni at the 73rd minute.

In another match, Yangon United beat Kachin United by 7-1. The goals for Yangon United were scored by Than Toe Aung at the 18th minute, Aung Myo Khant at the 39th minute, Thant Zin Oo at the 40th minute, Nay Lin Soe at the 56th minute, Thar Yar Win Htet at the 65th minute, and Yan Naing Lin and Aung Nyin Thein in injury time. The goal for Kachin United was scored by Maung Maung Soe at the 10th minute. In the match between Yadanarbon F.C. and Chin United, Yadanarbon drubbed Chin United by 6-0. The goals for Yadanarbon F.C. were scored by Lin Min Tun, Soe Lin Oo, Lwin Zaw Mg, and Kaung Nyi Nyi Thant. — Kyaw Khin

Players of Hantharwady United and Shan United vies for the ball at the South Dagon stadium on 27 January. **PHOTO: MNL**

World grieves for basketball legend Kobe Bryant after helicopter crash

LOS ANGELES (United States) —Basketball legend Kobe Bryant's death in a helicopter crash along with his teenage daughter sparked an outpouring of grief across the worlds of sports and entertainment on Monday.

Bryant, 41, was traveling Sunday with his 13-year-old daughter Gianna and seven other passengers and crew when their helicopter slammed into a rugged hillside in thick fog in Calabasas, west of Los Angeles. There were no survivors.

A five-time NBA champion and two-time Olympic gold medalist, Bryant is widely regarded as one of the greatest basketball players in history.

He was an iconic figure who became one of the faces of his sport during a glittering two-decade career with the Los Angeles Lakers.

All-time basketball great Michael Jordan said Bryant was "like a little brother" to him.

"Words can't describe the pain I'm feeling," the former Chicago Bulls star said. "We used to talk often and I will miss those conversations very much."

Dozens of firefighters and paramedics battled across hilly terrain to reach the flaming wreckage of the Sikorsky S-76 but found no survivors, officials said.

Fans and mourners descended on the area but police warned people to stay away.

"As you can imagine, it's a logistical nightmare in a sense because the crash site itself is not easily accessible," Los Angeles County Sheriff Alex Villanueva told reporters.

The National Transportation Safety Board said an 18-strong team of investigators would be sent to California to probe the crash.

Worldwide tributes

Tributes to Bryant flooded in from former US presidents, pop stars and athletes from different sports, a sign of how the man known as the "Black Mamba" had transcended basketball.

"Kobe was a legend on the court and just getting started in what would have been just as meaningful a second act," Barack Obama tweeted.

Basketball legend Kobe Bryant. **PHOTO: AFP**

"Laker Nation, the game of basketball & our city, will never be the same without Kobe," former Los Angeles Lakers star Magic Johnson tweeted.

American football star Tom Brady wrote simply: "We miss you already Kobe."

At the Australian Open, Australian tennis player Nick Kyrgios wore a Lakers jersey before he took on Rafael Nadal.

Nineteen-time Grand Slam champion Nadal put on a Lakers cap after his win and called Bryant "one of the greatest sportsmen in history". —AFP

Myanmar, Thailand to play friendly match today

AS part of their preparations for the 2020 AFC Women's Olympics Qualifiers, which will begin next month, the women's national football teams of Myanmar and Thailand will play their second friendly match today (28 January) at the Mandalar Thiri Stadium in Mandalay.

Entry to the match would be free of charge, according to the Myanmar Football Federation.

In their first friendly match on 25 January, Myanmar lost to Thailand by 1-2.

After the match today, team Myanmar will select a final squad of 20 players from the current squad of 26 players.

2020 AFC Women's Olympics Qualifiers: Myanmar in Group A

Myanmar has been placed in Group A with host South Korea and Viet Nam in the qualifiers for the 2020 AFC Women's Olympics.

Myanmar will play against South Korea on 3 February and take on Viet Nam on 6 February at the Jeju World Cup Stadium, Seogwipo, South Korea.

Meanwhile, Thailand has been placed in Group B with host Australia, China, and Chinese Taipei. The matches for Group B will take place in February.

The winners and first runners-up from the two groups will advance to the play-offs, which have been scheduled for 6 March (first leg) and 11 March (second leg). The two play-off round winners will qualify for the 2020 Summer Olympics. — Kyaw Khin