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Union Minister U Khin Maung Yi inspects Moe Swe forest research camp

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External trade falls by \$2.48 bln as of 22 January

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Union Minister U Ko Ko pays homage to State Ovada Cariya Sayadaw of Shwedagon Pagoda Board of Trustees, inspects preparations at Shwedagon Pagoda

UNION MINISTER for Religious Affairs and Culture U Ko Ko accompanied by the Permanent Secretary, Director-General of Religious Affairs Department and officials visited the Insein Ywama Pariyatti Monastery yesterday and paid homage to State Ovada Cariya and member of Shwedagon Pagoda Board of Trustees Sayadaw Agga Maha Pandita Bhaddanta Tilokabhivumsa.

During the visit, the Union Minister explained the current State situation and activities, pilgrimage programmes of Shwedagon Pagoda and other pagodas located in Nay Pyi Taw and regions/states for the monks and people in accordance with the COVID-19 health rules of the Ministry of Health and Sports.

The Union Minister also presented the activities for the promotion and propagation of the Sasana, Pariyatti and Pari-patti Sasana and donated the offerings.

The Union Minister and



Union Minister U Ko Ko and party pay homage to the State Ovada Cariya Sayadaw of the Shwedagon Pagoda Board of Trustees on 7 February 2021. **PHOTO: MNA**

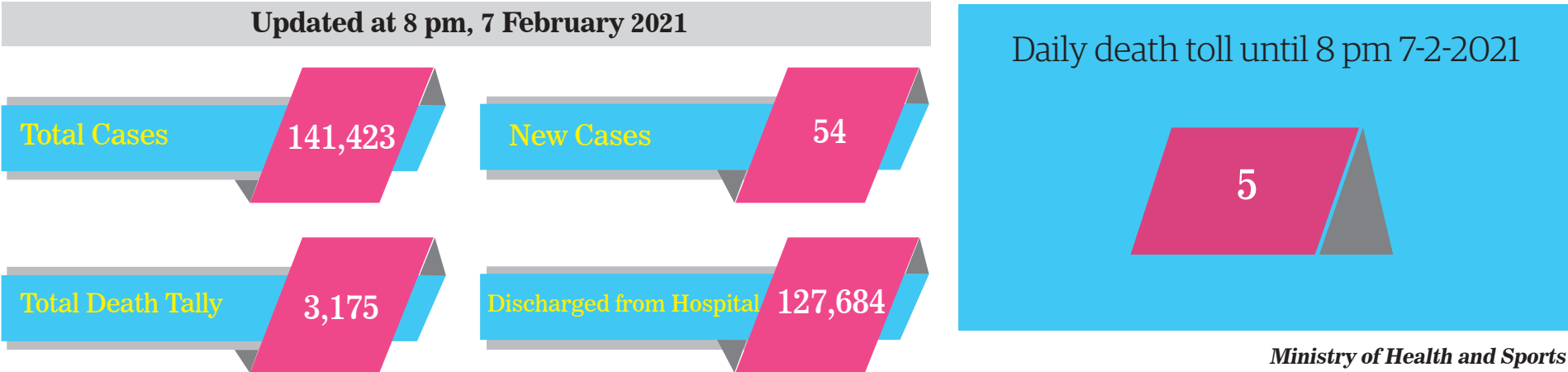
party then received the instructions from the Sayadaw. He also inspected the preparations to open the Shwedagon Pagoda in accordance with the COVID-19 health rules of the Ministry of Health and Sports.

Pagoda Board of Trustees member U Thaung Htike briefed on the preparations and the Union Minister added the necessary instructions.—MNA

(Translated by KTZH)

54 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 7 February, total figure rises to 141,423

MYANMAR'S COVID-19 positive cases rose to **141,423** after **54** new cases were reported on 7 February 2021 according to the Ministry of Health and Sports. Among these **141,423** confirmed cases, **3,175** died, **127,684** have been discharged from hospitals.—MNA



Union Minister U Khin Maung Yi inspects Moe Swe forest research camp

UNION MINISTER for Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation U Khin Maung Yi visited Moe Swe Camp in Forest Research Camp Number (5) in Ottarathiri Township, Nay Pyi Taw and inspected the research activities carried out by the Forest Research Institute yesterday morning.

During the inspection tour, the Director for the Forest Research Institute explained the set-up of 10 forest research camps, eight of which are implementing the Myanmar Reforestation and Rehabilitation Programme (MRRP); the camps' activities to collect, grow and distribute the seeds of the variety of locally-grown trees; experiment of the 40 acres of eight teak genes from eight major teak growing areas in Myanmar in Moe Swe Camp; the establishment of a Hedge Garden for the genes of Plus Tree Teak throughout Myanmar and the status of staff assignments in 10 camps depending on the number



Union Minister U Khin Maung Yi and party are seen looking around Moe Swe forest research camp on 7 February 2021. **PHOTO: MNA**

of operation.

Regarding the explanation of the Director, the Union Minister said to submit a request if there is a need for staffing in the assignment of staff in forest research camps. He added the need to develop better genes with good

teak germination from the eight main growing areas; to distribute and grow those viable seedlings in departmental plantations and private plantations; to conduct research and recommend the kind of trees should be planted depending on the soil type and

climatic conditions of the area to be planted; to disseminate the findings so that economically profitable trees can be grown on private plantations; to make more effort to establish the seed production areas and select Plus Tree.

He continued the plantations established in 2020 need to be planted with pot-tube seedlings and systematically documented by conducting experimental research papers comparing the condition of the plantations in bags. He also added the necessary staff and fund will be provided for the research Institute as the findings from the research will be able to provide recommendation for the survival of departmental and private plantations as well as the prevention of pests.

Afterwards, the Union Minister and party inspected the transplantation of seedlings and experimental planting of seedlings grown in pot tubes at Moe Swe Research Camp.

The Union Minister and party also inspected the planting stock trails and teak gardens along the way of Nay Pyi Taw-Taungtwingyi road and ordered as necessary.—MNA

(Translated by EPPA)

CBM issues announcement on public rumours about monetary issue

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Republic of the Union of Myanmar
State Administration Council
Order No 30/2021

11th Waning of Pyatho 1382 ME
7 February 2021

Appointment and Duty Assignment of
Union Minister

U Maung Maung Ohn is appointed as Union Minister for Hotels and Tourism in accordance with the right to exercise the powers under Article 419 of the State Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

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

Republic of the Union of Myanmar
State Administration Council
Order No 31/2021

11th Waning of Pyatho 1382 ME
7 February 2021

Appointment and Duty Assignment of
Deputy Ministers

The following persons are appointed and assigned by the State Administration Council to the duties of the Deputy Ministers shown against each of their ministries in accordance with Article 419 of the State Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

1. U Than Aung Kyaw	Ministry of Investment and Foreign Economic Relation
2. U Ye Tint	Ministry of Information
3. Brig-Gen Zaw Min Tun	Ministry of Information
4. Brig-Gen Lu Mon	Ministry of Transport and Communications
5. U Nyunt Aung	Ministry of Commerce
6. U Myo Hlaing	Ministry of Health and Sports

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

Republic of the Union of Myanmar
State Administration Council
Order No 32/2021

11th Waning of Pyatho 1382 ME
7 February 2021

Appointment and Duty Assignment of
Supreme Court Justices

The following persons are appointed and assigned as Supreme Court Justices, in accordance with the right to exercise the powers under Article 419 of the State Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

1. U Khin Maung Gyi

2. U Tin Hone

3. Daw Khin May Yi

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

Republic of the Union of Myanmar
State Administration Council
Order No 33/2021

11th Waning of Pyatho 1382 ME
7 February 2021

Appointment and Duty Assignment of
Chief Justices of Region High Courts

The following persons are appointed and assigned as Chief Justices of Region High Courts shown against each of their Region High Courts, in accordance with the right to exercise the powers under Article 419 of the State Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

1. U Phyo Phyo	Sagaing Region High Court
2. Daw Khin Thin Wai	Mandalay Region High Court
3. Daw Thin Thin Nwet	Yangon Region High Court

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

Republic of the Union of Myanmar
State Administration Council
Order No 34/2021

11th Waning of Pyatho 1382 ME
7 February 2021

Appointment and Duty Assignment of
Judges of Region/State High Court

The following persons are appointed and assigned as Judges of Region/State High Courts shown against each of their High Courts, in accordance with the right to exercise the powers under Article 419 of the State Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

1. Daw Man Hauk Nuan	Chin State High Court
2. U Zaw Htoo	Sagaing Region High Court
3. Daw Khin Thit Swe	Mandalay Region High Court
4. U Nyo Tun	Yangon Region High Court

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

Republic of the Union of Myanmar
State Administration Council
Order No 35/2021

11th Waning of Pyatho 1382 ME
7 February 2021

Appointment and Duty Assignment of Mayor

U Kyaw Hsan is appointed by the State Administration Council as Mayor of the Mandalay City Development Committee, Mandalay Region, in accordance with Article 419 of the State Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

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

Republic of the Union of Myanmar
State Administration Council
Order No 36/2021
11th Waning of Pyatho 1382 ME
7 February 2021

Appointment and Duty Assignment of
Deputy Mayor

U Maung Maung is appointed by the State Administration Council as Deputy Mayor of the Nay Pyi Taw Development Committee in accordance with Article 419 of the State Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

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

Military members conduct cleaning programmes at famous pagodas

As the pagodas across the nation will be reopened to public starting 8 February in accordance with the COVID-19 health rules, Tatmadaw members and their families and members of the Myanmar Police Force and Myanmar Fire Brigade collectively clean and sweep the pagodas.

The Tatmadaw members of Taunggyi-based Eastern Command conducted cleaning programmes at Sulamuni Pagoda of Taunggyi in Shan State (south) yesterday.

Lt-Gen Than Tun Oo of the Office of the Commander-in-Chief (Army), Commander of Eastern Command Brig-Gen Ni Lin Aung and officials coordinated the necessary things and donated the cash contribution.

Similarly, the military personnel of respective regions command also conducted cleaning programmes at Uppatasanti Pagoda of Nay Pyi Taw and at other pagodas, religious buildings, entry and exit ways and surroundings of pagodas located in Shan State (east), Yangon, Mandalay and Bago Regions.

The commanders and officials inspected the works and instructed the necessary things, according to the statement of the Office of the Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services.—MNA

(Translated by KTZH)

Military personnel pay homage to Sayadaws in Mawlamyine, Taunggyi

THE military regional commands donated rice, cooking oil and offertories to the monasteries and nunneries to be convenient during COVID-19 pandemic.

Lt-Gen Aung Soe of the Office of the Commander-in-Chief (Army), Commander of South-East Command Brig-Gen Ko Ko Maung and officials paid homage to the Sayadaw Agga Maha Pandita Vinaya Pali Paragu Bhaddanta Vimala Buddhi of Mya Sedi Monastery in Mawlamyine of Mon State yesterday.

The military personnel took five percepts from the Sayadaw and donated rice, oil and offertories.

Similarly, Lt-Gen Than Tun Oo of Office of the Commander-in-Chief (Army), Commander of Eastern Command Brig-Gen Ni Lin Aung and officials paid homage to Sayadaw Sasana Daja Dhamma Cariya Bhaddanta Veinnita of Dhamma Thukha monastery in Sao San Tun Ward of Taunggyi in Shan State (southern) yesterday.

They took five percepts from the Sayadaw and donated rice, oil and offertories.

Then, Lt-Gen Than Tun Oo and members also paid homage to Sayadaw Dhamma Cariya Baddhandata Candar Thiri of Mingalagu Vipassana monastery and donated the offertories, according to the statement of the Office of the Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services.—MNA

(Translated by KTZH)

74th Anniversary of Shan State Day celebrated

THE 74th Anniversary of Shan State Day was celebrated at the City Hall of Taunggyi in Shan State (south) yesterday.

The ceremony was joined by Lt-Gen Than Tun Oo of the Office of the Commander-in-Chief (Army), Commander of Eastern Command Brig-Gen Ni Lin Aung, departmental officials, religious titles winner Sayadaws, other award winners, town elders and local ethnic people.

Firstly, Lt-Gen Than Tun Oo read out the message sent by Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, Chairman of State Administration Council of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

Then, Chairman of Shan State Administration Council Dr Kyaw Tun made an address.

The Chairman of Shan State Administration Council gave Social Excellent Award (1st level) to Sayadaw Agga Maha Saddama Jotika Dhaja Agga Maha Kamma Htana Cariya Dr Baddhanta Pyannya Danda of Thiri Mingalaar Mansu Shan Monastery of Lashio, Management Excellent Award (1st level) to Shan United FC, Security and Rule of Law Excellent Award (3rd level) to Police Captain San Thein of Tachilek district police station, Agricultural Excellent Award (3rd level) to U Tint Naing from Nga Phal Chaung Village of Nyaungshwe, Livestock Excellent Award (3rd level) to U Saw Tin Ko Ko Lwin, Environmental Conservation Excellent Award (3rd level) to U Mya Than from Naung Kat Village of Hsipaw, Social Excellent Award (3rd level) to U Phone Myint Kyaw and Garunar Shin social welfare team of Namsang, according to the statement of the Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services.—MNA

(Translated by KTZH)

Patients transferred from general hospitals to Tatmadaw hospitals for medical treatment

DUE to the difficulties to get treatment at the general hospitals under the Ministry of Health and Sports across the country for various reasons at present, patients are being transferred to Tatmadaw hospitals, according to the Office of the Commander-in-Chief.

A total of 757 outpatients, 345 inpatients were transferred to the Tatmadaw hospitals in respective military headquarters as of yesterday from 5 February and doctors, nurses and health care workers are giving necessary treatment to those in need as well as facilitating the foods and places for hospitalized patients.

Among the patients, a total of 38 patients who were in need of major and minor surgeries have been given necessary operations and emergency patients are being treated specially by doctors and medical workers.

The Office of the Commander-in-Chief has announced that people can have medical treatment or be transferred at the nearest Tatmadaw hospitals if there are any medical difficulties at any time.—MNA

(Translated by EPPA)

Local people provided healthcare at Tatmadaw hospitals

TATMADAW is arranging temporary hospitals to provide necessary healthcare to monks and local people who are facing difficulties to have medical treatments, also facilitating with doctors and nurses for the patients who need surgery and to be hospitalized. Commanders of the respective Commands encourage and provide foods and necessary items to the patients, according to the Office of the Commander-in-Chief.

There were a total of 24 patients who came to the Tatmadaw hospitals and 17 hospitalized patients in Northern Shan State yesterday and Lt-Gen Aung Zaw Aye from the Office of the Commander-in-Chief (Army) and Brig-Gen Hla Moe and party encouraged the patients and provided food and necessary items to them. Similarly, there were a total of 24 local patients and one monk at regional Tatmadaw hospital in Mawlamyine, Mon State; 15 local patients in Dawei and 19 in Kawthoung; 76 in Patheingyi; 14 in Haka, Chin State and 12 in Mandalay Tatmadaw hospital who were given necessary medical treatment by doctors and nurses.

In addition, Tatmadaw is also preparing the Cherry Camp in Eastern Shan State and the sport hall of the Patheingyi based Command to provide medical care to the hospitalized patients.—MNA

(Translated by EPPA)

Request to monks, people for paying homage to Shwedagon Pagoda

THE Shwedagon Pagoda has been closed off for more than 10 months since 9 April 2020 during COVID-19 pandemic. The spread of disease reaches under control to a certain extent due to the effective COVID-19 prevention, control and treatment activities. Therefore, the pagoda will be opened to public starting 8 February 2021 in accordance with the words of State Sangha Maha Nayaka Sayadaws, Ovada Sariya Sayadaws of Pagoda Board of Trustees, and permission of the State Administration Council in line with the COVID-19 health rules. But, celebrating occasions with ceremonial gatherings remains restricted.

Pilgrimage programmes for monks, people

1. The pagoda will be opened to monks and nuns on 8.2.2021 and 9.2.2021.
2. The pagoda will be opened for the older people and people with disabilities on 10.2.2021.
3. The pagoda will be opened to public starting 11.2.2021.
4. There will be three pilgrimage sections respectively in the morning and afternoon- from 06:00 am to 07:00 am, 08:00 am to 09:00 am and 10:00 am to 11:00 am and 1:00 pm to 2:00 pm, 3:00 pm to 4:00 pm and 5:00 pm to 6:00 pm. There will be six times for pilgrimage and 500 visitors will be allowed at a time, and a total of 3,000 people can visit per day.
5. A total of 500 people can pay homage to the pagoda per time as it will allow 200 people from the eastern stairway while 150 from the western stairway, 50 from the southern stairway and 100 from the northern stairway.
6. The visitors except for elderly people and people with disabilities must not use the elevator.
7. The pilgrimage hour is 1 hour.
8. The pilgrims will have to fill the Form for personal data (name, father's name, NRC No, phone number, address). The pilgrims can also take the pre-filled personal data forms.
9. The pilgrims must return from the stairways where they come.

Facts to follow

1. The people with suspected COVID-19 symptoms like fever (temperature over 100.4°F/38°C), cough, difficult breathing and smell loss must not be allowed.
2. The pilgrims must wear masks. The elderly people at the age of over 60 and those having chronic diseases such as diabetes and hypertension must wear masks and face shields.
3. The pilgrims must cooperate in filling personal data, phone numbers in the designated forms and record books.
4. The pilgrims must exactly follow the COVID-19 preventive measures without fail.
5. The people need to wash the hands thoroughly for 20 seconds at the hand-washing basins at the entrance of stairways, pagoda platforms and exit ways or use Hand Sanitizer containing 60pc of alcohol before they enter the pagoda compound, or every time after paying homage (the hands touch the floor (or) pagoda platform), and when they return.
6. The people must take mini Hand Sanitizer containing 60pc of alcohol to wash the hands after paying homage (touching the floors or pagoda platforms).
7. The people must take temperature screening conducted by the officials at the stairways with Non-contact thermometer (or) Thermal Scanner.
8. The pilgrims must follow the 6ft social distancing at the entry and exit of stairways and on the pagoda platform.
9. The people must avoid paying homage at the rest house and guest pavilions for a long time, eating food in a group or offering food donation (Satudithar).
10. The people must systematically throw the used masks and tissues to the dustbin with covers.
11. Within 7 days after the visit to the pagodas, if the people suffer from sick, cough, smell loss and hard breathing, they must go to the nearest healthcare department.

Pilgrimage programmes for region/state pagodas

1. The pagodas located in regions/states will be opened to public starting 8.2.2021.
2. The pilgrims must follow the COVID-19 prevention, control and treatment instructions of the Ministry of Health and Sports.
3. All the people living in Nay Pyi Taw and other regions/ states must follow the instructions of the Ministry of Health and Sports.
4. The pagoda board of trustees of Nay Pyi Taw and other regions/states must make preparations for 33 facts released by the Ministry of Health and Sports.
5. The relevant pagoda board of trustees must follow the orders and directives of Nay Pyi Taw, Region/State Administration Councils.

Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture

External trade falls by \$2.48 bln as of 22 January

MYANMAR'S external trade between 1 October and 22 January in the current financial year 2020-2021 touched a low of US\$9.7 billion, a sharp drop of \$2.48 billion compared with the corresponding period of the FY2019-2020, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

During the same period in the previous FY, trade stood at \$12.18 billion, according to the ministry data.

Over the past three months, Myanmar's export was worth over \$4.7 billion,

which plunged from \$5.7 billion registered a year-ago period. Meanwhile, the country's import was valued \$4.968 billion, showing a decrease of \$1.47 billion compared with the last FY.

Both sea trade and border trade dropped amid the coronavirus impacts. The neighbouring countries tightened the border security and limit the trading time to contain the spread of the virus. Pandemic-induced container shortage pushed up the freight rates to almost triple

in Myanmar, causing delays for traders.

Myanmar exports agricultural products, animal products, minerals, forest products, and finished industrial goods, while it imports capital goods, raw industrial materials, and consumer goods.

The country's export sector relies more on the agricultural and manufacturing sectors. The government is trying to reduce the trade deficit by screening luxury import items and boosting exports.

Under the National Planning Law for

the Financial Year 2020-2021, Myanmar intends to reach an export target at US\$16 billion and import at \$18 billion.

The Ministry of Commerce is focusing on reducing trade deficit, export promotion and market diversification. Since 2011, the Ministry of Commerce has adhered to its reform policy. A series of moves to liberalize and open the economy have been introduced through policy development to improve the trade environment. — GNLM

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THE PANDEMIC-BATTERED GLOBAL ECONOMY

Four question marks hanging over global markets in 2021

AS the pandemic-battered global economy slid into a severe recession in 2020, global markets have turned more sensitive, with wild volatility seen from risky assets, notably stocks, to safe havens, such as gold.

Further development and distribution of COVID-19 vaccines in 2021 may help allay fears in global markets, yet uncertainties persist. The International Monetary Fund predicted in October that the world economy would shrink by 4.4 per cent in 2020.

Although the world economy will likely recover from the slump, the impact of the ravaging coronavirus cannot be underestimated, and global trade is being reshaped by mounting geopolitical risks and transfer of power in major economies. These factors stoked widespread concern among investors about the prices of the four major assets -- gold, the U.S. dollar, crude oil and stocks.

WILL GOLD HOLD FIRM?

Gold is always a safe haven for investors.

In 2020, fears of the greenback were simmering due to the combined factors of the pandemic, economic depression, increasing geopolitical risks and higher U.S. national debt. When adverse events occur and linger for a while, in addition to loose monetary policies adopted by countries, more investors are likely to pile their funds into safe havens like gold from volatile holdings and consequently drive up gold prices with increased demand.

Gold prices rose sharply amid volatile trading in 2020. Following the coronavirus outbreak, liquidity risks once emerged in the international financial market, and the precious metal drastically retreated after a strong start. As market sentiments improved, however, the yellow metal began to rally in March, and hit a record level of 2,075 dollars per ounce in August before dipping a bit.

On Dec. 31, 2020, Gold futures on the COMEX division of the New York Mercantile Exchange (NYMEX) closed at 1,895.1 dollars per ounce, up



Crude oil prices in 2020 indicated a "V-shaped" recovery. An Asian construction worker stands beside a solar panel in Dubai. The United Arab Emirates is still sitting on huge reserves of oil and natural gas, but now it plans to harness yet another of its abundant natural resources: the year-round sunshine. PHOTO: AFP

more than 24 per cent year on year.

Multiple institutions have made optimistic forecasts about gold in 2021, reckoning that uncertainties surrounding global economic recovery and fears for inflation will push gold prices up. Besides, resurging demand for the safe haven asset in emerging economies and rising global debt will play their part in supporting the price.

Citibank has recently predicted that gold would soar to 2,200 dollars per ounce in three months, and to 2,400 dollars in six to 12 months. Goldman Sachs also expected the demand for gold to strengthen across emerging markets as gold demand in China and India "already displays signs of normalization."

WILL DOLLAR CONTINUE WEAKENING?

The Federal Reserve in March unveiled unlimited, open-ended quantitative easing, cutting interest rates in two emergency meetings by a total of 150 basis points, which represented the government's desperate attempt to stimulate the coronavirus-stricken economy. Such aggressive moves, however, triggered a dollar plunge.

With European Union (EU) leaders reaching a deal on 750 billion-euro (915 billion dollars) coronavirus recovery fund in July, further financial integra-

tion in the EU has boosted investors' confidence in the bloc and the euro. Thus, while dollar falls, the euro strengthens amid increased optimism, reversing the prolonged weakness of the union's currency.

"Market consensus has shifted towards the euro on the assumption that euro area will suffer less economic damage," said Karl Schamotta, chief market strategist at Cambridge Global Payments.

The Australian bank ANZ forecasts the euro-to-dollar exchange rate will rise towards 1.30 in the medium term with a year-end forecast of 1.28.

HSBC said the euro exchange rate's rally appeared to be a reflection of a broader risk appetite and a weaker dollar, as opposed to pure bullishness about the eurozone's prospects.

"The relative attractiveness of U.S. financial assets is starting to wane," said J.P. Morgan Asset Management. "We continue to believe that over the next 10 to 15 years, the dollar will weaken; but the exact catalyst for this trajectory change is elusive."

HOW HIGH WILL CRUDE OIL GO?

Crude oil prices in 2020 indicated a "V-shaped" recovery.

The U.S. oil prices plunged nearly a third on Mar. 9, the biggest crash since the 1991 Gulf War, as Saudi Arabia launched

a price war against Russia. And once again on April 20, oil prices dipped below zero for the first time, closing at -37.63 dollars per barrel in New York, in that coronavirus-induced oversupply of crude threatened to overwhelm storage facilities.

Oil demand rebounded and prices edged up in the second half of 2020 as the international crude market tightened the supply side and business activities resumed in many economies amid preventive measures against the virus.

On Dec. 31, 2020, the West Texas Intermediate (WTI) for February delivery closed at 48.52 dollars a barrel on the NYMEX, down 20.5 per cent year on year. On the same day, Brent crude for March delivery closed at 51.80 dollars a barrel on the London ICE Futures Exchange, losing 21.5 per cent for the year.

It is widely acknowledged that vaccination against COVID-19 will buoy optimism on the global economic recovery as well as oil demand and prices.

Potential rollout of high-efficacy vaccines in the short term would be a turning point for oil demand as it could lead to a more sustainable economic recovery, Barclays said in a note.

The British bank forecasts Brent at an average 53 dollars a barrel and U.S. WTI crude at 50 dollars a barrel in 2021.

SOURCE: AFP

IN FAVOUR OF REOPENING SCHOOLS

Czech minister says pandemic worse than WWII

A Czech government minister said Sunday the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic were worse than those of World War II as she argued in favour of reopening schools.

Schools, restaurants, cinemas, theatres and most shops have been closed on and off since March last year in the country of 10.7 million people. “Even World War II didn’t cause as much trouble as COVID. Children went to school,” Labour Minister Jana Malacova said in a TV debate. “COVID is a disease that has made the country stop working for a year; the country is at a standstill, the entire economy is struggling,” said the Social Democrat.

The Czech Republic has registered more than one million confirmed coronavirus cases including over 17,000 deaths, and ranks among Europe’s worst-hit countries in terms of cases and deaths per capita.

Malacova later tried to backpedal, saying she did not mean to dishonour the more than 70 million victims of World War II.

“I’m just trying to show we have to find a way out of these blanket closures,” she said.

SOURCE: AFP



An AFP file photo of people protesting against COVID-19 government measures in Prague on January 10. PHOTO: AFP

SEVERE CONDITIONS

Dutch hit by first snowstorm in 10 years as Northern Europe shivers

THE Netherlands was blanketed on Sunday by the first major snowstorm to hit the country in 10 years, disrupting rail and road traffic, as a cold front pushed through northern Europe. Train services were also affected by snow in neighbouring Germany, while across the North Sea Britain was bracing for the impact what Dutch meteorologists have dubbed Storm Darcy.

The conditions are so severe that the Dutch government has closed all coronavirus testing centres for several days. The Dutch meteorological agency KNMI declared a rare “Code Red” warning for the whole country for Sunday, warning of winds of up to 90 kilometres an

hour and “bitter cold.”

Weather forecasting website Weer.nl said that overnight a force 8 wind was measured in combination with snowfall, adding: “This officially means a snowstorm in our country.”

“It is the first snowstorm in a long time: the last snowstorm took place in January 2010,” it said. Most parts of the country had between five and 10 centimetres of snow but some areas received 30 centimetres, public broadcaster NOS said. All trains were cancelled in the Netherlands until at least 12 noon, train operator NS said.

Motorists were advised to avoid travelling and there were around 85 reports of cars skid-

ding off the road, the Dutch infrastructure authority. One local authority tweeted a picture of one of its snowploughs that had fallen into a ditch.

‘Beast from the East’

Up to 10 days of sub-zero daytime temperatures are expected in the Netherlands, raising hopes in the skating-obsessed country that canals will freeze over to be skated on.

Prime Minister Mark Rutte has said ice skating will be allowed if the canals freeze for the first time since 2019, but warned Dutch people to observe social distancing and to try not to fall over and end up in already over-stretched hospitals.

SOURCE: AFP



The Netherlands was blanketed on Sunday by the first major snowstorm to hit the country in 10 years, disrupting rail and road traffic, as a cold front pushed through northern Europe. PHOTO: AFP

EFFECTIVENESS

AstraZeneca Covid jab ‘less effective against SAfrican strain’: study



The Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine fails to prevent mild and moderate cases of the South African coronavirus strain, according to research reported in the Financial Times. PHOTO: AFP

THE Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine fails to prevent mild and moderate cases of the South African coronavirus strain, according to research reported in the Financial Times.

But in its study, due to be published Monday, the pharma group said it could still have an effect on severe disease -- although there is not yet enough data to make a definitive judgement. None of the 2,000 participants in the trial developed serious symptoms, the FT said, but AstraZeneca said the sample size was too small to make a full determination.

“We may not be reducing the total number of cases but there is still protection against deaths, hospitalisations and severe disease,” said Sarah Gilbert, who led the development of the vaccine with the Oxford Vaccine Group. It could also be

“some time” before they determine its effectiveness for older people in fighting the strain, which is a growing presence in Britain, she told BBC television.

“We might have to put it together from a number of studies,” she said. Researchers are currently working to update the vaccine, and “have a version with the South African spike sequence in the works” that they would “very much like” to be ready for the autumn, said Gilbert.

UK vaccines minister Nadhim Zahawi said the government’s strategy to combat the spread of the strain was to continue with its mass vaccination programme “as rapidly as possible” as well as “hyper-local surge testing” in areas where it is detected.

SOURCE: AFP

Act now to adapt to realities of climate change

OUR country reels under a now-year-long assault by the COVID-19 pandemic and we are going to experience hotter temperatures driven upward by the warming effects the climate change.

With evil effects of the global warming, the evil effects of natural disasters related to climate change are threatening the safety of our planet. There have been increased occurrences of natural disasters with greater destructive impact. The consequences of climate change can cause physical and mental damage.

As the weather transitions from winter to summer, the daytime temperature will spiral upwards, and we can expect more severe weather patterns rather than normal conditions as the world warms up due to climate change.

In the face of drought, farmers have to pump underground water to their farmland and the cost of fuel has become another blow to the farmers.

Our country, which is bearing the brunt of climate-change induced disasters every year, should not have been slow to adapt to the realities of climate change.

Myanmar is an agricultural country, where peasants and farmers make up the bulk of the population. Rice is our staple food, and its production currently exceeds 40 per cent of domestic demand.

We have been experienced that it is uncertain to gain profits or not from farming crops due to extreme weather, high cost and unstable prices for crops.

In the face of drought, farmers have to pump underground water to their farmland and the cost of fuel has become another blow to the farmers.

We need all hands from private firms, organizations and departments would be on the deck to grow alternative crops or to change the classification of their farmland in response to the climate change-induced drought.

The number of natural disasters including drought and as well as the severity increases. Worse still was the fact that natural disasters were borderless as a natural disaster in a country becomes a challenge to the neighboring country.

Agriculture sector has time and weather constraints. A system aiming at rehabilitation and recovery within a short time should be systematic and must ensure tackling hindrances to the socio-economic development of the farmers.

With disasters bringing stronger and more devastation year by year, the disaster management tasks is crucial for the Union Government.

3 urgent actions to redesign the future of food in 2021

AT the beginning of 2021, food has found its way back to the centre of the global agenda. The World Food Programme was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize and the UN Secretary-General's Food Systems Summit in September 2021 was announced as a people and solutions summit. Yet the looming threat remains that the COVID-19 pandemic will lead us from an economic to a food crisis.

In 2020, the world benefited from a series of good harvests, offsetting major effects on food supply. However, with predictions that an additional 130 million people were facing acute food insecurity by the end of 2020 and with frailties in the production and supply of food increasingly coming to the fore, there is no room for complacency. As we look ahead, it is more important than ever to nurture and scale a portfolio of resilience-ready, healthy and nutritious, inclusive and sustainable solutions for food.

1. Rewrite the playbook for collective action

The pandemic has shown us the power of unprecedented global action and coordination towards achieving a common goal. Traditional partnerships, while often very effective at addressing specific issues, don't have the capacity to deliver either the scale of change or to manage the degree of complexity that food systems transition requires.

To build future food systems that are fit for purpose, we need to take a systems approach, develop a multi-stakeholder identity, maintain joint accountability and redesign the incentives and transitional steps to get us there.

The Food Action Alliance (FAA) led by partners from public, private and civil society, farmer and consumer organizations and academia, works to expedite country and region-led partnership platforms in the Americas, Europe, Africa, India and South-East Asia. A multi-stakeholder approach led by local and regional partners allows each partnership to maintain its uniqueness while harnessing the collective capacity of a significantly wider shared outcome at scale.



A farmer learn how to use planting machine in Hlegu. PHOTO: PHOE KHWAR

By embracing complexity and designing for scale, the level of ambition for who can benefit from better functioning, equitable food systems can go from tens of thousands to billions. Think about, for example, the collective power of a hundred million farmers incentivized to adopt regenerative farming practices, not just to reduce the impact on the environment but to undo past damage and allow the sector to be both carbon-neutral and carbon positive. Companies can then drive that as an operating principle through their supply chains and several billion consumers are incentivised to choose healthier, nutritious, zero-waste and environmentally conscious food through a variety of inspiring, transparent and trusted networks and approaches.

2. Move to a smarter, more agile and solutions-oriented mindset

COVID-19 has expedited the need to build resilient-ready food systems. This requires a genuine emphasis on building food chains that benefit everyone, where the risk burden is better shared and assessing how we measure the true cost of food production. Currently, up to 40% of people in rural poverty are directly reliant on food and land use systems for their livelihood and current food and land use systems cause up to 30% of total greenhouse gas emissions. Overall, hidden environmental,

health and poverty costs are estimated at almost \$12 trillion while the annualized market value of the global food system is estimated at \$10 trillion amounting to a multi-trillion annual loss to society overall.

The pandemic presents a powerful opportunity to redesign food systems so they are genuinely fit for purpose. In this respect, adopting a people-centric, solution-orientated mindset is more important than ever in order to build new forms of dynamic collaboration across sectors. That open and collaborative approach, which reframes the purpose from the outset to problem-solve together in a collective, systemic way and work with and for people, could unleash a new generation of business and organizational models, social/environmental tools and services, as well as individual and institutional systems leadership.

Actions taken to protect and restore food systems will also have to be smarter. The current crisis has underscored the necessity to retool the entire food system to enable digitalization and data-driven transformation. Data from satellite and geospatial operators, ICT and telecommunications providers, e-commerce and logistics companies and finance providers can be brought to bear.

During the onset of the pandemic, for example, the Kenyan government established a cross-ministry and cross-sector

data-driven food security war room. This allowed digital tools to be deployed in real-time to collect data which informed the

The pandemic presents a powerful opportunity to redesign food systems so they are genuinely fit for purpose.

response and recovery to COVID-19 and its impact on food supply, as well as to a series of compounded simultaneous threats, including a disastrous locust plague and extreme weather-induced flooding.

The complex and fragmented nature of food systems is a crucial challenge in itself. Leaders can start simply (or specifically in carbon soil sequestration) but be innovative, agile and bold. This could mean collectively developing a "good enough", proxy open-data solution and transitional financing mechanism, whereby millions of farmers could initially be rewarded for carbon capture in their soils.

In parallel, a series of com-

prehensive data enriched science-based methodologies are developed to potentially engage hundreds of millions of farmers in co-creating a new reward and payment mechanism for farmers and even a new asset class in soil. A good example of digital payment services in action as a response to COVID-19 is Mercy Corps AgriFin which, together with a consortium of partners, is coming together to use data to better understand the needs of farmers during this time and enhance and strengthen response offerings using trusted digital channels at scale. AgriFin's partners are currently reaching 8 million smallholder farmers across Kenya, Ethiopia and Nigeria.

These new methods can be linked to dynamic country and regional innovation hubs to ensure the approaches are adaptable, can be tailored to individual countries' needs and that benefits are being evenly

3. Put people first

Transitions are about people and the principle must be to prioritize social solidarity and rural economic growth over supply chain efficiency; to build greater trust that food systems work for people, not the other way around.

We have a tremendous opportunity to engage the 500 million smallholder farmers and 7.7 billion consumers around the world as change agents and leaders in a food system transition. Demand-driven and inclusive principles need to be embedded in global, regional and country approaches.

The Food Systems Summit Dialogues demonstrates this potential as they undertake an ambitious agenda to host Country Dialogues in as many member states as possible in the lead up to the UN Food Systems Summit. This will support countries to host local discussions, while offering a shared open source platform for independent and global dialogues.

We need to empower systems leaders, individuals and institutions with systems-thinking capacity, skill sets and tools, as well as the resources and networks to problem solve across silos and provide a positive impact at country and regional levels. The Transformation Leaders Network, led by a group of partners including the World Economic Forum, is curating a community of practitioners to do just this.

People-first also means an opportunity for innovative financing solutions that put people at the centre. As we look to renegotiate post-COVID-19 debt swaps, could we consider aligning those to sustainable food systems outcomes? Could we build innovative financing and de-risking tools that will allow countries to really shape their collective food futures?

To heed the Secretary General's call for the Food Systems Summit and as we realize the role food system transformation plays in people's lives during this pandemic, we ask for unparalleled leadership from all sectors.

This article is part of the Davos Agenda of the World Economic Forum.

Union Day Objectives 74th Anniversary of Union Day - 2021

- To work on the Union Peace Conference – 21st Century Panglong, till the success of the internal peace process is achieved.
- Development of the socio-economic life of the ethnic nationals.
- To work for the emergence of a constitution that is in alignment and harmony with the Democratic Federal Union.
- All ethnic nationals to work for the preservation and protection of non-disintegration of the Union, non-disintegration of national unity, and perpetuation of national sovereignty.
- To nurture and develop new generations endowed with high skills and capabilities imbued with strong Union spirit.

Union Day slogans for 2021 (74th Anniversary)

- Equal opportunities and equal responsibilities, living in a peaceful, prosperous and stable Union.
- Unity is strength, solidarity is power
That is the heart of the Union.
- Many fruits sprouting from one stem, this is our brotherhood of the Union.
- Our Union built with brotherhood, Never forget Union day.
- Drinking the same water, living on the same land, we are Union nationals of the same blood.

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PANDEMIC AND REGULATORY HURDLES

Boeing's new big plane is its big new problem



BOEING CO.'s newest jetliner is becoming its latest big problem, stretching out development, racking up a huge charge and complicating the plane maker's bid to navigate the Covid-19 pandemic.

When Boeing decided to build the 777X in 2013, engineers designed it for airlines wanting to connect the globe's major cities and carry some 400 passengers more efficiently than any of its earlier widely used jets. As the latest version of Boeing's long-range jetliner introduced in the 1990s, it features two giant, fuel-efficient engines and big wings that fold so they can pull up to airport gates.

Boeing's bet is souring, however. Unlike with some of its other airplanes, Boeing's recent 777X woes aren't directly related to apparent design missteps or quality lapses. The plane's troubles stem from the pandemic's hit to international travel and broader market fallout, and a stiffer regulatory posture following Boeing's missteps tied to a hazardous flight control system that led to two fatal crashes of its smaller 737 MAX jets.

SOURCE: AFP

Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al Maktoum, chairman of Emirates Airline, with Boeing Chairman Jim McNerney, centre, and Boeing Commercial Airplanes Chief Executive Ray Conner at the Dubai Airshow. PHOTO: AFP/POOL/FILE

INCREASED SWARM MOVEMENT

FAO warns numerous immature desert locust swarms persist in parts of Ethiopia, Kenya

THE United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) on Friday warned numerous immature desert locust swarms persist in southern Ethiopia and Kenya. The FAO, in its latest situation update, said there has been increased swarm movement in Ethiopia's Oromia region across places including Harerge, Bale, Borema, Arsi; and the Southern region around South Omo. The few swarms that moved to northern Ethiopia (Afar and Amhara) continued to Eritrea and reached the Red Sea coast where they were controlled, the FAO said. In Kenya, immature swarms continue to spread westwards across northern and central counties where there are currently about 20 small swarms present, mostly about 50 hectares in size, it said. According to the FAO, some of the swarms are in community areas and therefore cannot be treated. A small swarm reached

Keiyo-Marakwet county in the west and another one was reported today in Turkana county in the northwest; hence, there is a risk that a few swarms could reach eastern Uganda and southeastern South Sudan.

The FAO, however, said that it appears that the peak of the Kenya invasion has now passed as there have been no new reports of incoming swarms in the past two days and no further swarm reports in the east.

It also noted that "intensive control operations" are underway in Kenya and southern Ethiopia to reduce the potential scale of the next generation of breeding. According to the FAO, if rains fall in the next week or so, the swarms will quickly mature and lay eggs that will hatch and cause hopper bands to form; otherwise, this will be delayed until the arrival of the seasonal rains in March.

SOURCE: Xinhua



In Kenya, immature swarms continue to spread westwards across northern and central counties where there are currently about 20 small swarms present, mostly about 50 hectares in size. PHOTO: AFP

THE ECONOMIC FALLOUT

Damage to int'l tourism in 2020 estimated at \$1.3 tril. amid pandemic



India's iconic monument Taj Mahal was shut down to halt the spread of the coronavirus. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

REVENUE loss in the international tourism sector in 2020 caused by a decrease in travellers crossing borders is estimated at \$1.3 trillion, on the back of strict travel bans imposed by countries amid the coronavirus pandemic, a U.N. body said. Last year's international arrivals fell by one billion, or 74 per cent, from 2019, ensuring that the overall estimated damage was over 11 times larger than in 2009 in the wake of the global financial crisis, according to a recent press release by the World Tourism Organization, a specialized agency of the United Nations.

Due to the economic fallout from the virus spread, 100 to 120 million people have been put at risk of losing their jobs in the tourism industry, the Madrid-based

body said, adding that many of them are from small and mid-sized business operators.

"Global tourism suffered its worst year on record in 2020," the agency, also known as UNWTO, said in the news release, citing an "unprecedented fall in demand and widespread travel restrictions" to prevent the virus from further spreading.

By region, Europe saw the largest drop in absolute numbers, with overseas arrivals down 500 million, or 70 per cent, from the previous year. Meanwhile, those in Asia and the Pacific nations tumbled by 300 million, marking the sharpest decrease at 84 per cent. On a percentage basis, the Middle East and Africa followed with a 75 per cent plunge each, with the North and South Amer-

icas experiencing a 69 per cent sink. As for 2021, a UNWTO panel of experts survey showed 45 per cent of respondents forecast the situation will become better; while 30 per cent predicted a deterioration, according to the press release. The remaining 25 per cent expected a similar performance to 2020.

The survey also showed that 43 per cent think the tourism industry will rebound to pre-pandemic levels in 2023, with 41 per cent saying it will happen in 2024 or later. UNWTO said that it expects the "gradual rollout of a COVID-19 vaccine" to bring about a recovery in consumer sentiment and eased travel restrictions, making travel relatively normal, albeit at a slow pace, during 2021. SOURCE: AFP

NATHALIE BECQUART

Pope appoints first woman to senior synod post

Pope Francis has broken with Catholic tradition to appoint a woman as an undersecretary of the synod of bishops, the first to hold the post with voting rights in a body that studies major questions of doctrine. French woman Nathalie Becquart is one of the two new undersecretaries named Saturday to the synod, where she has been a consultant since 2019.

The appointment signals the pontiff's desire "for a greater participation of women in the

process of discernment and decision-making in the church", said Cardinal Mario Grech, the secretary-general of the synod.

"During the previous synods, the number of women participating as experts and listeners has increased," he said.

"With the nomination of Sister Nathalie Becquart and her possibility of participating in voting, a door has opened."

The synod is led by bishops and cardinals who have voting rights and also comprises ex-

perts who cannot vote, with the next gathering scheduled for autumn 2022. A special synod on the Amazon in 2019 saw 35 female "auditors" invited to the assembly, but none could vote. The Argentinian-born pope has signalled his wish to reform the synod and have women and laypeople play a greater role in the church. He named Spaniard Luis Marin de San Martin as the other undersecretary in the synod of bishops.

SOURCE: AFP



French woman Nathalie Becquart is the first woman to hold the post with voting rights in the synod, a body that studies major questions of doctrine. PHOTO: AFP/FILE

PRIVACY DEFENDERS

Google moves away from diet of 'cookies' to track users



Google is weaning itself off user-tracking "cookies" which allow the web giant to deliver personalized ads but which also have raised the hackles of privacy defenders. PHOTO: AFP

Google is weaning itself off user-tracking "cookies" which allow the web giant to deliver personalized ads but which also

have raised the hackles of privacy defenders.

Last month, Google unveiled the results of tests showing an alternative to the longstanding tracking practice, claiming it could improve online privacy while still enabling advertisers to serve up relevant messages. "This approach effectively hides individuals 'in the crowd' and uses on-device processing to keep a person's web history private on the browser," Google product manager Chetna Bindra explained in unveiling the system called Federated Learning of Cohorts (FLoC).

"Results indicate that when

it comes to generating interest-based audiences, FLoC can provide an effective replacement signal for third-party cookies."

Google plans to begin testing the FLoC approach with advertisers later this year with its Chrome browser.

"Advertising is essential to keeping the web open for everyone, but the web ecosystem is at risk if privacy practices do not keep up with changing expectations," Bindra added.

Google has plenty of incentive for the change. The US internet giant has been hammered by critics over user privacy, and is keenly aware of trends for leg-

islation protecting people's data rights.

Growing fear of cookie-tracking has prompted support for internet rights legislation such as GDPR in Europe and has the internet giant devising a way to effectively target ads without knowing too much about any individual person.

'Privacy nightmare'

Some kinds of cookies - which are text files stored when a user visits a website - are a convenience for logins and browsing at frequently visited sites.

SOURCE: AFP

THE STATE OF PLAY WORLDWIDE

Pandemic slows across the world

THE COVID-19 pandemic slowed down for the third week in a row and new cases are now at their lowest level since the end of October, with new infections falling by half in South Africa, according to a specialized AFP database. Here is the state of play worldwide:

Fewer than half a million per day

The number of new daily cases dipped below the half-million mark for the first time since late October, standing at 493,000, according to an AFP tally to Thursday. New infections dropped by 13% over the week, after reaching a record 725,000 in mid-January. Nearly every area of the world saw a slackening off, with new cases decreasing in Africa by 27%, by 17% in the United States and Canada, by 12% in Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean

and by 2% in Asia.

The number of new cases picked up slightly, by 4%, in the Middle East, however, while there were only 14 cases per day (43% more) in Oceania.

The number of confirmed cases only reflects a fraction of the actual number of infections, as different countries have different counting practices and levels of testing.

Steepest falls

The biggest decrease was in South Africa, the continent's worst-hit country, where the number of new cases dropped by 49%, at 4,100 new cases per day, confirming a strong deceleration that started the previous week. The country, where a more contagious variant of the coronavirus has been detected, in late 2020 saw an upsurge in cases, which



A Lesotho health official takes the temperature of motorists as a preventive measure against the spread of coronavirus. PHOTO: MOLISE MOLISE/AFP

led it to impose a curfew in late December.

Lithuania has the next big drop at -37%, (700 cases per day), Mexico (-35%, 10,600), Japan (31% fewer, 3,000), Panama (-31%, 1,100) and Portugal (30% fewer or 9,100 cases).

Biggest spikes

Malaysia is the country where the epidemic is picking up most speed, with 30% more, or 4,800 new cases per day, among the countries which have registered more than 1,000 daily cases over the past week.— AFP

Senate to judge Trump over riot

One year after his first impeachment, former president Donald Trump finds himself the subject of an unprecedented second trial beginning Tuesday in the Senate, whose members must determine whether he incited a deadly assault on the US Capitol.

The 100 senators will also step into controversial, uncharted territory when they sit in judgment of a president who is no longer in office, a deeply damaged political figure who remains a potent force in his party even without the power of the White House. At the heart of the coming week's high-stakes proceedings is the January 6 melee, when several hundred pro-Trump rioters stormed Congress, fought police and sought to stop the ceremonial certification of Joe Biden's election victory.— AFP

DOUBLING EFFORTS

Governors urge gov't to quickly come up with vaccine rollout plans



The National Governors' Association holds an online meeting on Feb. 6, 2021. The association called on the Japanese government to come up with realistic vaccination plans for its citizens amid the coronavirus pandemic. PHOTO: KYODO

Japan's governors urged the central government on Saturday to present its coronavirus vaccine rollout plan soon as little

information has been provided so far on how many vaccines will be available and when they will be delivered.

While the National Governors' Association pledged to double its efforts to bring the pandemic under control, participating prefectural chiefs demanded the government provide information on its rollout preparations in a speedy fashion to support municipalities in making detailed vaccination plans. The association decided to form a group of liaison officials to improve communication with the health ministry about inoculations, which are expected to start with health care workers in mid-February. Many local governments are frustrated at the lack of information from the central government on vaccine delivery, struggling to make plans for staffing and vaccination sites,

a recent nationwide survey by Kyodo News found. "We can't secure vaccination sites or doctors without knowing exactly when and how long we need them," said an official of the Sapporo city government. One mayor in the Tokyo metropolitan area said, "It's like we are being rushed to make preparations with our hands tied." The Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare said in late January that vaccinations for those aged 65 and over would begin in late March, but Taro Kono, administrative reform minister overseeing the vaccination program, said a few days later they would not start before April. SOURCE: KYODO

A VACCINE INTENSION SURVEY

Survey finds 59 pct population in Brunei open to COVID-19 vaccination

A total of 59 per cent of Brunei people would definitely or likely take the COVID-19 vaccine when it becomes available in the country, a vaccine intension survey conducted by the sultanate's Ministry of Health revealed. Thirty-three per cent of respondents were unsure for the time being. Only 8 per cent said that they would definitely not or were unlikely to take the COVID-19 vaccine, local daily the Borneo Bulletin reported on Saturday, quoting the health ministry survey. The survey found that 81 per cent of the respondents believed that getting a COVID-19 vaccine

was either very important or moderately important for their health. In contrast, 15 per cent thought that COVID-19 vaccination was less important for their health. Additionally, 84 per cent of survey respondents thought they would trust the health ministry's recommendation to get a COVID-19 vaccine. According to the report, the survey aimed to assess the acceptability of a potential COVID-19 vaccine among the general adult population in Brunei and explore the public's ideas, concerns, and expectations regarding vaccination. SOURCE: Xinhua



People unload medical materials donated by China in Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei, on April 23, 2020. PHOTO: JEFFREY WONG/XINHUA/FILE

SINOVAC'S CORONAVAC JAB

China approves a second domestic COVID-19 vaccine



A staff member carries a box of COVID-19 vaccines at a packaging plant of Sinovac Research and Development Co., Ltd. in Beijing, capital of China, Jan. 6, 2021. PHOTO: XINHUA/ZHANG YUWEI

China's drug authorities have given "conditional" approval

for a second COVID-19 vaccine, Sinovac's CoronaVac jab, the pharmaceutical company said Saturday. The vaccine has already been rolled out to key groups at higher risk of exposure to coronavirus but Saturday's approval allows for its use on the general public. A conditional approval helps hustle emergency drugs to market in cases when clinical trials are yet to meet normal standards but indicate therapies will work. The approval comes after multiple domestic and overseas trials of the vaccine in

countries including Brazil and Turkey, although "efficacy and safety results need to be further confirmed", Sinovac said in a statement. Sinovac's approval comes weeks after fellow Chinese pharmaceutical company Sinopharm received a similar conditional green light to put its vaccine on the market. Sinovac said trials in Brazil had shown around 50 per cent efficacy in preventing infection and 80 per cent efficacy in preventing cases requiring medical intervention. SOURCE: AFP

NEWS IN BRIEF

Iran to start COVID-19 vaccination; Turkey's tally hits 2,524,786

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said on Sunday that COVID-19 vaccination will begin in Iran in the coming days. Meanwhile, the total number of positive cases in Turkey reached 2,524,786. Iran on Thursday received the first batch of Russia-made COVID-19 vaccine Sputnik V. Iran's Health Ministry reported 6,983 daily COVID-19 cases, raising the total nationwide infections to 1,459,370. The pandemic has so far claimed 58,412 lives in Iran, up by 76 in the past 24 hours, said Sima Sadat Lari, the spokeswoman for Iranian Ministry of Health and Medical Education, during her daily briefing. Of the newly infected, 498 were hospitalized, said Lari. A total of 1,247,374 people have recovered from the disease and been discharged from hospitals, while 3,802 remain in intensive care units, she added. SOURCE: Xinhua

Portugal mulls transfer of Covid-19 patients to Austria

Portugal is considering transferring patients to Austria for treatment because its hospitals are being overwhelmed by the coronavirus, the health ministry said Sunday. The country has already accepted help from Germany, which dispatched personnel to reinforce Portuguese medics who have been stretched to their limits by a surge in Covid-19 cases. Portugal's health ministry said it was now studying an offer from the government in Vienna to transfer Portuguese patients, including those suffering from Covid-19, to hospitals in Austria. "These are important gestures of European solidarity, and also symbolic of the battle against the pandemic," a ministry statement said. The Austrian offer, which would involve five patients being treated for Covid-19 and five others suffering from other afflictions, is being studied by intensive care specialists, the ministry said. SOURCE: AFP

A CHALLENGING YEAR

German industrial gas producer Linde increases sales by 3 pct in Q4

SALES of Linde, an American-Anglo-German multinational chemical company, increased by three per cent year-on-year to 7.3 billion U.S. dollars in the fourth quarter (Q4) of 2020, with full-year figures down slightly, the German industrial gas producer announced on Saturday. “The company responded exceptionally well in a challenging year dominated by the COVID-19 pandemic,” said Linde’s chief executive officer (CEO) Steve Angel. Full-year sales were down three per cent year-on-year, amounting to 27.2 billion dollars in total, according to the company. Still, operating profit grew by ten per cent and reached 3.3 billion dollars.

SOURCE: XINHUA



Storage tanks for gas by Linde group in Rotterdam, Netherlands. PHOTO: AFP

SLASHING COSTS

ANA plans to cut workforce 20% over 5 yrs to survive COVID-19 crisis



ANA Holdings Inc. plans to reduce its workforce in the aviation business by roughly 20 per cent over the next five years through natural attrition to cut costs and cope with the COVID-19 crisis that has depressed travel demand. PHOTO: KYODO

ANA Holdings Inc. plans to reduce its workforce in the aviation business by roughly 20 per cent over the next five years through natural attrition to cut costs and cope with the COVID-19 crisis that has depressed

travel demand, sources familiar with the matter said Sunday. The parent of All Nippon Airways Co. expects the number of employees in the business to fall to 30,000 by March 2026 from 38,000 estimated at

the end of March this year by reducing new hires and with retirement, the sources said. The plan is the latest effort by the major Japanese airline to meet a goal of slashing costs by 100 billion yen (\$950 million)

over the five-year period. ANA Holdings estimates a record net loss of 510 billion yen (\$4.8 billion) in the current business year ending in March, as it is struggling to deal with a slump in air travellers with no immediate end in sight to the coronavirus pandemic. The company has already begun cutting costs to ride out the crisis, cancelling both domestic and international flights and reducing its fleet, including B-777s that are used for long-distance flights. ANA normally hires around 3,000 new graduates every year. But the company is planning to hire about 700 for fiscal 2021 starting from April and about 200 for fiscal 2022. SOURCE: Kyodo

DYING BREED

Fears for future of Romania’s master violin makers

SURROUNDED by violins hung from the ceiling and lined up on shelves, Vasile Gliga looks proudly on the fruits of his labours.

From his factory in the central Romanian city of Reghin, Gliga has been one of the city’s world-famous instrument mak-

ers for more than 30 years.

His business is one of the city’s large-scale producers in a city that also hosts master crafts-

men turning out just a handful of instruments a year.

The secret to his success, he says, is simple: “Putting a little

of your soul into it.” Gliga turned out his first two violins in a box room in his flat in 1988 when was 29.

SOURCE: AFP

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V GSS YANGON VOY. NO. (1132S/N)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V GSS YANGON VOY. NO. (1132S/N)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **8-2-2021** 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 NEW GOLDEN SEA SHIPPING PTE LTD

Notice for Change of registration distributors

Notice is hereby given that the official registration distributor has been changed for the following pesticides distributed by Wi Sar Ra International Co., Ltd. to Evogro Co., Ltd.

No	Trade Name	Active Ingredient	Registration Type	Registration Number	Registration distributors	
					Old	New
1	Evo Doctor 75SC	Chlorothalonil 37.5% + Propamocarb Hydrochloride 37.5%	Provisional	P2017-2678	Wi Sar Ra International Co., Ltd.	Evogro Co., Ltd.

Wi Sar Ra International Co., Ltd. invites objections to Co-secretary. Pesticide Registration Board, Plant Protection Division, West Gyogone, Insein Township, Yangon from all parties within a period of fourteen (14) days form the publication of this notice. If no objections are received within the period prescribed, parties mentioned above shall proceed with the completion of formalities recorded with the Pesticide Registration Board.

Address- Wi Sar Ra International Co., Ltd
No. (33), Shwe Padauk Yeik Mon, Bayint Naung Road, Kamayut Township, Yangon Region.

circulation
order is in
easier way.

Hot Line :
09974424848

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Hot Line :
018604530

MYANMA PORT AUTHORITY
HOLIDAY NOTICE

As the wharves, warehouses and chellan Offices of Yangon Port will be closed on the 12th FEBRUARY 2021 (Union DAY), Loading, Unloading and delivery for Goods will be received on Payment as Holiday Fees.

Trade Mark Ads
Call Thin Thin May, 09251022355, 09974424848

Notice for Change of Pesticides Trade Name

The foreign manufacturer AgriGate CropSciences Pte., Ltd will import and distribute the following insecticides registered in Myanmar Pesticide Registration Board Changing trading name.

No.	Old Trade Name	New Trade Name	A.I	Reg: Type	Reg: No.
1	Popular 37.5EC	Yatkha 37.5EC	Lambda-Cyhalothrin 1.5% + Profenofos 36% EC	Full	F2017-1520

It is therefore announced to come and reject within 14 days to joint Secretary, Myanmar Pesticide Registration Board, Plant Protection Division, West Gyogone, Insein in wishing to make any objection in respect of the said changing trading name of insecticide.

Address- Myanma Awba Group Co., Ltd
No.(95-A), Kyaik Wine Pagoda Road, 8th mile, Mayangone Township, Yangon Region, The Republic of Union of Myanmar.

COVID DEBT

ECB’s Lagarde says cancelling Covid debts ‘unthinkable’



The ECB has taken unprecedented steps to cushion the economic blow from the pandemic in the 19-nation euro area, launching a massive bond-buying scheme that has so far totalled 1.85 trillion euros (\$2.2 trillion). **PHOTO: AFP**

EUROPEAN Central Bank (ECB) chief Christine Lagarde on Sunday rejected calls to cancel debts run up by eurozone members to buttress their economies during the Covid-19 crisis.

The ECB has taken unprecedented steps to cushion the economic blow from the pandemic in the 19-nation euro area, launching a massive bond-buying scheme that has so far totalled 1.85 trillion euros (\$2.2 trillion).

“Cancelling that debt is unthinkable,” Lagarde told France’s *Le Journal du Diman-*

che weekly.

“It would be a violation of the European treaty which strictly forbids monetary financing of states,” she said, calling it one of the “founding pillars” of the euro single currency.

She was reacting to a call Friday by more than 100 economists for the ECB to further boost the economic recovery of eurozone members by forgiving their debts.

In the letter published in several leading European newspapers, the economists noted

that a quarter of the public debt of nations that use the euro – 2.5 trillion euros (\$3.0 trillion) – was now held by the ECB.

“In other words, we owe ourselves 25 per cent of our debt and, if we are to reimburse that amount, we must find it elsewhere, either by borrowing it again to ‘roll the debt’ instead of borrowing to invest, or by raising taxes, or by cutting expenses,” they wrote.

The economists proposed instead that the ECB forgive the debts in exchange for the countries pledging to spend an equivalent amount on greening their economies and on social projects.

Lagarde, a former French finance minister, admitted that “all eurozone countries will emerge from this crisis with high levels of debt”.

But, she said, “there is no doubt that they will be able to pay it back.”

She forecast that 2021 would be a year of “recovery” but acknowledged that the eurozone would not return to pre-pandemic levels of activity “before mid-2022”.

SOURCE: AFP

MULTIPLE TAILWINDS

Oil prices rise as market optimism continues

OIL prices advanced on Sunday, underpinned by multiple tailwinds. The West Texas Intermediate for March delivery added 62 cents to settle at 56.85 U.S. dollars a barrel on the New York Mercantile Exchange. Brent crude for April delivery increased 50 cents to close at 59.34 dollars a barrel on the London ICE Futures Exchange. “Besides ‘soft’ factors such as increased demand from investors in view of the pronounced price buoyancy, rising stock markets and economic optimism, the physical market is

also looking increasingly tight,” Eugen Weinberg, energy analyst at Commerzbank Research, said in a note on Friday. The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and its allies, widely known as OPEC+, agreed in January to keep most oil production curbs in place from February to the end of March. Saudi Arabia, the world’s biggest oil exporter, pledged a voluntary oil production cut of 1 million barrels per day beyond the required OPEC+ quotas in these two months. *SOURCE: XINHUA*



Oil prices advanced on Sunday, underpinned by multiple tailwinds. The West Texas Intermediate for March delivery added 62 cents to settle at 56.85 U.S. dollars a barrel on the New York Mercantile Exchange. **PHOTO: AFP**

A MAJOR REFORM

Cuba authorizes private activity in majority of sectors

CUBA announced Saturday that private activity will be authorized in most sectors, a major reform in the communist country where the state and its companies dominate economic activity.

The measure, which was unveiled last August by Labour Minister Marta Elena Feito, was approved Friday during a meeting of the Council of Ministers, according to the daily *Granma*, the official newspaper of the ruling Communist Party.

Until now, private activity — which has been authorized in Cuba since 2010 but whose real boom dates back to the historic warming of ties between Cuba and the United States, initiated at the end of 2014 under Barack Obama — was limited to a list of sectors set by the state.

“The previous list of 127 (authorized) activities has been eliminated,” the labour minister said.

From now on, a list will determine the sectors reserved for the state, which will be a minority: “Of the more than 2,000 activities in which private work is allowed... only 124 will be limited, partially or totally,” Feito said, without giving further details, though they are expected to include industries considered strategic to the state, include media, health and defence.

“That private work continues to develop, is the objective of this reform,” she said, stressing that this “will help free the productive forces” of the private sector.

Currently, more than 600,000 Cubans work in the private sector, or 13 per cent of the workforce on the island of 11.2 million.

SOURCE: AFP



Cuba announced Saturday that private activity will be authorized in most sectors, a major reform in the communist country where the state and its companies dominate economic activity. **PHOTO: AFP**

S&P U.S. LISTED CHINA 50 INDEX

U.S.-listed Chinese firms trade mostly higher

U.S.-listed Chinese companies traded mostly higher on Sunday to 30,723.60. The S&P 500 rose with six of the top 10 stocks by weight in the S&P U.S. Listed China 50 index ending the day on an upbeat note.

Shares of Pinduoduo and NIO surged 6.1 per cent and 3.96 per cent, respectively, leading the gainers in the top 10 stocks in the index. Shares of TAL Education Group and Yum China Holdings slipped 3.18 per cent and 2.09 per cent, respectively, leading the laggards in the top 10 stocks. U.S. stocks finished mixed on Wednesday as investors sifted through some earnings reports from big tech names. The Dow Jones Industrial Average increased 36.12 points, or 0.12 per cent, to 30,723.60. The S&P 500 rose 3.86 points, or 0.10 per cent, to 3,830.17. The Nasdaq Composite Index decreased 2.23 points, or 0.02 per cent, to 13,610.54.

The Cboe Volatility Index, widely considered as the best fear gauge in the stock market, slumped 10.37 per cent to 22.91.

As of Tuesday, the S&P U.S. Listed China 50 index, which is designed to track the performance of the 50 largest Chinese companies listed on U.S. exchanges by total market cap, stood at 5,895.80, marking a 5.01-per cent gain for the month-to-date returns and a 12.85-per cent rise for the year-to-date returns. *SOURCE:*

SCORES FEARED DEAD

Himalayan glacier bursts in India, dozens feared dead

DOZENS of people are feared dead in India after a Himalayan glacier broke apart and crashed into a hydroelectric dam with people hurriedly being evacuated amid rising water levels on a nearby river. Footage from TV channels and news agency ANI showed water gushing towards the dam in the state of Uttarakhand on Sunday, washing away parts of it and whatever else was in its path. Om Prakash, chief secretary of Uttarakhand state, said as many as 150 people were feared dead but “the actual number has not been confirmed yet”.

Uttarakhand’s police chief, Ashok Kumar, told reporters more than 50 people working at the dam, the Rishiganga Hydroelectric Project, were feared dead

though some others had been rescued. Kumar also said authorities had evacuated other dams to contain the water rushing in from the flooded Alakananda river.

A witness said he saw a wall of dust, rocks and water as an avalanche roared down a river valley.

“It came very fast, there was no time to alert anyone,” Sanjay Singh Rana, who lives on the upper reaches of Raini village, told the Reuters news agency by phone. “I felt that even we would be swept away.” Local authorities reported that districts including Pauri, Tehri, Rudraprayag, Haridwar and Dehradun were put on high alert. The Times of India newspaper quoted Prime Minister Narendra Modi as saying he



A rescue operation to clear Tapovan tunnel from debris following floods. PHOTO: INDO TIBETAN BORDER POLICE HANDOUT/AFP

was monitoring the situation in Uttarakhand. “India stands with Uttarakhand and the nation prays

for everyone’s safety there. Have been continuously speaking to senior authorities and getting

updates on ... rescue work and relief operations,” said Modi. SOURCE: AFP

“IN DIFFICULTY” IN THE CHANNEL

French boats rescue 36 migrants in English channel

FRENCH patrol boat rescued 36 migrants aboard two boats “in difficulty” in the channel, seeking to cross to Britain, maritime authorities said on Saturday. The first group of 13 migrants were rescued by a patrol boat after being spotted off the in the Pas-de-Calais region of northern France.

Later a ferry spotted a boat in trouble in the channel. The same patrol boat picked up the 23 people on board and brought all 36 migrants back to Calais before handing them over to border police. Conditions are currently relatively good for such clandestine departures with the waters unusually calm for winter. Last year, officials recorded a fourfold increase over 2019 in the number of channel crossings or attempted crossings from France, involving 9,551 people. Attempts by migrants to make the journey by sea have soared in recent years, despite the risks of hypothermia and accidents in the choppy waters of the busy shipping



French patrol boat rescued 36 migrants aboard two boats “in difficulty” in the channel, seeking to cross to Britain, maritime authorities said on Saturday. PHOTO: AFP

lane. A number of migrants also continue to try to stow away on trucks heading across the channel by ferry or by train through the channel Tunnel. Calais continues to attract migrants from the Middle East and Africa who set up makeshift camps along France’s northern coast from where they hope to eventually slip across to England unnoticed. France and Britain signed a new accord in November aimed at

shutting down the route through increased patrols and the use of radar and drones to spot boats more quickly.

Spanish police arrest gang accused of trafficking migrants. Eight members of a gang suspected of trafficking migrants from Spain’s North African enclave of Melilla to the Spanish mainland have been arrested, police said on Saturday.

SOURCE: AFP

SIX-YEAR WAR

US moves to end terror designation of Yemen Huthis

THE United States has moved to delist Yemen’s Huthi rebels as a terrorist organization, removing a block that humanitarian groups said jeopardized crucial aid as the country’s warring sides cautiously welcomed a push for peace by President Joe Biden.

The grinding six-year war in Yemen has killed tens of thousands and displaced millions, triggering what the United Nations calls the world’s worst humanitarian disaster.

A State Department spokesperson said Friday they had “formally notified Congress” of Secretary of State Antony Blinken’s intent to revoke the terrorist designations. The move, which will take effect shortly, comes a day after Biden announced an end to US support for Saudi-led offensive operations in Yemen.

SOURCE: AFP



The grinding six-year war in Yemen has killed tens of thousands and displaced millions, triggering what the United Nations calls the world’s worst humanitarian disaster. PHOTO: AFP

THE BANNED SUBSTANCE

9.1 tonnes of cannabis seized in SW Morocco

MOROCCAN police said in a statement on Saturday that they have seized 9 tonnes and 177 kg of cannabis near the southwestern city of Guelmim.

The banned substance was concealed in 337 packages, and was buried

in the sand, along a desertic area with a view to transporting it by international drug rings, the statement said.

This operation is part of efforts made by Moroccan security services to fight against cross-border crimes, including

international drug trafficking, the statement added. Despite efforts to crack down on cannabis cultivation during the past decade, Morocco remains one of the world’s largest producers of the narcotic plant, according to the UN Office on

Drugs and Crime.

Moroccan security services seized a total of 217 tonnes of cannabis in 2020, an increase of 37 tonnes compared to 2019, according to official statistics.

SOURCE: XINHUA

Striker Win Naing Soe (No 29) blocks the ball against the opponent during a Myanmar National League match against Yangon United on 1 September 2020. **PHOTO: YDNB**

Myanmar National League set to launch in April 2021

A new season of the Myanmar National League I is scheduled to start in April 2021, according to a virtual meeting held recently.

Officials from the Myanmar Football Federation, Myanmar National League Committee and football club owners decided the football league to be launched in this year April.

According to the officials' decision, MNL will run until October 2021.

The first leg of the MNL 1 will all be held in Yangon while the second leg will be held on a home-and-away basis depending on the current

situation with the COVID-19 pandemic.

The MNL 2 will be held between May to August 2021, the Bogyoke Aung San Shield from June to September 2021, the Women's League from April to July and the Under-21 Championship from May to November.

A total of ten football clubs: defending champions Shan United, Hantharwady United, Ayeyawady United, Yangon United, Yadanarbon FC, Rakhine United, Sagaing United, ISPE FC, Chin Land FC, and Myawady FC will participate in the Myanmar National League I, according to the MNL.—Lynn Thit ■

'Suffering' Nadal's Aussie Open in doubt with back injury

MELBOURNE—Rafael Nadal admitted Sunday he had been "suffering" for 15 days with a sore back and could not guarantee he'll play the Australian Open, with the injury threatening to derail his bid for a record 21st Grand Slam. The world number two sat out Spain's ATP Cup campaign in warm-up week, and

he hasn't played a competitive match since the ATP Finals in London in November. His only appearance since was an exhibition game against Dominic Thiem in Adelaide nine days ago, where he first experienced stiffness in his back. "Not great obviously," he said of the back injury on the eve of the first Grand Slam of the

year. "It's true that for the last 15 days I have been suffering. "In the beginning, the muscle was just a little bit tired but I feel (now) a little bit more stiff than usual." The 34-year-old has been hitting the practice courts at Melbourne Park in a desperate bid to be fit and firing for the Australian Open, which starts Monday. —AFP ■

Olympic organizers reach out to volunteers amid sexist remark turmoil



Yoshiro Mori, president of the Tokyo Olympic organizing committee, meets the press in Tokyo on Feb. 4, 2021. The former Japanese prime minister apologized for remarks he made that have been widely criticized as sexist and outdated but has refused to resign. **(KYODO)**

TOKYO—Tokyo Olympic organizers began emailing volunteers on Saturday to apologize and seek their continued cooperation in the wake of sexist remarks by the organizing committee president, former Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori. The emails, expressing the committee's "deepest apologies," emphasized the Olympics' vision of "diversity and harmony" after Mori complained on Wednesday that adding more female Japanese Olympic Committee directors would slow board meetings because women talk too long. The committee sought to attract a total of 80,000 volunteers for support tasks related to athletes and competitions. The message begins by stating "President Mori made inappropriate remarks that go against the spirit of the Olympics and Paralympics".

"We want to operate an event that aspires to realize a society where all our many differences are affirmed and accepted as natural," the email reads. Volunteers have not been immune to the turmoil caused by the 83-year-old Mori's comments. Some of the 30,000 additional Tokyo government-registered "City Cast" volunteers have submitted their resignations.—KYODO ■

Everton strike late to deny Man Utd in six-goal thriller

LONDON—MANCHESTER United missed the chance to move level on points with Manchester City at the top of the Premier League after Dominic Calvert-Lewin's 95th-minute equalizer salvaged a 3-3 draw for Everton at Old Trafford.

Edinson Cavani and Bruno Fernandes put the Red Devils into a commanding 2-0 lead at half-time, but the visitors hit back with two goals in seven minutes from Abdoulaye Doucoure and James Rodriguez. Scott McTominay's header 20 minutes from time restored United's lead, but they again failed to hold on as Calvert-Lewin reacted quickest to a free-kick launched into the box deep into stoppage time.

City now enjoy a two-point lead and two games in hand over

their local rivals ahead of their trip to defending champions Liverpool on Sunday. Everton's late show extends their unbeaten run

on the road to seven games and moves Carlo Ancelotti's men back up to sixth, three points off the top four.—AFP ■



Manchester United's English striker Mason Greenwood (L) is challenged by Everton's Norwegian striker Josh King during the English Premier League football match between Manchester United and Everton at Old Trafford in Manchester, north west England, on February 6, 2021. **PHOTO: AFP**

Takumi Minamino on target in Southampton debut

NEW CASTLE —Takumi Minamino scored a dazzling goal in his debut for Southampton on Saturday, finding the net in the first half of a 3-2 loss to Newcastle United in the English Premier League.

Newcastle held on for the win despite playing the last 18 minutes with nine men at a rain-soaked St. James' Park, hand-

ing Southampton a fifth straight league defeat. Minamino, who arrived on loan from Liverpool earlier in the week, struck in the 30th minute after his side had gone behind 2-0 on goals from Joe Willock and Miguel Almiron. After collecting a ball from left-back Ryan Bertrand, the Japan winger skipped past a defender at the edge

of the box and blasted a tightly angled shot past Newcastle keeper Karl Darlow into the roof of the net. Almiron netted again in first-half injury time to send the hosts into the break with a commanding 3-1 lead, but James Ward-Prowse cut the deficit with a spectacular free-kick in the 48th minute. The match looked to have swung in

Southampton's favour just a minute later, when Newcastle were reduced to 10 men after midfielder Jeff Hendrick received his second yellow card for a foul on Minamino.

But Newcastle hunkered down in defence and continued to hold firm after the loss of center-back Fabian Schar to a leg injury with no substitutes left.—KYODO ■