**President accepts credentials of Brazilian Ambassador**

President U Win Myint accepts credentials of Brazilian Ambassador Mr Carlos Antonio Da Rocha Paranhos on 18 January. PHOTO : MNA

U Win Myint, President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, accepted the credentials of Mr Carlos Antonio Da Rocha Paranhos, the newly appointed Ambassador of the Federative Republic of Brazil, in the Credentials Hall of the Presidential Palace, Nay Pyi Taw at 10 am yesterday.

Present on the occasion were Union Minister for International Cooperation U Kyaw Tin and Director-General of the Protocol Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs U Wunna Han.—MNA

**State Counsellor receives Chairman of Japan-Myanmar Association and former Member of House of Councilors of Japan**

State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi receives Chairman of Japan-Myanmar Association and former Member of the House of Councilors of Japan Mr Watanabe Hideo on 18 January. PHOTO : MNA

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, State Counsellor and Union Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar received Mr Watanabe Hideo, Chairman of Japan-Myanmar Association and former Member of the House of Councilors of Japan, at 2 pm yesterday at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Nay Pyi Taw.

During the meeting, they had a frank and cordial exchange of views on matters...

SEE PAGE-4

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**477 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 18 January, total figure rises to 134,795**

MYANMAR’S COVID-19 positive cases rose to 134,795 after 477 new cases were reported on 18 January 2021 according to the Ministry of Health and Sports. Among these 134,795 confirmed cases, 2,973 died, 118,200 have been discharged from hospitals.—MNA

**Daily death toll until 8 pm 18-1-2021**

18

Ministry of Health and Sports
Cash contribution for COVID-19 Vaccination Fund can be made through MOPFI website

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

(a) MPU Debit/Credit Card of local banks
(b) Visa/Master Credit of local banks
(c) Visa/Master Debit & Credit Card of foreign banks
(d) Mobile Wallets such as CB-pay, KBZ-pay, OK$ through QR Code (more mobile wallets will be available)
(e) Internet/mobile banking App of KBZ, CB, AYA, UAB and MAB (more internet/mobile banking Apps will be available)
(f) Over-the-counter at Supermarkets such as City Mart, Marketplace, Sein Gay Har, Aeon, Orange; mini-marts and convenience stores such as Denko Mini Market, Fun Fun Mart, ABC and Oasis; Mobile Wallet agents such as M-Pitesan, True Money and MyTelPay; Mobile Phone shops such as Any Call, e-City, Lu Gyi Min and My Fone; Wai Yan Electronics Sale Centre; the shops available Near Me logo.

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

Ministry of Planning, Finance and Industry

Announcement on fund establishment to purchase COVID-19 vaccines

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

(a) Fund for purchase of COVID-19 vaccines (Foreign Currency Account No. EDC 600012). The bank account will be initially deposited with USD250 million, equivalent to about K338 billion from State-funding.
(b) Fund for purchase of COVID-19 vaccines (Myanmar Currency Account No. OA 013733). The bank account is initially deposited Kt1 billion (Kt1,000 million) from State-funding.

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

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

Ministry of Planning, Finance and Industry

Myanmar seamen brought back home by relief flight

A total of 128 Myanmar seamen arrived back home by an MAI relief flight organized by Myanmar Embassy in Seoul and the Crew Change Supporting Committee (CCSC) via Incheon International Airport yesterday evening.

The group of Myanmar seamen included 103 from the ROK, 18 from Japan, 2 from Indonesia and 5 from Singapore.

The Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population, the Ministry of Health and Sports and the Yangon Region government arranged 14-day quarantine at specific places or designated hotels, followed by the 7-day home quarantine. To bring back the Myanmar citizens and Myanmar seamen who are stranded in foreign countries by relief flights and chartered flights in accordance with the instructions from National-Level Central Committee on Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs cooperated with the relevant ministries, companies and Myanmar embassies from respective countries.—MNA

Myanmar returnees are seen at the Yangon International Airport on 18 January 2021. PHOTO: MNA

Mandalay mango producers eye online market trend

Some advantages of the online market include no brokerage fee or service charges between the consumer and the producer and possible direct payment between them.

However, the consumers will have to mention the size of the fruit they want to purchase, and the sellers will need to ensure the quality of their product.—Min Htet Aung (Mann Sub printing House)

(Translated by Aung Khin)
President U Win Myint accepts Letters of Credence of Ambassador of Arab Republic of Egypt

U Win Myint, President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, accepted the Letters of Credence of Mr Sherif Salah Eldin Elleithy, the newly appointed Ambassador of the Arab Republic of Egypt, in the Credentials Hall of the Presidential Palace, Nay Pyi Taw at 10:30 am yesterday.

President U Win Myint receives Ambassador of the Arab Republic of Egypt Mr Sherif Salah Eldin Elleithy on 18 January. PHOTO : MNA

Those present on the occasion were Union Minister for International Cooperation U Kyaw Tin and Director-General of the Protocol Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs U Wunna Han.—MNA

Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker receives Ambassador of Arab Republic of Egypt

AMYOTHA Hluttaw Speaker Mahn Win Khang Than received the Ambassador of Arab Republic of Egypt to Myanmar, Mr Sherif Salah Eldin Elleithy, at the former’s office in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday afternoon.

At the meeting, they discussed the enhancement of lasting and friendly relations between Myanmar and Egypt, promotion of closer relations between the two parliaments and works on the development of Myanmar Hluttaws.

Deputy Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker U Aye Tha Aung and officials from Amyotha Hluttaw office attended the meeting.

—MNA

(Translated by Aung Khin)

Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker Mahn Win Khang Than receives Ambassador of the Arab Republic of Egypt Mr Sherif Salah Eldin Elleithy in Nay Pyi Taw on 18 January. PHOTO : MNA

Dawei SEZ Management Committee holds press conference on termination of contracts with Italian-Thai company

A press conference on the status of initial implementations of the Dawei Special Economic Zone (Dawei SEZ) Project was held yesterday morning at the Ministry of Electricity and Energy in Nay Pyi Taw.

During the ceremony, Deputy Minister for Electricity and Energy Dr Tun Naing, in his capacity as Chairperson of the Dawei SEZ Management Committee, explained the SEZ project implementations, a summary of project background, agreements signed for the undertaking, and cooperation with Thailand and Japan for the project.

The committee has sent a letter of notification to the company formerly permitted to build the initial project, informing the company about the termination of the permit-contracts.

The Italian-Thai Development, which was initially awarded the right to build the project, repeatedly delayed it, failed to fulfill contractual financial obligations, and failed to submit financial documents for the project.

As a result, the Dawei SEZ Management Committee terminated all nine initial project contracts (2015) signed with the Italian-Thai company by sending the letter of notification on 30 December last year about the termination of all contracts.

—MNA (Translated by Maung Maung Swe)
State Counsellor receives Chairman of Japan-Myanmar Association ...

FROM PAGE-1

related to the further expansion of Japanese investments in Myanmar during the next term of the government, the continued provision of socio-economic development assistance to the people of Myanmar including education and health sectors, the enhancement of mutually beneficial cooperation particularly in economic and investment sectors, and strengthening of people-to-people contacts, especially among the younger generation.

The meeting was also attended by U Kyaw Tin, Union Minister for International Cooperation and senior officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

—MNA

Union Minister U Kyaw Tin receives Egyptian Ambassador

U Kyaw Tin, Union Minister for International Cooperation received Mr. Sherif Salah Eldin Elleithy, Ambassador of Egypt to Myanmar at 3:35 pm on 18 January 2021 at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Nay Pyi Taw.

During the meeting, the Union Minister congratulated the Ambassador for being appointed as an Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Arab Republic of Egypt to the Republic of the Union of Myanmar. They cordially exchanged views on matters pertaining to the strengthening of bilateral relations, expanding mutually beneficial cooperation in areas such as trade and investments, agricultural and tourism between Myanmar and Egypt. They also discussed on the possibility of the resumption of the Foreign Office Consultations between two countries and closer collaboration in the multilateral fora including the United Nations.—MNA

Three-storey vessel designed into floating entertainment centre at Botahtaung jetty bridge

TAW Win Chan Thar Co., Ltd. has rented a three-storey vessel named Pyigyidagun No 3 from the Inland Water Transport for a long term and has been refurbishing the vessel to establish it as a floating centre at Botahtaung Jetty Bridge No 5 in Yangon within six months.

"Since we rented the Pyigyidagun No 3 three-storey vessel in November, we have been decorating it at a shipyard. Jetties are also being renovated," said Inland Water Transport (Delta Area) Manager U Kyaw Htoo Aung. "The floating restaurant is a long-term lease from the department in order for the middle class to visit there. Construction is underway with the permission of the Port Authority at the Botahtaung Bridge No 5."

Managing Director of Taw Win Chan Thar said, "We will implement this three-storey vessel to provide public recreation at a reasonable price. As an ethnic business person, we are preparing the vessel. Families will be able to stay there. The vessel is repaired by the department. Our company has been renovating the interior decoration for about two months. We are working hard to complete it early. The current plan is that we are allowed to open it as a bar and restaurant. If COVID-19 measures are lifted, we will be able to launch it within six months."

In addition, since early January, the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism and the Union of Myanmar Travel Association have rented two cruise ships from the Inland Water Transport and have been operating the two ships as a pilot project in order that the general public can go on vacation on holidays.—Thant Zin Win

(Translated by Maung Maung Swe)
We should not stumble just as our goal comes into view

What we are now focusing our attention on is the vaccine. To purchase vaccines for 15 million people, our delegation is now in India. We will get a clearer picture regarding the purchase of this vaccine within next week. Whatever the case may be, even after we have obtained the vaccines, the vaccination process for the whole country will take months. That is why we need to be very vigilant during this interim period. We should not stumble just as our goal comes into view.

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

Union Minister Dr Pe Myint inspects MRTV Thabyaytaung Station in Pyinmana

THE National ICT Awards 2019 (Educational Project & Skills Competitions) Award Ceremony, jointly organized by the Ministry of Education and the Myanmar Computer Federation (MCF), was held online yesterday morning.

During the ceremony, Union Minister for Education Dr Myo Thein Gyi said that the National ICT Awards (Educational Project & Skills Competition) had been held since 2004 and the Skills Competitions were included since the 2016-2017 academic year.

The competitions are held at various levels: primary school level, middle school level, high school level, teacher-level and professional level.

The competitions are aimed at promoting ICT skills of students and teachers, according to the Union Minister, who called on the teachers to use the award-winning projects as teaching aids. He said that the teachers and students should study the projects well and make the best use of ICT.

He said that the competitions would enhance students’ 21-century competencies, skills and abilities. In the Asia Pacific ICT Alliance (APICTA) Award Ceremony 2019, a Myanmar team organized by the MCF won the Merit Award in the Junior Student Category, said the Union Minister.

He urged the contestants of the National ICT Awards 2019 to try their best not to miss the opportunity to advance to the international level. He continued that the MCF, education officials and teachers made great contributions to hold the competitions in order to promote students’ 21st-century skills and their creativity.

The MCF Chairperson U Min Zeyar Hlaing also delivered a speech at the ceremony.

During the ceremony, a documentary featuring the National ICT Awards 2019 (Educational Project & Skills Competition) was shown, and the winners were awarded online. During the event, the MCF’s Capacity Building Committee Chairperson Daw Aye Aye Thin explained the competitions, and Director-General U Ko Lay Win from the Department of Basic Education expressed thanks to all stakeholders.

(Translated by Maung Maung Sue)

National ICT Awards (2019) winners honoured at virtual award ceremony

THE National ICT Awards 2019 (Educational Project & Skills Competitions) Award Ceremony, jointly organized by the Ministry of Education and the Myanmar Computer Federation (MCF), was held online yesterday morning.

During the ceremony, a documentary featuring the National ICT Awards 2019 (Educational Project & Skills Competition) was shown, and the winners were awarded online. During the event, the MCF’s Capacity Building Committee Chairperson Daw Aye Aye Thin explained the competitions, and Director-General U Ko Lay Win from the Department of Basic Education expressed thanks to all stakeholders.

(Translated by Maung Maung Sue)
MoLIP discusses EU Myan Ku Fund, future plans

UNION Minister for Labour, Immigration and Population U Thein Swe presided over the meeting via videoconferencing to conduct the year-end review on the EU Myan Ku Fund for garment sector in relation to COVID-19 and the future plans yesterday. The meeting was also taken part by Deputy Minister U Myint Kyai, the directors-general and officials, EU Ambassador to Myanmar Mr Ranieri Sabatucci, Director of UNOPS Mr Andrew Kirkwood, Executive Director Dr Zaw Oo from the Centre for Economic and Social Development, employers’ agents and employees representatives.

In his speech, the Union Minister expressed thanks for the European Union for rapid financial assistance to garment sector workers laid off amid the recent economic fallout from the COVID-19 epidemic, and over K4 billion cash assistance through EU Myan Ku Fund for over 60,000 workers in garment, footwear and textile industries. The government is implementing the Overcoming as One: COVID-19 Economic Relief Plan—CERP with the participation of ministries and working to adopt the Myanmar Economic Recovery and Reform Plan (MERRP), while putting emphasis on the social protection for the workers.

The ministry has given out more than K65 billion to over 1.5 million insured workers from the suspended businesses from 20 April 2020 to 12 January 2021 during the first wave and the second wave of COVID-19.

The European Union has planned to provide an additional Euro1 million for the unemployed workers, while the Myanmar government is struggling to contain the pandemic and economic recovery of the country simultaneously.

The EU Ambassador explained the financial assistance; the Director of UNOPS talked about the Myan Ku Fund, and the Executive Director of CESD presented the salient points in research findings on the workers who experienced the negative impacts of COVID-19 outbreak.

The employers’ agents and employee representatives also discussed their problems during the pandemic.

MoHS organizes 49th Myanmar Health Research Congress

THE Ministry of Health and Sports organized the opening ceremony of 49th Myanmar Health Research Congress via videoconferencing yesterday morning. Followed by the opening remarks by Professor Dr Zaw Than Tun, Director-General of Department of Medical Research, Union Minister Dr Myint Htwe delivered a speech and explained the reason of congress which will be held until 21 January under the theme of ‘Fighting Together against COVID-19’.

The congress will share medical experiences in relation to the COVID-19 and will exchange views on the betterment of existing strategies and working processes in handling this pandemic.

The Union Minister advises the Department of Medical Research to hold online discussions among researchers of new medical generations, departmental officials and experts from universities, while the Department of Public Health is organizing the regular ‘Friday Health Talk’ every Friday evening.

He also highlighted some considerable success of the Department of Medical Research during the term of incumbent government from April 2016 to now.

The National Health Research Plan was adopted in 2017 based on the changing trend of Myanmar healthcare sector, research development, outbreak of various diseases and global situations.

The government has budgeted K4.696 billion for setting up the Training Centre for Research Capacity Building, and it is expected to be complete in September this year.

The Union Minister also suggested designing research curricula in the courses of 16 universities and 53 nursing and midwives training schools.

The ‘Lesson Learnt from COVID-19 Pandemic Symposium’ was presided by the Union Minister and the Director-General, and senior medical officials presented their topics in relation to medical treatments in COVID-19.

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.
1 mln tonnes of corn expected to export to Thailand this year

By Nyein Nyein

MYANMAR intends to reach the export target of one million tonnes of corn to Thailand this year, said U Min Khang, chair of Myanmar Corn Industrial Association.

"There are about 1.628 million tonnes of corn in Myanmar, the MRPPA guessed. —Nant La Lay (translated by Ei Myat Mon)

"Among the 1.628 million tonnes of corn in Myanmar, about 1 million tonnes of corn will go to China via northern border," the association chair explained.

"With more than 800,000 tons of corn from Myanmar, Thailand will not face any corn shortage in the current FY2020-2021," the association stated.

Rubber farmers in Kawkhong town of Kawthoung District, Taninthayi Region are preparing high yield this year, allowing the farm owners and workers to increase income amid the COVID-19 pandemic, said rubber worker Ko Tun Naung.

"The rubber farm covering 40 acres in Kawkhong town produces 1,000 kilos per day, by tapping latex from about 3,000 rubber trees. Despite high yield, the profit is not that high due to transportation difficulties.

Earlier, a kilo of Myanmar’s rubber fetched only 50 baht in Thailand market. It is priced up to 45-50 baht per kilogramme (K15,000-20,000) this year," said Daw Ohn Mar Shwe Dwe, a rubber farm owner.

The growing demand for rubber products by Thailand causes the price to increase K900-950 per pound in Kawkthoung market, market data indicated.

The growing demand for rubber gloves during the coronavirus pandemic, shortage of natural rubber are the reasons for price rise, U Khang Myint, secretary of Myanmar Rubber Planters and Producers Association (MRPPA) said.

Rubber fetches 2,000 baht per pound in Kawkthoung town of Kawthoung and Myeik towns. Myanmar's natural rubber is valued only K750-800 per pound in legitimate export, the MRPPA stated.

Rubber is primarily produced in Mon and Kayin states and Taninthayi, Bago, and Yangon regions in Myanmar. As per 2019 rubber season’s data, there are over 1.628 million acres of rubber plantations in Myanmar, with Mon State accounting for 497,153 acres, followed by Taninthayi Region 348,344 acres and Kayin State with 276,760 acres. About 300,000 tonnes of rubber is produced annually across the country. Seventy per cent of rubber made in Myanmar goes to China. It is also shipped to Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, Viet Nam, the Republic of Korea, India, Japan, and other countries, according to the MRPPA.

Myanmar’s rubber fetches US$2.50 per tonne, while the global rate is at $2.20 per tonne, U Khang Myint stated.

Thailand is buying Myanmar’s natural rubber at a price which is lower than the black market in Paya Zone, Kawkhong and Myeik towns. Myanmar’s natural rubber is valued only K750-800 per pound in legitimate export, the MRPPA stated.

Rubber is primarily produced in Mon and Kayin states and Taninthayi, Bago, and Yangon regions in Myanmar. As per 2019 rubber season’s data, there are over 1.628 million acres of rubber plantations in Myanmar, with Mon State accounting for 497,153 acres, followed by Taninthayi Region 348,344 acres and Kayin State with 276,760 acres. About 300,000 tonnes of rubber is produced annually across the country. Seventy per cent of rubber made in Myanmar goes to China. It is also shipped to Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, Viet Nam, the Republic of Korea, India, Japan, and other countries, according to the MRPPA. Myanmar has exported about 200,000 tonnes of rubber worth around US$240 million in the last FY2019-2020. The export volume is expected to reach below 200,000 tonnes amid the COVID-19 impacts, MRPPA guessed.

Rubber is primarily produced in Mon and Kayin states and Taninthayi, Bago, and Yangon regions in Myanmar. PHOTO: NANT LAY LAY

EU Myan Ku Fund for garment workers extended amid coronavirus economic fallbacks

DOUBLING support to 10 million euro, the EU Myan Ku Fund has been extended to help the tens of thousands of mostly unemployed women migrant workers in the sector amid the global economic crisis. The EU Myan Ku Fund’s extension phase is planned to operate from January 2021 until February 2022. Financial support for laid-off factory workers is still a key feature. It is also sent to Vietnam.

The prevailing export price of corn stands at above US$250 per tonne. Corn is cultivated in Shan, Kachin, Kayah and Kayin states and Mandalay, Sagaing and Magway regions. Myanmar has three corn seasons: winter, summer and monsoon. The country yearly produces 2.3-5 million tonnes of corns.

Myanmar exported 2.2 million tonnes of corn to the foreign market in the past financial year 2019-2020 ended 30 September, with an estimated value of $90 million, the Ministry of Commerce’s data showed.

With the growing local corn consumption, Myanmar’s corn export to foreign markets is expected to reach 1.6 million tonnes in the current FY2020-2021 (Oct-Sep), the association stated. (translated by Ei Myat Mon)
Emergency mine risk activities should come first before demining

WITH 41 explosions of landmines and unexploded explo-
sions in 2020, Rakhine State experienced the highest number of explosions in 2020. Rakhine becomes a state with a high proportion of cases threatening civilians including children. The deaths and injuries by landmines and unexploded ord-
ance-UXO in Rakhine have been alarming since increasing since 2018. In 2019, 13 explosions occurred, leaving 19 dead and 39 injured. In 2020, 46 were killed and 49 injured as a direct result of 61 explosions. Children represent 21 per cent of casualties from landmine and UXO explosions countrywide and Rakhine State has the highest rate of child casualties with 47 per cent of the total. 17 children were killed in 39 in 2020. Rakhine State has the highest number of landmines and UXO explosions in 2020 in Myanmar. To respond to the alarming situation, we need to step up efforts for facilitating se-
cure demining. Several cases of emer-
gency Mine Risk Education activities, those should come first before demining ac-
tivities so that children and adults receive psychosocial support and education in schools and communities in all conflict-affected areas of Myanmar. Meanwhile, it is of utmost importance to carry out hu-
manitarian demining exten-
sively in Rakhine State. However, there are chal-
lenge for implementing hu-
manitarian demining in Ra-
khine-state. The situation calls for cooperation for all stakeholders to prevent deaths and injuries from landmines and UXO explosions, in addition to preventing other impacts on post-conflict communities.

Given that nearly 70 years of conflict of internal armed conflicts in Myanmar have halted regional development, the current government is prioritizing the national peace process and securing mine safety, raising aware-
ness of the public, and rehabilitating victims of mines is crucial to sustainable development.

Israel-Pfizer vaccine deals point to 'data for doses swap'

Israel has secured a sig-
nificant stock of coronavirus vac-
cines produced by Pfizer-BioNTech to more than 2.5 million people, a pace widely described as the world’s fastest, while some wealthier and many poor nations struggle with supply.

Some critics have voiced ethical concerns and raised the danger to medical privacy posed by such deals, which include sharing of personal health data (PHDs). The data is normally held by hospitals and other health facilities.

However, Israel’s government has been quick to share data on its impact with Pfizer, an agreement with the drug company was signed yesterday.

Pfizer will allow sharing of PHDs data with Pfizer to allow maintaining required vaccine rate for sufficient herd immu-
nity and enough data as soon as possible.

Both parties acknowledge that the viability and success of the project is dependent on the rate and scope of vaccinations in Israel.

Medical database

Multiple media outlets have also reported that Israel paid Pfizer well above market price to ensure full supply.

The health ministry has declined to comment on those reports.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu earlier this month said that Israel had agreed to share with Pfizer and with the whole world the statistical data that will help develop strategies for derating the coronavirus.

Israel’s arrangement with Pfizer would help make it “the first country in the world to emerge from the coronavirus,” he predicted.

Health data in Israel is col-
lected in part through four health maintenance organizations (HMOs), non-profit groups that collectively cover the country’s nine million people.

They maintain meticulous information about their patients and have been credited with rap-

dy generating vaccination lists by priority, a factor that experts say has enabled Israel to inoc-
ulate so quickly.

But Israel’s government also

ICAO indicated that the near-term outlook is for pro-
longed depressed demand, with widespread impacts on the industry, and that it may be subject to further deterioration.

It reports any improvement in the global picture only by the second quarter of 2023, though this will still be subject to the effectiveness of pandemic man-
agement and vaccination roll out.

In the most optimistic sce-

nario, by June of 2021 passen-
ger numbers will be expected to recover to 71 per cent of Decem-
ber 2019 levels (53 per cent for in-
ternational and 80 per cent for domestic).

PARLIAMENT

13 th regular session of Second Amyotha Hluttaw holds 16 th ordinary meeting

State Counsellor holds first working committees meeting

Mese Gate BP-13 to Loi-

constituency during the

reply to a question raised

the Kayah State Govern-

for foreign travellers to

reduce,

debates

PHOTO: MNA

The Global New Light of Myanmar

19 JANUARY 2021

19 JANUARY 2021

REVIEW

Santoru, southern France.

PHOTO: AFP

Air down drop 60 per cent as airline industries losses top $370 billion

Air travel down 60 per cent as airline industry losses top $370 billion
A single runner arrived in Yangon from Mandalay yesterday morning, as he completed his half-way of an 800-mile round trip between the two cities.

The campaign running of Zaw Lin Than aimed to raise public motivation in response to COVID-19 and to honour doctors, nurses and volunteers at the hospitals and quarantine centres.

The Myanmar sailor was welcomed by the residents in Yangon and officials from the Myanmar Seamen’s Federation at the corner of Dhamma Zedi and Thanlwin roads in Yangon by wearing the Stop COVID-19 Campaign T-shirts.

He said, “My running campaign is to donate cash for the doctors, nurses and volunteers at the COVID-19 centres and for the monks and nuns in Mandalay Region. I will also make donations to needy patients at the hospitals.”

“This campaign is also to mark the birthday of my daughter,” he added.

He has scheduled about 40 days for the round trip between the two cities.

He ran 5 hours for 20 miles in the morning, as he completed his half-way of an 800-mile round trip yesterday.

The Myanmar sailor also scheduled about 40 days for the round trip between the two cities.

The second batch of course will be conducted from 18 January to 18 March 2021. — MNA

(Translated by Aung Khin)
UK ‘seriously concerned’ by Israeli expansion of W. Bank homes

BRITAIN on Monday expressed serious concern over Israeli plans to expand settlements in the West Bank, saying the construction of 780 new homes could threaten future peace negotiations.

The government of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has decided to move the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. The approval of new settlement units comes days before Trump’s departure from the White House. During his four years in office, the US president was viewed as a particularly close Netanyahu ally.

Peace Now has said the expansion of construction puts Israel on a “collision course” with the incoming administration of Joe Biden. Biden, who will be sworn on Wednesday, has indicated that his administration will restore Washington’s pre-Trump policy of opposing settlement expansion.

US law enforcement agencies are screening National Guard members to make sure they do not pose a security risk during President-elect Joe Biden’s inauguration, a four-star general said in comments broadcast Sunday.

Following the January 6 riots at the Capitol building in support of outgoing President Donald Trump, it emerged that some of those involved had current or former ties to the military.

General Daniel Hokanson, who heads the National Guard Bureau, was asked by CBS News on Sunday if troops were being checked as they arrived in Washington.

“With security in place and the FBI, they’re screening all the personnel that are coming in,” Hokanson said. Much of Washington resembles a fortified compound in a war zone, with most of the downtown area blocked off, security fences topped by razor wire and about 25,000 National Guard troops deployed to the capital.

Internet

Twitter suspends QAnon-linked Republican lawmaker’s account

A newly-elected Republican congresswoman known for promoting QAnon conspiracy theories accused Twitter of censorship on Sunday after her account was temporarily suspended for “multiple violations”.

Marjorie Taylor Greene was hit with the 12-hour suspension after she tweeted claims of alleged election fraud in Georgia, her home state.

Twitters flagged at least two tweets as “disputed” and prevented them from being shared or retweeted, saying they carried the “risk of violence”.

The lawmaker’s account was suspended due to “multiple violations of our civic integrity policy”, a Twitter spokesmen said.

Greene, an ardent Donald Trump supporter, has echoed his baseless claims of rigging in the 2020 election.

Settlement

UK ‘seriously concerned’ by Israeli expansion of W. Bank homes

The UK is seriously concerned by the Government of Israel’s decision to approve the construction of 780 new settlement units across the Occupied Palestinian Territories, a Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office spokesperson said.

The inclusion of areas “deep within the West Bank” within the construction plans “could threaten future peace negotiations,” the spokesperson said.

“Settlements are illegal under international law and risk undermining the physical viability of the two state solution. “We call for the construction of these in East Jerusalem and elsewhere in the West Bank to cease immediately.”

The UK and much of the international community have decried ongoing construction of settlement homes in areas claimed by Palestinians for a potential future state.

However, in 2019 the administration of outgoing President Donald Trump broke with decades of US foreign policy declaring that Washington no longer considered settlements construction broke international law.

Britain’s position closely follows that of the European Union, which said Israel’s actions “fur- ther undermines the prospects of a viable two-state solution”.

In 2018, the Trump admin- istration also broke with allies like Britain and the EU when it decided to move the US embassy to Jerusalem. The approval of new settlement units comes days before Trump’s departure from the White House. During his four years in office, the US president was viewed as a particularly close Netanyahu ally.

Peace Now has said the expansion of construction puts Israel on a “collision course” with the incoming administration of Joe Biden. Biden, who will be sworn on Wednesday, has indicated that his administration will restore Washington’s pre-Trump policy of opposing settlement expansion.

TRAIL

Guinea mining bribery trial ‘impossible’: lawyer

In this file photo taken on 11 January 2021 French-Israeli diamond magnate Beny Steinmetz (C) is back in Geneva’s courthouse during his trial over allegations of corruption linked to mining deals in Guinea, in Geneva. PHOTO: AFP

The trial of diamond dealer Beny Steinmetz for alleged corruption linked to mining deals in Guinea is “impossible” owing to the absence of key witnesses, his lawyer argued Monday.

French-Israeli magnate Steinmetz is on trial in Geneva, facing charges of bribery.

On Monday’s final day of evidence, the 64-year-old’s lawyer Marc Bonnant underscored the absence of Mamadie Toure, said by prosecutors to be the fourth wife of former Guinean president Lansana Conte.

Toure has admitted she received payments, and has protected witness status in the United States.

Summoned to Geneva Criminal Court, she did not appear — nor did a dozen other defence witnesses.

“I hold this trial to be impossible,” Bonnant told the court.

“All those who were to appear are not here, and all those which are here should not be. “Mamadie Toure, who is the one who is corrupt, is not here.”

He said Steinmetz should be acquitted, denying any “act of corruption” and insisting that it was too late to pursue a case.

In Switzerland, the limitation for bringing forward a case of bribing a foreign public official is 15 years.

But prosecutor Yves Bertos- sa said there was “no problem of limitation”, because “payments stretch until 2012”.

Steinmetz is accused of setting up a complex financial web, including a system of front companies, to pay bribes so that Beny Steinmetz Group Resources could obtain mining permits in Guinea’s southeastern Sinandou region.

The area is estimated to contain the world’s biggest untapped iron ore deposits.

Conte’s military dictatorship ordered global mining giant Rio Tinto to relinquish two conces- sions to BSRG for around $170 million in 2008.

Steinmetz insists he never asked anyone to pay money to Toure.

Prosecutors allege that about $10 million (8.5 million eu- ropean union euro) was paid in bribes between 2006 and 2012, in part through Swiss bank accounts.

Questions over wedding

Steinmetz, who lived in Ge- neva at the time of the alleged offences, accused Toure of lying.

His lawyers said she was not Conte’s wife, but instead a mistress with no influence, and therefore, under Swiss law, did not fall within the scope of a cor- ruptible official.

Steinmetz’s legal team said no marriage certificate had been produced.

“She doesn’t recall the date, the venue, nor the people who attended this wedding,” said de- fence lawyer Camille Haab.

“No photos or video were taken on this supposed occasion,” while Toure’s diplomatic passport was not issued until many years after her “presumed marriage”.

Furthermore, Toure “was not a public official”, whether a legitimate wife or otherwise, added her colleague Bonnant.

SOURCE: AFP

Internet

Twitter suspends QAnon-linked Republican lawmaker’s account

A newly-elected Republican congresswoman known for promoting QAnon conspiracy theories accused Twitter of censorship on Sunday after her account was temporarily suspended for “multiple vi- olations”.

Marjorie Taylor Greene was hit with the 12-hour sus- pension after she tweeted claims of alleged election fraud in Georgia, her home state.

Twitter flagged at least two tweets as “disputed” and pre- vented them from being shared or retweeted, saying they car- ried the “risk of violence”.

The lawmaker’s account was suspended due to “multi- ple violations of our civic integ- rity policy”, a Twitter spokes- man said.

Greene, an ardent Donald Trump supporter, has echoed his baseless claims of rigging in the 2020 election.

SOURCE: AFP
higher income countries. administered so far in at least 49 of coronavirus vaccines had been at serious risk. coronavirus vaccines was now worldwide equitable access to light vaccine use globally. countries rather than submitting in rich vaccine manufacturers for chasing approval in rich countries rather than submitting their data to the WHO to green-light global use. China growth at 40-year low. The pandemic has a “huge impact” on China’s economy, which grew at the slowest pace in more than four decades last year. “Experiment on humans” Israel has secured a huge stock of Pfizer jabs partly by pledging to share impact data quickly with the company, with one privacy specialist describing the rollout as “the biggest experiment on humans in the 21st century”. Aussie borders stay shut Health department minister Brendan Murphy says he does not see normal travel being allowed to and from Australia this year. Malawi lockdown Malawi is set to roll out restrictions this week after overruling a decision by the High Court barring the government from confining citizens. Save Eurostar British business leaders call on the government to rescue cross-Channel train operator Eurostar after the firm said it was close to collapse following border closures. Salesman spreader Nearly three million people are under lockdown in China after a surge in cases linked to a travelling salesman in the country’s northeast who gave healthcare workshops to middle-aged and elderly residents. Slovakia mass testing Slovakia begins a new round of nationwide screening – a process aimed at easing curfew restrictions for people who test negative. More than two million dead The pandemic has killed more than two million people worldwide, according to a tally compiled by AFP on Monday at 1100 GMT based on official figures. At least 2,031,048 people have died of the virus since it first emerged in China in late 2019. The US has suffered the highest death toll with 387,600 fatalities, followed by Brazil with 209,847 and India 152,419. The number of deaths globally is broadly under-estimated. The toll is calculated from daily figures published by national health authorities and does not include later revisions by statistics agencies. Japan PM under fire Yoshihide Suga pledges to tackle surging cases and restore normal life “as soon as possible” as polls showed plunging support for his government. Subdued ceremony? Tokyo Olympics organizers say they will slash the number of athletes at the opening and closing ceremonies of this year’s virus-delayed Games. SOURCE: AFP

**Coronavirus: Latest global developments**

Here are the latest developments in the coronavirus crisis:

**Jabs for seniors** France and Britain join a growing list of nations starting mass vaccinations for the elderly with London extending its campaign to everyone over 70 and the French drive covering all people over 75.

**Rich ‘me-firsters’ lashed**

The World Health Organization denounced the “me-first” attitude of wealthy nations in obtaining vaccines and blasts manufacturers for chasing approval in rich countries rather than submitting their data to the WHO to green-light global use.

**China growth at 40-year low**

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**Malawi lockdown**

Malawi is set to roll out restrictions this week after overruling a decision by the High Court barring the government from confining citizens.

**Save Eurostar**

British business leaders call on the government to rescue cross-Channel train operator Eurostar after the firm said it was close to collapse following border closures.

**Slovakia mass testing**

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**Danger of ‘me-first’ attitude**

The world is on the brink of a “catastrophic moral failure” if rich countries hog Covid-19 vaccine doses while the poorest suffer, the head of the WHO said Monday.

World Health Organization director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus denounced the “me-first” attitude of wealthy nations and also blasted vaccine manufacturers for chasing regulatory approval in rich countries rather than submitting their data to the WHO to green-light vaccine use globally.

In a speech in Geneva opening a WHO executive board meeting, he said the promise of worldwide equitable access to coronavirus vaccines was now at serious risk.

Tedros said 39 million doses of coronavirus vaccines had been administered so far in at least 49 higher income countries.

Meanwhile, “just 25 doses have been given in one lowest income country. Not 25 million; not 25,006; just 25,” he said.

“I need to be blunt. The world is on the brink of a catastrophic moral failure – and the price of this failure will be paid with lives and livelihoods in the world’s poorest countries.”

He said even as some countries pronounced reassuring words on equitable access, they were prioritising their own deals with manufacturers, driving up prices and trying to jump the queue.

He said 44 such deals were struck in 2020 and at least 12 have already been signed this year.

“The situation is compounded by the fact that most manufacturers have prioritised regulatory approval in rich countries where the profits are highest, rather than submitting full dossiers to WHO,” Tedros said.

“Not only does this me-first approach leave the world’s poorest and most vulnerable people at risk, it’s also self defeating. “Ultimately, these actions will only prolong the pandemic, prolong our pain, the restrictions needed to contain it, and human and economic suffering.”

**Shot in the arm**

The WHO has only approved emergency use validation for the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, and Tedros urged other manufacturers to come forward with their data for regulatory review.

Covax, the WHO co-led globally-pooled vaccine procurement and distribution effort, has struck agreements with five manufacturers for two billion vaccine doses.

It aims to secure vaccines for 20 per cent of the population in each participating country by the end of the year, with funding covered for the 92 lower- and lower-middle income economies involved.

“We aim to start deliveries in February,” said Tedros.

**A man passes by a sign reading “COVID-19 vaccination point!” at a vaccination centre in Vesoul, eastern France, on 18 January 2021 amid the crisis linked with the Covid-19 pandemic caused by the novel coronavirus. PHOTO: AFP**

He said the recent emergence of rapidly-spreading SARS-CoV-2 virus variants makes the swift and equitable roll-out of vaccines even more important.

“Vaccines are the shot in the arm we all need – literally and figuratively,” he said.

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“Vaccines are the shot in the arm we all need – literally and figuratively,” he said.

**There will be enough vaccine for everyone,” Tedros insisted.**

“But it’s not right that younger, healthier adults in rich countries are vaccinated before health workers and older people in poorer countries.”

SOURCE: AFP
European stocks steady amid Biden stimulus doubts

EUROPEAN stock markets steadied Monday amid doubts over the passage of US President-elect Joe Biden’s flagship stimulus policy.

Nearing the half-way mark, London’s benchmark FTSE 100 index was down 0.1 per cent, Paris flattened and Frankfurt added 0.2 per cent.

Asia mostly closed lower following a recent rally, though Hong Kong and Shanghai rose on news showing China’s economy has expanded a forecast-beating 2.3 per cent last year.

While the reading was the weakest in four decades, it showed growth was picking up again after a devastating start to 2020 as swathes of the country were shut down to contain the deadly coronavirus.

The dollar traded mixed, bitcoin held steady and oil prices declined, while most US markets were shut for Martin Luther King Jr Day.

Focus is turning to Biden’s inauguration on Wednesday and hopes that his massive spending plan can get through Congress.

Stimulus concerns
“European markets have stumbled into a new week, with Biden’s stimulus promises doing little to help sentiment given doubts over just how much of that package will be approved in Congress,” said Joshua Mahony, senior market analyst at online traders IG.

“With the US markets closed for Martin Luther King Day, today provides a gentle entry into a week that will be dominated by the US.”

“While US trading activity will minimise today’s speculation over whether Biden will be able to garner enough support to pass his full stimulus package remain a key concern for markets,” Mahony added.

While broadly welcomed on trading floors, Biden’s $1.9 trillion stimulus proposal was unable to fuel fresh gains with the spending spree largely priced in. Concern about a frightening spike in new virus cases was also keeping a lid on buying sentiment as governments are forced to impose fresh lockdowns while battling to roll out vaccines.

On the corporate front, shares in French supermarket Carrefour tacked 5.5 per cent to $15.69 after Canadian convenience store chain Couche-Tard dropped a mega takeover bid.

Elsewhere, newly-created European carmaker Stellantis motored its way Monday onto the Paris and Milan stock exchanges.

Stellantis – created by the merger of France’s PSA and US-Italian rival Fiat Chrysler – is the world’s fourth-biggest automaker by volume.

It’s brands include Peugeot, Citroen, Fiat, Chrysler, Jeep, Alfa Romeo and Maserati. On Monday, its shares gained 4.1 per cent to $13.44 in Paris in midday trades, and were 6.87 per cent higher at $13.43 in Milan.

The group will make its New York stock market debut on Tuesday. SOURCE: AFP

China GDP grows at slowest pace in more than four decades in 2020

CHINAS GDP grew at the slowest pace in more than four decades in 2020, official data showed Monday, but it was still expected to be the only major economy to grow at all after a strong rebound from the coronavirus crisis.

Covid-19, which has ravaged the world economy, first emerged in central China in late 2019. But the world’s second-largest economy also became the first to bounce back after imposing strict lockdowns and virus control measures.

The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) said last year was a “grave and complex environment both at home and abroad” with the pandemic having a “huge impact”.

The 2.3 per cent expansion in 2020 was a marked slowdown from 2019’s revised growth of 6.0 per cent – itself already the lowest in decades – with the country hit by weak domestic demand and trade tensions.

But it is better than that forecast by an AFP poll of analysts from 13 financial institutions, who had predicted a 2.0 per cent expansion.

In the last three months of 2020, China’s economic rebound continued with a better-than-expected 6.5 per cent growth on-year, a sustained improvement since the second quarter.

This brings it back to a pre-pandemic trajectory, although full-year 2020 growth is still its worst performance since 1.6 contraction in 1990, the year Chairman Mao Zedong died. That was two years before former leader Deng Xiaoping set in motion a shift away from communist-style central planning, turning China into an industrial, trade and tech powerhouse.

SOURCE: AFP

Claims Day Notice

Claims Day Notice

M/V TR Princess V.2

Consignees of cargo carried on M/V TR PRINCESS NO. (2) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 19-1-2021 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of IBTT 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: 2301928

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:
M/S Ben Line Agencies (P) Co LTD

Claims Day Notice

M/V Lal 001 Voy. No. (089N/S)

Consignees of cargo carried on M/V Lal 001 VOY. NO. (089N/S) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 18-1-2021 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of HPT where it will lie at the consignee’s risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

Phone No: 2301185

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:
M/S INTER ASIA LINES

Claims Day Notice

M/V Senari Voy. No. (02N)

Consignees of cargo carried on M/V MTN SENARI VOY. NO. (02N) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 19-1-2021 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of MIPT where it will lie at the consignee’s risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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Phone No: 2301185

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:
M/S Regional Container Lines

Claims Day Notice

M/V Xetha Bhoom V.0. (115W/E)

Consignees of cargo carried on M/V XETHA BHUM VOY. NO. (115W/E) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 19-1-2021 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of MITT/MIP where it will lie at the consignee’s risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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Phone No: 2301185

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:
M/S Regional Container Lines

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M/V MTT Senari Voy. No. (02N)

Consignees of cargo carried on M/V MTT SENARI VOY. NO. (002N) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 19-1-2021 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of MIPT where it will lie at the consignee’s risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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RUSSIA

Kremlin critic Navalny decries ‘mockery of justice’ at hearing

RUSSIAN opposition leader Alexei Navalny said Monday his treatment was beyond a “mockery of justice” as he was brought before a hastily organised court a day after his dramatic airport arrest.

With calls growing in the West for Navalny’s release, he was brought into a courtroom set up at a police station in Khimki on the outskirts of Moscow where he was taken following his detention on Sunday night.

Police seized Navalny, President Vladimir Putin’s most prominent opponent, at a border control post at Moscow’s Sheremetyevo airport less than an hour after he returned to Russia from Germany for the first time since he was poisoned with a nerve agent in August.

In a video posted by his team inside the hearing, an incredulous Navalny said he did not understand how a court session could take place at a police station and why no one had been notified until the last minute.

“I’ve seen a lot of mockery of justice, but the old man in the bunker (Putin) is so afraid that they have blatantly torn up and thrown away” Russia’s criminal code, Navalny said.

“This is ultimate lawlessness.”

Amazing absurdity

In another video, Navalny called for the hearing to be open to all journalists, after only pro-Kremlin media were allowed to attend.

“I demand that this procedure be as open as possible, so that all media have the opportunity to observe the amazing absurdity of what is happening here,” he said.

About 100 people, mostly journalists, gathered in the snow outside the police station and several police vans were waiting nearby with their engines running.

Russia’s FSB prison service said Sunday that it had detained Navalny, 44, for violating the terms of a suspended sentence he was given in 2014, on fraud charges he says were politically motivated.

Navalny is also facing potential new criminal charges under a probe launched late last year by Russian investigators who say he misappropriated over $4 million worth of donations.

The leading Kremlin critic emerged a decade with his Anti-Corruption Foundation publishing anti-graft investigations that often reveal the lavish lifestyles of the Russian elite.

He has repeatedly led large-scale street protests against Putin, most recently in the summer of 2019, and was gearing up for another challenge to authorities during elections to the lower house State Duma in September.

He was evacuated to Germany after falling violently ill on a flight over Siberia in August from what Western experts eventually concluded was a poisoning with Soviet-designed nerve agent Novichok.

Navalny accused Putin of ordering the attack, a claim the Kremlin vehemently denies. Russian police have not opened an investigation citing a lack of evidence.

SOURCE: AFP

MEXICO

Guatemala police fire tear gas, disperse US-bound migrant caravan

GUATEMALAN police fired tear gas Sunday to disperse thousands of Honduran migrants trying to reach the United States on foot, with soldiers beating back a group trying to push through barricades, AFP journalists witnessed.

Security forces surrounded the migrant caravan on a road in the southeastern Guatemalan town of Vado Hondo, near the border with Honduras.

Amid the deforming explosions of gas and smoke canisters, many migrants retreated, with some waiting nearby to make a new attempt later; while others fled into nearby mountains.

Several dropped their sparse belongings as they rushed from harm’s way.

Uniformed soldiers with clubs and plastic shields beat back one group trying to break through a fence.

A regional health official, who did not give her name, said several migrants were struck and injured.

In the name of curbing the spread of the coronavirus, security forces are under strict orders not to let anyone through.

Saying they are desperate to escape poverty, unemployment, gang and drug violence and the aftermath of two devastating hurricanes, the migrants set out from Honduras last week, aiming to cross Guatemala and Mexico and reach the US — an arduous journey of thousands of kilometers.

“They have no heart, we are risking our lives,” lamented Dix-on Vazquez, 29, who begged the Guatemalan authorities to let the group continue.

“There is no work in Hondu-ras,” he said.

No work, nor food

Dania Finestrosa, a 23-year-old domestic worker travelling with her daughter, said she had left behind another child of three and twins aged four.

“We have no work, nor food, so I decided to go to the United States,” Finestrosa said.

But Guatemalan migration head Guillermo Diaz insisted Saturday the group “will not be able to pass” and urged the migrants to turn back.

Anyone wishing to enter Guatemala would need legal travel documents and a negative Covid-19 test, he said in a video, and claimed to have intelligence information suggesting that members of organized crime gangs had infiltrated the migrant group.

Migration authorities said nearly 1,400 people in the caravan had been returned to Honduras by Sunday, including 192 children.

SOURCE: AFP

SECURITY COOPERATION

Japan, Britain ministers to hold security talks in February

JAPAN and Britain plan a video-conference of their foreign and defence ministers in February to boost security cooperation, amid China’s rising assertiveness in the East and South China seas, sources close to the matter said Monday.

If realized, the ministers will likely agree to work closely on Britain’s plan to dispatch an aircraft carrier strike group, centered on the warship Queen Elizabeth, to the western Pacific for joint naval exercises, the sources said.

They are expected to share concerns about China’s unilateral attempts to change the status quo in those bodies of water and send a clear message to the international community that maintaining a free and open maritime order is vital, they said.

The so-called two-plus-two meeting will be attended by Foreign Minister Toshim-itsu Motegi, Defence Minister Nobuo Kishi and their British counterparts Dominic Raab and Ben Wallace.

Japan has opposed Chi-nese vessels’ repeated entries into its territorial waters near the Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea, which are claimed by China, where they are known as the Diaoyu.

SOURCE: KYODO

PHOTO: AFP


PHOTO: AFP

SOURCE: KYODO

PHOTO: AFP

Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny is seen at Moscow’s Sheremetyevo airport upon the arrival from Berlin on 17 January 2021.

PHOTO: AFP

SOURCE: KYODO

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**Suga vows to bring COVID-19 under control in Diet speech**

Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga delivers a policy speech at a House of Representatives plenary session on 18 January 2021. **PHOTO: KYODO NEWS**

Opposition parties have accused the government of sitting on its hands while Japan has been gripped by its sharpest spike in infections.

Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga vowed to bring COVID-19 under control in his policy speech to the House of Representatives on 18 January.

Suga said the government will step up support for hospitals treating COVID-19 patients, the premier said, adding, “What is important is that everyone requiring medical care receives the treatment they need.”

During the 150-day parliamentary session through June 16, the government hopes to pass legislation making it possible to punish people and businesses that refuse to comply with its coronavirus measures.

The penalties include a maximum fine of 1 million yen ($9,600) or a prison sentence of up to one year for people who test positive for the virus yet refuse to be hospitalized, and a maximum fine of 800,000 yen for businesses that fail to comply with government requests to adopt shorter hours or temporarily shut down.

Success in dealing with the coronavirus is crucial for Suga to retain his grip on power after his current term as leader of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party ends in September.

Suga reiterated the government will prepare for coronavirus vaccinations to begin in Japan by late February following procedures to confirm their safety and efficacy.

Suga said he will “set an example” by taking the vaccine himself to dispel any skepticism among the public.

**Samsung chief jailed for 2.5 years over corruption scandal**

Lee Jae-yong (C), vice-chairman of Samsung Electronics, arrives at a court for a trial in his bribery scandal involving former South Korean president Park Geun-hye in Seoul on 18 January 2021. **PHOTO: AFP**

Lee Jae-yong, vice-chairman of Samsung Electronics, the world’s biggest smartphone and memory chip maker, was found guilty of bribery and embezzlement in connection with the scandal that brought down President Park Geun-hye.

Lee “actively provided bribes and implicitly asked the president to use her power to help his smooth succession” at the head of the sprawling conglomerate, the Seoul Central District Court said in its verdict.

“It is very unfortunate that Samsung, the country’s top company and proud global innovator, is repeatedly involved in crimes whenever there is a change in political power,” Lee’s lawyer, Lee In-jae, told reporters.

“Given the nature of the matter, I find the court’s ruling regrettable.” Samsung is by far the biggest of the family-controlled conglomerates, or chaebols, that dominate business in the world’s 12th-largest economy.

Its overall turnover is equivalent to a fifth of the national gross domestic product and it is crucial to South Korea’s economic health.

Its rise has been driven by a willingness to invest billions in strategic bets on key technologies.

But experts say the sentence will create a leadership vacuum that could hamper its decision-making on future large-scale investments.

“It’s really a huge blow and a big crisis for Samsung,” said Kim Dae-jong, a business professor at Sejong University.

**Death toll in Indonesian quake rises to 84**

The death toll from last Friday’s 6.2-magnitude earthquake on Indonesia’s Sulawesi Island has risen to 84 with 932 others injured, authorities said Monday.

More bodies were recovered in Mamuju, the capital of West Sulawesi Province that was hard hit by the quake, according to the National Disaster Mitigation Agency. Bodies have also been recovered in the nearby Palu Regency.

**12 workers alive underground after Jan. 10 blast at Chinese mine**

Twelve workers have been confirmed to still be alive, though four of them are injured, after they were trapped underground following an explosion at a gold mine in China on Jan. 10, state-run media reported Monday.

The blast occurred at the mine in Shandong Province, and 22 people were working more than 600 meters underground from the entrance, according to the official Xinhua News Agency.

China, ROK ink memorandum on translation, publication of classics

China and the Republic of Korea (ROK) on Monday signed a memorandum on translation and publication of classics, initiating a new step in people-to-people and cultural exchanges between the two countries.

China and the ROK have agreed to translate and publish 50 classic works from the two countries in the next five years in a bid to provide more outstanding cultural and intellectual resources for the two peoples, according to the memorandum.

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China and the ROK have agreed to translate and publish 50 classic works from the two countries in the next five years in a bid to provide more outstanding cultural and intellectual resources for the two peoples, according to the memorandum.

**Death toll in Indonesian quake rises to 84**

The death toll from last Friday’s 6.2-magnitude earthquake on Indonesia’s Sulawesi Island has risen to 84 with 932 others injured, authorities said Monday.

More bodies were recovered in Mamuju, the capital of West Sulawesi Province that was hard hit by the quake, according to the National Disaster Mitigation Agency. Bodies have also been recovered in the nearby Palu Regency.

**12 workers alive underground after Jan. 10 blast at Chinese mine**

Twelve workers have been confirmed to still be alive, though four of them are injured, after they were trapped underground following an explosion at a gold mine in China on Jan. 10, state-run media reported Monday.

The blast occurred at the mine in Shandong Province, and 22 people were working more than 600 meters underground from the entrance, according to the official Xinhua News Agency.

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Tokyo to cut back on athletes at Olympics opening ceremony

TOKYO Olympics organizers said Monday they will slash the number of athletes at the opening and closing ceremonies of this year's coronavirus-delayed Games, as a report said thousands fewer will attend.

More than 11,000 athletes are expected to compete at the Tokyo Games, but anti-virus measures limiting the time they can spend in the Olympic Village mean not all will be able to attend the opening and closing festivities.

Organizers said they would also “reconsider” how many athletes can take part in the ceremonies, and how to get them into the stadium safely.

“In order to ensure the safety and security of the athletes and simplify operations at the stadium and security of the athletes into the stadium safely,” the organizing committee said in a statement.

A report in Japan’s Yomiuri Shimbun newspaper on Monday said the International Olympic Committee expects only 6,000 athletes to take part in the July 23 opening ceremony, citing unidentified sources.

Tokyo 2020 organizers said the details are still being worked out in discussions with the IOC and other organizations, and “a specific approach has not been decided yet”.

‘Anything can happen’

The organizing committee has insisted the Games can go ahead even if the virus has not been brought under control, and unveiled a raft of anti-virus measures in a 53-page interim report in December.

Athletes cannot check in to the Olympic Village — which can accommodate 18,000 people — more than five days before their event, and must leave two days after finishing their competition.

A surge in infections in Japan and elsewhere around the world has cast fresh doubt over the Games, just over six months before the opening ceremony.

A Japanese cabinet minister last week admitted “anything can happen” with the Games, while reports at the weekend said a former IOC vice-president suggested the United Nations could be consulted on whether the event should go ahead.

Public support for the Games has plummeted in Japan, with a poll earlier this month finding that more than 80 percent believe the event should be cancelled or postponed again.

Japanese government spokesman Katsunobu Kato said Monday that Japan is committed to holding the Games as scheduled. “There is no change in the government’s stance on the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics,” he said.—AFP

‘No special treatment’ - Australia rebuffs tennis stars’ quarantine complaints

Men’s world number one tennis player Novak Djokovic of Serbia gestures from his hotel balcony in Adelaide on January 18, 2021, one of the locations where players have quarantined for two weeks upon their arrival ahead of the Australian Open tennis tournament in Melbourne. PHOTO: AFP

DOZENS of tennis stars stuck in hotel quarantine ahead of the Australian Open were told Monday they would get no “special treatment” to leave their rooms to train, despite complaints from some players.

Australian health authorities rejected demands for tough isolation rules to be eased, as players resorted to hitting balls off windows, walls and upturned beds in the hope of being ready for the year’s first Grand Slam.

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The 72 players on the three planes have been deemed close contacts of the four Covid-19 cases and barred from leaving their hotel rooms for 14 days, as largely virus-free Australia tries to prevent community transmission.

Health authorities said they discovered two more cases linked to the tournament on Monday, bringing the total for the Australian Open cluster to six.

Several players have taken to social media to complain about conditions.

World number one Novak Djokovic — who arrived on a virus-free flight and is being allowed to train in a bio-secure bubble — reportedly sent a list of demands to tournament organizers that included allowing players to move to private homes with tennis courts.—AFP

ISPE Defender Soe Moe Kyaw joins Yangon United

DEFENDER of the ISPE FC Soe Moe Kyaw has recently signed a two-year contract with Yangon United, according to a statement with the YUFC.

Upon joining the football club, Soe Moe Kyaw expressed his joyfulness.

“It’s my great honour to be here with one of the great clubs in the Myanmar National League. I am thrilled to be part of the team to raise the image of the club. One more thing that I want to say is to hold the trophies that I haven’t got in my former club Ayeyawady United, and I am sure I can do that,” Soe Moe Kyaw said.

The 21-year-old defender studied his football education from the Institute of Sports and Physical Education (Mandalay) from 2011 to 2015.

In 2017, he was selected in the Myanmar National League U-18 team and ISPE Junior football club.

Owing to his performance, Myanmar football authorities selected him to participate in the U-21 Myanmar National Team in the same year.

With his best assist, ISPE U-21 team won the very first Championship trophy of Myanmar National U-21 League in 2018.

Consequently, the defender moved to Ayeyawady United with two years loan and performed like an apple of everyone’s eyes in there with his smart tackling and accurate assist.

Soe Moe Kyaw was selected for Myanmar National U-22 men’s football team in 2019 SEA Games, and his team bagged the bronze medal.—Lynn Thit (Tgi)