

NATIONAL

MoHT holds meeting with MTF, its 11 member associations

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LOCAL BUSINESS

Sale of green gram in Thanlyin brings more profit than last year

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State Administration Council's Announcement

Some unscrupulous persons are putting various forms of pressures and posing threats to civil service personnel in performing their duties at present. The civil service personnel who have encountered such pressures and threats shall contact the following phone numbers. Strong legal actions will also be taken against those who make such pressures and threats.

Contact phone numbers	-067 412168	-067 412246	-067 412388	-067 412598	-067 412539
	-067 412222	-067 412387	-067 412444	-067 412066	-067 412541

MoEE holds coordination meeting

THE MINISTRY of Electricity and Energy held a coordination meeting over the ongoing works at its headquarters in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday morning.

Union Minister U Aung Than Oo, Permanent Secretary U Than Zaw, directors-general and managing directors from the departments and enterprises under the ministry met the presidents and chief executive officers from the corporations via video conferencing.

At the meeting, the Union Minister talked about his staff members, duties in providing public services of the ministry, working closely for the public in unity, making concerted efforts in their duties.

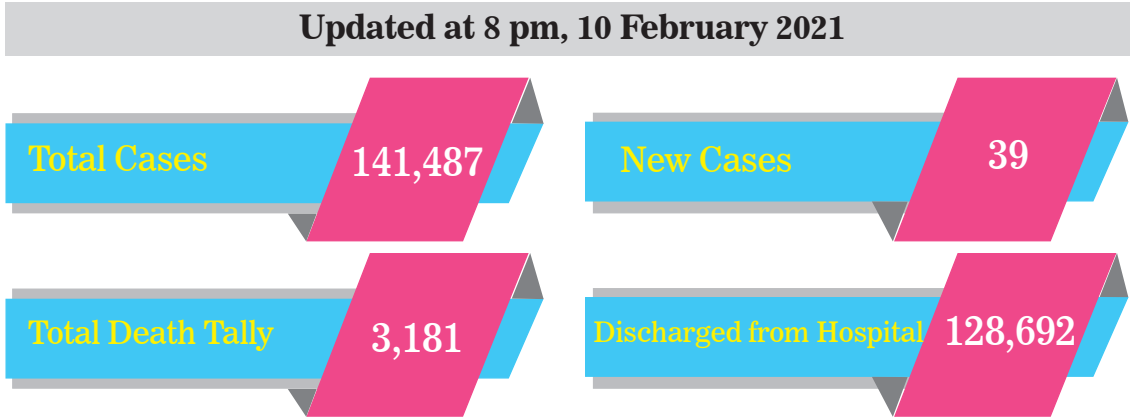
The Union Minister also coordinated the discussions of officials before concluding the meeting.—MNA



Union Minister U Aung Than Oo chairs the coordination meeting over the ongoing works of the Ministry of Electricity and Energy in Nay Pyi Taw on 10 February 2021. PHOTO: MNA

39 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 10 February, total figure rises to 141,487

MYANMAR'S COVID-19 positive cases rose to 141,487 after 39 new cases were reported on 10 February 2021 according to the Ministry of Health and Sports. Among these 141,487 confirmed cases, 3,181 died, 128,692 have been discharged from hospitals.—MNA



Republic of the Union of Myanmar
State Administration Council

State Administration Council Law No (1/2021)
Law Amending Yangon City Development Law

14th Waning of Pyatho 1382 ME
10 February 2021

1. The State Administration Council has issued this law in accordance with Section 419 under the State Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

2. This law shall be called the Law Amending Yangon City Development Law.

3. The Law shall take effect until the formation of Union Government and Region/State governments resulted from the elections organized by the State Administration Council after carrying out its tasks in accordance with the provisions during the period with the State of Emergency.

4. Under the prevalence of this amending law, Chapter 3 and 4 of Yangon City Development Law are deemed to be ineffective.

The law is signed as per Section 419 of State Constitution.

Sd/
Min Aung Hlaing
Senior General
Chairman of State Administration Council

Republic of the Union of Myanmar
State Administration Council

State Administration Council Law No (2/2021)
Law Amending Mandalay City Development Law

14th Waning of Pyatho 1382 ME
10 February 2021

1. The State Administration Council has issued this law in accordance with Section 419 under the State Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

2. This law shall be called the Law Amending Mandalay City Development Law.

3. The Law shall take effect until the formation of Union Government and Region/State governments resulted from the elections organized by the State Administration Council after carrying out its tasks in accordance with the provisions during the period with the State of Emergency.

4. Under the prevalence of this amending law, Chapter 3,4,5 and 6 of Mandalay City Development Law are deemed to be ineffective.

The law is signed as per Section 419 of State Constitution.

Sd/
Min Aung Hlaing
Senior General
Chairman of State Administration Council

Republic of the Union of Myanmar
State Administration Council

Order No 46/2021

14th Waning of Pyatho 1382 ME
10 February 2021

Appointment of Central Bank of Myanmar members

In accordance with Section 419 of the State Constitution, the following personnel are appointed as the members of Central Bank of Myanmar:

1. Dr Khin Naing Oo

2. U Aung Kyaw Than

By order

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

Republic of the Union of Myanmar
State Administration Council

Order No 47/2021

14th Waning of Pyatho 1382 ME
10 February 2021

Formation of Yangon City Development Committee

State Administration Council has formed the Yangon City Development Committee as follows:

1. Chairman, Mayor

2. Vice-Chairman, Deputy Mayor

3. 4 members

4. Secretary

By order

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

Republic of the Union of Myanmar
State Administration Council

Order No 48/2021

14th Waning of Pyatho 1382 ME
10 February 2021

Formation of Mandalay City Development Committee

State Administration Council has formed Mandalay City Development Committee as follows:

1. Chairman, Mayor

2. Vice-Chairman, Deputy Mayor

3. 2 members

4. Secretary

By order

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

Announcement

The Yangon Airport Molecular Lab located on Pyay Road in Mingaladon Township provides COVID-19 tests for the people who travel from Yangon International Airport to other parts of the country or foreign countries in accordance with the SOP (Standard Operating Procedure) of the Ministry of Health and Sports.

Yangon Region Administration Council

Union Day Flag-hoisting Ceremony to be broadcast live on MRTV

Flag-hoisting Ceremony of 74th Union Day 2021 will be held at the open field in front of the Nay Pyi Taw City Hall at 7 am on 12 February.

The ceremony will be broadcast live starting 6:40 am on MRTV, MWD, MRTV Radio, Ministry of Information Faceook Page, MRTV Facebook Page and Myanmar Digital News Facebook Page.—MNA

To foster the multiparty democracy expected by the people

Free and fair elections are fundamental to strengthen the democratic system. In my 2020 New Year Message to the country, I said that ‘the Year 2020 is an important year for the country. It is important to strengthen the multiparty democracy system this year with the holding of the general elections. For ensuring free and fair elections and for prioritizing the national interest sincerely in the politics, I said during the 3rd anniversary of Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement on 15 October 2018 that ‘Nothing is as important as the ethnic affairs and the national interests, and only the politics with sincerity and fairness’.

During the 4th meeting of Union Peace Conference-21st Century Panglong, held on 20 August 2020, I also said that the concept ‘no one is above the law’ in establishing the democratic system as a fundamental rule in laying the democratic foundation, and ‘no one or no organization is above the national interest in state-building and nation-building’. These concepts of the Tatmadaw are aimed to foster the multiparty democracy expected by the people.

(Excerpt from the speech to the public made by the Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Administration Council Chairman Senior General Min Aung Hlaing on 8 February 2021)

MoHT holds meeting with MTF, its 11 member associations

THE Ministry of Hotels and Tourism held a meeting with the Myanmar Tourism Federation and its 11 associated member organizations through video conferencing in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday morning.

Union Minister U Maung-Maung Ohn, the directors-general, officials from the ministry, chairpersons and secretaries of the MTF and its 11 associated member organizations attended the online meeting.

During the meeting, the Union Minister said the work would be accelerated for the benefit of the country, people and entrepreneurs in accordance with the policies and procedures set by the ministry and he urged to present the activities related to the development of the hotels and tourism sector.

He continued the State Government also pays special attention to the ministry and expressed words of thanks for the tourism promotion shows,

Yangon river cruise, participation in digital marketing tenders for tourism promotions.

He added the mutual trust and respect are the keys in co-operating with each other and he called on the Myanmar Tourism Federation and its 11 associated member organizations to explain the misunderstanding and cooperate in tourism promotion activities.

The chairmen and the secretaries attended the online meeting discussed plans for short-term tourism development, the support and interest-free loans by the State to the low-income organizations and staff, the reopening of restaurants in accordance with the rules and regulations issued by the Ministry of Health and Sports, the funding requirements of the federation, holding jewellery exhibition, the negotiation with the bank for loan application and tax payment and work implementation by



Union Minister U Maung Maung Ohn presides over the online meeting with the Myanmar Tourism Federation and its 11 associated organizations in Nay Pyi Taw on 10 February 2021. **PHOTO: MNA**

sectors.

The Union Minister expressed words of thanks for the discussion of the Myanmar Tourism Federation and its 11 associated member organizations and said to organize the programmes for the short-term tourism development, and he said he would coordinate with the relevant ministries for the presentation.— MNA / GNLM



Relevant regional commanders are seen comforting the injured police member in PyinOoLwin on 9 February. **PHOTO: MNA**

Police injured in Mandalay protest

THE PROTESTS that seem to harm the stability of the State, security of people, the rule of law, community peace and tranquillity currently occur in some large cities of the nation. Therefore, Section 144 of Criminal Procedure and a ban on gatherings of 5 or more people have been imposed, and Myanmar Police Force conduct security measures the whole day.

During the angry protest in Mahaaungmye of Manda-

lay Region on 9 February, the police were injured and security vehicles damaged. Those injured were being treated at military hospitals in Mandalay and PyinOoLwin. The relevant regional commanders comforted and provided food aids to the injured police yesterday.

One of the police who is currently under the medical treatment of ICU of Pyin Oo Lwin military hospital is unlikely to survive a wound to the head.

The military medics make best efforts not to lose a loyal civil service person.

The people need to be cautious as the angry protests occur across the nation, and some of the demonstrators peacefully staged a strike while some intentionally conducted protests to explode into unrest, according to the Office of the Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services statement.— MNA/GNLM

Pilgrims visit famous pagodas



The Uppatasanti Pagoda in Nay Pyi Taw. PHOTO: MNA

FAMOUS pagodas across the nation have reopened to public starting 8 February under the COVID-19 rules. Pilgrims and visitors including monks and nuns visit the Shwedagon and Botahtaung pagodas of Yangon Region, Maha Muni Pagoda of Mandalay Region and Uppatasanti Pagoda of Nay Pyi Taw Council Area and other pagodas of regions and states accordance with the COVID-19 rules. — MNA/GNLM

Six non-military doctors join medical services at military hospitals

MILITARY hospitals in the townships of regions and states provide medical treatments to the people to solve their difficulties in healthcare services, and six non-military doctors joined the medical services yesterday. A total of 3,443 outpatients and 1,562 inpatients reached these hospitals from 5 February to date. Senior medical experts, medics and nurses conducted 134 major operations and 63 minor operations, and the senior doctors treat serious cases. These hospitals managed for the birth of 226 babies, while 226 pregnant women were taken to the respective military hospitals. Officials from the respective commands also provided the patients with foods, according to the Office of Commander's report in Chief of Defence Services.— MNA/GNLM

Trade Mark Ads

Call Thin Thin May, 09251022355, 09974424848

Pansodan-Dala ferries run from 5:30 am to 7 pm

PANSODAN-DALA ferries are running from 5:30 am to 7 pm beginning from 9 February because of the dropping number of commuters and declaration of a curfew from 8 pm until 4 am, according to the Delta Division of Inland Water Transport (IWT). Three "Cherry" ferries provide their transport services with 46 routes between Pansodan and Dala jetties for the residents' convenience from Dala, Twantay, Kawhmu, Kungyangon townships and some townships. The Pansodan-Dala jetty is the only gateway for the local people in southern Yangon to link themselves with the commercial hub of Yangon City. "Today, we started our new schedules of water ferries from 5:30 am to 6:40 pm. We will start to ride from Pansodan from 6 pm to 7 pm. Earlier, we operated the water ferries for 38 runs. Now, we will run only 35 routes because the government declared the curfew. That is the reason why we have reduced the water ferry routes. However, we are running the ferries with a new schedule for the safety and convenience of passengers," said U Hla Win Naing, assistant general manager with the Delta Division of Inland Water Transport (IWT). The number of commuters aboard the Pansodan-Dala water ferries is sharply dropping. There were about 12,362 passengers on 1 February, 9,190 passengers on 2 February, 8,578 passengers on 3 February, 9,026 passengers on 4 February, 9,117 passengers on 5 February, 5,253 passengers on 6 February, 5,517 passengers on 7 February and 8,902 passengers on 8 February, according to the Yangon Pansodan-Dala ferry ticket station.



Pansodan-Dala ferry "Cherry" is seen in the Yangon River. PHOTO: NAING LIN KYAW (DALA)

At present, the ferries are running from 5:30 am to 7 pm with 35 runs on weekdays and from 6 am to 7 pm with 22 runs on weekends. —Naing Lin Kyaw (Dala)/GNLM

Request to health workers

- 1. It is appreciated for the strenuous efforts of the medical doctors, nurses, medical experts and other health works at the respective departments under the Ministry of Health and Sports at the front-line in the fight against prevention, containment and treatment of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19).
- 2. As the vaccination programme of COVID-19 is being conducted for the public and the real-time healthcare services are required for the people, all the staff members at the respective departments under the Ministry of Health and Sports are strongly urged to return to their duties with taking the well-being of patients into consideration.

Ministry of Health and Sports
8 February 2021

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

Police injured in Nay Pyi Taw protest

The protests that seem to harm the stability of the State, security of people, the rule of law, community peace and tranquillity currently occur in some large cities of the nation. Therefore, Section 144 of Criminal Procedure and a ban on gatherings of 5 or more people have been imposed.

About 150 protestors conducted chanting, protesting and riots starting 9 February morning near Thabyay Kone roundabout in Zabuthiri Township of Nay Pyi Taw Council.

Although Myanmar Police Force members request the protestors to disperse, the protest crowds have grown bigger up to more than 1,000.

The district and township administrators also warned the protestors regarding Section 144 of Criminal Procedure and requested to disperse.

The situation became intense more and the police inevitably fired shots to disperse at noon.

The shot left six people injured.

A total of six police and six protestors were injured and police materials damaged, according to the Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services statement.—MNA



Pieces of brick and stone used by the protestors during the riots and police materials are seen. **PHOTO: OFFICE OF THE C-IN-C OF DEFENCE SERVICES**

Sale of green gram in Thanlyin brings more profit than last year

THE GREEN GRAMS harvested in the first week of February are being sold in the market, bringing more profit this year than last year.

The local farmers are growing monsoon paddy, summer paddy, edible oil crops and green gram as an agricultural sector in Thanlyin township, Yangon southern district. And, the residents from Thanlyin cultivated about 42,904 acres of green gram.

The winter crop green grams are being grown in Win Kani village, Pharku east village, Pharku west village, Day Zet village, Thabyay Gone village, La Har Yat village, Kadat Phar village, Bagan Htaung village, Minga Loon village, Yone Thabyay Kan village, Bawt Thabyay Kan village, Kayin Seik village,

Thahtay Gwin village, Kalar Wae village, Nyaung Lay Bin village, Napa village, Phayargone village, Latyatsan village, Saylonegyi village, Chaung Soat village, Bayat village, Thanatpin village and Sitpingwin village in Thanlyin township.

The green grams are also grown on about 323 acres of land in Bagan Htaung village and about 109 acres in Bawt Thabyay Kan village under Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) system.

The green grams are started to harvest in the first week of February. An acre of green gram yields nearly 16 baskets. The harvested beans are priced K 46,000 for 20 visses. The green grams are selling well this year than last year, according to the local bean growers.—*Thet Khaing (Thanlyin)/GNLM*



The green grams are also grown on about 323 acres of land in Bagan Htaung village and about 109 acres in Bawt Thabyay Kan village under Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) system. **PHOTO: THET KHAING (THANLYIN)**

Black bean price rises by over K50,000 per tonne on USD appreciation

THE PRICE of black beans in the domestic market has risen by over K50,000 per tonne because of the appreciation of the US dollar exchange rate, according to the Yangon Region Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Bayintnaung commodity depot).

Although the dollar exchange rate stood around K1,330 per dollar in the local currency market at the end of January, the rate jumped to K1,400 per dollar on 4 February.

Therefore, the black bean's price has amounted to K975,000 per tonne on 10 February, increasing from just K923,000 per tonne on 3 February, increasing over K50,000 per tonne. Similarly, the price of the pigeon pea is also about K810,000 per tonne.

The new harvested black

bean is currently entering the domestic market. The traders demand it from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

The first October of 2020 saw the Ministry of Commerce and Industry of India issue a notification to purchase 150,000 tonnes of black beans. The import deadline is March 2021. The licence will be equally granted for India's companies.

At present, Myanmar has already exported nearly 100,000 tonnes of black beans. The remaining 50,000 tonnes of beans will continuously be exported, according to Myanmar Pulses, Beans and Sesame Seeds Merchants Association (MPBSSMA).

The newly harvested black bean started to enter the market. The black bean plantations yielded around 400,000 tonnes annually, and the bean is main-

ly exported to India.

Similarly, about 50,000 to tonnes of pigeon peas are produced yearly and exported. Myanmar has also produced about 50,000 tonnes of pigeon peas annually and exported them chiefly to India.

Since 2017, India has been setting import quota on beans, including black beans and pigeon peas. Myanmar has to export black beans and pigeon peas under a quota system and limit period. Consequently, according to market observers, there is no guarantee that we could get the prevailing market price next year.

Following no assurance of black beans and pigeon peas in the market, the association suggested on the end-October that the local farmers grow the black-eyed beans more. —NN/GNLM

Myanmar-Thai border trade plummets by \$238 mln this year

THE BORDER trade between Myanmar and Thailand hit US\$998 million as of 22 January in the current financial year 2020-2021 ending September, said a statistical report of Myanmar's Ministry of Commerce.

During this period, the border trade value dropped by \$238 million compared to that of the same period of the previous FY. The bilateral border trade was \$1.2 billion in the last year.

The Myanmar-Thai total border trade was shared by Myanmar's export of \$675 million and its import of \$322 million.

Between 2016-2017FY and 2019-2020 (as of August), Thailand has been Myanmar's largest trade partner among the ASEAN states, followed by Singapore and Malaysia.

Myanmar is carrying out border trade with Thailand's neighbouring country through seven border checkpoints — Tachilek, Myawady, Myeik, Mawtaung, Hteekhee, Kawthoung and Maese border areas respectively. Among them, Hteekhee completed the most extensive trade in border trade with Thailand, followed by

Myawady.

Myanmar primarily exports natural gas, fishery products, coal, tin concentrate, coconut (fresh and dry), beans, corns, bamboo shoots, sesame seeds, garment, footwear, plywood and veneer, broken rice and other commodities to Thailand. It imports capital goods such as machinery, raw industrial goods such as cement and fertilizers, and consumer goods such as cosmetics, edible vegetable oil and food products from the neighbouring country.

The bilateral trade between Myanmar and Thailand stood at \$659 million in FY2020-2021 (as of November), \$5.1 billion in FY2019-2020, \$5.5 billion in FY2018-2019, \$2.9 billion in the mini-budget year of 2018 or transitional period from April to September this year, \$5 billion in FY2017-2018, \$4.3 billion in the 2016-2017FY, \$4.8 billion in the 2015-2016FY, \$5.7 billion in the 2014-2015FY, \$5.6 billion in the 2013-2014FY, \$4.7 billion in the 2012-2013FY, and \$4.5 billion in the 2011-2012FY, according to the Myanmar Ministry of Commerce.—Zwe/GNLM

COVID-19 Call Centre opens daily

In efforts to speed up the prevention, containment and treatment of the COVID-19 disease, the call centre ([phone number 2019](tel:09-555-1234)) is established by four communications operators and the Blue Ocean Company with the coordination of the Medical Research Department of the Health and Sports Ministry and Post and Telecommunications Department from 9 am to 5 pm daily at the Medical Research Department in Yangon.

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

Strict rules for Lunar New Year in Singapore amid pandemic

THE ANNUAL Lunar New Year celebrations will be more muted in Singapore this year as many restrictions to curb the spread of novel coronavirus remain in place, with roving lion dance troupes that are in high demand during the festivities badly hit.

Despite being able to contain the COVID-19 pandemic and having entered Phase 3 in reopening the economy after a semi-lockdown most of last year, many restrictions on social gatherings are continue to be imposed in the wealthy city-state.

People are still required to wear masks in public places, and

the government is ramping up vaccinations and testing for the coronavirus all over the island.

The government is encouraging people to meet virtually in celebrating the Lunar New Year, which falls on Friday, so as to minimize social gatherings. Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong appealed to Singaporeans in a Facebook post on Monday to limit their house visits during the festival to family members only.

Ethnic Chinese account for 74 per cent of Singapore's total population of 5.69 million.

The number of visitors that every house can receive per day

is currently capped at eight, and people are not allowed to visit more than two houses per day, which is expected to affect the tradition of having reunion dinners on the eve and the tradition of house visits.

Restaurants cannot have more than eight diners occupying a table and intermingling between tables is forbidden, with restaurants ordered by the authorities to make sure that large groups of people from different households do not gather at the same restaurant, occupying more than one table and mingling with each other.—Kyodo



Members of the Singapore Chin Woo (Athletic) Association practise lion dance in a park in Singapore on Jan. 24, 2021. **PHOTO: KYODO**

S.Africa goes for Johnson & Johnson vaccine: minister

SOUTH AFRICA will begin its coronavirus inoculation campaign with Johnson & Johnson vaccines, the health minister said on Wednesday, after withholding the Oxford/AstraZeneca formula over doubts about effectiveness.

The country worst-hit by the pandemic in Africa has suspended its vaccine rollout -- meant to begin with Oxford/AstraZeneca this week -- after scientists found the shot failed to prevent mild and moderate illness caused by a local virus variant known as 501Y.V2.

"Given the outcomes of the efficacy studies..., (government)

will continue with the planned phase one vaccination using the Johnson & Johnson vaccines instead of the AstraZeneca vaccine," Health Minister Zweli Mkhize told a press briefing.

"The Johnson & Johnson vaccine has been proven effective against the 501Y.V2 variant."

He did not say when immunization would begin.

To date South Africa has ordered nine million doses of the Johnson & Johnson vaccines, of which a small shipment is expected to arrive next week.

However, the first consignment will probably be used as "research stock", Mkhize said.

South African pharmaceutical giant Aspen, a contracted Johnson & Johnson vaccine manufacturer, is striving to produce its first doses next month.

"They are very determined to fast-track this production in South Africa," Mkhize said, adding that the stock would then be available in April.

South Africa's vaccination delay has set back an ambitious aim to inoculate around 40 million people -- 67 per cent of the population -- by the end of 2021.

The country was slow to catch on to the global vaccine scramble and only received its first jabs on February 1.—AFP

Thyssenkrupp sees 'signs of recovery' after virus hit



Troubled German industrial giant Thyssenkrupp said Wednesday it narrowed losses in the first quarter, buoyed by a "recovery" in demand for steel and car parts after the initial hit from the pandemic. **PHOTO: AFP**

TROUBLED German industrial giant Thyssenkrupp said Wednesday it narrowed losses in the first quarter, buoyed by a "recovery" in demand for steel and car parts after the initial hit from the pandemic.

The Essen-based group, which is in the throes of a painful restructuring, posted a net loss of 141 million euros (\$171 million) between October and December, compared with a 449 million euro loss over the same period a year earlier.

The group made an adjusted operating profit of 78 million euros, reversing a loss of 185 million euros in its first quarter a year ago.

"We're noticing signs of an economic recovery and our measures are starting to bear fruit. But we're not out of the

woods yet," CEO Martina Merz said in a statement.

The long-struggling conglomerate, which employs around 100,000 people, last year sold off its lucrative elevator business to fund a turnaround plan that will include 11,000 job cuts.

The coronavirus outbreak compounded Thyssenkrupp's woes, pushing it deep into the red in its 2019/2020 fiscal year as lockdown measures closed dealerships and disrupted production at factories around the world. But the group said economic activity picked up in the final stretch of 2020 and it saw strong demand for car parts and industrial components used in wind energy, particularly in China and Germany.—AFP

Facebook ramps up effort to curb vaccine hoaxes

FACEBOOK on Monday said it is ramping up efforts to stem the spread of misinformation about COVID-19 vaccines, spread facts, and figure out who might be wary of getting the jab.

The move includes banning groups that repeatedly spread misinformation and debunked claims about the virus and vaccines in general.

The leading social network has been highlighting health advice from reliable agencies and removing COVID-19 misinformation for months and on Monday expanded that initiative.

A list of debunked claims about the virus or vaccines that are not welcomed on Facebook

was updated with the help of the World Health Organization (WHO).

The list of barred misinformation included claims COVID-19 was created by people or that it is safer to get the virus than the vaccine.

It also included false claims that vaccines are toxic or cause autism.

Critics of the social media giant's handling of misinformation were not convinced by its latest move.

"Facebook has been promising to crack down on COVID and anti-vax misinformation for the past year," the nonprofit Centre for Countering Digital Hate said in a message fired off on Twitter.—AFP

Act now to find sustainable ways for saving our water resources

WATER is essential to life on our planet. It is a must for ensuring uncontaminated stream, rivers, and lakes as a prerequisite of sustainable development. Water Pollution is very harmful to humans, animals and water life. Effects can be Catastrophic, depending on the kind of chemicals, concentrations of the pollutants, and where there are polluted.

In Myanmar, oil spillage was considered a major cause of river water pollution.

Now, the time comes to consider that major water pollution sources in Myanmar are wastes from industries, agriculture and mining.

The chemical wastes from illegal gold mining in rivers and heavy wastes from industries have polluted our rivers and water sources since decades ago with development of industries and minings.

Heavy metals, which contain many toxic compounds that damage the health aquatic animals and those who eat them, from industrial process can accumulate in nearby lakes and rivers.

Microbial pollutants from sewage often results in infectious diseases that infect aquatic life and terrestrial life thorough drinking water.

Heavy metal pollution is caused when such metals as arsenic, cobalt, copper, cadmium, lead, silver and zinc contained in excavated rock or exposed in an underground mine come in contact with water.

Metals are leached out and carried downstream as water washes over the rock surface.

Chemical agents such as cyanide, mercury or sulphuric acid used by legal and illegal mining industries leak or leach into nearby water resources when they neglect the safety measures for chemicals. These Chemicals can be highly toxic to humans and wildlife.

Myanmar is encouraging investments for Industrial and other sectors by inviting domestic and international Investors. Meanwhile, we are facing considerable challenges on environmental pollution caused by man-made actions.

To curb river water pollution effectively, we need public policies which will protect water resources, and which especially focus on pollution caused by industrial wastes and oil spills, will curb river water pollution effectively.

All stakeholders in the industries are urged to innovate and create sustainable ways of doing business that do not negatively impact the environment.

■■■

COVID-19 ‘extremely unlikely’ to have come from a lab, experts say

THE VIRUS that causes COVID-19 probably jumped from animals to humans and is “extremely unlikely” to have come from a laboratory, the head of an international team investigating the origins of the disease said on Tuesday.

Dr Peter Ben Embarek from the World Health Organization (WHO) was speaking during a press conference in Wuhan, China, at the end of a four-week mission to the city where the new coronavirus first emerged in December 2019.

“Our initial findings suggest that the introduction through an intermediary host species is the most likely pathway and one that will require more studies and more specific targeted research”, he said.

Joint expert team

The international team convened by WHO consisted of 17

Chinese experts and an equal number of counterparts from other nations, looking at three areas: epidemiology, molecular research and animal and environment.

They visited hospitals and other sites in Wuhan, including the Huanan Market where the SARS-CoV-2 virus was first detected, and identified four main hypotheses of how it could have been transmitted to humans.

“However, the findings suggest that the laboratory incident hypothesis is extremely unlikely to explain introduction of the virus into the human population, and therefore is not a hypothesis that implies to suggest future studies into our work, to support our future work, into the understanding of the origin of the virus”, Dr Embarek said.

Frozen food link?

While ongoing research

continues to suggest that bats are a natural reservoir for the new coronavirus, Dr Embarek ruled out the possibility in Wuhan, as the city is not near to any environments where these animals are found.

One hypothesis suggests the virus could have come through the food chain, as frozen products can provide a surface for transmission.

Dr Embarek said frozen animal products, mainly seafood, were sold at Huanan Market, along with products made from wild and farmed animals, some of which came from other parts of China or were imported.

“So, there is the potential to continue to follow this lead and further look at the supply chain and animals that were supplied to the markets in frozen and other processed and semi-processed form, or raw



World Health Organization scientists speak at a press conference in Wuhan, China. PHOTO: UN

form”, he said.

Virus circulating elsewhere earlier

It has been nearly a year since the COVID-19 pandemic was declared and as of Tuesday, there were more than 106 million cases worldwide, including some 2.3 million deaths.

The investigations conducted in Wuhan will lay the groundwork for virus origin tracing elsewhere, according to the team’s Chinese lead, Dr Liang Wannian.

He said their review of unpublished studies suggests the virus was circulating earlier in

other regions.

“These studies from different countries suggests SARS-CoV-2 circulation preceding the initial detection of cases by several weeks”, said Dr Liang, speaking through an interpreter.

SOURCE: UN News

Five questions still unanswered

The World Health Organization expert mission to China ended this week without finding the source of the coronavirus that has killed over 2.3 million worldwide.

But the team of foreign experts did agree the virus likely jumped from bats to an unknown animal species, before being transmitted to humans.

It also concluded that it was “extremely unlikely” that the virus came from a high-security lab in the central city of Wuhan, appearing to quash a number of theories linking the city’s virology institute to the outbreak.

Huge global pressure and scrutiny trailed the team during its probe in China, which mission member Peter Daszak described as working “flat out under the most politically charged environment possible.”

After a mission that lasted nearly a month, here are five things we still don’t know about the virus’ origin:

The animal source

Experts said tests were done on tens of thousands of samples

from wild, farmed and domestic animals across China – but none of them contained the SARS-CoV-2 virus that causes Covid-19.

However, Dutch virologist and WHO team member Marion Koopmans said that species more susceptible to the virus – includ-

ing bamboo rats, badgers and rabbits – were sold at Wuhan’s Huanan market, the site of an early virus cluster, and could be an entry point for trace-back investigations.

British zoologist Daszak also said after the briefing that new bat viruses discovered in Thailand and Cambodia, “shifts our focus to Southeast Asia”.

“I think one day we’ll find



Medics from north China’s Tianjin Municipality wave goodbye before their departure in Wuhan, central China’s Hubei Province, March 17, 2020. PHOTO: XINHUA

that (reservoir), it might take some time... but it will be out there without a doubt,” he told

reporters.

Raw data

Concern has been expressed about the scientists’ access to data in China, amid accusations that Beijing downplayed the initial severity of the outbreak in Wuhan in late 2019.

Danish epidemiologist and team member Thea Kolsen Fischer said after the briefing that the WHO team were not given raw data, but instead relied on earlier analysis by Chinese scientists.

In most cases, she said, it would be usual for outsiders to get access to “aggregated data”.

WHO team members said they were granted full access to the sites and individuals they requested to visit.

Cold chain transmission

Beijing has repeatedly floated the theory that the virus was brought to China through packaging on cold chain products like imported frozen seafood, linking these to recent domestic outbreaks.

WHO emergencies chief Mike Ryan had previously said that there is “no evidence that food or the food chain is participating in transmission”.

But in China the WHO mission appeared to give some weight to the theory.

The head of the Chinese

side of the mission, Liang Wannian, said the virus can travel long distances on the surface of cold chain products, and environmental samples from Huanan market – which sold frozen wild animals and seafood – showed “widespread contamination” of the virus.

But WHO team lead Peter Ben Embarek cautioned that it is still unclear whether the virus can transmit to humans from contaminated cold chain surfaces.

Origin outside China?

Beijing has repeatedly called for the WHO to launch an origin tracing mission in the US, and foreign ministry officials have drawn attention to conspiracy theories about virus leaks from an American military germ research lab.

Eager to deflect international criticism over its initial handling of the outbreak, China has also amplified studies suggesting some Covid-19 cases emerged in Italy and other countries in late 2019.

But in releasing the report’s conclusions, Koopmans said these studies “do not provide full evidence of earlier circulation” outside China in early December.

However, she conceded that experts “should really go and search for evidence of earlier circulation.”

SOURCE: AFP

Myanmar Gazette

Heads of Service Organizations confirmed

The following persons are confirmed as Heads of Service Organizations shown against each of their names after the one-year probational period.

Name	Appointment
1. U Ye Toe Thwin	Managing Director Electricity Supply Enterprise Ministry of Electricity and Energy
2. U Hein Htet	Director-General Department of Hydropower Implementation Ministry of Electricity and Energy
3. U Win Zaw Aung	Director-General Population Department Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population

Union Day slogans for 2021 (74th Anniversary)

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



Myanmar Daily Weather Report

(Issued at 7:00 pm Wednesday 10 February 2021)

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

FORECAST VALID UNTIL NOON OF THE 11 February 2021: Light rain or thundershowers are likely to be isolated in Taninthayi Region and Kachin State. Degree of certainty is (60%). Weather will be partly cloudy in Upper Sagaing Region and Shan, Mon states and generally fair in the remaining regions and states.

STATE OF THE SEA: Seas will be moderate in Myanmar waters. Wave height will be about (4-8) feet off and along Myanmar Coasts.

Don't let Long Covid 'fall through the cracks', WHO warns



Researchers work in a lab that is developing testing for the COVID-19 coronavirus at the Hackensack Meridian Health Centre on 28 February, 2020 in Nutley, New Jersey. **PHOTO: AFP**

THE World Health Organization called Tuesday for greater research, recognition and rehabilitation for Long Covid sufferers as it brought experts together to share insights into the little-understood condition.

The WHO held the first in a planned series of seminars aimed at expanding understanding of post-Covid conditions, which heard not only from scientists and doctors but also from sufferers themselves.

Little is known about why some people, after coming through the acute phase of Cov-

id-19, struggle to recover and suffer ongoing symptoms including tiredness and brain fog as well as cardiac and neurological disorders.

Studies suggest that potentially one in 10 cases may have prolonged symptoms one month after infection -- meaning millions may be suffering from ongoing illness.

WHO director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said that with attention turning in the coronavirus pandemic towards vaccination campaigns, "Long Covid should not fall

through the cracks".

He said the impact of Long Covid on society and the economy was starting to become clear, and for those reasons, "people start to listen" beyond the medical community.

Though the level of research is growing, it is "still not enough", he said.

British doctor Gail Carson, from the International Severe Acute Respiratory and Emerging Infection Consortium, warned that "Long Covid could become the pandemic on the pandemic".—AFP

Covid-safe Valentine's Day dining

IT'S A Covid-era conundrum for Valentine's Day: how to eat out with your beloved when you live in a country where all restaurants are closed?

The answer hit upon by a handful of hotels in Belgium's capital is to convert empty rooms into private dining salons for two, where a four-course meal with champagne and wine can be enjoyed without breaking the household "bubble".

"We're over the moon about being here tonight, just like in a restaurant," said Marine Deroo, a 34-year-old Frenchwoman living in Brussels who was trying out the concept just ahead of Valentine's Day.

"We've been cooped up at home for months. We've tried setting up pretend 'evenings out' at home -- but to actually go out, like to a restaurant, it's a super opportunity that we just jumped on," she said.

She and her boyfriend had just been greeted and shown to a candle-lit table set up where a bed used to be, as music travelled into their room in the Qbic Hotel, which

says it pioneered the idea.

A waitress hovered to take their choices from the menu, including a bottle of wine, which had to be ordered before a government coronavirus ban on serving alcohol past 8:00 pm kicked in.

It's not just room service, the hotel manager, Bert Vandewaetere pointed out. The 149-euro (\$180) package covers a hotel room to sleep in, a separate room to dine in, the dinner -- not including any drinks -- and breakfast.

"Basically, people dress themselves up for a really good night on a Saturday evening -- children at home, only couples are coming here, just two people," he said.

'Finally we can go out'

He said he came up with the idea after Belgium closed restaurants and bars in November to slow the spread of the coronavirus, aggravating an already steep drop in hotel business because of cancelled trade fairs and other events.

It was especially important that the Qbic prove itself, as it had opened in late 2019, just before the pandemic hit.—AFP

Vaccine production must catch up to science

EUROPE'S race to manufacture Covid-19 vaccines must accelerate to catch up to scientific breakthroughs and outpace emerging variants, European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen said on Wednesday.

"We underestimated the difficulty related to mass production. Normally, it takes five to 10 years to produce a new vaccine. We did it in 10 months. This is a huge scientific success, and we should be rightly proud -- but in a way, science has outstripped industry," she told the European Parliament.

In her first public admission to Europeans -- outside of some select media interviews -- von der Leyen said her Commission had made missteps in procuring vaccines on behalf all EU countries.

But she defended the overall strategy.

"We were late to authorize. We were too optimistic when it came to massive production. And perhaps we were too confident that what we ordered would ac-

tually be delivered on time," she said.

But to have allowed Europe's wealthiest countries to grab vaccines for themselves and leave others in the cold "would have been, I think, the end of our community," she said.

'We got it right'

There were lessons to be learnt, von der Leyen said, and her Commission would do so.

They included getting more data shared between clinics in EU countries, improving regulations to allow the European Medicines Agency to move faster in authorising vaccines, and especially to clear industrial bottlenecks to vaccine production.

"Industry must adapt to the pace of science," she said, noting that vaccines can contain as many as 400 ingredients and manufacturing involve as many as 100 companies. A vaccine production task force under internal market commissioner Thierry Breton was charged with that mission, she said.



Europe's race to manufacture Covid-19 vaccines must accelerate to catch up to scientific breakthroughs and outpace emerging variants, European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen said on Wednesday. **PHOTO: AFP**

"We're dealing with completely new mRNA vaccines never manufactured at scale before. One of the current bottlenecks is, for example, linked to synthetic molecules... we need more co-

ordination on the supply of key ingredients."

Von der Leyen warned that European scientists do not yet know if the vaccines will be effective against new mutant strains

of the virus that are emerging.

"But we do know these variants will continue to emerge. And we do know that we need to anticipate and prepare immediately," she warned.—AFP

Prince Charles gets Covid-19 jab



A general view of the almost empty departure hall of Suvarnabhumi Airport in Bangkok on Tuesday, as visitor numbers have plummeted in the region over the spread of the Covid-19 coronavirus. **PHOTO: AFP**

QUEEN ELIZABETH II's eldest son and heir Prince Charles, who contracted Covid-19 last year, has received a first vaccine dose, his office said on Wednesday.

The 72-year-old Prince of Wales and his wife Camilla, 73, both received the shot as health authorities urged those over the age of 70 to get a jab.

Britain, which was the first Western nation to roll out Covid jabs in the general population, is banking on its biggest ever vaccination programme as a

way out of a contagion that has killed more than 113,000 people.

Some 12.5 million people have so far been inoculated using either the Pfizer/BioNTech or Oxford/AstraZeneca shots.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson's government has set a target to vaccinate the most vulnerable and at-risk groups by February 15.

Over-70s are the last cohort in that group of 15 million people to be vaccinated under the plan.

The queen, 94, and her

99-year-old husband, Prince Philip received their Covid vaccine last month.

The unusual move to publicise the inoculations -- royal officials rarely comment on private health matters concerning the head of state -- came as those over 80 were given the vaccine.

The state-run National Health Service meanwhile on Wednesday released an advert starring pop icon Elton John and the Oscar-winning actor Michael Caine urging the public to get vaccinated.—AFP

Russia's virus caseload passes four million

RUSSIA officially surpassed four million coronavirus infections Wednesday, days after the country dramatically revised upwards its fatality rate, cementing its place as one of the world's worst-hit nations.

A government tally showed infections had reached 4,012,710, which is the fourth-highest rate globally after the United States, India and Brazil.

But Russia has come under fire for its official virus statistics and the government's stated death toll of 78,134 in particular has been undermined by recent mortality data.

Figures published by statistics agency Rosstat on Monday showed more than 162,000 virus-related deaths last year, more than double the number reported by the government's task force so far.

Russia has frequently come under fire for downplaying the impact of the pandemic and only counting fatalities where coronavirus was found to be the



Russia officially surpassed four million coronavirus infections Wednesday, days after the country dramatically revised upwards its fatality rate, cementing its place as one of the world's worst-hit nations. **PHOTO: AFP**

primary cause of death after an autopsy.

The country had been battered recently by a second wave of infections but has held back on reimposing lockdowns like other European countries and instead relied on a nationwide vaccine rollout.

Russia said Wednesday that 2.2 million people in the country had been administered the jab since vaccinations began in

January.

The mayor of Moscow Sergei Sobyain said last month that half of the city's population, or at least six million people, had been infected with the virus, suggesting a much higher nationwide toll.

Still, last month he also announced a significant easing of restrictions in the capital, which is the epicentre of the virus outbreak in Russia.—AFP

Japan to start Covid vaccines despite syringe shortage

JAPAN will start coronavirus vaccinations next week, its prime minister said Wednesday, but it is scrambling to secure suitable syringes so doses won't go to waste.

The country has reached deals with three major drug firms to buy enough vaccine doses for its population of 126 million.

But it has not yet announced a detailed roll-out plan for the jabs, less than six months before the pandemic-postponed Olympics begin.

The Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine is likely to become the first jab approved for use in Japan in the coming days, following domestic clinical trials required by the country's health authorities.

"When we have confirmed the vaccine's efficacy and safety, we will start vaccination by the middle of next week," Prime Minister Yoshihide

Suga said.

Japan is trying to secure enough special syringes that can extract the full six doses from each vial of Pfizer vaccine.

More commonly used syringes can only draw five doses -- meaning the last one needs to be discarded.

The syringe problem could force the country to forgo enough Pfizer vaccine doses for up to 12 million people, local media estimated.

"At first, we will use the syringes that can draw six doses, but as we vaccinate many people, these will become scarce," Health Minister Norihisa Tamura said on Tuesday.

"We are working hard to secure the syringes. We are asking medical equipment manufacturers to increase their production," he told parliament.

—AFP

NEWS IN BRIEF

AstraZeneca will boost vaccine manufacturing for Europe

Pharmaceutical group AstraZeneca announced on Wednesday that it will partner with Germany's IDT Biologika to produce more Covid-19 vaccines for Europe.

The two companies are "exploring options" to accelerate output of the completed AstraZeneca vaccine in the second quarter of 2021, AstraZeneca said in a statement.

The agreement will see both companies invest to increase capacity at a production site in Germany to produce millions of doses per month by the end of 2022.—AFP

BioNTech starts Covid-19 vaccine production at new German site

German Covid-19 vaccine maker BioNTech said Wednesday it has started production at its new facility in Marburg, expected to significantly boost the EU's vaccine supply.

"We have started the first step of vaccine production in our production facility in Marburg," the company said in a statement.

The factory, whose launch was fast-tracked by German authorities, will produce mRNA, the active ingredient in BioNTech's vaccine developed with US pharmaceutical giant Pfizer.

It will then be purified and concentrated before being transported to a "production partner" to be finished.

The European Medicines Agency (EMA) will carry out quality checks in February or March.

"The first vaccines produced at the Marburg site are expected to be delivered at the beginning of April," BioNTech said.

The main European factory for producing the vaccine is Pfizer's plant in Puurs, Belgium.

Once fully operational, the new Marburg site in Hesse state will be one of the largest mRNA production facilities in Europe, with an annual production capacity of up to 750 million vaccine doses.—AFP

Democrats lay out case in Trump impeachment trial

DEMOCRATS present the case against Donald Trump in his Senate impeachment trial Wednesday, arguing that he directed an enraged crowd to storm Congress in the dying days of his presidency – even if Republicans look unlikely to convict.

Unlike Trump's first impeachment trial a year ago, which took three weeks, this one is expected to last just days, with lawmakers on both sides keen to move on.

After a large majority of Republicans voted Tuesday that they consider putting a former president on trial to be unconstitutional, it would take a major surprise for Democrats to obtain the two-thirds majority in the Senate requires for conviction.

But even if Trump looks set for acquittal in the 50-50 Senate, as he was last year, Democrats are presenting a searing case against the populist real estate tycoon, who is holed up in his luxury Florida club.

Impeachment managers, the equivalent of prosecutors in a regular trial, are expected to



Democratic impeachment managers head to the Senate where former president Donald Trump is on trial. **PHOTO: AFP**

take no more than two days to lay out their contention that Trump incited an insurrection when he tried to overturn his November election loss to Joe Biden with a sustained campaign of lies about voter fraud.

On Tuesday they gave a preview, playing a 13-minute compilation of video clips showing Trump stirring up a crowd of supporters on January 6 before a mob rampaged through the halls of Congress, seeking to stop

certification of Biden's victory.

"If that's not an impeachable offence, then there is no such thing," lead impeachment manager Jamie Raskin said in a speech that riveted watching senators.— AFP

Italian police seize 1.3 tonnes of cocaine in major mafia drug bust

ITALIAN police said Wednesday they had seized 1.3 tonnes of cocaine in the past week from the southern port of Gioia Tauro, a major narcotics entry-point controlled by the 'Ndrangheta mafia.

In three operations using sophisticated scanners, police discovered the uncut drugs worth €260 million hidden within containers loaded with coffee and frozen meat from Brazil, and exotic fruit from Ecuador.

"The seized drugs, of the purest quality, could have been cut up to four times by drug traffickers before being put on the market, earning €260 million for the 'Ndrangheta," the provincial police force said in a statement.

The 'Ndrangheta, which is based in the southern region of Calabria but whose tentacles reach internationally, is now considered Italy's most powerful organized crime group by anti-mafia prosecutors.—AFP



The port of Gioia Tauro. Police used scanners to detect the drugs. **PHOTO: AFP**

Huthi drone attack on Saudi airport leaves plane ablaze

A DRONE strike launched by Yemen's Iran-backed Huthis on Wednesday left a civilian plane ablaze at a Saudi airport, days after the US moved to delist the rebels as terrorists.

Saudi authorities did not immediately report any casualties from the attack, claimed by the Huthis, the latest in a series of rebel assaults on the kingdom despite a renewed American push to de-escalate Yemen's six-year conflict.

Pictures released by state media showed a blackened gash on the side of a passenger jet after the attack, which occurred on the same day the new US special envoy for Yemen Timothy Lenderking met Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan in Riyadh for talks.

"A cowardly criminal ter-

rorist attack launched against Abha International Airport in Saudi Arabia by the Huthi militia," state-run Al-Ekhbariya television quoted the Riyadh-led military coalition battling the rebels as saying.

"A fire that engulfed a passenger plane due to the Huthi attack on Abha Airport is under control," it added.

The coalition did not say how the attack was carried out, but earlier in the day reported that it had intercepted two "booby-trapped" drones in the south.

The Shiite Huthis, who control much of northern Yemen, said they had struck Abha airport with four drones.

Yahya Sarie, spokesman for the Huthis' armed wing, claimed the airport was used to launch attacks on Yemen.— AFP

NEWS IN BRIEF

Briton convicted in Bali cop killing to be freed from prison

A Briton jailed for beating an Indonesian policeman to death in Bali with his Australian girlfriend was to be freed Thursday after more than four years in prison, authorities said. David Taylor is expected to be deported back to the United Kingdom after leaving Kerobokan prison on the Indonesian holiday island, an official told AFP Wednesday.

"He'll be released tomorrow," said Bali's justice department spokesman, I Putu Surya Dharma.

Taylor and his former girlfriend, Sara Connor, who was released from prison last year, were convicted in 2017 of fatally assaulting officer Wayan Sudarsa, whose battered body was found in the popular tourist area of Kuta the previous year.—AFP

France mulls introducing consent age as sex abuse claims pile up

The French government has backed the introduction of a minimum age of sexual consent, a move that would bring it in line with most other Western countries, following years of campaigning by abuse victims.

The push for a change in the law has been given extra impetus by allegations brought by a woman who claims she was raped by more than 20 firefighters when she was a teenager, with a ruling in the long-running case expected later on Wednesday.

Justice Minister Eric Dupond-Moretti said on Tuesday that the government was "favourable that a new crime be established, whereby any act of sexual penetration by an adult involving a minor aged 15 is a crime".

His proposal goes further than a bill drafted by members of the Senate, which calls for the age of consent to be set at 13. Speaking to France 2 television the minister said public opinion had shifted on the issue of sex between adults and minors, long shrugged off in France as harmless in cases where the relations were presented as consensual.— AFP

Maersk profit soars nearly six-fold for 2020



The company operates in 130 countries and employs 80,000 people worldwide.
PHOTO: AFP

DANISH shipping giant AP Moller-Maersk on Wednesday posted a near six-fold increase in net profit for 2020, as demand during the coronavirus pandemic rebounded strongly from an initial slump, sending freight rates soaring.

A shortage of available containers in Asia during the pandemic has led to a surge in freight rates.

For the full-year 2020, Maersk recorded a net profit of \$2.9 billion (€2.4bn) in its ongoing operations. Revenue grew 2.2 per cent to \$39.7 billion, slightly more than analysts’

estimates which ranged between \$39.56 and \$39.58 billion.

Gross operating profit, EBITDA, increased by 44 per cent to \$8.23 billion, thanks to reduced costs and optimization of the supply chain.

The transport sector has recovered faster than other parts of the world economy as restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic have weighed more heavily on the consumption of services than on goods.

At the end of 2020, global container volumes

were higher than at the end of 2019, the Danish freight behemoth noted.

“We are today a profitable, growing logistics company with a broad offering of ocean and air transportation,” chief executive Soren Skou said.

Since the sale of its oil division to France’s Total in 2017, Maersk has undertaken a major restructuring to refocus on transport and logistics. Maersk aims to become carbon neutral by 2050 and reported a drop of over 40 per cent in emissions for the year as a whole. —AFP

Turbine giant Vestas looking offshore after strong 2020 results

Vestas, the global leader in wind turbines, posted stronger annual results Wednesday and said it was looking to expand crucial offshore operations with a giant new model.

The Danish company reported a 10 per cent rise in net profit to 771 mil-

lion euros (\$933 million) for 2020, even though its supply chain had been affected by the coronavirus pandemic.

Sales jumped 22 per cent to a record 14.82 billion euros, a statement said.

One disappointing number was for orders however, which declined by eight percent to 12.7 billion euros in a sector where competition is stiff

and global investment is growing.

Vestas has long been a leader in onshore turbines and must now catch up with offshore rivals such as the German/Spanish group Siemens Gamesa or the US multinational General Electric (GE).

“To lead the expansion of wind energy into becoming the dominant energy source, it is crucial for Vestas to become a leader in offshore wind,” the statement quoted president and chief executive Henrik Andersen as saying. — AFP

Heineken to cut 8,000 jobs as virus takes fizz out of sales

Dutch brewing giant Heineken said on Wednesday it would cut around 8,000 jobs worldwide as the coronavirus pandemic kept much of the hospitality sector closed.

Heineken, the world’s number two brewer, said it recorded a net loss of €204 million in 2020, a 109 per cent fall in profits from the year before.

Heineken CEO Dolf van den Brink said it had been “a year of unprecedented disruption and transition” for the company.

“The COVID-19 pandemic and governments’ measures continue to have a material impact on our markets and business,” Heineken said in a statement.

Sales fell by 17 per cent to €23 billion with bars and cafes closed in many countries, the company said.

Less than 30 per cent of outlets were operating in Europe in particular at the end of January, it said.

Heineken had announced in October that restructuring was needed to reduce personnel costs but gave no figure for layoffs at the time.

“The overall restructuring programme will reduce our employee base by circa 8,000 people,” Wednesday’s statement said.

This included cutting jobs at the head office in Amsterdam, while other layoffs would depend on local circumstances, it added.

Founded in the 19th century in Amsterdam, Heineken sells more than 300 brands, including its namesake plus others such as Strongbow and Amstel. It employs 85,000 people globally.—AFP

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE
M.V MTT SENARI VOY. NO. (004N)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V MTT SENARI VOY. NO. (004N)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **11-2-2021** 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 REGIONAL CONTAINER LINES

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE
M.V SINAR BANDA VOY. NO. (0YA0SS1NC)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V SINAR BANDA VOY. NO. (0YA0SS1NC)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **11-2-2021** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **AWPT** 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 CMA- CGM SHIPPING LINES

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE
M.V CHERRY VOY. NO. (018N/S)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V CHERRY VOY. NO. (018N/S)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **11-2-2021** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **AWPT** 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 IAL 001 VOY. NO. (091N/S)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V IAL 001 VOY. NO. (091N/S)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **11-2-2021** 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.

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Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

M/S INTER ASIA LINES

China factory prices see first rise in a year



Consumer prices in China fell in January after a brief improvement at the end of last year. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

FACTORY prices rose in China for the first time in a year last month as the country's vast industrial sector leads a recovery from the virus pandemic, with analysts hailing the data as a turning point for the world's number two economy.

But the lingering effects of the disease weighed on the country's vast army of shoppers as consumer prices slipped, hit by new outbreaks that led to the reimposition of containment measures.

Official data showed the producer price index (PPI), a key measure of input costs, came in at 0.3 per cent in January, having fallen every month but January

in 2020 owing to a collapse in demand as the virus broke out around the country and then the world. The figure was in line with forecasts and a big improvement in the 0.4 per cent fall seen in December.

"We believe that the turn of PPI is very solid, from a deflation trend to an inflation trend," said ING chief economist for Greater China Iris Pang. "Although this is mild, it is a turn, a very important turn, and it will last for the rest of 2021."

The reading comes as China leads a recovery in the world economy, with the rollout of vaccines and slowing infection rates fuelling hopes that lockdowns

and other containment measures can be eased, setting up a huge bounce this year.

However, the consumer price index edged down a worse-than-expected 0.3 per cent as a spike in infections that led to new tough restrictions in the north of the country combined with a high base from January last year.

"With the Spring Festival (Lunar New Year) taking place in February this year, and the impact of a partial epidemic spread, there were decreases in both residents' travel and some contact-based services in January," said National Bureau of Statistics official Dong Lijuan.—AFP

Virus threatens 'game over' for Japan's arcades

EVENINGS are normally the busiest time at Mikado, a retro gaming arcade in Tokyo, but these days the shutters come down early, leaving "Street Fighter" fans out in the cold.

Bright, noisy arcades are still a neighbourhood fixture in Japan, but they have been disappearing as business is hit by virus-curtailed opening hours.

"This is when the place usually starts to fill up," laments Yasushi Fukamachi, a manager at Mikado, whose 250 vintage machines attract nocturnal students and office workers who have just clocked off.

It is approaching 8 pm and a few dozen gamers wearing face masks are fighting it out

on joystick classics, eking out their final minutes of fun before being shooed out.

Since early January, Tokyo and other parts of Japan have been under a state of emergency to bring down surging virus cases. Businesses are told to close early, with possible fines for those that refuse.

But unlike bars and restaurants, arcades like Mikado do not receive government cash as compensation for lost income.

Several arcades went bust following Japan's first state of emergency last year, which saw most of them close completely for two months, and those that survived are now struggling.—AFP



Unlike bars and restaurants, Japan's arcades do not receive government cash as compensation for income lost during the virus-curtailed opening hours. **PHOTO: AFP**

Firms hope for post-pandemic profits from 'digital nomads'

COMPANIES around the world are betting that spiking interest in working from abroad during the pandemic will prove the foundation for a profitable new sector that can thrive in the years ahead.

"Covid has sped things up, what used to be a niche has become the norm," says Emmanuel Guisset, whose firm Outsite rents slots in shared living and working spaces to so-called "digital nomads" from Portugal to Hawaii. He calls the pandemic a "springboard" for his business, one in a whole web of companies offering highly-mobile online workers everything from co-working spaces to Instagrammable villas and training to ease them into their new way of life.

Although it had to close its properties in the first months of the coronavirus outbreak, Outsite enjoyed a 30-per cent increase in reservations compared with 2019 and masses of new users. "When things are back to normal, it's going to explode," Guisset predicts.

Crucially, employers are increasingly open to the idea, with around 20 companies contacting Guisset to arrange paid-for stays for their workers -- "a way of hanging on to talented employees," he says. "The million dollar question" for the budding sector is whether such openness at workplaces will outlive pandemic restrictions, says Professor Maurie Cohen of the New Jersey Institute of Technology.—AFP



Spain's Mallorca island is a popular destination for digital nomads. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

As Trump trial opens, evidence mounts Capitol attack was planned



Trump supporters clash with police and security forces as they storm the US Capitol hoping to reverse his loss in the presidential election. **PHOTO: AFP**

ON DECEMBER 19, Beverly Hills salon owner Gina Bisignano read a tweet from president Donald Trump: “Big protest in D.C. on January 6th. Be there, will be wild!”

“We’ll be there,” replied Bisignano, one of tens of millions who saw the summons to Washington to battle Trump’s election defeat.

Meanwhile Ethan Nordean in Washington state and Enrique Tarrio in Florida were online making their January 6 plans

as leaders of the extreme-right Proud Boys.

Nordean, according to a court filing, on December 27 appealed to followers for funds to buy protective gear and communications equipment.

A week later he and Tarrio told followers in a podcast to wear black, and said they would have to be prepared to fight.

“We are looked at almost like soldiers of the right wing,” said Tarrio. “This stuff is real. We are in a war.”

In the ranks of the extremist Proud Boys or Oath Keepers, among QAnon conspiracists and hardcore fans of the Republican president, the message was clear weeks ahead: Trump wants you to head to Washington to stop Congress from certifying Joe Biden’s election win on January 6.

As Trump stands trial in the US Senate for incitement of insurrection, increasing evidence in court filings shows the attack on the US Capitol was premeditated.— AFP

Oil-rich Libya in poverty after decade of conflict

LIBYA has Africa’s largest proven oil reserves and only seven million people, but a decade of bloody conflict has left its economy shattered and its population mired in poverty.

The dinar has crashed and consumer prices have surged, power outages and fuel shortages are common, and even clean water is rare in a country that was once among the continent’s richest per capita.

In Tripoli, defunct cranes tower precariously above the rusty steel and concrete skeletons of half-finished buildings in deserted, overgrown construction sites.

They are sad reminders of the relative prosperity and economic stability under dictator Moamer Kadhafi, whose 42-year grip on power ended with the Arab Spring uprising 10 years ago.

In recent years, the econo-

my has fallen victim to the violent turmoil that has seen Libya torn apart by two rival administrations and countless militias.

Today, while the guns have mostly fallen silent since a fragile October truce, the frontline still runs from the coastal city of Sirte to the “Oil Crescent” that

holds 90 per cent of its crude deposits.

After the last upsurge in fighting from 2019-2020, and amid the Covid pandemic, the already struggling economy plummeted by 66.7 per cent last year, initial IMF estimates show.— AFP



Big oil reserves were first discovered in 1959 in Libya when it was still among the world’s poorest nations. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

Pilots reported multiple problems with Indonesia jet before crash: report

INDONESIAN pilots had reported multiple problems with an ageing jet’s throttle system before it plunged into the sea after takeoff in January, killing 62 passengers and crew, investigators said Wednesday.

The malfunction in the Sriwijaya Air Boeing 737-500’s engine control system was highlighted in a preliminary report on the January 9 crash, but investigators said it was too early to pinpoint an exact cause.

The 26-year-old plane -- previously flown by US-based Continental Airlines and United Airlines -- plunged around 3,000 metres (10,000 feet) into waters off Jakarta just minutes after takeoff.

Divers are still attempt-

ing to locate the cockpit voice recorder, which could provide vital clues to what the desperate crew was saying when the flight from Jakarta to Pontianak in Borneo went down.

On Wednesday investigators said they were probing the autothrottle system -- and possible human error.

Crews on previous flights had reported that the system was “unserviceable” and it had been repaired several times before the fatal crash, the report said.

“The left (engine throttle) was moving backward too far while the right one was not moving at all -- it was stuck,” said National Transportation Safety Committee investigator Nurcahyo Utomo.— AFP



Sriwijaya Air flight SJ182 came down just four minutes after setting off from Jakarta last month. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

Two killed as multiple bombs rock Afghan capital

At least two people, including a local police chief, were killed after multiple bomb blasts rocked the Afghan capital early Wednesday, officials said.

The latest violence in Kabul follows a pattern of attacks during morning rush-hour traffic targeting prominent Afghans including politicians, journalists, activists and judges.

Police spokesman Ferdaws Faramarz told reporters that two people were killed and another wounded in their vehicle by a bomb in downtown Kabul.

Interior ministry spokesman Tariq Arian told AFP that one of those killed was a district police chief in the capital.

An AFP photograph at the scene said the bomb had ripped

through the rear of what was appeared to be an armoured vehicle.

Minutes earlier, another blast targeting a vehicle in the same district wounded four people, Faramarz added.

A third blast targeted a police vehicle in Paghman district on the outskirts of Kabul.

Authorities did not say if the blasts were caused by so-called “sticky bombs” attached to the vehicles, or roadside improvised explosive devices.

Wednesday’s blasts come a day after militants shot dead four government employees in an ambush in the capital.

No group has so far claimed responsibility for the attacks. Afghan and US officials have blamed the Taliban for the wave of violence, but the group has denied the charges.— AFP

AUFC Winger Thiha Zaw signs for Shan United on loan

LEFT-WINGER Thiha Zaw has moved to Shan United from Ayeyawady United on loan for two years, the Shan United FC stated.

The Winger is good in both left-foot and right-foot and showed brilliant performances at Ayeyawady United in the previous season.

"I manage to be in the line-up just because I can play on both feet. There are lots of good players in Ayeyawady. I used to play with Hein Thiha Zaw in there. He plays left-back. What I like about him is that he doesn't talk too much. He minds his own business. I feel safe when he is backing me. Sometimes, although in play, he told me to go and cover this and that place, there were times that I couldn't come back and tackle. He was not mad at me but just seriously went for the ball.

We need lots of players like him in football – dutiful, not talkative, and indomitable in the field. Senior players like Ko David and Ko Thiha Sithu in Shan United are sure to be respected," said Thiha Zaw.



Shan United's Thiha Zaw (middle) receives his Shan United jersey from the club's authorities. PHOTO: SUFC

Some clubs offered him to join their football squads, but Thiha Zaw chose Shan United for many reasons.

"Some clubs contacted me when my contract with Ayeyawady had finished – some with the good and high offer. But, I've had discussions with

Shan United. They have been very patient, waiting for quite a while. They value and want me, and in return, I chose them with respect."

"I know there are some players in the same position as me. They are also good, which is why they have a chance to

play here. If not, it's uneasy about being in the first line-up. What matters most is that you need to know what the coach likes and needs. You need to play as he wants you to do. I'll try not only for the team but for me as well," the Left-Winger added.—GNLM

Atletico Madrid v Chelsea Champions League match moved to Bucharest

LONDON—Atletico Madrid's home match against Chelsea in the Champions League last-16 has been moved from Spain to Bucharest as a result of coronavirus restrictions, UEFA confirmed on Wednesday.

The first-leg tie will be staged at the Arena Nationala in the Romanian capital.

Chelsea said in a statement on their website that the date of the match, February 23, and the kick-off time (2000 GMT) would remain the same. The second leg is scheduled to take place at Stamford Bridge in London on March 17. It is the latest European match to be switched to a different venue as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. The Spanish government on Tuesday extended a ban on arrivals by air from Britain, Brazil and South Africa until March 2 over new variants.

Only legal residents or nationals of Spain and the neighbouring micro-state of Andorra are currently allowed in on flights from those countries.—AFP

Man. Utd reach FA Cup quarter-finals, Burnley crash out

LONDON—Scott McTominay sent Manchester United into the FA Cup quarter-finals as his extra-time strike sealed a hard-fought 1-0 win against West Ham on Tuesday.

Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's side were well below their best in a scrappy fifth round tie at freezing, snow-dusted Old Trafford.

But a fine finish from Scotland midfielder McTominay ensured United advanced to the

last eight for a seventh successive season.

United last won the FA Cup in 2016 and McTominay's third goal in three games kept them in the hunt to lift the trophy for the 13th time.

After the frustration of the late Everton equalizer that dented their Premier League title challenge on Saturday, this was an essential result to lift the mood at United.

It was hardly an eye-catching performance however, with United labouring against defensive West Ham until McTominay and Bruno Fernandes were introduced as second half substitutes.

Amad Diallo was named on the United bench for the first time since the 18-year-old's January move from Atalanta as Solskjaer made six changes.—AFP

Bad dream puts Osaka on edge before Australian Open win

MELBOURNE—A "nervous" Naomi Osaka said she dreamed of defeat and feared the worst – before putting her worries to rest with a sweeping victory over Caroline Garcia at the Australian Open on Wednesday.

Osaka, the third seed,

faced a tricky contest against the Frenchwoman, who was ranked a career-high of fourth in late 2018, but never gave her a sniff in the 6-2, 6-3 victory in 61 minutes.

The three-time Slam winner, however, had an uneasy

feeling Wednesday, waking up in a panic after a nightmare.

"Last night I had a dream that I lost this match, and I really didn't feel good about it," she said.

"My dreams are very telling of the future.—AFP

Juventus hold Inter to make Italian Cup final



TURIN—Juventus are in the final of the Italian Cup after a goalless draw with rivals Inter on Tuesday put them through 2-1 on aggregate.

Andrea Pirlo's side will face one of Napoli or Atalanta, who are locked at 0-0 ahead of Wednesday's second leg in Bergamo, in May's final in Rome after comfortably holding Inter in a disciplined display at the Allianz Stadium.

Inter barely troubled veteran Juve goalkeeper Gianluigi Buffon despite the return of Romelu Lukaku and Achraf Hakimi, while Cristiano Ronaldo was twice denied by fine Samir Handanovic saves at the other end. Juve are unbeaten since losing 2-0 to Inter in Serie A last month as novice coach Pirlo drags his team into contention in league and cup after an uncertain start coaching the Italian champions.—AFP