DEAR esteemed citizens of Myanmar,

I extend my greetings and good wishes for your good health and well-being on this auspicious occasion of the 2021 New Year. During the past years, our Union Government has worked relentlessly for the smooth performance and effectiveness of the government's administrative machinery and development of the whole country. For the all-round development of the Union, we formulated short-term and long-term plans by designating 11 sectors and worked on these plans. Working in this way, there have been many projects which we have successfully completed as well as many projects that remain to be completed. In the coming years, we will join hands and work with the people not only to complete these projects but will strive to create better conditions and new opportunities in the political, economic and social sectors.

My fellow citizens,

The most important fundamental requirement for the development and success of a country is to peace and stability and the rule of law. In working towards this end, the collective strength of the people is extremely important. Just as it is important for all the people to work collectively in collaboration for Union peace and stability, for the successful establishment of a Democratic Federal Union aspired by all citizens, in such a way we would be able to work simultaneously for equal development all across the Union.

... it is important for all the people to work collectively in collaboration for Union peace and stability, for the successful establishment of a Democratic Federal Union aspired by all citizens, in such a way we would be able to work simultaneously for equal development all across the Union.

DEAR esteemed Union born ethnic national brothers and sisters, I extend my good wishes and greetings to all Union born ethnic national brothers and sisters living in the Republic of the Union of Myanmar to be blessed with good health and well-being in the auspicious New Year of 2021. In the New Year, all ethnic national brothers and sisters –

May they be able to work in the interest of the country in good health and well-being.

May their socio-economic lives be elevated and developed.

May they all be free from the dangers of COVID-19 and be blessed with good health.

May they achieve as soon as possible the “Peace” that they have all been longing for!

ON the auspicious occasion of the New Year “2021”, I extend my greetings and good wishes to all citizens for their good health, well-being and auspiciousness. Every New Year usually brings new challenges and new opportunities. So, in this New Year also, I believe that there will be new opportunities for all our ethnic national brothers and sisters to work with mutual respect and mutual understanding and friendship in establishing the Democratic Federal Union that we all aspire to.

In this year, may all of us be able to learn good lessons from the experiences of past years. May all of us be able to collaborate and work to fulfill all the expectations of all ethnic national races. I wish you a prosperous and great New Year 2021, free from COVID-19 pandemic.
**New Year Wishes of Bhaddanta Kumara Bhivamsa**  
Chair of State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee

MY NEW YEAR Wish is that during the life-time of Buddha in the past over 2,500 years ago, Vesali state was hit by three major catastrophes—(a) pandemic (b) devils (c) starvation.

The Lord Buddha taught his disciple Anadar recitation of Ratana Sutta, and the latter could help people to overcome these catastrophes.

Myanmar people are advised to recite Ratana Sutta very often, to follow moral conducts and to share merits to celestial beings. In return, these celestial beings may help all the human beings in overcoming COVID-19 pandemic.

**New Year Special Message of Sitagu Sayadaw,**  
Sagaing Hill

HOW to live in life, like swimming across a sea

Life is very wide and deep with full of storms and tidal waves. Life is like a sea. If someone is not in motion or is unable to swim, it is not sure to avoid sinking or floating.

• Continuous effort must be made in swimming to reach the shore.
• It is needed to know ‘swimology’.
• ‘Swimology’ must be learnt.
• Swimming skill is required.

By developing great courage, firm determination, brave endeavour and profound wisdom, the most traditional and ancient way of living in life, like swimming across the wild sea with dangerous aquatic creatures, is the ‘Eightfold Noble Path’ with eight components.

The noble persons in the past followed this path, and the future ones will follow suit.

The nobler ones of the present time are also on the same path.

May all the persons with devotion to good deeds cross the sea with tidal waves and dangerous aquatic creatures along the single path of -ology.

It is the ‘Eightfold Noble Path’. The most important meaning is ‘swimology’.

Swimology is the most important.

‘Swimology’ must be learnt.

That is the ‘Eightfold Noble Path’.

**Dhamma Duta Sayadaw Ashin Cekinda**

IT is required to have good wishes for the prosperity of our own family. The wish rooted in affection to our own family. All the members of the family, including oneself, should enjoy the prosperity.

Laziness and stupidity must be removed by active learning to enjoy prosperity. There is no end to learning. A very conceited person could not learn any more and would turn into an idiot due to the lack of updated knowledge.

All the persons should try for the prosperity of their family and for their country.

Keep a mindset to love and cherish the own country, while expanding knowledge for the development of the country.

**Dr Nandamala Bhivamsa**  
Rector Sayadaw

THX Year 2020 has ended with worries and remorse caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Share merits for all beings, and make wishes for a happy and pleasant life, the end of the pandemic in the upcoming year.

The pandemic has caused various losses of relatives and property. It is needed to follow healthcare guidelines, and everybody should maintain moral disciplines, right views and practising good deeds.

May all you steadfastly follow the Dhamma path.

**COVID-19 Call Centre opens daily**

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

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

Beginning from the end of 2019, because of the COVID-19 pandemic that spread across all the countries of the world, many countries suffered tragic losses in human lives as well as great difficulties in the economic and social sectors. Our country also suffered similar difficulties to a certain extent; it is a well-known fact that because the people worked in close cooperation with the Union Government by taking on their assigned tasks in unity, we were able to protect ourselves and control this pandemic without suffering huge losses. This is a very visible and good example of the great value of collective strength. For this, I wish to thank all our citizens.

In the post-COVID-19 period also, we will continue to implement plans which will include economic response and recovery programmes to lessen the impact of this disease on the socio-economic life of the people. I wish to express my firm belief that all of us would be able to overcome the losses that resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic with the united strength of the Union Government and the people.

On this auspicious occasion of the New Year, may all citizens be free from the dangers of this pandemic and may you all have good health and happiness. I send these good wishes for the peace, prosperity and progress of the Union. Thank you all.

2021 New Year Message from President U Win Myint

FROM PAGE-1
to work simultaneously for equal development all across the Union. That is why I wish to make this request to all Union citizens to join hands in overwhelming numbers and work in the interest of our country.

DEAR esteemed citizens and ethnic national brothers and sisters, I send these good wishes for your peace of mind and good health in this auspicious New Year 2021. With unity between the Union government and citizens, we are proud to have successfully held the 2020 multi-party democratic General Elections in accordance with the COVID-19 prevention and control guidelines in order to maintain the momentum of working for nationwide peace and a Democratic Federal Union that all of us aspire to. The Union government has also taken short-term and long-term measures to remedy economic impacts caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, and I would like to request all citizens to cooperate in that process.

On this auspicious occasion of the New Year I send these good wishes to all citizens to be free from the pandemic. May they all be able to make their own contribution, “a grain of sand or a piece of brick”, for the emergence of a Democratic Federal Union with mutual tolerance and forgiveness!

I wish to express my firm belief that all of us would be able to overcome the losses that resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic with the united strength of the Union Government and the people.

On this auspicious occasion of the New Year, may all citizens be free from the dangers of this pandemic and may you all have good health and happiness. I send these good wishes for the peace, prosperity and progress of the Union. Thank you all.

2021 New Year Message from President U Win Myint

New Year Greetings by Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker U T Khun Myat

New Year Greetings by Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker Mahn Win Khaing Than

DEAR esteemed ethnic national brothers and sisters living in the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and abroad, I send my good wishes and prayers for your good health and well-being on this auspicious occasion of the New Year!

By taking lessons from the difficulties and challenges of the previous years, we will have to embrace the New Year in order to benefit from the opportunities of the future. Follow democratic practices with empathy and, sharing which are the intrinsic aptitudes of Myanmar people. Develop morality and sympathy and tolerance so that a peaceful and prosperous Democratic Federal Union, which is the common goal of national people.

Strictly adhere to healthcare rules of the Ministry of Health and Sports to wear masks whenever going outside and wash hands frequently to prevent infection of the COVID-19 pandemic, which is being faced by the entire world. I wish that all citizens would be free from COVID-19; may you all enjoy a healthy and pleasant future in the upcoming year, and may you all be able to follow the teachings of your respective religions.
2021 New Year Message from Senior General Min Aung Hlaing

DEAR esteemed ethnic national brothers and sisters,

I send these good wishes for this auspicious 2021 New Year for your good health and well-being.

I said in the previous New Year’s Greetings that the Year 2020 was an important year for our country. Not only our country but also the world encountered various difficult challenges in 2020. COVID-19 pandemic started in December 2019, and it has spread throughout the world. The Tatmadaw has kept monitoring the prevention and treatment of this disease.

Although the number of COVID-19 cases has declined in the country, constant vigilance is still needed. Strict adherence to the guidelines of the Ministry of Health and Sports could effectively control the transmission of this disease.

All countries of the world are experiencing socio-economic losses due to this pandemic. The global population is over 7,000 million. All the countries and all the people are struggling for their livelihoods. As Myanmar is an agriculture-based country, strenuous efforts in agricultural and livestock sectors could help in global food security and socio-economic development of Myanmar.

The Tatmadaw will shun any matter that can hinder and disturb peace-making processes. In implementing eternal peace, the Tatmadaw has announced a ceasefire for two years from 21 December 2018 to 31 December 2020 in five military command areas. Possible efforts will be made in the future to the utmost extent.

The ethnic armed organizations need to take the NCA path in the post-2020 in leading to a political path based on democracy and a federal system.

The Tatmadaw will make the best effort for eternal peace and national development in close cooperation with the ethnic national brothers and sisters. Let me pray once again for the people to have all their good wishes fulfilled.

New Year Greetings by Interfaith Groups

Interviewed by Min Thit (MNA)/ Photo: Nay Lin U Thaung Htaik
(Shwedagon Pagoda Board of Trustees member / Chairperson of Myanmar Interfaith Central Organization)

I make my New Year greetings to all brothers and sisters of different faiths in Myanmar to live peacefully with mutual respects for one another’s religion. I pray for the nation to be free from calamities and for all brothers and sisters from different faiths possess mental and physical wellbeing. May all Myanmar citizens overcome the pandemic.

Cardinal Charles Maung Bo (Archbishop of Yangon, Myanmar)

I would like to urge “to visualize together” the establishment of a new Myanmar nation. We saw the united supports of the public during the democratic election in 2020.

People in ethnic regions cast votes for NLD with the hope they will get peace. It is clear that this is the time to settle disagreements related to nationalism, faiths and religions. We already gave lives, blood, and sweat. Let us make our nation recover from pains by bringing about reconciliation. No justice, no peace. The government is necessary to abide by political, economic, social, cultural and citizens’ rights. It must embrace the dignity of difference.

Let us visualize emerge of a peaceful nation after having justice in economic and environmental affairs of Myanmar. Let us visualize that displaced persons return to their natives with dignity. Let us visualize together to be Myanmar “Golden Country” and to be “the most developed nation in Southeast Asia from the poorest one” after building a democratic system, welcoming the day faiths play a central role in peace and reconciliation processes, and sharing resources with equal and transparent manners.

Dr Hla Tun
(Archbishop of Church of the Province of Myanmar [Anglican])

I pray for the disappear- ances of bad dreams of 2020. May the new peaceful, healthy and wealthy Myanmar nation that we imagined actually emerge.

May all citizens possess an auspicious New Year.

Dr Hla Tun
(Member of Thanantana Dhamma Palaka (Hindu Association and Myanmar Interfaith Central Organization))

We were facing coronavirus pandemic in 2020. All people felt sorrow. I pray for all beings to be free from danger and be well and happy.

Stephen Than Myint Oo
(Archbishop of Church of the Province of Myanmar [Anglican])

The Year 2021 be an auspicious year. We faced difficulties in 2020 because of coronavirus pandemic. I pray for all citizens possess mental and physical well-beings. May God bless you all.

Al Haj Kalifa U Aye Lwin
(Myanmar) Chief Convener, Islamic Centre of Myanmar

All Myanmar citizens and all beings across the world be well, happy and peaceful in the new year. We had many difficulties and challenges in 2020. We are facing against the common enemy of coronavirus. May peace and good health be upon you.

890 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 31 December, total figure rises to 124,630

MYANMAR’S COVID-19 positive cases rose to 124,630 after 890 new cases were reported on 31 December according to the Ministry of Health and Sports. Among these 124,630 confirmed cases, 2,682 died, 107,069 have been discharged from hospitals.—MNA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Death Cases</th>
<th>New Cases</th>
<th>Total Death Tally</th>
<th>Discharged from Hospital</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>124,630</td>
<td>890</td>
<td>2,682</td>
<td>107,069</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Daily death toll until 8 pm 31-12-2020

Ministry of Health and Sports
We should not stumble just as our goal comes into view

what we are now focusing our attention on is the vaccine. To purchase vaccines for 15 million people, our delegation is now in India. We will get a clearer picture regarding the purchase of this vaccine within next week. We have already made necessary preparations to initiate the vaccination programme not long after the sales agreement has been signed and all the necessary preparations have been made. This is for the whole country. We will be carrying this out step by step. Whatever the case may be, even after we have obtained the vaccines, the vaccination process for the whole country will take months. That is why we need to be very vigilant during this interim period. We should not stumble just as our goal comes into view.

(Excerpt from State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's report on COVID-19 containment measures, on 25 December 2020)

MoE holds second-day meeting with teachers for drafting NESP

UNION Minister for Education Dr Myo Thein Gyi held the second day of the online meeting with teachers from the basic education, technological and vocational education sectors for drafting the National Education Strategic Plan (NESP) 2021-2030 yesterday morning.

The meeting was also joined by the Deputy Minister, the Permanent Secretary, Directors-General, Deputy Directors-General, teachers and relevant officials.

During the meeting, the Directors-General for the Department of Technical and Vocational Education and Training, and the Department of Higher Education of the Ministry of Education participated in the discussion on the respective sectors and the relevant officials cordially discussed detail.

Afterwards, the Union Minister expressed words of thanks and concluded the meeting. —MNA

PHOTO: MNA

2021 New Year Greetings from Peace Negotiators, EAOs leaders

THE following are the excerpts from 2021 New Year Greetings of peace negotiators and EAOs leaders reflecting the expectation of peace.

Dr Lian Hmung Sahkong
(Chairman of Chin National Front) I wish that peace dialogues could turn into peace implementation in 2021. May all the national people make peace of the country this year after discussions on fundamental principles for the establishment of the Union based on democracy and federal system.

U Hla Maung Shwe
(Secretary, UPDJC) I wish for the well-being of people in the new year. The Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee (UPDJC) will implement peace-processes, including the Part 3 of Union Accord and discussions with the ethnic armed organizations which have not signed the NCA. I hope that we could make good results in these processes. May all the citizens enjoy peace and happiness in 2021 New Year, overcome the pandemics and establish a Union based on the democracy and federal system.

U Myo Win
(Vice-Chairman of ABSDF) We all encountered many challenges in 2020, in peace-making issue and the outbreak of COVID-19. I wish that all the people could free from the disease and get the vaccine. Peace and prosperity of the country cannot be made by the ruling party or the government alone. We need to work for national unity aspired by all citizens. We must try for lasting peace based on the good foundations.

Armed conflicts in Rakhine State and the northern part of the country have been under control to a certain degree. All the stakeholder must work together for peace. Enjoy peace and happiness in the new year.

Khun Myint Tun
(Vice-Chairman of PNLO) I hope peace and unity could be made phase by phase in 2021. I also wish for the establishment of the Federal Union through national reconciliation and unity. I expect that we could overcome all sorts of crisis by the collective strength of our people.

Saw Mra Razar Linn
(Deputy Leader of Peace-Making Group, ALP) I wish that all the national people could enjoy health and well-being in the new year. My wishes also reflect the expectations of Arakan Liberation Party (ALP). I believe that the ethnic armed organizations, the government and majority of the public have agreed that the establishment of a Federal Union is pivotal to the peace. I conclude that absolute devotion is needed in serving for the country.

THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR
1 JANUARY 2021
NATIONAL
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PHOTO: MNA

MoE holds second-day meeting with teachers for drafting NESP

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During the meeting, the Directors-General for the Department of Technical and Vocational Education and Training, and the Department of Higher Education of the Ministry of Education participated in the discussion on the respective sectors and the relevant officials cordially discussed detail.

Afterwards, the Union Minister expressed words of thanks and concluded the meeting. —MNA (Translated by Ei Phyu Phyu Aung)
Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Office of the Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services
Statement on Ceasefire and Eternal Peace
(2nd Wanning of Nadow, 1382 ME)
(31 December 2020)

1. For striving towards the achievement of eternal peace aspired by the public and effective and rapid control of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) in the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, the Office of Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services has issued a statement to enforce the ceasefire from 1 to 31 December 2020 in all areas excluding the areas where terrorist groups declared by the government take positions. The Tatmadaw was forming a peace dialogue committee to hold discussions with EAOs for achieving eternal peace.

2. With the aim to achieve eternal peace in the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, to smoothly implement peace processes with EAOs, and to increase momentum of effective containment, prevention and treatment of COVID-19 pandemic, The Tatmadaw announced the extension of suspension of military activities from 1 to 31 January 2021 in all areas excluding the areas where terrorist groups declared by the government take positions.

2021 New Year Wishes from Businesspersons

Interview by Min Thit (MNA)
Photo by Nay Lin

Wunna Kyaw Htin Sithu, Thayay Sithu U Aung Ko Win
(Patron of UMFCCI)

May all the national people of the Union enjoy health and well-being during the auspicious New Year occasion. While the government is working for the COVID-19 vaccination programme, people need to follow the rules and directives of the state leaders and the Ministry of Health and Sports to prevent infection of this pandemic.

People should join hands with the government to improve the education quality of the country as it is crucial for the development of the country in the post-COVID-19 period. It is pleasing to see that the government is putting emphasis on the economic sector in trying for the livelihood the public and the creation of employment opportunities. All the stakeholders in the economic sector need to work for the successful digital transformation.

All the national people should be united in striving for the Union peace as early as possible as it is necessary for the better rule of law and security, services in health and education, businesses and social sectors.

On this New Year, I wish that all the national people could overcome COVID-19 pandemic and establish a democratic state with lasting peace and prosperity.

U Zaw Min Win
President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (UMFCCI)

I wish all the best of our citizens and international partners who support Myanmar with good intentions. The Republic of the

U Chit Khang

Wanna Kyaw Htin Dr Khin Shwe
Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry, which leads the private business sector of the country, is successively cooperating with the government and international organizations for peace, stability, the prosperity of the country as well as socio-economic development of the people.

I also appreciate the efforts of the government that they are closely working with the private firms to implement the sustainable economic development of the country based on the development of the private sector.

I would like to extend my sincere wishes for active collaboration of Myanmar businesspersons, members of UMFCCI and partner organizations and for the interests of the State, public and private business firms in upcoming New Year.

U Chit Khang

Wanna Kyaw Htin Dr Khin Shwe
(Chairman of Zaykabar Company Limited)

On this auspicious occasion of New Year, I wish all people of the world and Myanmar citizens an early escape from COVID-19 pandemic and good health.

The year has changed from 2020 to 2021, and it is such an important year for all people. All as you know, all the countries report high casualties while many business people face recession and all have to struggle in a serious quarantine due to COVID-19 pandemic.

During the COVID-19 outbreak, all the people from different walks of life are prioritized not to be infected with the diseases as well as their keeps. When the pandemic ends, it needs better economic recovery to ease the food and accommodation concerns of grassroots people.

Myanmar has better things than other countries as it boasts vast areas of land to conduct breeding and agriculture and better soil, weather and human resources to produce food products.

If we correctly apply these advantages, the country will have the best opportunities for recovery processes than other countries in the post-COVID-19 period.

Myanmar has plenty of natural resources, and so it is easier to conduct recovery plans than other countries. If the relevant officials create better changes and systematic management, the situation will be better.

I hope there would be good news for the country and citizens in the coming New Year:

U Myo Htwe
(Managing Director of PRO 1 Global Co., Ltd.)

On the auspicious occasion of the 2021 New Year, I would like to extend my good wishes to all for their excellent health, well-being and better job opportunities.

May all Myanmar citizens receive COVID-19 vaccines, may the country quickly be free from the pandemic and may all you enjoy best of health and peace of mind in this New Year.

Dr San San Yi
(President of Aden Group Company Limited)

I am wishing you all a Happy New Year. May all the Myanmar people possess better portents and sweet words in 2021. May all you be free from three disasters and five enemies. I wish you all the best. May all the people in the world enjoy best of health and peace of mind and may all you overcome the risk of COVID-19 pandemic by following the health rules. May the whole world be free from COVID-19 pandemic. I wish you all gain better economy and better job opportunities.

Dr San San Yi
(Chairperson of Obbar Thiri Company Limited)

I wish you all a Happy New Year. May all the Myanmar people possess better portents and sweet words in 2021. May all you be free from three disasters and five enemies. I wish you all the best. May all the people in the world enjoy best of health and peace of mind and may all you overcome the risk of COVID-19 pandemic by following the health rules. May the whole world be free from COVID-19 pandemic. I wish you all gain better economy in 2021. I believe that everything will be OK if we all carry out in unity.

(Translated by Khine Thazin Han)
New Year wishes from artists for 2021

One year has passed. The old year is over, and the new year is 2021. Welcoming the year 2021, here is a collection of New Year wishes, including words of encouragement from the artists to get through the best in the new year, based on the events happened in the year 2020.

Academy award winner Yan Aung
In the 2021 New Year, I wish we all be free from the fifth and diseases of the old year and a safe and prosperous New Year with a new mind and a new spirit. During the suffering COVID-19 period, all human beings are struggling and trying to face it. All of this is a new experience for us. With that in mind, let’s get through a new life by protection, prevention and living a new lifestyle. I urge you all to be strong.

Director Kyi Phyu Shin
I wish all the people from Myanmar and all around the world can welcome the New Year with good health. I want the global COVID-19 pandemic to end as soon as possible. The disease affects everyone’s health, well-being and the economy. Therefore, I wish all of you to be free from this catastrophe and to be healthy, happy and prosperous. The main thing is that if this terrible disease is cured, I love there will be an economic and social improvement.

Zen Kyi
With half a smile without giving up I was able to get out… What a beautiful number for all.

Director Na Gyi
In the new year 2021, I pray for the speedy implementation of a new rating system that we have never had before and a genuine democracy as soon as possible. The world is once a long time, I avoided as much as a stressful situation as possible by doing physical activity, eating fruits and vegetables that reduce stress, reading inspirational books, spending time with my loving family and doing research to improve my career and waiting for the pandemic to leave the world.

May all be strong and free from the pandemic as soon as possible and may you have a prosperous, happy and disease-free life.

Director Na Gyi
In the new year 2021, I pray for the speedy implementation of a new rating system that we have never had before and a genuine democracy as soon as possible.

Paing Phyo Thu
In the new year, I wish all the people of Myanmar good health physically and mentally.

Daung
In the new year, I wish we all have new hopes, new dreams, a world with new joys.

Kyaw Su
In the New Year, I wish all human beings free from all diseases and Happy New Year. We all have to go through the same period during COVID-19, so I would like to tell you not to get discouraged, but to live with a healthy lifestyle and protect yourself.

Yan Yan Chen
Starting from the new year, I pray all the people will have better health and prosperity, and all businesses will prosper beyond normal. I believe that now all human beings can overcome COVID-19 disease.

Aung Htet
At the New Year, I wish all Myanmar people are happy, healthy and free from diseases. I wish we all are free from the current COVID-19 disease and all families are happy and healthy.

Phyo Pyae Sone
In the new year 2021, I wish you all good health. May you have more success and happiness in the future. In the year 2020, We had to go through sadness and harmful things. From there, in 2021, we will bring back the good from the bad. I also pray for better health, and what to prepare with maturity and experiences we have had.

I want you to think about how we can get through our days in life with COVID-19 rather than the COVID-19 vaccines. Another thing is that nothing is permanent in the world. So what is happening now will pass at some point. As good things will come and so I urge you to move on with this belief.

Eaint Chit
In the year 2021, I wish all the audience good health and prosperity. I wish we can get rid of the COVID-19 disease as soon as possible and I also wish all the families have happy minds.

Gone Ye Aye Kyaw
In the coming new year, may all Myanmar people and all the people of the world be free from all diseases, economic crises and have healthy and prosperous days.

Wanna
In the new year, I wish we all have new minds and new successes. During the COVID-19 period, don’t get depressed but live a healthy lifestyle to keep your spirits up. I would like to encourage you all to strive to be healthy and the strong people who are able to achieve many of your dreams once the pandemic is over.

May Lu Than Zin
I wish every family will be healthy and work again, starting from the new year 2021. I am now living a healthy lifestyle with care. We do not know how far this COVID-19 will last, so whatever you do, I would like to urge you to take care of yourself in whatever you do by following the instructions, wearing masks and washing your hands.

Performer Comedian Tain Nyut
I wish all art lovers and citizens full of joys starting from the beginning of the New Year. I also wish you all good economic and social prosperity and free from the pandemic.

Comedian Pann Thee
Starting from the New Year, may all citizens be free from the COVID-19 disease and have a happy life. May all families be happy and healthy. May the peace that all the people have been waiting for during the second term of the government be achieved as soon as possible. I pray that the government and the people will work together to overcome the COVID-19 pandemic more successfully.

Comedian Oak Aww
May the world free from the global COVID-19 virus as soon as possible. From the time of the New Year, I wish all citizens may have a good economy, health and social life and free from the disease. May all the people be successful in 2021 and work for the development of the country.

Artist Sin Ma
In 2021, may all the ethnic brothers and sisters living in the country have peace of mind and be in good health and free from the COVID-19 disease. Please protect the disease starting from ourselves. Roads for the development of our country are appearing. Each of us is responsible for making our country, nationality and the next generation prosper. Let all the people cooperate. I would like to encourage to be strong, and I wish we all start the economy and social works with a new mind, new spirit beginning from the New Year.

Interviewed by Mon Oo Naing / Zau Gyi (Translated by EPPA)
Remain united in fighting pandemic in New Year

In fact, even with the arrival of vaccines in 2021, we are not out of the woods yet. Still, we need to recope the havoc wreaked by COVID-19 in the years to come. It has been a struggle in 2020 but we could see a light at the end of the tunnel due to the COVID-19 vaccines. Getting through that long tunnel will involve following health guidelines such as social distancing, wearing masks and washing hands frequently. Mask up, wash up and keep at least 6 feet of distance from others until there is widespread immunity to the coronavirus.

On New Year Day, we would like to urge the people to remain vigilant, determined, diligent and united to be able to overcome the issues that resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic. HAPPY NEW YEAR!!

This helped him secure an enhanced opportunity of becoming a Pali scholar when he grew up. In 1896, he joined a government high school where he got scholarship and many prizes. In 1906, he entered Yangon College. Then he got a B.A degree from it in 1899 and in 1908 he graduated from Calculat University in 1911. Due to his competence in Pali, he was appointed Maung Maung Tin. During his first years of life, he was called Maung Maung Tin but the name was given with his father’s fav, when he came of age.

In 1911, he was despatched to Oxford University where he translated the Visuddhimagga (The Path of Purity) and got a B.A degree. While staying in England, he also translated the Hinman-raya win into English under the name of ‘The Glass Palace’.

He was the only Myanmar on the commission formed in 1918 to establish the Yangon University, independent of Calculat University. In 1920, he was despatched to Oxford University where he translated the Visuddhimagga (The Path of Purity) and got a B.A degree. He was appointed Pali teacher as an L. and U Tin in addition to U Pwe who had been appointed before he went to Oxford. Moreover, he demand fixed to the University Senate that the curriculum of Myanmar-sar should be extended and that more opportunities of teaching Myanmar-sar should be created. In the University Senate, he prescribed that Myanmar-sar must be a compulsory subject for all students including Myanmar and foreigners. It also prescribed him to 1,800 rubies to pay more Myanmar-sar teachers. Therefore, soon, he was able to open Myanmar-sar honours and master classes with the aid of the newly-appointed teachers. Thus he could produce a breed of outstanding Myanmar-sar teachers like Maung Sein Tin, Maung Wun, Maung Thain Rin, Maung Aye Maung, Maung Tone Aung, etc who, some years afterwards, pioneered new form of Myanmar-sar called Khii-san-pye (Age-testing literature), which marked a turning point in the history of Myanmar literature.

The Second Yangon University Student boycott broke out because of the expulsion of Ko Nu Se from the University. As he then summoned the protest, Principal D.S. James was transferred to Hongkong University. U Pe Maung Tin was appointed in his place. Then he became the only Myanmar to be appointed to the Post of Principal of University College in 1937 under the British rule. He is, in the capacity of the principal, used to protect Myanmar-sar staff from the oppression of British university authorities as much as one could. One day, Chemistry Professor Mr Peacock punched in the jaw Ko Ba Nyunt, a staff of the laboratory for a trivial case. The blow was so severe that a tooth of Ko Ba Nyunt came off. So he reported the incident to Principal U Pe Maung Tin. Then, the latter summoned demonstrator U San Tan, who was the only eye-witness to the case, and interrogated him whether Mr Peacock really did so. When U San Tan answered in the affirmative, he called Mr Peacock to come to his office-room immediately. Having known that U Pe Maung Tin would blame him, Mr Peacock stomped with trepidation into his room and retreated solderly to him, treading on the edge of his table with his shoes. However, U Pe Maung Tin choked back his anger and got Mr Peacock solderly out of his room. The same day, he issued the order of dismissal of Mr Peacock from the Post of Principal in 1944. However, due to his excellent academic knowledge he was dropped back into the academic field and appointed again to the position of Principal of University College in 1947. He was also became the first Myanmar pastor of Hinthada University and lectured on Buddhism.

It conferred an Honourary Doctorate LL.D, from Yangon University in 1952. In 1957-58, he visited Chicago University and lectured on Buddhism. It conferred an Honourary Doctorate on him. Moreover, he took the helm of the Myanmar Translation Association. And he also served as Chairman of the Myanmar Historical Commission from 1984 to 1986. He died at the age of 86 on 22 March, 2019.

It is concluded that, although U Pe Maung Tin was one of the most educated Myan-mars during Colonial Period and Fronting his superior and commit-ting physical offence against his tenant-Governor, he also agreed to the decision of U Pe Maung Tin.

Myanmar Daily Weather Report

Issued at 12:00 pm Thursday 31st December, 2020

R AY INFERENCE: Weather is generally fair over the North Bay and Westcoast Area and a few cloud to partly cloudy over the Andaman Sea and elsewhere over the Bay of Bengal.

FORECAST VALID UNTIL AFTERNOON OF THE 2nd January, 2021: Weather will be partly cloudy to. Yangon-Taninhtayi Regions and Eastern Shan, Kayin, Mon States and generally fair in the remaining regions and States.

STATE OF THE SEA: Strong easterly winds with moderate to rough seas are likely at Times Debalt, Gulf of Mottama, off and along Min Taninthayi Coasts. Surface wind speed in strong easterly winds may reach (30-35) m.p.h. Sea will be moderate elsewhere over the Andaman Sea and elsewhere over the Bay of Bengal.

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 1 January, 2021: Fair weather.

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 1 January, 2021: A few cloud.

FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 1 January, 2021: Fair weather.
Implementation committee on recommendations on Rakhine State holds meeting on review report (draft)

The committee on implementing recommendations on Rakhine State held its coordination meeting over the review report (draft) regarding implementation activities, at the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement on 31 December 2020.

Mr. Ko Ni, an advisor to the committee, Rakhine State Chief Minister Dr. Win Myat Aye, and other committee members attended the meeting. The Union Minister said that during the three-year term of the committee, it had prepared a review report based on the status of implementation of the recommendations of the Rakhine State Advisory Commission chaired by Mr. Ko Ni for the stability and long-term development of the Rakhine State.

The Secretary’s Office of the Recommendation Committee has prepared a review report (draft) in accordance with the results of the analysis, and the attendees discussed the report (draft).

The Union Minister said that the review report (draft) is based on the information published in the committee’s public reports issued every four months and the information from monthly reports submitted by the Rakhine State government and the relevant ministries.

He pointed out that the three crises that need to be addressed for stability and development in the Rakhine State are development, human rights crisis, and security crisis. He said that all relevant committees and officials have worked together to address these crises.

The Union Minister added that most of the recommendations are for a long-term period and progress has been made to some extent. But it is difficult to quantify the progress, according to the Union Minister, who said that indicators need to be developed to measure the progress.

Regarding the international pressure, Rakhine State Chief Minister Dr. Win Myat Aye, in his capacity as joint chairperson of the committee, said that the committee members need to be thoughtful in their speech and actions because their words and actions will have a great impact on the international perspective. He also highlighted the need to focus on Rakhine State issues to ease international pressure.

Deputy Minister for State Counsellor Office U Khin Maung Tin, in his capacity as vice-chairperson of the committee, said that preparation of the review report is very important because the report will provide necessary information to respond to international pressure.

During the meeting, other committee members explained their relevant tasks and made suggestions for the report.

In his closing speech, the Union Minister called on the committee members to adhere to COVID-19 related guidelines in implementing recommendations on the Rakhine State.

Myanmar nationals brought back home from Japan by relief flight

Myanmar nationals brought back home from Japan by relief flight.

THE 17th relief flight of All Nippon Airways (ANA) organized by the Myanmar Embassy in Tokyo landed at Yangon International Airport bringing back a total of 155 Myanmar Nationals after they were stranded in Japan due to the suspension of international flights yesterday evening.

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

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

(Translated by Ei Phyu Phyu Aung)
US dollar rate drops to K1,340 despite CBM purchases $8 mln

By Nyein Nyein

THE US dollar exchange rate dropped to K1,340 per dollar, although the Central Bank of Myanmar bought US$8 million, according to the local exchange market.

The US dollar against the Kyat rose by 50 kyats to K1,400 in mid-December. Then, the exchange rate plummeted around 60 kyats a few days later.

Within ten days, the CBM purchased $1.9 million at the auction average exchange rate of K1,330 per dollar on 23 December, $3.8 million on 29 December and $2.1 million on 30 December from the local exchange market.

In December, CBM bought $7.8 million. After that, the CBM resold $3 million back on 14 December when raising the US exchange rate. Since the start of the year, the bank has been purchasing the US dollar in the auction market to keep the exchange rate stable.

This year, the exchange rate moves in the range of K1,465-1,493 in January, K1,436-1,465 in February, K1,320-1,445 in March, K1,395-1,440 in April, K1,406-1,426 in May, K1,385-1,412 in June, K1,367-1,410 in July and K1,335-1,390 in August.

Last year, the rates are pegged at K1,508-1,517 in July, K1,510-1,528 in August, K1,527-1,565 in September, K1,528-1,537 in October, K1,510-1,524 in November and K1,485-1,513 in December.

In 2019, the rates are fixed at K1,508-1,517 in July, K1,510-1,528 in August, K1,527-1,565 in September, K1,528-1,537 in October, K1,510-1,524 in November and K1,485-1,513 in December.

THE Yangon Region Investment Committee (YRIC) has endorsed four foreign enterprises from China, Singapore and Hong Kong SAR in the manufacturing sector, with an estimated capital of US$4.92 million, in the first quarter (Oct-Dec) of the current financial year 2020-2021.

Those enterprises are to create over 2,000 jobs. They will execute manufacturing of bags, footwear, underwear and garments on a Cutting, Making, and Packing (CMP) basis, YRIC stated.

Between 1 October and 30 September of the previous financial year 2019-2020, Yangon Region stood at the first place with 127 foreign enterprises (with a capital of $308.768 million), followed by Bago Region with 18 foreign projects (US$2.645 million) at the second place and Ayeyawady, with nine at the third place (US$0.614 million).

Additionally, foreign direct investments also flow into Taninthayi Region from two projects worth $1.397 million, Magway Region from two worth $0.991 million, Mon State from two worth $1.664 million, Mandalay Region from one business valued $4.6 million, Sagaing Region from one worth $3 million, Kachin State from one worth $1 million, Shan State from one worth $4.13 million and Nay Pyi Taw Council from one valued $0.862 million.

In the last FY, the respective investment committees of Kayah, Kayin, Rakhine and Chin states did not endorse foreign enterprise at all, the DIAC stated.

The region and state investment committees endorsed 175 foreign enterprises with an estimated capital of US$23.671 million capital in the last FY.

The endorsed enterprises are to be engaged in the manufacturing, hotel and tourism, other services, power and agricultural sector.

The majority of the investment goes into the manufacturing sector, followed by other services, hotels, and tourism sectors.

The manufacturing sector has attracted the most foreign investments in Yangon Region, with enterprises engaging in pharmaceuticals, vehicles, container boxes, and garments on a Cutting, Making, and Packing (CMP) basis.

To date, foreign investments from China, Singapore, Japan, Hong Kong, the Republic of Korea, Viet Nam, India, China (Taipei), Malaysia, the British Virgin Islands, and Seychelles arrive in the region.

To simplify the verification of investment projects, the Myanmar Investment Law allows the region and state Investment Committees to grant permissions for local and foreign proposals if the initial investment does not exceed $6 billion, or $5 million.—GNLM

YRIC endorses $4.92 mln worth 4 proposals in Q1 creating over 2,000 jobs

YANGON Region Gold Entrepreneurs Association (YGEA) to penetrate foreign markets with Bogyoike Aung San, DASSK gold coins

By Nyein Nyein

YANGON Region Gold Entrepreneurs Association (YGEA) is endeavouring to sell gold coins with the portrait of national leader Bogyoike (General) Aung San or Daw Aung San Suu Kyi in foreign markets, U Myo Myint, chair of YGEA.

The gold coins are planned to place in the London, the US and Hong Kong SAR markets, he continued.

“The association is committed to export gold coins to London, the US and Hong Kong SAR markets. Myanmar’s gold market will raise its head again if we can ship the gold to foreign markets in line with international standardization, and it can easily flow in and out of the country,” he affirmed.

At present, the illegal gold trade is still found in the country. As a result of this, the association plans to export gold coins with the portrait of Bogyoike Aung San or Daw Aung San Suu Kyi or the state seal to international markets.

“Additionally, the gold coin export to London has some issues. The investors from London had met Myanmar businesspersons to set up coin factory in Myanmar,” the YGEA chair said.

“The Central Bank of Myanmar, the Ministry of Mines and the Ministry of Commerce are associated with this matter. The gold can be directly delivered to the London market only with approvals from those institutions. London investor offered to establish a coin factory in Myanmar with contributions of US$24 million. We need to give three acres of land and one building for the factory. They will implement to run the factory within six months to one year,” U Myo Myint stated.

Furthermore, beyond physical gold bullion, matters concerning gold monetization with interest rate benefits and gold exchange are also discussed. I see potential in this. I believe a gradual change over a long period with the formation of law and by-laws will bring about a fruitful result,” he shared his opinion.

Myanmar gave the green light to gold exports and imports in January 2018, with the aims to eradicate illegal trade, earn revenue for the country and maintain the market’s stability. (Translated by El Myat Mon)
Digital yuan parades its strengths during trial

Imagine a digital currency that can be used even without the internet, one that does not have to be linked to a bank account and is treated just as banknotes and coins. China’s digital yuan, although still being piloted, promises to include more people in this fast-developing digital era, making daily life easier and digital payment more secure.

In the eastern Chinese city of Suzhou, a resident named Lu bought some snacks at a basement store in Tianhong Shopping Mall using digital yuan. She transferred 60.6 yuan (about 10.21 U.S. dollars) from her digital wallet to the vendor’s account, although both mobile phones were offline. Lu was one of the 100,000 lucky residents of Suzhou who won a “red envelope” containing 200 digital yuan in a pilot program and could spend the digital currency in designated brick-and-mortar stores as well as online retailers.

WHAT IS DIGITAL YUAN?

According to a signed article of Fan Yiwei, deputy governor of the People’s Bank of China (PBOC), digital yuan will be positioned as a legal tender, designed to be treated as M0, meaning cash in circulation such as coins and bank notes.

The digital currency will be issued by the PBOC, the country’s central bank, to designated commercial banks which will then distribute the currency to the public, according to the article published in the Financial News.

China fines affiliate of IT giant Alibaba for irregular pricing

China’s market regulator said Wednesday that it has fined the country’s IT companies, including an affiliated firm of Alibaba Group Holding Ltd., 500,000 yuan ($76,657) each for irregular pricing.

The punishment comes as President Xi Jinping has pledged to strengthen measures to curb monopolistic behaviour and disorderly capital expansion of the nation’s IT giants.

Earlier this month, China’s State Administration for Market Regulation started an anti-monopoly investigation of Alibaba, a Chinese company that has grown into one of the world’s largest e-commerce businesses, in response to reports to the authorities.

Facebook to close Irish units at centre of tax dispute

FACEBOOK confirmed Wednesday it was closing its Irish subsidiaries at the centre of a dispute on profit shifting to avoid taxes in the United States.

The California tech giant acknowledged the winding down of Facebook Ireland Holdings Unlimited Company amid a dispute with US tax authorities, which claimed the company owed billions in taxes by improperly shifting profits offshore. A Facebook spokesperson said the move was “part of a change that best aligns with our operating structure” and that the holdings of the three subsidiaries were “distributed to its US parent company.” The closure was previously reported by the Times of London and other media. Facebook has disputed the claims from US tax authorities seeking some $9 billion for allegedly undervaluing intellectual property assets used by the social network. But it noted that these assets were repatriated in July in a move which “best aligns corporate structure with where we expect to have most of our activities and people.”

US slaps sanctions on Venezuelans for jailing ex-Citgo executives

The United States on Wednesday imposed sanctions on a Venezuelan judge and prosecutor over the jailing of six US-connected former oil executives who allege a sham trial.

The Treasury Department said it was freezing all US assets and criminalizing transactions with Judge Lorena Carolina Cornielles Ruiz and prosecutor Ramon Antonio Torres Espinoza.

The two were behind a trial last month in which six former executives from Citgo, the US-based subsidiary of Venezuelan state oil company PDVSA, were handed prison terms.

The six men’s families say they were lured to Venezuela and arrested in November 2017 on charges such as money laundering – allegations they call laughable in light of what they say is rampant graft and judicial bias under President Nicolas Maduro.

“The unjust detention and sentencing of these six US persons further demonstrates how corruption and abuse of power are deeply embedded in Venezuela’s institutions,” Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said as he announced the sanctions.

Citgo’s former president Jose Pereira Ruimyek, a Venezuelan national with US residency, was jailed for 13 years and seven months and fined $2 million.

Global News

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Secretary Liz Truss.

Toshimitsu Motegi (R) and British International Trade bilateral free trade agreement Friday, paving the way Japan and the United Kingdom signed a post-Brexit pact no longer covers the United Kingdom beyond Thursday, the end of the transition period following its exit from the European Union in January 2020.

A lack of an agreement may have resulted in impositions of higher tariffs on both countries. The deal largely duplicates the Japan-EU FTA, including gradual elimination of British tariffs on Japanese cars by 2026 and immediate removal of its duties on most Japanese agricultural goods such as beef and tea.

Under the pact, Japan did not set new preferential treatment for British agricultural imports, although the issue was a major sticking point in their four months of negotiations through October.

Japanese Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi and British International Trade Secretary Liz Truss signed the agreement in Tokyo. The deal with Japan was the United Kingdom's first trade pact with a major economy following its departure from the European Union. SOURCE: Kyodo

HALF A CENTURY OF TIES

Brexit to take full effect as UK leaves EU single market

Brexit becomes a reality on Thursday as Britain leaves Europe's customs union and single market, ending nearly half a century of often turbulent ties with its closest neighbours.

The UK's tortuous departure from the European Union takes full effect when Big Ben strikes 11:00 pm (2300 GMT) in central London, just one of the most European mainland usherers in 2021 at midnight.

Brexit has dominated British politics since the country's narrow vote to leave the bloc in June 2016, opening deep political and social wounds that still remain raw.

Legally, Britain left on January 31 but has been in a standstill transition period during fractious talks to a secure a free-trade agreement with Brussels, which was finally clinched on Christmas Eve.

Once the transition ends, EU rules will no longer apply, with the immediate consequence being an end to the free movement of more than 500 million people between Britain and 27 EU states. Customs border checks will be back for the first time in decades, and despite the free-trade deal, queues and disruption from additional paperwork are expected.

SOURCE: APP

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M/V MCC SHENZHEN VOY. NO. (0515/052N)

Consignees of cargo carried on M/V MCC SHENZHEN VOY. NO. (0515/052N) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 1-1-2021 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of MITT/TMT where it will lie at the consignee’s risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

Phone No: 2301185

Agent For:

M/S SEALAND MAERSK ASIA PTE., LTD.

Shipping Agency Department
Myanmar Port Authority

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M/V TRieste TRADER VOY. NO. (0515/053N)

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Phone No: 2301185

Agent For:

M/S MCCC TRANSPORT (S’PORE) PTE LTD

Shipping Agency Department
Myanmar Port Authority
LEAVING THE EU’S SINGLE MARKET

Brexit sparks fears of disrupted food, drug supplies

DESPITE the free trade deal signed by London and Brussels, suppliers of food and medicine fear the rapidly introduced changes will disrupt supplies and increase costs, undercutting government claims of a post-Brexit dividend.

While Boris Johnson had promised an “oven-ready” deal a year ago, the British prime minister eventually “delivered us four working days”, the Food and Drink Federation complained ahead of Britain leaving the EU’s single market at the close of 2020.

Minette Batters, president of the National Farmers’ Union, said members “do anticipate that there will still be disruption to trade at the border”, despite the deal signed on Wednesday.

As many companies rushed to order in more stock or fulfill orders delayed by coronavirus lockdowns, England’s Channel ports, particularly Dover, were already overflowing ahead of the deal’s announcement.

The situation worsened when a number of European countries closed their borders with Britain for two days ahead of Christmas, seeking to curb the spread of a new, more contagious variant of COVID-19.

Thousands of lorries heading to ports got stuck in vast traffic jams and it took several days and the help of the armed forces to unravel the situation.

Ian Wright, chief executive of the Food and Drink Federation, said “last week’s chaos at Dover and the last-gasp nature of this deal means that there will be significant disruption to supply and some prices will rise”.

SOURCE: AFP

A TOURIST DESTINATION

China plans tourism development for Greater Bay Area

China will build the Greater Bay Area into a habitable, entrepreneur-friendly area and a tourist destination with a flourishing cultural industry. PHOTO: XINHUA

CHINA has recently rolled out a comprehensive development plan on the cultural and tourism development for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Greater Bay Area, said the Ministry of Culture and Tourism.

The country will build the Greater Bay Area into a habitable, entrepreneur-friendly area and a tourist destination with a flourishing cultural industry.

The plan projected that by the year 2035, the area’s tourism and cultural sectors will realize high-quality development, and it will boast greater cultural soft power and higher tourism competitiveness. The plan also emphasized the promotion of national history and culture and the need to beef up patriotic education among the youth in the area. The plan was jointly issued by the ministry, the office of the leading group for the development of the Greater Bay Area, and the Guangdong Provincial People’s Government. SOURCE: AFP

VIBRANT URBAN CENTRE

Afghan youth fear Taliban return will roll back Kandahar’s progress

Disc jockey Habiba Quraishi, 19, speaks during a broadcast at the women-led Mermaid radio station.

Once the epicentre of the Taliban’s iron-fisted Islamist government, Kandahar city in Afghanistan’s restive south is slowly transforming into a vibrant urban centre dotted with bustling cafes, co-ed universities — and even a women’s gym. Every evening, young men head to the Arena club, a trendy café in the city of 700,000, to play snooker, watch football on a big screen, or smoke shisha “bubble-bubble” pipes — unhinkable when the Taliban ruled Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001. “There was no such place in Kandahar when we built it and there is still no other such place in the (entire) south,” said Nazir Ahmad, the 30-year-old owner of Arena. SOURCE: AFP

Taliban hit back Kandahar’s progress

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Muslim clerics among 26 held after Pakistan Hindu temple destroyed

AT LEAST two dozen people, including several Muslim clerics, were detained Thursday after a mob attacked and set fire to a Hindu temple in northwest Pakistan, police said.

Around 1,500 Muslims on Wednesday descended on the temple — which was destroyed in similar circumstances in 1997 — after staging a protest against renovations at an adjoining building owned by Hindus.

The temple is located in a remote village in Karak district, some 160 kilometres (100 miles) southeast of Peshawar.

“We have arrested 26 people including local clerics for destroying a place of worship and inciting people to riot”, local police official Fazal Sher told AFP.

He added police were looking for a further 50 people identified from videos of the attack.

Discrimination and violence against religious minorities are commonplace in Pakistan, where Muslims make up 97 per cent of the population and Hindus around two per cent. Irfanullah Khan, the district police chief, also confirmed the arrests. SOURCE: AFP

Boris Johnson’s father seeks French citizenship

BRITISH Prime Minister Boris Johnson’s father Stanley confirmed plans on Thursday to seek French citizenship as the free movement of Britons in the EU comes to an end under the Brexit pact delivered by his son.

Speaking to France’s RTL radio in French, Stanley Johnson said: “It’s not a question of becoming French. If I understand correctly I am French! My mother was born in France, her mother was completely French as was her grandfather.

“For me it’s a question of obtaining what I already have and I am very happy about that,” the 80-year-old added.

The father of the politician who ended Britain’s 47-year-old membership of the EU was among the first civil servants appointed to Brussels after Britain joined the EU in 1973.

He worked for the European Commission and served as a member of the European Parliament.

He initially campaigned against leaving the EU before changing his mind a year after Britain voted to leave the union in 2016. SOURCE: AFP

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Around 1,500 Muslims on Wednesday descended on the temple — which was destroyed in similar circumstances in 1997 — after staging a protest against renovations at an adjoining building owned by Hindus.

The temple is located in a remote village in Karak district, some 160 kilometres (100 miles) southeast of Peshawar.

“We have arrested 26 people including local clerics for destroying a place of worship and inciting people to riot”, local police official Fazal Sher told AFP.

He added police were looking for a further 50 people identified from videos of the attack.

Discrimination and violence against religious minorities are commonplace in Pakistan, where Muslims make up 97 per cent of the population and Hindus around two per cent. Irfanullah Khan, the district police chief, also confirmed the arrests. SOURCE: AFP
Yemen govt vows to bring stability after deadly attack

Yemen’s new power-sharing government vowed on Thursday to bring stability to the war-torn country, a day after deadly blasts rocked Aden airport in an attack targeting cabinet members. At least 26 people, including three members of the International Committee of the Red Cross and a journalist, were killed and scores wounded in the explosions as ministers disembarked from an aircraft in the southern city.

All cabinet members were reported to be unharmed in what some ministers charged was an attack by the north Yemen-based Iran-backed Houthi rebels. AFP video footage shows what appears to be a missile strike followed by a ball of intense flames, in part of the airport which moments before had been packed with crowds.

But it is still not fully clear what caused the explosions.

Foreign Minister Ahmed bin Mubarak told AFP on Thursday that the new unity government was up to tackling the challenges facing a country that has long been the Arab Peninsula’s most impoverished nation. “The government is determined to fulfill its duty and work to restore stability in Yemen,” he said.

“This terrorist attack will not deter it from that.”

Tens of thousands of people, mostly civilians, have been killed and millions displaced in Yemen’s grinding five-year war, which has triggered what the United Nations calls the world’s worst humanitarian disaster.

The cabinet ministers had arrived in Aden days after being sworn in by Yemeni President Ahmed al-Mansour Hadi in Saudi Arabia, which leads a military coalition against the Houthi insurgents. SOURCE: AFP

One year after US killed Iran general, Iraq tensions boil

ONE year after US forces assassinated Iran’s most storied commander, tensions are boiling between Iraq’s Washington-backed premier and pro-Tehran forces that accuse him of complicity in the Baghdad drone strike.

US President Donald Trump sent shock waves through the region on January 3, 2020, with the targeted killing of Qasem Soleimani and his Iraqi deputy Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the powerful pro-Iranian paramilitary network Hashed al-Shaabi paramilitary network.

One of a man who planned another attack on the US embassy, a fighter of Asaib Ahl al-Haq (AAH), a faction of the Hashed al-Shaabi paramilitary network. SOURCE: AFP

Ten still missing after Norway mudslide buries homes

RESCUE workers were still searching on Thursday for survivors from a landslide that destroyed homes in a Norwegian village close to Oslo leaving 10 people unaccounted for, including two children, and 10 injured.

Work continued overnight after a whole hillside collapsed in Ask, 25 kilometres (15 miles) northeast of the capital. Homes were buried under mud and some houses were left teetering on the edge of a crater caused by the slide, with several falling over the edge as the day went on.

“It is important for me to stress that all known survivors,” chief of operations Roger Pettersen told reporters.

“Now there’s daylight and that will help us in our work with better visibility,” he said.

Police said one of the 10 people hurt had been seriously injured and was transferred to Oslo for treatment.

One-fifth of Ask’s 5,000 population have been evacuated. SOURCE: AFP

Peacekeeping mission in Sudan’s Darfur ends, stoking fears

Sudan’s hybrid United Nations-African Union mission in Darfur is set to end its 13-year peacekeeping operations in the conflict marred region Thursday, even as recent violent clashes leave residents fearful.

“The joint United Nations-African Union mission in the Darfur region of Sudan (UNAMID) will officially end operations on Thursday, when the Government of Sudan will take over responsibility for the protection of civilians in the area,” the mission said in a statement on Wednesday.

While the bitter conflict that began in 2003 and claimed 300,000 lives has largely subsided, tribal clashes last week left at least 15 people dead and dozens wounded. Citizens, many of whom remain displaced, have held protests in recent weeks against the mission’s imminent departure.

SOURCE: AFP

Colombia sets new record in eradicating coca production

COLOMBIA beat its record for eradicating coca crops for the second year in a row, the government said Wednesday, although the country still remains the world’s leading producer of cocaine. “We have achieved the highest level of manual coca eradication ever recorded in Colombia: 230,000 hectares (321,000 acres),” President Ivan Duque said in a statement to the press. “That area, roughly the same size as the city of Los Angeles, exceeds the last record set in 2019, when the government got rid of 94,000 hectares of coca, the main ingredient of cocaine. In 2019, 1,137 tonnes of cocaine were produced in Colombia, a number slightly higher than the previous year, the UN reported. Figures for 2020 are still not available. Duque said his country also set other “historic records” in 2020, such as 498 tonnes of cocaine seized and 5,447 laboratories destroyed.

COLOMBIA” beat its record for eradicating coca crops for the second year in a row, the government said Wednesday, although the country still remains the world’s leading producer of cocaine. “We have achieved the highest level of manual coca eradication ever recorded in Colombia: 230,000 hectares (321,000 acres),” President Ivan Duque said in a statement to the press. “That area, roughly the same size as the city of Los Angeles, exceeds the last record set in 2019, when the government got rid of 94,000 hectares of coca, the main ingredient of cocaine. In 2019, 1,137 tonnes of cocaine were produced in Colombia, a number slightly higher than the previous year, the UN reported. Figures for 2020 are still not available. Duque said his country also set other “historic records” in 2020, such as 498 tonnes of cocaine seized and 5,447 laboratories destroyed.

Since taking office in August 2018, Duque’s conservative government has prioritized fighting drug trafficking and also launched a plan meant to cut the land area of coca cultivation in half between 2022 and 2023. SOURCE: AFP

SOURCE: AFP

One of a man who planned another attack on the US embassy, a fighter of Asaib Ahl al-Haq (AAH), a faction of the Hashed al-Shaabi paramilitary network. SOURCE: AFP

PHOTO: AFP/FILE

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Since taking office in August 2018, Duque’s conservative government has prioritized fighting drug trafficking and also launched a plan meant to cut the land area of coca cultivation in half between 2022 and 2023. SOURCE: AFP
Myanmar’s licenced football clubs hit record in ASEAN

MYANMAR broke the record of the most licenced football clubs in ASEAN region to enter the AFC Club Tournament in 2021 with totalling 15 clubs, according to an official statement with the Myanmar Football Federation and the ASEAN Football Federation.

Myanmar has surpassed all other ASEAN countries in terms of the number of clubs which have successfully licenced for the AFC tourney, according to the ASEAN Football authorities. Among the 11 ASEAN countries, Myanmar hit record with 15 clubs that have licenced for entering the AFC Club Tournament, beating 12 licenced football clubs from neighbouring Thailand and 10 licenced clubs from Viet Nam, AFF stated.

For getting the AFC Club Tournament licenses, every ASEAN football clubs need to fulfil five main criteria – sporting, infrastructure, personnel and administrative, legal and financial, football officials said.

This record was made possible by the joint efforts of the Member Associations (MA) Club Licencing Manager and the Club Licencing Officers. It is also due to the support of all the club officials”, MFF officials added. — Lynn Thit (Tgi)

EPL plans not to pause season amid rise in Coronavirus case

LONDON—After two fixtures were postponed due to COVID-19, English Premier League (EPL) on Wednesday said they are not planning to pause the season and will play matches as per the scheduled.

Premier League in a statement said it has the backing of the UK government and have confidence in its COVID-19 protocols to enable fixtures as planned.

“Premier League has not discussed pausing the season and has no plans to do so. The League continues to have confidence in its COVID-19 protocols to enable fixtures to be played as scheduled, and these protocols continue to have the full backing of Government,” Premier League said in a statement.

This comes following matches between Tottenham and Fulham, and Manchester City’s clash against Everton was postponed after a number of positive coronavirus cases were reported.

“The Premier League has not discussed pausing the season and has no plans to do so. The League continues to have confidence in its COVID-19 protocols to enable fixtures to be played as scheduled, and these protocols continue to have the full backing of Government,” Premier League said in a statement.

On Wednesday, Fulham lodged a request with the Premier League Board to rearrange the fixture following a significant rise in positive COVID-19 cases, as well as a number of players showing symptoms.

The Premier League Board has consulted its medical advisors and the decision to postpone the game has been taken as a precaution and with the health of players and staff as the priority.— ANI

Boxing: Ioka defends WBO crown with TKO of unbeaten Tanaka

TOKYO—Japan’s Kazuto Ioka successfully defended his WBO super flyweight title for the second time on Thursday in an eighth-round technical knockout of previously unbeaten compatriot and top-ranked contender Kosei Tanaka.

The 31-year-old Ioka, who became the first Japanese to win world championships in four different weight classes, knocked down his aggressive 25-year-old opponent in the fifth and sixth rounds before staggering him with an eighth-round left that caused the referee to stop the fight.

“I thought I’d trained well, but the proof is in the ring,” said Ioka after their fight at Tokyo’s Ota City General Gymnasium in which he bided his time to launch surgical strikes while Tanaka moved in to attack at every opportunity.

“Tanaka is still young, and he is boxing’s future,” Ioka said.

“Fighting him was a great experience for me.— Kyodo

WBO super flyweight world champion Kazuto Ioka (L) lands a left on Japanese compatriot Kosei Tanaka in the eighth round, when Ioka won by technical knockout, on Dec. 31, 2020 at Tokyo’s Ota City General Gymnasium. PHOTO: KYODO

After two fixtures were postponed due to COVID-19, English Premier League (EPL) on Wednesday said they are not planning to pause the season and will play matches as per the scheduled. PHOTO: AFP/FILE