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Vice-President U Henry Van Thio and officials are viewing the elephants' shows during his inspection tour near Nay Pyi Taw on 5 January 2021. PHOTO : MNA

IN his capacity as the Chairman of National Tourism Development Central Committee, Vice-President U Henry Van Thio looked into the development works at Ngalaik Sakanthar elephant camp, forest road and suspension bridge. During the inspection tour to the elephant camp near Mile Post 217 of Yangon-Mandalay Highway, the Vice-President was accompanied by Union Minister for Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation U Ohn Win, Union Minister for Hotels and Tourism U Ohn Maung, Nay Pyi Taw Council Chairman Dr Myo Aung, Deputy Minister U Tin Latt and officials. They fed the elephants and enjoyed the shows of giant creatures.

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Announcement on fund establishment to purchase COVID-19 vaccines

- The National-Level Central Committee on Prevention, Control and Treatment of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) on 30-12-2020 formed a Fund Management Sub-committee on the Purchase of COVID-19 Vaccines. The sub-committee has opened the COVID-19 Vaccination Fund at the Myanma Economic Bank in Nay Pyi Taw as follows:
 - Fund for purchase of COVID-19 vaccines (Foreign Currency Account No. EDC 600012). The bank account will be initially deposited with USD250 million, equivalent to about K338 billion from State-funding.
 - Fund for purchase of COVID-19 vaccines (Myanmar Currency Account No. OA 013733). The bank account is initially deposited K1 billion (K1,000 million) from State-funding.
- Therefore, organizations and people (local/ foreign countries) who want to contribute cash donation for the purchase of vaccines, can donate any type of foreign currency to the COVID-19 Vaccination Fund (Foreign Currency Account No. EDC 600012) at the Myanma Economic Bank (Nay Pyi Taw), and can donate Myanmar Kyat to the COVID-19 Vaccination Fund (Myanmar Currency Account No. OA 013733).
- The potential well-wishers can contact the following phone numbers:

Director-General (067 3410156)
Treasury Department (067 3410158)

Ministry of Planning, Finance and Industry

Foreign Heads of State send felicitations to President U Win Myint

The following are messages of felicitations from Foreign Heads of State/Government sent to President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar U Win Myint, on the occasion of the 73rd Anniversary Independence Day of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar:

His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah, Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam sends congratulatory message to the President

I am pleased to convey my warmest congratulations to you and to the government and people of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar on your 73rd Independence Day. Brunei Darussalam and the Republic of the Union of Myanmar continue to share warm and close cooperation, and I am confident that the friendship and ties between our countries will continue to strengthen in the coming years. Brunei Darussalam looks forward to developing these important ties, both bilaterally and as close regional partners particularly during our chairmanship of ASEAN this year. With my kindest regards and best wishes to you, the government and people of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar for continued good health and happiness.

His Majesty Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, King of the Kingdom of Bahrain sends Congratulatory Message to the President

As you celebrate the Independence Day of your friendly country, it gives us pleasure to extend to you, in our own name and on behalf of the people of the Kingdom of Bahrain, our warmest congratulations and greetings on this national occasion. We also avail ourselves of this opportunity to express Your Excellency our sincere wishes for your continued good health and happiness, and for your people further progress and prosperity under your wise leadership.

With our deepest appreciation and regards.

His Excellency Guy Parmelin, President of the Swiss Confederation sends Congratulatory Message to the President

It is my pleasure to extend to you my warmest congratulations on the occasion of the Independence Day of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar. Switzerland and Myanmar enjoy longstanding bilateral relations based on reliability and trust. On behalf of the Federal Council, I would like to express my solidarity in this time of sanitary crisis. Through its cooperation programme in Myanmar for 2019-2023, Switzerland will continue supporting your country in its efforts to achieve peace, democracy and sustainable development. The general elections of November 8th 2020 were a milestone in Myanmar’s democratic process and I would like to congratulate you and the people of Myanmar on their peaceful and successful conduct. I look forward to continue strengthening our bilateral relations and wish you and the people of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar a peaceful and prosperous future. Please accept, Your Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

His Excellency Gotabaya Rajapaksa, President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, sends Message of Felicitations to the President

On behalf of the Government and the people of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka and on my

own behalf, I wish to extend the warm congratulations and sincere best wishes on the occasion of the 73rd Anniversary of the Independence Day of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar. The longstanding, friendly ties between Sri Lanka and Myanmar firmly bound by Theravada Buddhism and cultural affinities span for many centuries. This centuries-old deep-rooted friendship between Sri Lanka and Myanmar has evolved to a greater height in the recent years. The establishment of the Amarapura and Ramanna Nikaya in Sri Lanka in 1803 and 1865 respectively are the testimonies to the culmination points of bilateral relations between the two countries. I am confident that the existing relations will continue to flourish in the coming years for the mutual benefit of our two countries. Please accept, Excellency, my sincere best wishes for your good health, personal well-being and for the continued happiness and prosperity of the people of Myanmar.

His Excellency Aleksandar Vučić, President of the Republic of Serbia sends Congratulatory Message to the President

On the occasion of Independence Day of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, I extend to you, on behalf of the people of the Republic of Serbia and myself, cordial felicitations and best wishes for the further prosperity and well-being of your country and its people.

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Foreign Heads of State send felicitations to State Counsellor

The following are messages of felicitations from Foreign Heads of State/Government sent to State Counsellor and Union Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, on the occasion of the 73rd Anniversary Independence Day of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar:

His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah, Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam sends congratulatory message to the State Counsellor

It gives me great pleasure to extend my warmest congratulations to you, and to the government and people of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar on the auspicious occasion of Myanmar’s 73rd Independence Day. Brunei Darussalam attaches importance to its relation with the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and I value our close bilateral and regional partnership. As chairman of ASEAN, I look forward to the pleasure of working closely with you in advancing the ASEAN community towards our shared regional goals. With my kindest regards and best wishes for your continued good health and happiness.

His Excellency Daniel Ortega Saavedra, President of the Republic of Nicaragura and Her Excellency Rosario Murillo, Vice-President of the Republic of Nicaragua send Congratulatory Message to the State Counsellor

On this memorable date of Commemoration of the 73rd Anniversary of the Independence of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, we convey to Your Excellencies a Fraternal, Respectful and Sincere Greeting, from this our Blessed and Always Free Nicaragua. We greatly appreciate the excellent Bonds of Friendship, Cooperation on fundamental issues, Solidarity between our Peoples and Governments, and above all, the closeness and coincidences in these challenging Times. It is our wish that from our Brotherhood in Struggle for a World of Humanist, Dialogical and Peaceful Coexist-

ence, our Relations are consolidated, promoting the best for the Stability and Prosperity of our Peoples. May Health and Happiness continue to be part of our Lives, and may generosity manifest itself with more and more certainty in the Daily Life of our Countries and the Families of Good that integrate our Communities. Excellencies, be assured of our respectful and auspicious Friendship.

His Excellency Thongloun SISOULITH, Prime Minister of the Lao People’s Democratic Republic sends congratulatory message to the State Counsellor

On the occasion of the 73rd Anniversary of the Independence Day of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, on behalf of the Government of the Lao People’s Democratic Republic and on my own behalf, I wish to convey my warmest congratulations and best wishes to Your Excellency and through Your Excellency to the people and the Government of the Republic of the Union Myanmar. I am delighted to note that over the past 65 years, the friendly relations and good cooperation between our two countries have been continuously enhanced and strengthened. I stand ready to work closely with Your Excellency to further strengthen our existing good bonds of friendship and close cooperation between our two countries for mutual benefits of our two nations as well as for peace, stability and cooperation for development in the region and the world at large. On the occasion of the New Year 2021, I would like to wish Your Excellency good health and happiness, and lead the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and people to further progress and long-lasting prosperity.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Right Honourable K. P. Sharma Oli, Prime Minister of Nepal, sends congratulatory message to the State Counsellor

On the happy occasion of the 73rd Independence Day of Myanmar, on behalf of the Government and people of Nepal and my own, I extend to Your Excellency and through you to the people of Myanmar my sincere congratulations. I wish Your Excellency’s good health and happiness as well as progress and prosperity of the people of Myanmar. I am confident that the friendly and cordial relations existing between our two countries will grow further in the years ahead.

His Excellency Abdelaziz DJERAD, Prime Minister of the People’s Democratic Republic of Algeria sends Congratulatory Message to the State Counsellor

The celebration by the Republic of the Union of Myanmar of its National Day gives me a happy occasion to extend to you my warmest congratulations and best wishes for health and happiness as well as continuous progress and prosperity upon the friendly Myanmar’s People. I would like also to avail myself of this opportunity to assure to you my full readiness to work with you for the strengthening of the relations of friendship and cooperation which links our two countries. Please accept, Excellency, the expression of my highest consideration.

VP U Henry Van Thio inspects development of elephant camp, forest resort near Nay Pyi Taw

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The Vice-President and party then inspected the forest road on a wooden bridge which is 4,817-ft long from Htin Shu Taw elephant camp to the waterfront restaurants. The longest wooden bridge in Myanmar has been budgeted at K409.655 million of the 2020-2021 financial year, and a total of 3,070-ft length

has been constructed until now. The Vice-President also arrived at the suspension bridge construction site at the Ngalaik Sakanthar elephant camp. The 70 per cent of the bridge with 170-ft length and 4-ft width has been completed to date. At the Shwe Kyun Taw camp, the Vice-President heard reports on the development project which were first intended



The Vice-President and party look into the displays at the Ngalaik Sakanthar elephant camp yesterday. PHOTO: MNA



Vice-President U Henry Van Thio feeds the elephants at the Ngalaik Sakanthar elephant camp on 5 January 2021. PHOTO: MNA

for the recreation place of staff members in Nay Pyi Taw and the nearby public. The Vice-President instructed to promote the recreation site into a destination with full safety standards for local and foreign visitors. He also discussed creating a clean environment at the forest resort and training for the more attractive elephants' performances for the camp visitors. The Vice-President and party grew conifer plants and rode motorboats in Ngalaik dam to have scenic views.—MNA (Translated by Aung Khin)



Vice-President U Henry Van Thio inspects the development project near Nay Pyi Taw on 5 January 2021. PHOTO: MNA



The Vice-President views the miniature of the recreation site for local and foreign visitors on 5 January 2021. PHOTO: MNA

COVID-19 Call Centre opens daily

In efforts to speed up the prevention, containment and treatment of the COVID-19 disease, the call centre (phone number 2019) is established by four communications operators and the Blue Ocean Company with the coordination of the Medical Research Department of the Health and Sports Ministry and Post and Telecommunications Department from 9 am to 5 pm daily at the Medical Research Department in Yangon. Over 43 staff from the Medical Research Department and 17 volunteers from the Myanmar Medical Association totally 60 workers have been working at the centre since 8th April.—MNA

CBM grants second foreign bank subsidiary licence

THE Central Bank of Myanmar granted a banking licence to IBK Myanmar Limited to operate subsidiary outlet of Industrial Bank of Korea in the country out of seven foreign banks during its third round of foreign bank licencing on 30 December. IBK Myanmar Ltd is the second bank to establish a branch in Myanmar, and it can provide banking services of Financial Institutions Law Section (52) like other local banks. Granting licences to foreign bank subsidiaries can make competitiveness in banking sectors with the local banks and create modern banking business to offer international banking services to the people.—MNA (Translated by Khine Thazin Han)

MoLIP conducts refresher course in HR development trainers



MoLIP Minister addresses the online ToT refresher course in HR development on 5 January 2021. PHOTO:MNA

THE Social Security Board under the Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population held the opening ceremony of a refresher course on trainers for human resource development under the social welfare project via videoconferencing in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday morning.

Union Minister U Thein Swe, Deputy Minister U Myint Kyaing, directors-general and deputy directors-general, departmental officials and social welfare officers from the respec-

tive states and regions attended the ceremony.

During the ceremony, the Union Minister said his office is working together with employers and employees in accordance with labour laws on labour issues and implementing activities to create stable and peaceful workplaces, to receive benefits under the labour law, to ensure the safe working environment, to make suitable employment and safe migration, to provide skills training and to

provide social protection and health care.

According to the visions and objectives, activities under in the social welfare project are being implemented in accordance with the 2012 Social Security Law. The ministry is also conducting the five main responsibilities— registering the work place and workers, collecting social security fund, issuing financial benefits and health insurance and Social Security Programme Awareness

Campaigns for insured workers in 116 townships in order that employers and employees can easily access the benefits for project-covered insured workers, laws and regulation including procedures.

He said the confidence of the employers and employees in the social security project would be strengthened by understanding the importance of the system, including responsibilities and benefits under the Social Security Project and existing policies and procedures will be successful.

The Union Minister also highlighted the importance of awareness campaigns to build trust and good governance for workers to be aware of the benefits that social security programmes can provide. He continued the awareness campaign was limited due to the temporary suspension of activities during the COVID-19 period, and he urged doctors and

the officers from the respective townships and districts which are dealing with employees and employees to continue to share the social security plan, the implementation for insured workers, easing knowledge on the future activities and the future activities.

He said that the Training of Trainers course is crucial for providing online training on social welfare planning in new normal lifestyles and informing the activities and ease of restrictions to workers and employers through online system will be able to cooperate in the implementation of the procedures, policies and objectives set by the Social Security Board.

A total of 269 trainees from the respective regions and states, townships and districts will join the 3-week online training course from 5 to 21 January.

—MNA

(Translated by Ei Phyu Phyu Aung)

Groundbreaking ceremony of new 100-bedded Waibargi Hospital held

ASIA World Foundation "AWF", the philanthropic arm of Asia World Group of Companies "AWC", in aid of the need to provide a proper facility for the treatment of infectious diseases in the future, will be constructing a new 100-bedded Waibargi Hospital under the guidance and permission of the Ministry of Health and Sports and Yangon Region government, Myanmar. This new hospital facility is expected to be completed by this year, 2021, and intended to alleviate the demand for the facility in this current COVID - 19 pandemic.

The groundbreaking ceremony for the construction of the New Hospital was held on the site area yesterday at 8:00 am in the presence of Yangon Region Chief Minister U Phyo Min Thein, Minister of Electricity, Industry and Transportation Daw Nilar Kyaw, Minister of Social Affairs U Naing Ngan Lin, Professor Dr Zaw Wai Soe, Vice-Chairman (2) of COVID-19 Prevention, Control and Treatment Coordination Committee for Yangon Region, Dr Tun Myint, Deputy Director-General of Yangon Public Health Department, Chairman of Asia World Foundation U Htun Myint Naing, officials of Waibargi Specialist Hospital, and representatives from Asia

World Foundation.

At the ceremony, U Phyo Min Thein, Chief Minister of Yangon Regional government, said, "It has been over one year since COVID-19 affected the whole world, and no one is certain for how long we have to face this challenging situation. We understand it is essential to do the prevention, control, and treatment of COVID while balancing the business sector's need to resume as usual and support the nation's economy. Therefore, we have to adjust and adapt to the New Normal while following the necessary health guidelines and procedures. Health facility like hospitals is needed for us to achieve this. I appreciate and welcome the initiative of Asia World Foundation for its contribution to the most needed sector in this difficult time, and we will try our best to support you and accelerate the development of this new hospital project as much as we can."

"Yangon Region is a Commercial Hub, and it's also the most populous city in Myanmar. It currently has a 60% rate of local transmission and is suffering from the COVID-19 pandemic. The rate of infection has been reduced with the government's cooperation and the public and private sector

though, the new variant of COVID-19 is transmitting in other neighboring countries since 12 December; therefore, efforts should be made to prevent the suffering from the third wave. Special thanks to the Asia World Foundation for donating a new, modernized 100-bedded Infectious Disease Hospital with 30 ICUs and 70 Oxygen pipe lines," said Dr Tun Myint, Deputy Director-General, Yangon Region Public Health Department.

"People are considering how to live with the current pandemic, and the donation of

this new 100-bedded Infectious Disease Hospital will be for the long-term benefit. As this is not an ordinary hospital but an infectious disease hospital, we will provide the necessary facilities following its specifications.

Oxygen pipelines, emergency rooms, and ICU rooms are already included as build-in facilities. As this facility is required urgently, this new hospital will be built as quickly and efficiently as possible to achieve its project's goal of providing the best medical care to the public. Asia World Foundation is confident

of prompt completion of the new hospital this year based on our track record over the years with the construction of a two-lane concrete road (55 km Maungtaw-Angumaw) on the other side of Sittway, Rakhine State, and recently the opening of a two-lane prestressed Reinforced Concrete Cantilever Bridge, spanning over 800 feet in length (elevation of 476 ft) on the Toungoo - Bawgali -Mawchi Road built and donated by Asia World Foundation," said U Htun Myint Naing, Chairman of the Asia World Foundation.—GNLM



The new 100-bedded Waibargi Hospital's proposed design plan . PHOTO: SUPPLIED

We will be putting more focus and efforts into the programmes of the NRPC during this year



We knew and have accepted the fact that national reconciliation is something which is absolutely necessary for the emergence of the Union, which is our aspiration ever since the NLD was founded in 1988. Because of differences in beliefs, ideologies and views among our Union nationals, metta ceased to exist, anger grew, armed conflicts flared, and peace was burnt to the ground; thus we need to build mutual trust, understanding and respect on a firm foundation to end this vicious and dreadful cycle. That is why when our government took over responsibility in 2016, one of our first acts was to establish the “NRPC - National Reconciliation and Peace Centre”. We will be putting more focus and efforts into the programmes of the NRPC during this year.

(Excerpt from Chairperson of National Reconciliation and Peace Centre and State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi’s speech on New Year, on 2 January 2021)

Foreign Heads of State send felicitations to President U Win Myint

FROM PAGE-2

Decades-long friendly relations between the Republic of Serbia and the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, based on the principles of the Non-Aligned Movement, are characterized by the high level of mutual respect and appreciation.

I am convinced that we will continue to promote bilateral relations and qualitatively enrich cooperation in all areas of mutual interest, especially in view of the fact that on 29 December 2020 we mark the 70th anniversary since the establishment of diplomatic relations between our two countries which the Republic of Serbia is particularly proud of.

The position of your country concerning the respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Serbia we see as not only the commitment to safeguarding the fundamental principles of international law and the UN Charter but also as the confirmation of the traditionally good and friendly relations and solidarity existing between our two countries.

Hoping that we will meet in person in the near future and exchange views of mutual interest and to the benefit of our two peoples, I extend to you, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Right Honourable Bidya Devi Dhandari, President of Nepal, sends Message of Felicitations to the President

On the happy occasion of the 73rd Independence Day of Myanmar, I extend to Your Excellency cordial felicitations and best wishes for Your Excellency’s personal health and happiness and for the progress and prosperity of the people of Myanmar.

His Excellency Jair Bolsonaro, President of the Federative Republic of Brazil sends Congratulatory Message to the President

It is with great joy that, on behalf of the Government of and the people of Brazil, I would like to express to Your Excellency our sincere congratulations on the occasion of the 73rd Anniversary of the Independence Day of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

I avail myself this opportunity to also express my wishes of happiness and prosperity to the people of Myanmar, as I reiterate the conviction of Brazil to continue to strengthen the friendly bonds between our countries and for the mutual benefit of our people.

Please accept, Your Excellency, the assurances of

my highest esteem and consideration.

His Excellency Daniel Ortega Saavedra, President of the Republic of Nicaragua and Her Excellency Rosario Murillo, Vice-President of the Republic of Nicaragua send Congratulatory Message to the President

On this memorable date of Commemoration of the 73rd Anniversary of the Independence of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, we convey to Your Excellencies a Fraternal, Respectful and Sincere Greeting, from this our Blessed and Always Free Nicaragua.

We greatly appreciate the excellent Bonds of Friendship, Cooperation on fundamental issues, Solidarity between our Peoples and Governments, and above all, the closeness and coincidences in these challenging Times.

It is our wish that from our Brotherhood in Struggle for a World of Humanist, Dialogical and Peaceful Coexistence, our Relations are consolidated, promoting the best for the Stability and Prosperity of our Peoples.

May Health and Happiness continue to be part of our Lives, and may generosity manifest itself with more and more certainty in the Daily Life of our Countries and the Families of Good that integrate our Communities.

Excellencies, be assured of our respectful and auspicious Friendship.

His Excellency Md. Abdul Hamid, President of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh sends Message of felicitations to the President

On behalf of the people and on my own behalf, I have the pleasure to convey my warmest greetings and heartiest felicitations to Your Excellency and the people of Myanmar on the auspicious occasion of the Independence Day of the Union of Myanmar.

Bangladesh looks forward to working together deeply with Myanmar in securing peace, prosperity and development for the benefits of our two peoples and the region as well.

I avail myself of this opportunity to wish you good health and continued peace, progress and prosperity of the people of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

His Excellency Abdelmadjid Tebboune, President of the People’s Democratic Republic of Algeria sends Congratulatory Message to the President

On the occasion of the Republic of the Union of

Myanmar celebrating its National Day, I would like to extend to Your Excellency, on behalf of the Algerian people and Government and in my own name, my warmest congratulations and best wishes for Your Excellency’s good health and wellbeing, and more progress and prosperity to the people of Myanmar.

I also seize this opportunity to express my full readiness to continue working with Your Excellency towards the strengthening of the relations of friendship and cooperation that unite our two peoples.

In renewing my warmest congratulations, please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

His Excellency Kim Jong Un, Chairman of the State Affairs Commission of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea sends Congratulatory Message to the President

On behalf of the government and people of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, I extend my warm congratulations to you and to the government and people of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar on the occasion of the 73rd anniversary of the independence of Myanmar.

I take this opportunity to express my conviction that the traditional relations of friendship and cooperation between our two countries would further strengthen and develop as required by the new era and sincerely wish you and the people of your country success in the efforts for national unity and prosperity.

Her Excellency Sheikh Hasia, Prime Minister of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh sends Message of felicitations to the President

I am pleased to convey my warmest greetings and heartiest felicitations to Your Excellency and through you to the people of Myanmar on the august occasion of the Independence Day of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

Bangladesh attaches great importance to her relationship with Myanmar. We are keen to further strengthen our bilateral relationship for peace and prosperity of both nations.

I seize this occasion to wish you good health and happiness as well as continued peace and prosperity of the people of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

“People are the key”

MoHS discusses plans for resumption of medical courses

UNION Minister for Health and Sports Dr Myint Htwe presided over the meeting via videoconferencing yesterday to discuss the resumption of medical courses at the universities under the ministry.

The meeting discussed plans to reopen final year part 2 regular classes at the Universities of Medicine, final year regular classes at the University of Dental Medicine and post-graduate medical courses.

The ministry is working to resume the remaining classes of final part 2 at the Universities of Medicine and final year courses at the University of Nursing with the approval of the national com-

mittee on COVID-19 control soon.

The meeting was participated by rectors, pro-rectors, professors/deans, professors and officials from the Department of Human Resources for Health and the 15 universities under the ministry. The courses are scheduled to reopen in February in line with the COVID-19 preventive guidelines. The virtual system will also be used in teaching.

Deputy Minister Dr Mya Lay Sein, Permanent Secretary Professor Dr Thet Khaing Win, Director-General Dr Tin Tin Lay, together with the participants at the meeting, discussed course resumption plans.—MNA

(Translated by Aung Khin)



Union Minister Dr Myint Htwe presides over the online discussions to reopen medical courses, on 5 January 2021. PHOTO: MNA

48-year-old man continues long journey walking in honour of COVID-19 front-liners

A 48-year-old man continued his over 1,000-mile journey walking in honour of COVID-19 front-liners, including medical workers and volunteers, as he left Meiktila Township in central Myanmar yesterday morning.



A long-journey walker is walking to honour COVID front-liners, healthcare workers and volunteers. PHOTO: CHAN THAR (MEIKTILA)

U Kyaw Kyaw Win (a) Bo Sanay is the residence of Phaungtaung village in Pyin Oo Lwin Township, and he will walk the round trip between Pyin Oo Lwin and Yangon.

He also walked over 1,000 miles for the first

walk of honour in 2017 on the theme of Myanmar's victory in 29th Southeast Asian Games.

He began his second long-journey walk from Pyin Oo Lwin on 30 December.

He said, “It will take about 50 days for the 1,000-mile-journey in the round trip under fine weather condition.

He also expressed his appreciation for the assistance of locals on his journey.

“I will share the donations which I received on the way to the COVID-19 control measures,” he added.

—Chan Thar (Meiktila)

(Translated by Aung Khin)

38th relief flight from ROK brings 77 citizens back home

THE 38th relief flight of Myanmar Airways International, organized by the Myanmar Embassy in Seoul, landed at Yangon International Airport with 77 citizens yesterday evening.

The group of returnees included 65 from the Republic of Korea, 1 from Canada, 1 from Italy and 10 from the United States.

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 seamen and citizens in accordance with

the instructions from National-Level Central Committee on Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is working together

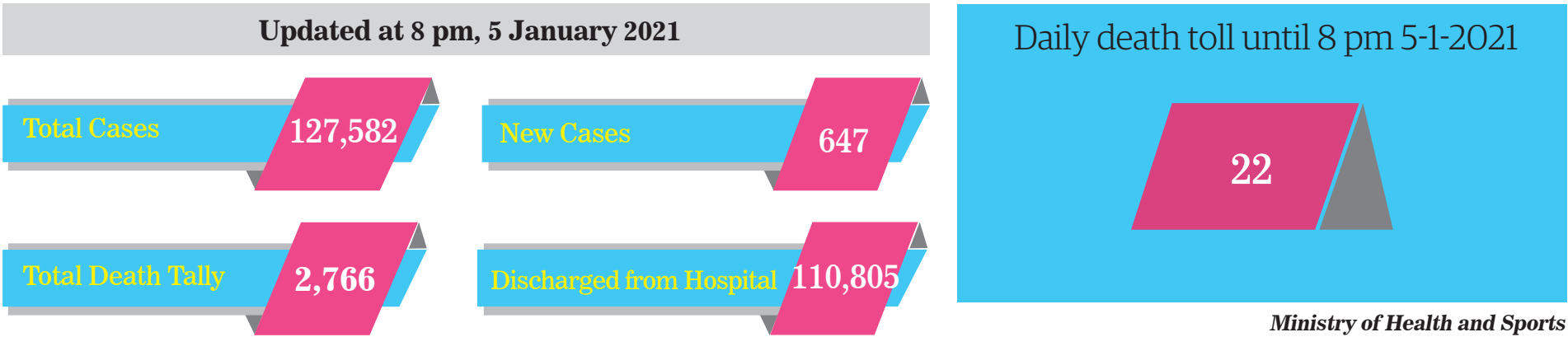
with the relevant ministries, Myanmar embassies from respective countries, shipping companies and the relevant organizations.—MNA



Myanmar returnees are going through immigration process at the Yangon International Airport yesterday. PHOTO: ZAW GYI

647 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 5 January, total figure rises to 127,582

MYANMAR'S COVID-19 positive cases rose to 127,582 after 647 new cases were reported on 5 January 2021 according to the Ministry of Health and Sports. Among these 127,582 confirmed cases, 2,766 died, 110,805 have been discharged from hospitals.—MNA



Cattle exporters hopes for positive negotiation outcomes in Jan-end

By Nyein Nyein

CHINA and Myanmar will negotiate on legitimate export of cattle in January-end, prompting the exporters to keep waiting for positive outcomes to send about 15,000 heads of cattle stranded in Muse to China, according to the Mandalay Region Cattle Exporters Association.

"The cattle are still stranded in Muse. We are anticipating G-to-G pact for legal export. For now, the exporters are still struggling," Chair U Soe Naing of the exporters association affirmed.

"Last early December, about 70 companies of cattle stranded in Muse arranged to bring the cattle back to their home owing to the burden of labour wages and high feedstuff cost. The association stopped them to wait for another month," he continued.

About 15,000 heads of cattle, owned by 150 companies, are stranded in Muse border as

China stopped purchasing cattle. The labour wages and feedstuff cost burden them. It costs K400,000-600,000 to take care of 100 heads of cattle every day.

China permits live cattle import only after ensuring the cattle is free from 20 diseases, including Foot and Mouth Disease, along with vaccination certificates, health certificates, and farming registration certificates. Therefore, the officials concerned from the two countries are negotiating this.

Earlier, 1,500-2,000 heads of cattle were daily traded through Muse border. With China stepping up border control as precautionary measures for the COVID-19 and other reasons, it was over three months that China halted cattle trade, the association stated.

"In the meantime, we are concerned about possible market manipulation when the supply is surpassing the demand. Additionally, Myanmar's live cat-



Live cattle export was allowed in late 2017, to eradicate illegal exports, creating more opportunities for breeders and promoting their interests. **PHOTO : SUPPLIED**

tle export relies heavily on the China market due to a reasonable price. However, Myanmar has other external markets such as Laos, Thailand, Malaysia and Bangladesh," said U Soe Naing.

The Ministry of Commerce grants a permit to each compa-

ny for 100 cattle export, and the permit is valid for three months. The companies can be taken legal actions if they do not sell the cattle during the three months.

Live cattle export was allowed in late 2017, to eradicate illegal exports, creating more

opportunities for breeders and promoting their interests.

Myanmar has around 500,000 heads of cattle for export beyond domestic consumption, the association stated.

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

Food Safety Project to provide indigenous poultry farming in 3 MDY townships

FOOD Safety Project (Mandalay) will contribute funds to develop poultry farm system for indigenous chicken in three townships of Mandalay Region to improve breeders' interests.

The farm system is implemented under the guidance of Mandalay Region government.

The FSP will provide K500,000 per farm to the breeders of native breeds in three townships in the current financial year 2020-2021, to ensure food safety. The project covers ten farms of native chicken in Patheingyi Township, 10 in Kyaukse Township and 10 in Sintgaing Township, said Food Safety Project Director U Kyin Maung. "We aim to offer antibiotic-free chicken and ensure food safety. Antibiotic use in poultry

production can lead to multi-drug resistance. That is the reason we are adopting a poultry farm system for native breeds. Indigenous chicken is adapted to a free-range production system. The FSP provides fund for breeders to build farm. The breeders can increase income, and they can easily give an eye drop vaccine to chicken on the farm. The businesses are temporarily suspended amid the COVID-19," he elaborated.

The FSP also provided technical assistance to the poultry farmers in the previous financial years, covering 20 farms in Madaya Township, 20 in Amarapura Township, 16 in Myingyan Township, and TadaU Township. —Ko Thwin (Mandalay)

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)



The FSP will provide K500,000 per farm to the breeders of native breeds in three townships in Mandalay Region in the current financial year 2020-2021, to ensure food safety. **PHOTO : KO THWIN (MANDALAY)**

Agricultural exports surge to \$936 mln amid COVID impacts

THE agricultural exports have touched a high of US\$936.074 million as of 18 December 2020 in the current financial year since 1 October 2020 despite a drastic drop in overall export values amid the COVID-19 impacts.

The figures reflect a significant rise of \$156.3 million this FY. The agro exports soared from \$779.69 million in the corresponding period of the 2019-2020FY, according to the trade figures released by the Ministry of Commerce.

Myanmar's agricultural exports rose regardless of the impact of the coronavirus on foreign demand.

In the exports sector, the agriculture industry performed the best, accounting for 22 per cent of overall exports. The agricultural industry's chief export items are rice and broken rice, pulses and beans, and maize. Fruits and vegetables, sesame, dried tea leaves, sugar, and other agro products are also shipped to other countries.

Myanmar agro products

are primarily exported to China, Singapore, Malaysia, the Philippines, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka. Sometimes, the export market remains uncertain due to unsteady global demand.

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, the involvement of regional and state agriculture departments, exporters, traders, and some grower groups, are required to meet production targets, said an official from the Agriculture Department.

More than 100,000 acres of monsoon paddy have been cultivated under the contract farming system this year, according to the Myanmar Rice Federation (MRF).

The Commerce Ministry is working to help farmers deal with high input costs, procurement of pedigree seeds, high cultivation costs, and unpredictable weather conditions.

Myanma Agricultural Development Bank (MADB) under the Ministry of Planning, Finance and Industry has notified the farmers of agricultural loans for the current financial year.

In a bid to mitigate the impacts stricken by the COVID-19, the bank also provided an additional loan of K50,000 per acre under the COVID-19 Special Relief Loan Scheme between June and September 2020. Moreover, it cut the loan interest rate from eight to five per cent during the COVID-19 crisis.

The MADB grants agricultural loans to the small-scale farmers annually. The paddy farmers can take out loans of K150,000 per acre, while the growers of other crops including sugarcane, can get K100,000 per acre. They have to put the original Farmland Permit Form (7) up for collateral to secure the loan under the personal guarantee system.—Ko Htet

(Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

Trade Mark Ads Call

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Aim to speed up development in Rakhine State

SOCIO-economic development is a fundamental need to restore normalcy and improve the situation in Rakhine State, and it is also a critical step in building a Democratic Federal Union. With some positive improvements in the socio-economic sector in Rakhine State, the COVID-19 pandemic and armed conflicts have hindered the implementation of the recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State.

Due to the pandemic and armed conflicts, the locals in the state are facing shortage of job opportunities and uneasy livelihoods.

Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, the Union Government continued to implement the recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State as much as it could, and is making efforts in the implementation of its National Strategy for the closure of internally displaced person (IDP) camps.

Bringing sustainable peace and development to Rakhine State requires a firm commitment and a broad involvement of all stakeholders including international civil society organizations which are working tirelessly with government organizations at large.

The Union Government is taking concrete steps to address what the Kofi Annan Commission described as complex challenges of low development and poverty rooted in enduring social conflict between the communities.

The actual status of the implementation of the recommendations could have progressed a lot more if we did not have the pandemic and other hindrances, and the massive consequences that followed, which hindered the implementation of the recommendations of the Advisory Commission. Over the past three years, we witnessed the improvements of infrastructure such as roads, telecommunications and electricity in Rakhine State. However, the state still has a long way to go.

Peaceful Co-existence among People in Diverse Communities

By Lokethar

WE hear now a days of preaching by elders of diverse communities about promoting love and goodwill to avoid conflicts and maintain peace and tranquillity between people of different race and religion. Somehow in some diverse communities prejudices and animosity among the diverse people does exist to a certain extent. Some people tend to demean “aliens” whether citizens or legal residents, by referring to them in denigrating terms. For those who are loyal to and sincerely work for the good of the Country, it can be very insulting, even as a joke, more so because there is no ill-will on their part. Such “racist talk” can only increase divisions in diverse communities.

Peaceful co-existence

The way to bridge the divide is peaceful co-existence. People must be made aware of the need to coexist if the community as a whole is to “survive and thrive”. The basis of such coexistence would be adherence to the Rule of Law and norms of behaviour regarding social and economic relations. There needs to be a set of Rules governing such relations. These Rules have to be observed by all people in the community, irrespective of race, religion, culture and every body has to abide by them.

The authorities must be even handed in matters of governance. Whether people of diverse communities are citizens or are legal residents of foreign origin but of different race and religion, authorities must endeavour to treat all equally and not discriminate on the basis of race and religion. In fact nowa-

days every country have their share of immigrants whether from the past or at the present. The process of migration that started with the evolution of humanity will not stop. The migrants some how find “work” because of their willingness to work to earn their living. After all It’s no crime to work for a living. In fact by working for wages or a “consideration” arising out of a performance agreement, they are contributing to the economy of the country which accepts

“Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence”

Favouring one community over another as regards economic incentives and opportunities can be the cause of conflicts

as well. Any legal “grants” or “concessions” to any community should be regulated by the Government authorities to ensure that benefits arising out of such grants and concessions are enjoyed by the community at large.

Perhaps we can, if it is acceptable, delve into the “Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence” (Panch Sila) devolved by the Heads of States of two biggest Nations of Asia and agreed to by some Asian States including Burma (now Myanmar) at a meeting in Bandung, Indonesia some seventy or so years ago. Drawing up on the wisdom of the five principles or the “Panch Silas” we can perhaps, as a corollary, formulate the five principles of peaceful coexistence among people of diverse communities within the country as follows:-

1. Mutual respect for each other’s way of life and religious practice.

2. Not resorting to degrading speech or violence against each other.
3. Mutual non interference in each others’ affairs.
4. Cooperating for mutual benefit.
5. Peaceful coexistence and abiding by the Rule of Law.

Each of the “five principles” could be elaborated depending on the situation existing.

These “five” basic principles and their elaborations should be agreed to collectively by the representatives of people of diverse communities concerned. The five principles and their elaborations should be upheld and practised by all members of the community, especially in the regions of likely communal violence between people of different race and religion. With charity to all and malice to none.

BRAZIL SCRAMBLES TO SECURE COVID VACCINE FROM INDIA

Brazil private clinics seek deal for Indian COVID vaccine

A Brazilian association of private health clinics said Sunday it was negotiating with Indian pharmaceutical firm Bharat Biotech to buy five million doses of its COVID-19 vaccine, which India has just authorized for emergency use.

THE Brazilian Association of Vaccine Clinics (ABCVAC) confirmed on its website it had signed a memorandum of understanding with the Indian firm to purchase its Covaxin vaccine, which is currently in the final stage of clinical trials.

Any final deal would be subject to approval by Brazil’s health regulator, Anvisa, which has yet to approve any vaccines against the new coronavirus.

Far-right President Jair Bolsonaro’s government faces mounting criticism of dragging its feet on a vaccination campaign in Brazil, which has the second-highest death toll in the pandemic, after the United States.

That has left some state governments, and now the private sector, scrambling to try to launch vaccination drives on their own.

ABCVAC described its planned deal with Bharat Biotech as a way to ensure Brazilians using the private health system—typically the wealthy—would have access to a vaccine, even as the government reserves its own initial doses for the public health

system and high-priority groups such as health workers and the elderly.

“We had been looking for solutions for the private market, and the possibility came up of using this Indian vaccine, which is very promising,” ABCVAC president Geraldo Barbosa told TV network Globo News.

“It’s an additional sale that will not interfere with the quantity of vaccine doses the government has ordered.”

ABCVAC representatives will travel to India Monday to continue negotiations, the association said.

It said its clinics could begin vaccinating people by the second half of March, pending the conclusion of clinical trials and regulatory approval from Anvisa.

India approved vaccines from both Bharat and Britain’s Oxford University earlier Sunday for “restricted use in emergency situations,” even though the former is still in testing.

The country has set an ambitious target of vaccinating 300 million of its 1.3 billion people by mid-year.



In recent months, the COVID-19 pandemic has reinforced the ills of the Amazon region, the largest tropical forest in the world. PHOTO: AFP

Brazil is meanwhile struggling to get its vaccination campaign off the ground, amid political squabbling and vaccine skepticism from Bolsonaro.

The president regularly flouts expert advice on contain-

ing the pandemic and says he does not plan to get a COVID-19 shot himself.

The government has secured 100 million doses of the Oxford vaccine but has yet to get regulatory approval or acquire the

necessary syringes.

Brazil’s health ministry has yet to announce the start date for its vaccination campaign.

Earlier Sunday, Anvisa authorized the importation of the first two million doses of the Ox-

ford vaccine, pending approval for their use.

“Intolerable” vaccine delays Many accuse the government of waiting too long.

The situation has grown “intolerable,” Supreme Court Justice Gilmar Mendes said in a blistering tweet.

“Neighboring countries have already started their vaccination campaigns. It is urgent we establish a timeframe to do the same. Ignorance must not prevail over science,” he wrote.

There are warning signs the virus is surging again in Brazil.

Experts say the country of 212 million people is being hit by a second wave, and areas that once seemed to have brought the virus under control are again facing an onslaught of cases and deaths.

That includes the Amazon rainforest state of Amazonas, whose capital, Manaus, was devastated by the virus last year, with haunting scenes of mass graves and corpses piled in refrigerator trucks.

SOURCE: AFP



Myanmar Daily Weather Report

(Issued at 7:00 pm Tuesday 5 January, 2021)

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

FORECAST VALID UNTIL NOON OF THE 6 January, 2021: Light rain are likely to be isolated in Taninthayi Region. Degree of certainty is (60%). Weather will be partly cloudy in Upper Sagaing Region and Kachin, Kayin, Mon States and generally fair in the remaining Regions and States.

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

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Likelihood of light rain in Upper Sagaing Region and Kachin State.

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 6 January, 2021: Fair weather.

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 6 January, 2021: Fair weather.

FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 6 January, 2021: Fair weather.



THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

သတင်းစာများကို ဤသို့ဖတ်ရှုနိုင်ပါသည်

- မြန်မာနိုင်ငံအတွက် အမှတ် ၅၈ ကိုယ်စားပြုသည့်သတင်းစာ ဖတ်ရှုနိုင်ပါသည်။
- ကြေးမုံခရိုင်အတွက် အမှတ် ၇၃ ဝယ်ယူနိုင်သည့်သတင်းစာ ဖတ်ရှုနိုင်ပါသည်။
- သတင်းနှင့်စာပေလုပ်ငန်း စာအုပ်အရောင်းဆိုင် အမှတ် ၁၇၃၊ ပုသိမ်တိုင်းဒေသကြီး (အလယ်ဘလောက်) ကျောက်တံတားမြို့နယ်၊ ရန်ကုန်မြို့ ဖုန်း - ၀၁ ၂၄၈ ၁၁၁၊ ၀၁ ၂၄၈ ၁၁၂။
- The Global New Light of Myanmar အမှတ် ၁၅၈၊ ငါးဆယ်ပြည့်ဘုရားလမ်း (ကင်ဘလမ်း)၊ ဗဟန်းမြို့နယ်၊ ရန်ကုန်မြို့ ဖုန်း - ၀၁ ၈၆၈ ၄၄၃၂ / ၀၉ ၉၇၄ ၄၂၄ ၁၁၄။

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Thaton hatchery sends 1.3 mln fingerlings to licenced fish ponds during pandemic



Thaton hatchery sells over 1 million fingerlings to a licenced pond in Thaton Township, Mon State. PHOTO : KHUN (WINPA)

THATON hatchery provided 1.3 million fingerlings to the licenced fish breeding ponds during the coronavirus pandemic, Mon State Fisheries Department reported. Furthermore, 2.2 million fingerlings are sold at a fairer

price to the breeders. During the 2019-2020 financial year, Thaton hatchery has produced 4.3 million fingerlings (nine species) and added over 800,000 fingerlings to the rivers, creeks, dams, reservoirs and paddy fields. The hatchery in Thaton Township under Mon State Fisheries Department is carrying out hatching in each season so that the department can sell them to the breeders at lower prices and provide food security. Fingerlings are added into ponds, dams and rivers to ensure plenty of fish resources. The hatchery started hatching of carp and common carp. Fingerlings of rohu are selling well, and they are produced with the process of artificial reproduction. The natural hatching process is found in Tilapia and common carp. The hatchery ensures that fish production must grow steadily and fish can be bought at a fair price, said U Win Bo, in-charge of Thaton hatchery. The breeders from Paung and Mawlamyine mostly come to purchase the fingerlings at the hatchery. Those from Kayin State and Bago Region also purchased them.—Khun (Winpa) (Translated by Ei Myat Mon)

One-year patrolling project implemented to conserve Ayeyawady dolphins

A combined team led by the Fisheries Department conducted a one-year patrolling project on Ayeyawady dolphin conservation to reduce and finally eliminate illegal electrofishing in Ayeyawady River. When the Fisheries Department conducted the patrolling project, it was joined by the Department of Environmental and Endangered Aquatic Species Conservation, Kanbalu township Fisheries Department, Singu township Fisheries Department, Sagaing township Upper Myanmar Fisheries Training Centre, Maritime Police Supervision Division No. 1, the local people from Mandalay Ayeyawady Dolphin Conservation and the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) of Myanmar. The patrolling project took 104 hours, and the activities were usually conducted in early mornings, mornings, afternoons, evenings and at nights in an area of 1,140 kilometres. The team completed the patrolling project for 15 days from 16 December to 30 December 2020. Within 15 days, the team confiscated five fishing boats, five batteries and 12 other related equipment used in the illegal



The Fisheries Department conducts the one-year patrolling project on Ayeyawady dolphin conservation to fight illegal electrofishing. PHOTO : SUPPLIED

fishing. The team has arrested one man and filed charges against him under Freshwater Fisheries Law in Mandalay Region. The team has handed over the illegal equipment seized on 17 and 24 December to Madaya township Fisheries Department, those captured on 21 and 27 December to Singu township Fisheries Department and those charged on 23 December to Shwebo District Fisheries Department.—GNLM (Translated by Hay Mar)

Over 80 killed, 388 injured in Meiktila road accidents in 2020

A total of 86 people were killed with 388 others injured in connection with 260 road accidents in Meiktila in 2020, according to a statement of No. 96 Traffic Police Force (Meiktila).



No 96 Traffic Police Force (Meiktila) is carrying out the traffic awareness campaign and taking action against the disobedient drivers every Sunday in the crowded areas to reduce the traffic accidents. PHOTO : THEIN MYINT KYAW (MEIKTILA)

The number of road accidents in Meiktila township, Mandalay region, has also dropped in 2020 compared to last year's same period. No 96 Traffic Police Force (Meiktila) is carrying out the traffic awareness campaign and taking action against the disobedient drivers every Sunday in the crowded areas to reduce the traffic accidents. Besides, the awareness-raising is being carried out day and night at the road junctions and the traffic lights to make local motorcyclists and vehicle drivers aware of 2020 Motor Vehicle Management Laws. Because of this, the number of traffic accidents declined in 2020. In 2019, there were 366 car accidents with 136 deaths and 628 injuries, said Inspector Tun Min of No. 96 Traffic Police Force (Meiktila). In 2020, the traffic police force conducted 64 times of traffic awareness campaigns. The police force also prosecuted 651 unruly vehicles and confiscated 33 vehicles without licences. Deaths and injuries related to traffic accidents remain a significant concern in Myanmar. They were mostly caused by human errors such as over-speeding, negligent driving, drowsy driving, and others that include defective vehicles and severe weather.—Thein Myint Kyaw (Meiktila) (Translated by Hay Mar)

PM JOHNSON CANCELS R-DAY VISIT

UK PM Johnson postpones India trip due to Covid crisis

PRIME Minister Boris Johnson on Tuesday postponed a post-Brexit trip planned this month to India after the Covid crisis worsened in Britain, Downing Street said.

“The prime minister spoke to Prime Minister (Narendra) Modi this morning, to express his regret that he will be unable to visit India later this month as planned,” a spokesperson said, blaming a fast-spreading strain of the virus.

Johnson announced a new England-wide lockdown on Monday following the emergence of the virulent new strain, explain-

ing urgent action was needed to prevent spiralling numbers of cases overwhelming health services.

“The prime minister said that it was important for him to remain in the UK so he can focus on the domestic response to the virus,” Downing Street said Johnson had told his Indian counterpart.

Johnson still hopes to visit India in the first half of 2021, before Modi is due to attend a G7 summit in Britain later this year.

The British leader was due to be a guest at India’s annual Republic Day celebrations on



Britain’s Prime Minister Boris Johnson looks on during a news conference in response to the ongoing situation with the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, inside 10 Downing Street, London, Britain, on 19 December, 2020. PHOTO: AFP

January 26, shortly after the UK left the European Union’s single market and as it seeks new trade

deals around the world, particularly in fast-growing Asia. SOURCE: AFP

“UNNECESSARY RISKS”

Australia vows not to rush vaccine rollout, citing UK ‘problems’



Australian PM Scott Morrison suggested virus-ravaged countries like Britain had been forced to take risks with emergency approvals. PHOTO: POOL/AFP

UNDER mounting pressure to speed up coronavirus vaccinations, Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison on Tuesday said he would not take “unnecessary risks” and emulate Britain’s emergency drug approval.

While vaccinations are already well underway in many countries, Australia’s pharma-

vaccine -- suggested virus-ravaged countries like Britain had been forced to take risks with emergency approvals.

“Australia is not in an emergency situation like the United Kingdom. So we don’t have to cut corners. We don’t have to take unnecessary risks,” the conservative leader told local radio 3AW.

Australia had largely eliminated community transmission but is currently battling to contain small clusters of the disease in the country’s biggest cities, Sydney and Melbourne.

Around 26 people are currently in hospital nationwide with the disease.

He said Britain, with almost 60,000 cases of Covid-19 a day was “in the very early phases” of the vaccine rollout and “they’ve had quite a few problems, and they’re doing it on an emergency basis”.

“They’re not testing batches of vaccines before they’re

disseminated across the population, is my understanding,” Morrison said, insisting Australia would carry out such testing.

The Australian premier has for weeks said that mass-vaccination efforts in Britain, the United States and elsewhere would provide Australia with more data about the safety of the vaccines than clinical trials could.

Australia -- with a population of around 25 million -- has agreed to buy almost 54 million doses of the University of Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine, with 3.8 million to be delivered early this year.

It also reached an agreement for 51 million doses of Novavax this year, 10 million doses of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine early this year, and had invested in a domestic University of Queensland vaccine that was scrapped while still in trials. SOURCE: AFP

SNIPING AND SQUABBLING

Virus-hit Italy gripped by political crisis

ITALY’S Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte has more than enough on his plate as he deals with a raging coronavirus pandemic, but also faces the more immediate challenge of staying in office.

Despite a soaring Covid-19 death toll and with a deadline looming to come up with a credible plan to spend billions of euros in EU recovery funds, the government has been consumed for weeks by internal sniping from

former premier Matteo Renzi.

Renzi has threatened to withdraw his small but pivotal Italia Viva (Italy Alive) party from the centre-left coalition that Conte heads, which would force its collapse.

“The situation is, in technical terms, a disaster,” the politician, who led Italy from 2014 to 2016, said in an interview with the Rete 4 channel broadcast late Monday.

Asked about the chances of

Conte keeping his job, he said: “We’ll see.”

Renzi has complained about slow progress in rolling out coronavirus vaccinations and delays in school reopenings, and has lambasted Conte for seeking to concentrate power in his hands.

This includes setting spending priorities without enough consultation for the 196 billion euros (\$240 billion) Italy expects to receive as part of a post-virus EU recovery plan, which is due

to be submitted to Brussels by mid-April.

Italy has recorded more than 75,000 deaths from coronavirus, the highest toll in Europe, and the associated lockdowns and restrictions have hit the economy hard.

The leaked draft spending plan includes more than 50 priorities, with only nine billion euros for Italy’s cash-strapped health system. SOURCE: AFP

NEWS
IN BRIEF

A LOGISTICAL PROBLEM

Belgium expects to receive half of Pfizer vaccine doses for January

BELGIUM will receive only half of the doses it has ordered of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine for January, reports Reuters, due to a logistical problem in December.

Belgian Health Ministry spokesman Yves Van Laethem said the issue prevented the scheduled delivery of vaccines as per the Belgian vaccination strategy, without providing any further details.

Van Laethem told a press conference: “The company Pfizer, which supplies us, will only be able to supply half of the planned doses for the month of January and so we go from 600,000 doses to a little over 300,000 doses.” SOURCE: AFP

VACCINE ROLL-OUT

Mexico approves AstraZeneca/Oxford coronavirus vaccine

MEXICO on Monday authorized the coronavirus vaccine developed by AstraZeneca and the University of Oxford for emergency use in the country, which has one of the world’s highest Covid-19 death tolls.

Deputy health minister Hugo Lopez-Gatell announced on Twitter that Mexican regulators had approved the vaccine, which has also been authorized by Britain, India and Argentina.

Lopez-Gastell said the vaccine could be available in March. “It depends on the private entities that work on it to specify the production capacity,” he explained later during a routine afternoon conference.

It is the second coronavirus vaccine authorized by Mexico, which on December 24 began a mass immunization programme using the Pfizer-BioNTech shot, with priority given to health workers.

Some 30,000 workers, about a quarter of what was planned in the first stage, had received the vaccine by Sunday, according to the government. SOURCE: AFP

WARM WELCOME

Saudi crown prince greets Qatar emir for reconciliation summit

QATAR'S leader arrived in Saudi Arabia Tuesday, greeted by de facto ruler Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman with a tight embrace, ahead of a summit that could yield more breakthroughs in a regional crisis.

Saudi Arabia led a coalition of countries in the Gulf and beyond that cut ties and transport links with Qatar in June 2017, charging that it was too close to Iran and backed radical Islamist groups – allegations Doha has always denied.

Those countries, along with Oman and Kuwait which have mediated between the two sides, will meet in the Saudi city of Al-Ula, after Riyadh overnight re-

opened its borders to Doha despite lingering enmity between the neighbours.

The warm welcome that Prince Mohammed extended to Qatar's ruler Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, with the pair chatting as they walked to a waiting limousine, will also fuel hopes for a wider deal.

Sheikh Tamim's attendance at the summit, visiting Saudi Arabia for the first time since the crisis began, is seen as a key vote of confidence in the process and was only confirmed after the concessions were announced.

"Confidence building measures seem to start with Saudi and Qatar, but the rest will join even

if later," said Kuwait University assistant professor Bader al-Saif.

"Any step toward reconciliation is better than no step at all. The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) requires a major reset and can offer much more than it has."

Washington has intensified pressure for a resolution to what Doha calls a "blockade", insisting Gulf unity is necessary to isolate US foe Iran as the curtain falls on Donald Trump's presidency.

Jared Kushner, Trump's son-in-law and senior adviser who shuttled around the region to seek a deal, will attend the signing on Tuesday of the "breakthrough" agreement, a US official said.

SOURCE: AFP



Qatar's ruler Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani is given a warm welcome by Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman on his first visit after three and a half years of broken relations, fueling hopes of rapprochement at a Gulf summit. **PHOTO: SAUDI ROYAL PALACE/AFP**

SHIP SEIZURE NEGOTIATIONS

S. Korean destroyer arrives in waters near Iran after oil tanker seizure



CCTV footage of the Hankuk Chemi, a South Korean-flagged oil tanker, shows a boat from Iran's Revolutionary Guards in a red circle. The footage was shown at tanker owner DM Shipping's offices in Busan on January 4, 2021. **PHOTO: YONHAP/AFP**

SOUTH Korea will send a delegation to Iran to negotiate the release of a seized oil tanker and its crew, Seoul said Tuesday, as an anti-piracy unit arrived in waters near the Strait of Hormuz.

Iran's Revolutionary Guards said Monday it had seized the South Korean-flagged Hankuk Chemi – which it said was carrying 7,200 tonnes of "oil chemical products" – for infringing mari-

time environmental laws.

Seoul's defence ministry said Tuesday a destroyer carrying members of South Korea's anti-piracy unit had arrived in waters near the Strait of Hormuz and was "carrying out a mission to ensure the safety of our nationals", without giving details.

Seoul said the 300-strong Cheonghae unit had been in the region since late last year and

would not engage in an offensive operation, an unnamed military official told the South's Yonhap News Agency.

"The issue should be resolved through diplomacy. The unit is focused on the safety of our people who use the waterway after the seizure incident," they added.

Foreign ministry spokesman Choi Young-sam said a government delegation would be "dispatched to Iran at the earliest possible date to try to resolve the matter through bilateral negotiations".

The arrested crew were from South Korea, Indonesia, Vietnam, and Myanmar, the Guards said on its website Sepahnews, without giving further details.

The seizure followed days of high US-Iran tensions marked by the first anniversary of the US assassination of Iran's revered military commander Major General Qasem Soleimani in a Baghdad drone strike.

SOURCE: AFP

CONTESTED PRESIDENCY

New Venezuela parliament leaves Western-backed Guaido out in cold

A new Venezuelan parliament will be sworn in Tuesday with the party of President Nicolas Maduro now in almost complete control and the main thorn in his side, Western-backed opposition leader Juan Guaido, out in the political cold.

Venezuelans have lived almost two years with both men laying claim to the presidency, but with Maduro labeled a dictator and subject to Western sanctions and Guaido recognized as the country's legitimate leader by the United States and more than 50 other nations.

In a move some criticized as a strategic error, the opposition led by Guaido boycotted December 6 legislative elections that returned a large majority for Maduro's party. The National Assembly formerly enjoyed an opposition majority.

This means that on Tuesday, Guaido will be out of his job as National Assembly speaker, losing the limited institutional legitimacy he had, and leaving

foreign governments backing his claim to the presidency in a difficult position.

"I do not think that this duality (of power) will continue for much longer," Benigno Alarcon, director of the Centre of Politics and Government at Venezuela's Andres Bello Catholic University, told AFP.

Maduro, he said, "has control of the country through force" and a firm grip all state institutions. This means, among other things, he could use Covid-19 restrictions on movement to ban any possible protests against his rule. At the same time, Guaido is faced with increasingly feeble opposition mobilization. A referendum-style consultation called by Guaido and held over five days in December for people to condemn the December 6 vote and Maduro with it, failed to muster the large numbers of opposition supporters that participated in the protests of 2019.

SOURCE: AFP

CRUCIAL RUNOFFS

Georgia votes in polls that could shape Biden presidency

AFTER an unprecedented campaign that mobilized Donald Trump and his White House successor Joe Biden, Georgians troop to the polls Tuesday for two closely-watched US Senate runoffs that could shape the first

years of the new Democratic presidency.

For nearly 20 years Georgia has voted reliably Republican in the presidential election and Senate contests.

But Biden pulled out a

shock victory in Georgia in November, one of several states that he flipped to win the White House, and the races for the Senate have come down to the wire in the biggest, most expensive congressional runoffs in US

history.

Polls open at 7:00 am (1200 GMT) in the southern state. A record three million-plus people have voted early, election officials say, and final results may not be known for several days.

A staggering \$832 million has been spent on the two contests, including spending in the primary and general elections, according to the Centre for Responsive Politics.

SOURCE: AFP

TUNA ON THE CHEAP

Pandemic overshadows Japan’s New Year tuna auction



At this year’s auction, no spectators were allowed, and buyers and sellers wore masks and sanitized their hands. PHOTO: AFP

TOKYO’S annual New Year tuna auction ended Tuesday without the usual jaw-dropping bidding war, with the country’s “Tuna King” holding back on gunning for the top fish, citing

the pandemic woes affecting the restaurant industry. The most expensive fish of the day – a 208-kilogram (459-pound) bluefin caught off the northern Aomori region of Japan,

known for its quality tuna – was bought by another bidder for 20.84 million yen (\$202,000). That is just a fraction of the millions of dollars that sushi businessman

and self-proclaimed “Tuna King” Kiyoshi Kimura has shelled out in recent years to secure the bragging rights that come with buying the auction’s top tuna. Last year, Kimura paid \$1.8 million for a 276-kilogram (608-pound) bluefin, and in 2019 he paid a record \$3.1 million for a 278-kilogram (613-pound) fish. But Kimura said he wanted to show restraint this year as the raging pandemic has caused so much suffering to restaurants and other businesses. “I didn’t go for the highest bid this year because this is the time for self-control,” Kimura told journalists who gathered to see him after the pre-dawn auction at the Toyosu fish market. SOURCE: AFP

3.8 MILLION

Spain jobless grew by 23% in 2020

THE number of registered jobless in Spain jumped by nearly 23 per cent in 2020, with the country suffering one of the hardest economic blows from the coronavirus pandemic, government figures showed on Tuesday. By the year’s end, the number of people out of work had risen by 724,532 from the figure a year earlier to 3,888,137, labour ministry data showed. In December alone, an extra 36,825 people registered as unemployed. At the height of the pandemic in March and April, that figure stood at nearly 600,000 people. By the end of 2020, the number of people still on furlough stood at 755,000, official figures showed

with the government scheme set to remain in place until the end of January. A total of 360,000 jobs were destroyed during the course of 2020 when the number of people making social security contributions is taken into account. “We are ending a dreadful year for employment,” said Lorenzo Amor, deputy head of the Spanish Confederation of Employers’ Organizations (CEOE) who called on the government to extend its ERTE furlough scheme, which has already been renewed twice. Union bosses say the furlough scheme has been vital, with Unai Sordo, secretary general of the Workers’ Commissions (CCOO)

admitting without it and other safeguards, there “could have been another two million unemployed”. But the scheme has cost the public purse a huge amount, adding to the ballooning deficit and public debt in Spain which had chalked up an impressive recovery in recent

years from the devastation wreaked by the financial crisis of 2008. Heavily dependent on tourism, Spain is expected to show the biggest slump among western economies this year, with the IMF expecting growth to contract by 12.8 per cent. SOURCE: AFP



Spanish workers hold a placard reading “Hospitality is not the problem. No to closure”. PHOTO: JOSEP LAGO /AFP

EXTRA GRANTS

UK launches new €5.1bn plan to help virus-hit firms

THE UK government on Tuesday launched an extra £4.6-billion (€5.1bn) package for virus-battered businesses as England began a fresh lockdown set to last weeks.

The financial support “will help businesses to get through the months ahead – and crucially it will help sustain jobs, so workers can be ready to return when they are able

to reopen,” finance minister Rishi Sunak said in a statement. Sunak announced grants for retail, hospitality and leisure businesses worth up to £9,000 (€9,959)

per property to help businesses through to the spring. Other impacted businesses would share £594 million (€657m). SOURCE: AFP

NEWS IN BRIEF

EX-BANKER

Former Huarong board chairman Lai Xiaomin sentenced to death for graft

LAI Xiaomin, former board chairman of China Huarong Asset Management Co., Ltd., was sentenced to death Tuesday after he was found guilty of graft and bigamy. The sentence was handed down by the Second Municipal Intermediate People’s Court of Tianjin. The court also ruled that his political rights shall be deprived for life and all his personal properties shall be confiscated.—SOURCE: Xinhua

NEW YORK STOCK EXCHANGE

NYSE scraps plan to delist China telecom firms

THE New York Stock Exchange abandoned plans to delist three state-owned Chinese telecom companies on Monday, reversing a decision that further dented already strained relations between the world’s two superpowers. In a brief statement, the stock exchange said it “no longer intends to move forward with the delisting action” for China Telecom, China Mobile and China Unicom. No detailed reason was given for the sudden reversal, which the exchange said came after “further consultation with relevant regulatory authorities”. In response, Chinese foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said the initial US move to delist the three companies “reflected the arbitrariness, capriciousness and uncertainty of its rules and systems”.

“This will harm US national interests and its own image,” she added. Shares in the three state-owned telecoms firms jumped on the news. In Hong Kong trading of China Unicom, which at one point soared 11 percent, ended up at more than eight percent. China Mobile climbed more than five per cent and China Telecom added more than three per cent. Mainland Chinese shares reversed earlier losses, while the yuan rose around 0.7 per cent against the dollar. Jackson Wong, at Amber Hill Capital, said the move was “quite unexpected”. “Some funds that had an obligation to unload these shares will now need to buy them back. Some investors are also starting to pricing in a scenario that the decision to halt delistings could be a start of a de-escalation” in China-US tensions, he added.—SOURCE: AFP

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V OLIVIA VOY. NO. (052S)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V OLIVIA VOY. NO. (052S)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **6-01-2021** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **MITT/TMIT** where it will lie at the consignee’s risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

Phone No: **2301185**

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

M/S SEALAND MAERSK ASIA PTE LTD



Farmers work at a watermelon nursery in Sagaing Region. PHOTO: MYO WIN TUN



A farmer watering plants in a watermelon farm in Nay Pyi Taw

Myanma watermelon to extend foreign market to the UAE, Qatar and Singapore

By Mayyu-Myo Aung (MANA)

A largest part of people is residing in the rural areas in Myanmar relying entirely on agriculture as their major profession. The more agriculture sector develops, the more the socio-economic life of rural people makes progress. Only if the rural area develops can Myanmar be improved. The residents in the rural area make up more than 70% of the total population of the country. Apart from rice, marketable beans and pulses, sesame, cucumber, watermelon, onion and garlic, and winter crops (rural term) such as groundnut and carrot grow well in Myanmar's climate.

Myanma coffee saw a market's favourite and an offer last year. An order for 100 tonnes coffee of six containers' shipment worth of about USD 850,000 was accepted to be sent in the harvest time of coffee.

Myanma coffee already sought foreign markets by sending coffee samples and conducting introducing of coffee products. The Republic of Korea, Japan, China, and Chinese Taipei in East Asia become well aware of Myanma coffee and would like to place orders from Myanmar due to the advantages of being organic and better processes of making coffee.

Myanma avocado was exported to London and won the customers' likes. The information that plans would underway to export Myanma watermelon to Qatar and Singapore if the UAE liked Myanma watermelon has become good news for the growers, farmers and Myanma agriculture sector.

Myanma avocado will be exported to London for the second time, according to Myanmar Avocado Producers and Exporters Association. Avocado strains like Amara, Hass and Barkaenia from Myanmar could be exported to England for the first time in the first week of November. Myanma avocado is scheduled to be exported to

England for the second time early January in 2021.

Myanmar produces avocado a lot and most of which have to rely on local markets. But now the producers are trying to export Myanma avocados to foreign markets. Myanmar produced 5,000 tonnes of avocados in 2019-2020 financial year and 500 tonnes of them received Premium Market which included local consumption and export. Agricultural techniques and information are being distributed in line with standardizations in order to grasp Premium Market in 2020-2021FY.

Every product coming from Myanmar agriculture sector has to rely entirely on China. Myanmar traders have to be satisfied with the price China offered as they have no competitive market. When watermelons are transported by trucks to China, they are inspected by poking inside with iron rods at the checked points. It looks like illegal things especially narcotic drugs are checked. Therefore some watermelons see dam-

ages during the inspection. When they arrive at the Chinese market, they do not get good price and they are subject to a reduction in the current price.

The traders have to sell at a loss despite the fact that they do not get good price. Unless they sell the watermelon at the reduced price, they have to charge for transport cost for one more day and they have to pay for parking fee as well. If they do not sell, the watermelon may go rotten. If it is disposed, they will have to pay for municipal cost. For these reasons, they have to sell the watermelon at a reduced price. If the rice is exported to African and Asian countries, there may be some delays and difficulties and so it has to be sold to China at a reduced price. Myanma watermelon is being currently exported to UAE, becoming a new market for Myanmar traders in addition to the Chinese market. It can be said that Myanmar agricultural products have seen a new export route to the foreign market.

"Myanma watermelon had

to place too much reliance on export only to a single country of China. But now foreign markets have already been sought to export to the UAE, Qatar and Singapore. The fruit wholesales company from Dubai in the UAE contacted Future Glory company for purchase on watermelon. They signed an agreement to export watermelon all the year round although the exact export volume was not stated," said Kyaw Ko Ko, a boss of Future Glory company. An order for seedless watermel-



A watermelon cultivation plot in Kayin State



aw. PHOTO: GNLM

on was already accepted and it was picked up on 9 September. A container holding 25 tonnes of seedless watermelon was first sent to the cold room and then it was exported to Dubai for the first batch. Myanma muskmelon together with the seedless watermelon was also exported as a testing ground.

Two kinds of smuskmelon produced from ChaungU in Sagaing Region will be exported for the purpose of a testing ground, according to a source from Sagaing Region Watermelon and Muskmelon Producers and Exporters Association. “Shwe” muskmelon and “Pike” muskmelon produced from Pauk-inn in ChaungU Township was transported by water for the first time. In the past, these fruits had to place much reliance on the Chinese market. If international competitive markets can be sought, there would be a reduction in difficulties with fault-finding such as reduced price, reduced fruit tonnage and low quality and the farmers can hope for the

opportunities of good price. Two samples of muskmelon from Sagaing Region, sample of 855 large size watermelon from Meiktila, sample of small size watermelon called “Done-kyi” from Kayan in Yangon Region will be sent.

In an effort to export watermelons to China via Myanmar border, the authorities from the border of China often close the border crossings and their inspections cause some delays. These reasons bring an unstable market and Myanmar watermelon farmers had to face wastes and losses throughout the history. Watermelon plantations carried out by the Chinese can be seen not only in the northern part of Shan State but also in Mandalay and Sagaing Regions and the watermelon produced from these plantations are sent back to their country and it has an effect on local growers to some degree.

With the emergence of new markets in the UAE, Qatar and Singapore, Myanmar will manage to escape from the

much-reliance on the Chinese market. Myanmar has the opportunities of extending the watermelon market and the growers are going to enjoy the benefits with the extensive foreign market. The UAE is going to purchase mangoes and pipe apples from Myanmar and they will be exported at a time when they are in season. Moreover, mangoes and pipe apples will be exported to Qatar and Singapore, according to Myanmar Watermelon and Muskmelon Growers and Exporters Association.

During the COVID-19 crisis, an entry into China through border was closed. For that reason, the watermelons couldn't be grown in Myanmar by the Chinese people because they were banned entering Myanmar. Local farmers had to grow the watermelon less than the previous as the market seemed uncertain and at the same time the watermelon acreage was on the decrease. The reduced production caused less supply but more demand in the foreign market. Therefore, per tonne price of Myanma watermelon rose to 6,500 Yuan in the fruit market of Wantein in China, according to the fruit wholesales centre of Muse.

Watermelon and muskmelon are produced in Bago, Mon, Mandalay, Sagaing and northern part of Shan State where more than one million tonnes of crops is harvested in a year. The reliable market for Myanma watermelon and muskmelon is China. Last year saw almost no purchases from China due to the impact of the COVID-19 on the market which the cucumber farmers had to suffered losses. This year new markets have already been sought to export foreign countries apart from China. The demands from China have increased significantly with the price reaching a record high within 20 years at a time when the new markets are extended to foreign countries.

The climate changes in China resulted in losses in the cultivation of crops and a reduction in the crop yield. When the demand increased, there was few numbers of growers in the country and the crop yield decreased and this situation hardly happens, according to some watermelon and muskmelon merchants from Muse. Local watermelon price to China has been unprecedented reaching a record high by the time the fruit is in season this year. The current watermelon

export price from Muse to China has been the highest within 30 years. With less supply and more demand, per tonne price stands at 7,200 Yuan. In the early September, per tonne price was around 2,500 Yuan.

The number of watermelon trucks entered Muse in a day at the end of last year was about 300, but now about 50. Watermelon exporters had to come across the most losses within 20 years due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The post-January of 2020 is the time of substantial export volume, but since then the traders faced sizable losses with almost no buyers who can afford to purchase a very large amount. Watermelon and muskmelon sale festivals were held in Yangon with the purpose of easing the losses to some extent.

Myanma watermelon was exported to the UAE while Myanma avocado was exported to London. A plan to export muskmelon and watermelon to Qatar and Singapore has become a sign of development in the market expansion of Myanma agriculture sector.

Translated by Htut Htut (Twantay)



Watermelons. PHOTO: MYO WIN TUN



ate. PHOTO: LIN THANT (IPRD)



Watermelon plantation in Sagaing Region. PHOTO: MYO WIN TUN



A farmer works in a watermelon farm in Nay Pyi Taw. PHOTO: SUPPLIED

Premier League records 40 positive coronavirus cases

LONDON — The Premier League confirmed on Tuesday that 40 players and staff tested positive for coronavirus in two rounds of testing over the past week but insisted the season would continue as planned.

That figure is more than double the previous record of 18 positive cases and comes as England enters a nationwide lockdown to halt soaring infection rates.

Three matches were postponed last week due to outbreaks of Covid-19 at Manchester City and Fulham.

However, the British government has given the go-ahead for elite sport to continue despite the tighter restrictions.

Twice-weekly testing, used during the Project Restart plan



Manchester City's Benjamin Mendy (centre) admitted to breaching coronavirus regulations by hosting a New Year's Eve party. **PHOTO: POOL/AFP**

to complete last season, has resumed in the Premier League after being scaled down to once-a-week at the start of the season.

In the first round of testing

last week, 28 positive cases were detected from 1,311 tests, with a further 12 positives from 984 tests in the second round of testing.

—AFP ■

Australian Open forced to switch player quarantine hotel

MELBOURNE — Australian Open organizers were forced to find new quarantine accommodation for players Tuesday after a hotel pulled out, reportedly because of concerns from residents.

Organizers of the year's first tennis grand slam confirmed they had secured new hotel accommodation after Melbourne's The Westin cancelled plans to house tennis players during two weeks of quarantine ahead of the tournament.

"Several hotels in Melbourne have already been secured, including a replacement for the Westin, to safely accommodate the international playing group," organizers said in a statement.

Local media reported that a legal threat from several permanent residents in the luxury hotel

had scuppered the plan to host players there. The news comes 10 days before the first players are expected to arrive in the city.

The start of the opening Grand Slam of 2021 has already been delayed until February 8, to allow players to undergo a mandatory 14-day quarantine imposed on all overseas arrivals before taking part in a week of warm-up tournaments.

Melbourne only emerged from a months-long lockdown in October following a second wave of Covid-19, complicating planning for the Grand Slam. Australia has largely contained the coronavirus, although fresh outbreaks in Sydney and Melbourne have forced authorities to reintroduce some restrictions, including state border closures. —AFP ■

Olympic super-fan determined to welcome world to Tokyo

TOKYO — Whistle-blowing, flag-waving super-fan Kyoko Ishikawa has attended every Summer Olympics in the past 30 years – and the Tokyo resident doesn't plan on missing out on a Games in her home city.

The 51-year-old can't wait to welcome the world to Tokyo, even though surging infections and skyrocketing costs have

convinced many other Japanese that the event should not go ahead this year. "The Olympics are amazing," said Ishikawa, who has become a familiar face at Olympic venues with her traditional Japanese outfit and 'hachimaki' headband, adorned with her country's red-and-white flag.

"The power of diversity. The energy of diversity. The Olympics

are only three weeks, but within that short period you get a concentrated picture of the whole world," she told AFP.

A third wave of coronavirus infections is causing jitters in Japan, with Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga announcing Monday that he was considering declaring a state of emergency in the greater Tokyo area. —AFP ■

Rooney's Derby close training ground after virus outbreak



Derby County, with Wayne Rooney in interim charge, have closed their training ground after a coronavirus outbreak. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

Ronaldo-inspired Juventus face Milan test as Inter lurk

TURIN — Cristiano Ronaldo-powered Juventus head for Serie A leaders AC Milan on Wednesday with little room for error in their push for a 10th consecutive Serie A title.

Andrea Pirlo's side are 10 points behind unbeaten Milan, having played a game less.

Inter Milan lurk just one point behind their city rivals

with a chance to pull ahead against mid-table side Sampdoria.

"Against Juventus it's not decisive nor a passing of the baton," insisted Milan coach Stefano Pioli.

"Juve have won the last nine titles and aren't far behind us."

But a failure to take three points would weigh heavily on

Pirlo's team who currently sit fifth.

It will be a clash of styles between Milan and the champions, who have relied heavily on Ronaldo this season, with the Portuguese scoring 14 of their 29 goals, including six braces.

Without the 35-year-old, Juventus have struggled for victories, being held three times in his absence by Crotone, Hellas Verona and Benevento.

Juve will also be without injured forward Alvaro Morata, their second best scorer after Ronaldo, with defender Alex Sandro also out after testing positive for coronavirus.

Milan have remained solid despite missing injured top scorer Zlatan Ibrahimovic since late November, winning five and drawing two in his absence.

The 39-year-old Swede scored 10 goals in six games played before picking up a muscle problem. —AFP ■



Cristiano Ronaldo has scored 14 of Juventus's 29 league goals this season. **PHOTO: AFP**

LONDON — Championship strugglers Derby County have closed their training ground after several first-team staff members and players tested positive for coronavirus, the club said on Tuesday.

Derby, managed on an interim basis by Manchester United great Wayne Rooney, are liaising with the English Football League over their upcoming matches.

Their next scheduled fixture is an FA Cup third-round match against non-league Chorley on Saturday.

"Staff members and players were tested on Monday and have subsequently returned a number of positive results," read a statement on Derby's

website.

"The names of those individuals will not be made public for medical confidentiality reasons, but they and their close contacts must now serve a period of isolation at home in line with UK government guidelines."

Derby last week lost 1-0 to Sheffield Wednesday, who announced they had closed their training ground on Monday.

Elite professional sport in England is to continue despite new national lockdown restrictions announced by the British government on Monday.

Britain has been among nations worst-hit by the outbreak, with 2.7 million cases and more than 75,000 deaths. —AFP ■