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# THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

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## Myanmar agrees to export 100,000-tonne rice to Bangladesh

A coordination meeting was held in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday to discuss 100,000-tonne rice export to Bangladesh under the bilateral agreement between the two governments.

Union Minister for Commerce Dr Pwint San said the Myanmar Rice Federation would manage the export of high-quality rice by forming a task force participated by the relevant ministries and associations.

Union Minister for Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation U Tin Htut Oo discussed the importance of the export sector to promote the livelihood of farmers, while food security is required during the COVID-19 pandemic. He also said some trade restrictions would be released for the rice export to Bangladesh.

The ministers and officials coordinated the discussions of rice merchants and associations.—MNA



Union Minister for Commerce Dr Pwint San presides over the coordination meeting to discuss the rice export to Bangladesh on 17 February 2021. PHOTO: MNA

**31** new cases of COVID-19 reported on 17 February, total figure rises to **141,690**

Total Cases

141,690

New Cases

31

Total Death Tally

3,192

Discharged from Hospital

130,944

Updated at 8 pm, 17 February 2021

MYANMAR'S COVID-19 positive cases rose to **141,690** after **31** new cases were reported on 17 February 2021 according to the Ministry of Health and Sports. Among these confirmed cases, **3,192** died, **130,944** have been discharged from hospitals.—MNA

Ministry of Health and Sports

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### Civil service personnel to receive salary

THE State Administration Council has confirmed that salaries and pensions will be given to the civil service personnel in accordance with their pay scale.

The Council also said that some unscrupulous persons calling for the civil disobedience movement are spreading the baseless rumour about no payment for civil service personnel and the retired persons.

It is not required for the civil service personnel to have any concern for the salaries, and they were also advised to perform their duties as their payments will be given accordingly.—MNA

### Websites of CBM, Office of Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services, True News Information Team under attacks

THE website of Central Bank of Myanmar and the ordinary online information platforms of Office of Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services and the True News Information Team were under the attacks, causing some delays yesterday.

Computer experts of the Tatmadaw could try to run the websites of Office of Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services and the True News Information Team within hours. The website of CBM is being repaired by its developer company for the recovery soon.

These websites are the information websites and are not concerned with the operation of respective organizations, according to the report from the Information Team of State Administration Council—MNA

### Saltwater fishing licence extended up to 75 days

THE Fisheries Department has extended the term of licence for offshore fishing vessels from 60 to 75 days.

The department made a statement that the licence extension was made in order to cover inevitable losses in the fishing industry impacted by COVID-19 pandemic, declining market demand and lower prices of seafood.

The ongoing fishing licence is valid from 1 September 2020 to 30 April 2021 for the 2020-2021 fishing season.

The fishing vessels will expire their business licence after 60 days for the third time in going fishing in the sea.—MNA

### Celebrities charged with CDM incitement

THE LAWSUIT was filed against celebrities for their incitement to civil disobedience movement.

Actor Pyay Ti Oo, Director Ko Pauk, Actor Lu Min, Director Wine, Director Na Gyi and singer Annet Ga are now charged with Article 505 (A) of the Penal Code at the respective police stations.

The Myanmar Police Force also announced to report on the findings of these persons to the phone numbers of police stations and the centres in Nay Pyi Taw and other regions/states, and those who hide them will also face legal actions.—MNA

### 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	-067 412 168	-067 412 246	-067 412 388	-067 412 598	-067 412 539
	-067 412 222	-067 412 387	-067 412 444	-067 412 066	-067 412 540

### Mandalay Region Administration Council's Announcement to Public

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	-02 403 9635	-02 403 6869	-09 797 144 144
	-02 403 7199	-02 403 6978	-09 694 740 311

### COVID-19 Call Centre opens daily

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

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



# We will review the laws for their benefits

REGARDING the civil service personnel, the 2008 State Constitution has defined that ‘The Union shall enact necessary laws for Civil Services personnel to have security and sufficiency of food, clothing and shelter, to get maternity benefits for married women in service, and to ease livelihood for the welfare of retired Service personnel’. There have been some laws for civil service personnel. There might be some weaknesses in these laws. We will review the laws for their benefits. The civil service personnel have got a direct chance to serve the country and people. They are honourable persons for their public services through their responsibility and accountability for operating the sectors of legislation, administration and judiciary. We need to maintain this dignity.

*(Excerpt from the speech to the Situation Report on the Country made by the Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Administration Council Chairman Senior General Min Aung Hlaing on 12 February 2021)*

## MoBA discusses border area, human resources development

THE Ministry of Border Affairs organized a coordination meeting on the development of border areas and human resources yesterday.

During the meeting, Union Minister Lt-Gen Tun Tun Naung highlighted the impacts of COVID-19 on businesses, society and education in addition to health sectors, the safe condition only after the fully COVID-19 vaccination programmes and efforts of State Administration Council for vaccination programmes.

The Union Minister also urged to serve the duties with consideration in accordance with the COVID-19 health rules of the Ministry of Health and Sports.

He then discussed the reopening of university and degree college of Human Resources Development, youth training centres and vocational training in the post-COVID-19 period, capacity building of instructors and staff, and completion of region/state construction works in 2020-2021FY in accord with the fixed quality and criteria.



MoBA Union Minister Lt-Gen Tun Tun Naung chairs the coordination meeting on the border areas development and human resources yesterday. **PHOTO: MNA**

He then highlighted the strategy of ministry - “to ensure that there is no lapse in the border and ethnic development of the various regions of Myanmar”, proportionate development between border area development and human resources development processes, sustainable socio-economic development of border ethnic people, stability and peace in border areas.

He also stressed the need to utilize the state budget for the priority sectors in border areas, effective use of budget, accountability and responsibilities of staff in every level to scrutinize the work to complete in time in accordance with the fixed quality, standards, policies and directives.

He also emphasized the Civil Services Law, relief measures of State Administration Council

for the civil services to enter the workplaces in time and consideration of civil services for the interests of country and people.

Then, the Directors-General briefed the performance of departments and Rectors of development university, Deputy Directors-General, principals of degree colleges and other officials presented the work plans being conducted in 2020-2021FY, plans for reopening of university,

colleges and training schools in the post-COVID-19 period and management system of administrative affairs.

The Ministry of Border Affairs spent a total of K62,343.763 million of the budget for the border area development programmes in 2020-2021FY while K10,236.466 million of the budget for the human resource development of ethnic young people. —MNA

## 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*



# Announcement to the civil servants who fail to perform their duties for various reasons

1. Civil servants are the people who are working to make the whole State machinery function well. No matter how much the political, economic or government changes, civil servants must perform the duties to function the State machinery. They must abide by the rules and regulations regarding working hours, performance, and conduct in the workplace in accordance with the Civil Service Law and Employee Ethics. Those who breach the employee ethics and misconduct can be taken action in accordance with the provisions of the Civil Service Law. If an employee’s act or fail to serve is a possible offence, legal action will be taken.
2. Therefore, it is announced to the civil servants who fail to perform their duties for various reasons to return to work as soon as possible while urging employees to return to work.

# 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

# MoPFI discusses CERP implementation

THE Ministry of Planning, Finance and Industry organized a coordination meeting on the progress in the implementation of COVID-19 Economic Relief Plan (CERP) yesterday.

During the meeting, Union Minister U Win Shein discussed the need to carry out the CERP processes released on 27 April 2020 and the progress of work plans in respective sectors of 7 goals, 10 strategies, 36 action plans and 78 actions of CERP.

He also instructed to review the ongoing processes and further work plans with analysis teams and to expand the works if necessary, by considering whether the plan meets the objectives.

He then discussed the transparent use of COVID-19 fund in accordance with the financial rules, audition, suspension of unnecessary action plans as the numbers of infection rate decline, adoption of quick ways for ongoing work plans, the addition of further action plans and projects to set up based on the CERP and current situation.

The Deputy Ministers and departmental heads presented the completions and further work plans of CERP.—MNA

# MoSWRR discusses celebration of International Women’s Day, reinstitution of Myanmar National Committee for Women’s Affairs



Union Minister Dr Thet Thet Khine chairs the meeting to celebrate the International Women's Day and reorganize Myanmar National Committee for Women's Affairs, yesterday. PHOTO: MNA

THE Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement held a meeting on the celebration of International Women's Day and reorganization of Myanmar National Committee for Women's Affairs yesterday.

During the meeting, Union Minister Dr Thet Thet Khine discussed the duties of the ministry that serves from the expectant mothers to elderly people including woman sector, the wide scope of social affairs and successive holding of state-level International Women's Day since 2012 in the country.

The Union Minister mentioned the women's power as the strength of the country. She also sought suggestions for the celebration of International Women's Day that falls on 8 March amid COVID-19 pandemic.

The Director-General and Deputy Director-General of Social Welfare presented arrangement to hold International Women's Day on 8 March 2021 and plans for the appointment and duty assignment of Myanmar National Committee for Women's Affairs.

Then, the Permanent Secretary coordinated the discussion, and Union Minister instructed the necessary things.—MNA



The mini-buses and buses are seen ferrying the civil service personnel from their living quarters to the workplaces and departments concerned in Nay Pyi Taw. These are the welcoming signs for those who still fail to return to work to serve the people and the country.





# Union Minister U Shwe Lay inspects infrastructural developments in Mon, Taninthayi

UNION MINISTER for Construction U Shwe Lay inspected the construction of roads and bridges in Mon State and Taninthayi Region on 14 and 15 February.

During his inspection tour in Mon State, the Union Minister looked into the building of Phayagyi-Kyaikto-Mawlamyine bridge constructed under the BOT system and the construction of Kyaikto Bypass Road in the East-West Economic Corridor Section and instructed the responsible persons on the work requirement.

The Union Minister and party also inspected the paving of Mawlamyine-Thanyu-zayat-Ye-Dawei road with 24 feet wide asphalt concrete, the strength of Kalawpi Bridge and paving the entrance and exit of



Union Minister U Shwe Lay inspects the construction of roads and bridges in Mon State and Taninthayi Region on 14 and 15 February. **PHOTO: MNA**

the bridge, construction of retaining wall to prevent road erosion and paving of the road between the Mile Post (65/4 to 72/7) and drawing the centre line of the 24 feet wide two-lane road.

The Union Minister also inspected the construction of Dawei Bypass Road and the construction of the two bridges on the bypass road, in Dawei on 15 February. He said the need to

continue the construction work in the respective regions, districts and townships with the systematic use of the fund in accordance with the financial rules and regulations.

During the meeting with directors, deputy directors and assistant directors from the departments of Building, Road, Bridge, Urban and Housing and Rural Road Development in Taninthayi Region on 16 February, the Union Minister said the bridge and road construction works implemented by the Ministry of Construction must continue since the State Administration Council took office and the employees are required to abide by staff rules and regulations. He urged to focus on the improving of the bridges and roads in the region for the convenience of the people. Afterwards, the directors discussed their responsible works with powerpoint presentation, and the Union Minister coordinated the requirement.—MNA

## Myanmar takes part in second day meeting of Trade Policy Review Body



Myanmar delegation led by MoC Permanent Secretary U Min Min joins the online second day meeting of the WTO Trade Policy Review Body on 17 February 2021. **PHOTO: MNA**

THE Trade Policy Review Body of the World Trade Organization held the second-day virtual meeting on the second trade review report of Myanmar yesterday.

The Chair of TPRB from World Trade Organization and the Ambassador of Iceland, Mr Harald Aspelund, extended greetings to the meeting which was taken part by Permanent Secretary U Min Min from the Ministry of Commerce, and he discussed the implementation of agreements, rules and pledges in the provisions of WTO.

During the first day session of the body, a total of 23 representatives from Canada, the United States, Malaysia, Brunei, Thailand, the United Kingdom, Japan, the Philippines, the Republic

of Korea, Singapore, China, Turkey, Indonesia, EU, Brazil, Laos, China (Taipei), India, Cambodia, Viet Nam, Czech, Australia and Nepal discussed the issues in the trade policy review of Myanmar and raised some questions.

Myanmar will also reply to the questions received after 11 January on the scheduled date.

Ms Kirsti Kauppi, the Ambassador of Finland, and Mr Harald Aspelund made their remarks on the trade review processes of Myanmar.

The meeting was taken part by 30 representatives from the trade and relevant departments online, and representatives from 164 countries joined the meeting online and in person.—MNA

## Dala-Pyapon highway express reopens at Dala bus terminal

THE highway express running to the townships in Ayeyawady Region through Dala Township, which had halted in the pandemic period, resumed its operation beginning from 16 February.

Htet Aung Kyaw bus line and Paing Ayar bus line are recently running along the Dala-Pyapon route from the Dala bus terminal for the passengers' convenience. These two bus lines are running in line with the current COVID-19 rules and regulations.

The YBS Numbers 47, 48, 49 and 50 are running as usual from Dala-Twante-Kawhmu-Kungyangon townships to Hlinethaya.

The YBS buslines officials have warned YBS passengers to wear masks and maintain social distance from fellow passengers while travelling onboard the buses.

About 294 YBS buses, from 23 bus lines in Dala township in Yangon and Ayeyawady, transport the passengers. Now, some townships are lifting the restriction, and some buses are resuming their operation. —Naing Lin Kyaw (Dala)



Htet Aung Kyaw bus line and Paing Ayar bus line are recently running along the Dala-Pyapon route from the Dala bus terminal for the passengers' convenience. **PHOTO: NAING LIN KYAW (DALA)**



# MoALI to set up FMD free zone in Kutkai Tsp, Muse

A foot-and-mouth-disease (FMD) free zone, control zone and vaccination areas will be set up in Kutkai Township of Muse District, where animal disease surveillance station is also located, according to the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation.

The officials from the Livestock Breeding and Veterinary Department (LBVD) under the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation signed with China's counterparts regarding cattle surveillance and health projects for live cattle export on 18 January 2021, intending to enhance livestock trading and ensure regular border trade through legitimate channel.

The LBVD has been implementing the establishment of FMD free zone, control zone and vaccination areas since 14 July 2020 to export live cattle to China through the land border.

The development of the FMD zones will help bring about the local breeders' socio-economic development, market potentials for the livestock products and revenue for the country.

About 10,000 heads of cat-

tle, owned by 150 companies, are stranded in Muse border as China stopped purchasing cattle. The labour wages and feedstuff cost burden them. It costs K400,000-600,000 to take care of 100 heads of cattle every day.

Some traders brought the cattle from Muse back to their home owing to the burden of high feedstuff cost and labour wages. Some intentionally stated that they would return to the original designated place but conduct illegal trade in border areas.

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

Earlier, 1,500-2,000 heads of cattle were daily traded through Muse border. Chinese New Year holidays, precautionary measures for the COVID-19, and other reasons contribute to the cattle trade suspension.



The Ministry of Commerce grants a permit to each company for 100 cattle export, and the permit is valid for three months. **PHOTO: SUPPLIED**

Additionally, Myanmar's live cattle export relies heavily on the China market due to a fair price. However, Myanmar has other external markets such as Laos, Thailand, Malaysia and Bangladesh, he added.

The Ministry of Commerce

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

Live cattle export was allowed in late 2017, to eradicate

illegal exports, creating more opportunities for breeders and promoting their interests.

Myanmar can yearly export around 500,000 heads of cattle beyond domestic consumption, the association stated. — NN/GNLM

## Myanmar exports plummet by \$1 bln as of 22 January

MYANMAR'S exports over past three months of the current financial year 2020-2021 touched a low to US\$4.73 billion, reflecting a tremendous drop of over \$1 billion compared with a year-ago period of the previous FY, according to data from the Ministry of Commerce.

During the corresponding period in the previous FY, exports stood at \$5.74 billion, according to the data released by the ministry.

The pandemic deals a severe blow to the manufacturing, mineral and other service sectors as it shut down the events. Additionally, people demand only staple food.

Drop-in exports of natural gas, gems and jewellery and CMP garments contribute to a slump in exports, the ministry stated.

Both sea trade and border trade dropped amid the corona-

virus impacts. The neighbouring countries tightened border security and limited 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 exporters.

Of the seven export groups, agricultural exports showed an increase of \$514.58 million against a-year ago-period. At the same time, exports of other goods were also seen a small rise. Meanwhile, exports of livestock, forest products, minerals, fishery products and finished industrial goods declined.

Between 1 October and 22 January of the current FY, export values have registered at \$1.646 billion for agro products, \$15.665 million for livestock, \$297 million for fishery products, \$386.227 million for

minerals, \$42 million for forest products, \$2.2 billion for manufactured goods, and \$143 million for other goods.

The country's export sector relies more on the agriculture and manufacturing sectors. At present, CMP garment exports drastically dropping since the western countries cancelled order following the COVID-19 impacts. The country's export sector is likely to extend its drop due to the current political climate, an exporter shared his opinion.

The Ministry of Commerce is focusing on 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. — KH/GNLM

## Request to Public

1. Democracy practices have granted the public freedom of speech, practices and living. Such freedoms should not harm others. Diverse views of others should be understood, but should not be disturbed or harassed. However, with the reason for human rights, some persons are now under pressure, harassed and threatened in breaching the laws. Undisciplined acts could lead to tarnishing the image of democracy.
2. For preventing destructive actions against the stability of the State, the safety of the public and the rule of law, it is also required to take proper actions in line with the law.
3. All the people who favour justice, freedom, equality and safety are requested to oppose breaching the laws and prevent such actions for the benefit of country and people.

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# Extension of fishing season a step to minimize COVID-19 impacts on fishing communities

With the 15-day extension to the fishing season which will end in the first week of March, concerns of the communities who are relying on the offshore fishing amidst COVID-19 are expected to be eased.

The announcement on the 15-day extension to offshore fishing brings a rosy hope to fishing communities in coastal areas, factories, workers and businesses are still suffering from negative consequences of the pandemic.

Due to the decrease in the demand for seafood as there are logistic restrictions and no export amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, the aquaculture sector hit hard those depending on the sector for their livelihood.

With zero exports without no new orders from buyer countries, fish exports have collapsed.

The drop in demand has affected from daily-waged workers to cold storage facilities in the seafood supply chain. In this situation, national-level plans and projects need to be implemented to ensure future success in the sector. Or, the aquaculture sector could face longer disruption if farmers are unable to restock in this COVID-19 crisis.

Meanwhile, the revival of local food networks amidst COVID-19 thanks to logistics with health guideline has also mitigated the fishery sector to a certain extent and maintained the local sales through direct

marketing and deliveries.

There are many offshore and inshore fishing enterprises in Yangon and Taninthayi Regions and Mon State. Currently, there are over 3,400 offshore fishing vessels in Myanmar.

Myanmar's coast is home to various fish, reptiles, birds, crustaceans, and other marine life.

When it comes to responding to the COVID-19 and businesses, we also need to consider how to minimize the impact of COVID on the fishery sector and how to make these enterprises grow in the long term.

Fore fishery sector recovery, advanced machinery and cold stores with sufficient electrical power are required.

Installation of the vessel monitoring system to prevent fishing vessels from conducting illegal fishing is also an effective way to prevent illegal fishing.

Only then can the Myanmar fishery and aquatic sector be maintained and developed with sustainable production while losses in tax and revenue prevented.

■ ■ ■

## UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta Fore's remarks at the UN Security Council Open Debate on ensuring equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines

"Excellencies. Fellow briefers. Secretary Raab — thank you for convening this debate. UNICEF appreciates the UK's efforts to shine a light on the importance of equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines.

"The only way out of this pandemic for any of us, is to ensure vaccinations are available for all of us.

"In this historic effort, we must include the millions of people living through, or fleeing, conflict and instability.

"Equitable access to vaccines for all people, including those living under conflict, is essential. Not only as a matter of justice. But as the only pathway to ending this pandemic for all. And to sowing the seeds of care, hope and even peace in countries that have seen far too little.

"For UNICEF and our many humanitarian partners around the world, COVID-19 has fundamentally altered our responses, adding a new layer of complexity in some of the most difficult and dangerous operating environments anywhere.

"As this Council knows well, the violent and protracted nature of today's armed conflicts has shattered countries' health systems...damaged or destroyed vital infrastructure like water and sanitation...and spurred a flight of badly needed health workers.

"In this context, vaccine-delivery is also hampered by a funding gap for humanitarian support overall...and by a lack

of transportation, cold chains, and logistical infrastructure to support the rollout.

"We need to reach the same populations that are routinely missed with basic services — like health, nutrition, and basic immunization — with a vaccine that will not only potentially save their lives, but help address a global pandemic.

"UNICEF is proud to support the WHO-led global response. And we're bringing our decades of experience and expertise to this massive task.

"We're working with our partners and governments to support country readiness. With our vast field presence, we're working with local and national authorities on preparations and strategies to reach all people, including those in hard-to-reach locations.

"Using existing immunization infrastructure, we're also working to reach people not normally targeted in our immunization programmes — including health workers, the elderly and other high-risk groups.

"We're helping governments establish pre-registration systems and prioritizing which people, such as healthcare workers, need to receive vaccines first.

"We're engaging communities and building trust to defeat misinformation.

"We're training health workers to deliver the vaccine, and helping governments recruit and deploy more health work-



On 15 May 2019, UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta Fore addresses the United Nations Security Council. **PHOTO: UNICEF/FILE**

ers where they're needed most.

"We're advocating with local and national governments to use other proven health measures like masks and physical distancing.

"And now, through the COVAX Facility, we're working with Gavi, WHO and CEPI to procure and deliver the COVID vaccines in close collaboration with vaccine manufacturers, and freight, logistics and storage providers.

"And we're doing so on a dramatically accelerated timeline. We're aiming to procure two billion doses of the COVID-19 vaccines by the end of this year. This is on top of the two billion doses of other vaccines we normally

procure each year on behalf of 100 countries.

"With our longstanding work in humanitarian contexts, we're adapting, adjusting, and assessing the specific needs in each location.

"This means, for example, ensuring that enough doses and syringes are available in each country, and undertaking inventories to ensure that effective cold chain systems are in place.

"It means procuring syringes and safety boxes.

"It means finding ways to ensure distribution and delivery in logistically difficult contexts like South Sudan or DRC — or high-threat environments like Yemen

or Afghanistan.

"It means negotiating access to populations across multiple lines of control by non-state armed groups — areas that the ICRC estimates represent some 60 million people.

"It means ensuring that all population groups, including those who are routinely excluded from support, are covered by national vaccination plans — no matter their legal, economic or political status. This includes refugees or migrants, and those deprived of their liberty.

"And we've joined a global effort to secure vaccines under a humanitarian buffer that can be used as a measure of last resort.

COVAX has set aside five per cent of its doses as backup stock for at-risk populations like refugees, the internally displaced and migrants. In short — a safety net for those not covered by national immunization programmes.

"But as we prepare for this historic rollout, we need the support of this Council.

"First — join our call to all Member States to ensure that everyone is included in national vaccination plans, regardless of their legal status or if they live in areas controlled by non-state entities.

"Second — we need a global ceasefire. At a minimum, we need your help to extend the call made in Resolution 2532 for a humanitarian pause for the duration of vaccine delivery.

"And third — help us re-start stalled immunization campaigns for other diseases like measles, diphtheria and polio. We cannot allow the fight against one deadly disease to cause us to lose ground in the fight against others.

"Over the last year, the global community has come together to develop, manufacture, distribute and deliver this vaccine in record time.

"This historic effort deserves historic support. Help us ensure that the light at the end of the tunnel shines on us all — including the families and communities enduring the horrors of conflict. Thank you."

*SOURCE: UN News*

## UN Security Council session on COVID-19: IFRC warns of combined dangers of mistrust and vaccine inequity

THE chief executive of the world's largest humanitarian network has warned world leaders of the consequences of high levels of mistrust and persistent inequity in the distribution of COVID-19 vaccines.

In a briefing to a UN Security Council high-level meeting on COVID-19 vaccines, Jagan Chapagain, the Secretary General of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), spoke first of the impact of mistrust on virus response efforts. He said:



The chief executive of the world's largest humanitarian network has warned world leaders of the consequences of high levels of mistrust and persistent inequity in the distribution of COVID-19 vaccines. **PHOTO: AFP**

"When communities do not understand health interventions, they will not accept them. Instead, they are likely to see these health measures as threats, which can lead to

violence. We saw this many times during (recent) Ebola outbreaks and we have all seen this many, many times during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Put simply: mistrust kills. When science is not only ignored but derided, when the decision to wear masks becomes controversial and when the web is filled with absurd rumours, trust in the tremendous efforts to stop the pandemic is severely undermined. When mistrust prevails, it stops people from getting the help they need, and it prevents us from ending pub-

lic health emergencies. It can even lead to people incorrectly blaming 'others' — foreigners, migrants or other minority groups — for the spread of an illness."

Mr Chapagain went on to share the IFRC's deep concerns about pervasive inequality and inequity in the distribution of COVID-19 vaccines worldwide. According to IFRC analysis, less than 1 per cent of COVID-19 vaccine doses globally have been administered in the 32 countries currently facing severe or very severe humani-

tarian crises.

Mr Chapagain said: "People trust us for our actions. They look at what we do, and they judge us for what we do not do. They see, clearly, the current high levels of vaccine inequity and inequality.

"Equity is not something that happens on its own. History tells us this. Just as we need to ensure that all countries can access vaccines, we also need to make sure that those vaccines reach the arms of all the people who need them.

*SOURCE: IFRC*



**BAY INFERENCE:** Weather is a few cloud over the Andaman Sea and Bay of Bengal.

**FORECAST VALID UNTIL AFTERNOON OF THE 18 February, 2021:** Light rain or thundershowers are likely to be isolated in Upper Sagaing, Taninthayi regions and Kachin, Shan States. Degree of certainty is (60%). Weather will be partly cloudy in Chin, Kayah, Kayin, Mon states and generally fair in the remaining Regions and States.

**STATE OF THE SEA:** Seas will be moderate in Myanmar waters. Wave height will be about (4-7) feet off and along Myanmar Coasts.

**OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS:** Likelihood of isolated rain or thundershowers in Naypyitaw, Sagaing, Mandalay, Bago, Yangon, Ayeyawady, Taninthayi regions and Kachin, Shan, Chin, Rakhine, Kayah States.

**FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 18 February, 2021:** A few cloud.

**FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 18 February, 2021:** A few cloud.

**FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 18 February, 2021:** A few cloud.

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## EU to launch programme for 'second generation' Covid-19 vaccines



People spend time at a cafe in Brussels, Belgium. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

THE EU will launch a programme to study Covid-19 variants and produce "second generation" vaccines against future strains, the bloc's president has said.

The "HERA incubator" programme, which begins Wednesday, will bring together the pharmaceutical industry,

laboratories, health authorities and researchers, Ursula von der Leyen told French daily *Les Echos* on Tuesday.

"The virus has evolved and will continue to evolve," said a spokesperson for the bloc -- which has been criticized for its a slow rollout of vaccines so far.

"It is important we prepare

for mutations."

Member states will also be asked to contribute additional funds so the EU can adapt and modify contracts already signed with vaccine providers and secure doses against future variants, Bloomberg reported.

The EU Commission did not comment when contacted by AFP. With delays to deliveries of three already-authorized vaccines by AstraZeneca, Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna, the EU's medicines regulator is under pressure from European capitals to speed more into service.

US pharmaceutical giant Johnson & Johnson is the latest to apply for authorisation for its coronavirus vaccine in the EU with a decision possible by the middle of March, Europe's drugs regulator said Tuesday.

—AFP ■

## Japan begins vaccinations targeting medical workers, New Zealand to lower COVID-19 alert level in Auckland

JAPAN on Wednesday began administering its first COVID-19 vaccines to medical workers, while New Zealand will lower its COVID-19 alert level in Auckland, in the latest developments of the COVID-19 pandemic in Asia-Pacific region.

Japan's first inoculations used the vaccine developed by U.S. pharmaceutical firm Pfizer and German partner BioNTech at the National Hospital Organization Tokyo Medical Centre.

New Zealand will lower the COVID-19 alert level in its largest city Auckland on midnight Wednesday after a three-day lockdown following five community cases found over the past four days.

Auckland will move to alert level 2 from level 3, and the rest of New Zealand will go down to level 1 from level 2, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern told a press conference.

New Zealand reported three new cases of COVID-19, including two in the community and one in managed isolation.

Indonesia began the second phase of its massive COVID-19 vaccination programme targeting 38.5 million people including market traders, senior citizens, educators and religious figures.

Elected representatives,

government officials, police and military personnel, security guards, journalists as well as workers in hospitals, transportation offices and tourism industries are also included.

The COVID-19 cases in Indonesia increased by 9,687 in the past 24 hours to 1,243,646, with the death toll adding by 192 to 33,788, the Health Ministry said.

The Maldives has inoculated over 50,000 people against COVID-19, local media reported. Data from the Health Protection Agency (HPA) showed that 6,230 people were vaccinated on Monday, raising the

country's total number of vaccinated to 50,047.

Thailand confirmed 175 new cases of COVID-19 infection, mostly domestic, according to the Centre for the COVID-19 Situation Administration (CCSA). Of Wednesday's new cases, 168 were domestic infections while seven others referred to imported cases, CCSA spokesman Taweessin Visanuyothin told a press conference.

The Department of Health (DOH) of the Philippines reported 1,184 new COVID-19 cases, bringing the total in the Southeast Asian country to 553,424.

—AFP ■



Japan on Wednesday began administering its first COVID-19 vaccines to medical workers, while New Zealand will lower its COVID-19 alert level in Auckland, in the latest developments of the COVID-19 pandemic in Asia-Pacific region. **PHOTO: AFP**

## Joe Biden says vaccines available for all Americans by end July

US President Joe Biden said Tuesday that all Americans will have access to Covid-19 vaccines before August.

Biden has previously predicted that vaccines might be available to all by spring, but the White House has recently toned down its optimism, citing difficulties both with availability of vaccines and ability to deliver them.

Asked when all Americans would be vaccinated, Biden told a CNN town hall meeting with members of the public: "By the end of July this year."

"By the end of July we'll have 600 million doses, enough

to vaccinate every American," he said.

Biden also said that he wanted a faster return of children to schools and that he backs vaccinations for teachers. Authorities should "move them up in the hierarchy."

Asked at the town hall session when life would get back to normal, Biden said "by next Christmas we'll be in a very different circumstance."

"A year from now I think that there'll be significantly fewer people that have to be socially distanced, have to wear a mask," Biden said, adding that he couldn't be sure. —AFP ■



US President Joe Biden said Tuesday that all Americans will have access to Covid-19 vaccines before August. **PHOTO: MLADEN ANTONOV/AFP**

## Trump health policies condemned by Lancet commission

40% of Covid-19 contractions and deaths in the United States could have been avoided, but for the policies and actions of former President Donald Trump, the widely-respected international medical journal *The Lancet* said in a report published last week.

The report by the Lancet Commission on Public Policy and Health in the Trump Era reviewed President Trump's health-related policies throughout his term. In particular his public comments on the coronavirus were condemned, particularly as his private knowledge and understanding of the virus painted a far gloomier picture than the one he portrayed in public. His underplaying of the seriousness of the virus, the promotion of false 'cures,' conspiracy theories and serious disinformation and misinformation,

at most times in conflict with professional advice he was receiving, and his dismissal of measures such as the wearing of masks were cited.

Other high-income G7 countries that were not subjected to the Trump administration's actions and statements fared far more favourably (on average by 40 per cent), than the United States, the report stated. At the time of writing there have been 27,536,548 cases reported in the United States, and 482,933 deaths.

On the basis of *The Lancet's* findings, 11,014,619 cases, and 193,173 deaths could have been avoided but for President Trump's policies and public statements.

The report, published Thursday, lashed the former president's health policies well beyond his handling of the coronavirus. —ANI ■



# New PM Draghi to unveil plan to rescue Italy from virus crisis

ITALY'S new Prime Minister Mario Draghi is due to unveil his rescue plan for the country on Wednesday, two weeks after he was called in to tackle the coronavirus crisis.

The former head of the European Central Bank (ECB), known as "Super Mario" for his role in saving the euro, was scheduled to address the Senate before submitting his government to a vote of confidence.

The lower house of parliament, the Chamber of Deputies, was due to hold its own vote on Thursday -- although there is little suspense, as he has the support of almost all the main political parties. Italy has high hopes of the 73-year-old economist, who has already gone down

in history with a 2012 speech in which he pledged to do "whatever it takes" to shore up the European single currency.

In his new mission, Draghi needs equal determination.

He was sworn in on Saturday as Italy's 30th prime minister in 75 years of republican history, ending a month-long political crisis that played out in the middle of a raging coronavirus pandemic.

The country's death toll is approaching 100,000, and there is rising concern about a new surge in cases brought about by the spread of British, Brazilian and South African variants.

Meanwhile, the economy shrank by almost nine per cent last year, one of the worst re-



Italy's new Prime Minister Mario Draghi is due to unveil his rescue plan for the country on Wednesday, two weeks after he was called in to tackle the coronavirus crisis. **PHOTO: AFP**

sults in the eurozone, and close to 450,000 people lost their jobs -- mostly women and young people.

In a short acceptance speech

on February 3, after President Sergio Mattarella asked him to form a government, Draghi called for national unity in the

face of a "difficult moment".

## Long-awaited overhaul

He listed as his immediate priorities "defeating the pandemic, completing the vaccination campaign and relaunching the country" with the "extraordinary resources" offered by the European Union.

Italy expects to receive more than 200 billion euros (\$240 billion) from the EU's post-coronavirus recovery fund, but in return, it is expected to commit to potentially difficult or unpopular reforms.

The Senate speech will give Draghi the chance to finally unveil his agenda for the country, after weeks in which he hardly spoke in public, working mostly behind the scenes. —AFP ■

## In UK, volunteers to be infected with Covid-19



UK is one of the hardest-hit countries by coronavirus with more than 118,000 deaths. **PHOTO: AFP**

A study which will expose volunteers to the coronavirus is to begin in Britain within a month after it gained approval from the country's clinical ethics body, the government said on Wednesday.

The study, the first of its kind in the world, will expose up to 90 volunteers between 18 and 30 years old to Covid-19 in a controlled environment, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy said.

The trial will look to establish the smallest amount of virus needed to cause infection, in order to help develop vaccines and treatments.

"While there has been very positive progress in vaccine development, we want to find the best and most effective vaccines for use over the longer term," Business Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng said. The study will "help accelerate scientists' knowledge of how coronavirus affects people and could eventually further the rapid development of vaccines," he said.

Britain, one of the hardest-hit countries in the world by the coronavirus with more than 118,000 deaths, was also the first Western nation to begin a Covid vaccination campaign. —AFP ■

## EU buys up to 300 million more Moderna jabs



The European Union has bought up to 300 million extra COVID-19 vaccine doses from US firm Moderna, European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen said on Wednesday. **PHOTO: AFP**

THE European Union has bought up to 300 million extra COVID-19 vaccine doses from US firm Moderna, European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen said on Wednesday.

The new deal, which she hailed as "good news", adds to the EU's vaccine stock as it strives to meet a target of fully vaccinating 70 per cent of adults by mid-September.

The commission now has access to a "portfolio" of 2.6 billion doses of three EU-authorised vaccines and three more prospective ones, to be provided this year and next, von der Leyen told a media conference.

Numerically, that is more than enough for the EU's 450 million inhabitants, with the excess going to neighbouring countries,

she said.

But another reason for such a big stock was to hedge against "the possibility for the virus to mutate", as is already being seen with variants, some of which appear to be at least partially resistant to some of the current vaccines.

"We will always have to be vigilant to be able, if there are escaped mutations, to fight them with improved vaccines," she said.

## Stuttering rollout

The terms of the new deal with Moderna, covering a firm order for 150 million doses late this year and an option for 150 million more next year, were kept secret under confidentiality clauses the commission has agreed with vaccine makers. —AFP ■

## Spanish police seize 4 million fake medical-grade masks

SPANISH police on Wednesday said they had seized around four million counterfeit medical-grade face masks at a hotel during a raid on a gathering that violated virus restrictions.

Officers found the masks inside cardboard boxes on the ground floor and in the warehouse of the hotel in Leganes on Madrid's southern outskirts,

police said in a statement.

The boxes were "ready to be transported" and marked as containing high-protection KN95 and FFP2 face masks, it said.

In addition, police found a printer that was capable of printing masks with the so-called CE mark, reflecting conformity to European standards. "The material which was seized leads

investigators to believe that non-approved masks were being put through a (CE-mark) printing process so they could be put on the market as certified masks," the statement said.

Police searched the hotel after being notified of a gathering of 48 youths that violated restrictions regarding the number of people allowed to meet up. —AFP ■



# German investor confidence leaps on reopening hopes



Many people in Germany will be waiting a long time to get their vaccination. **PHOTO: AFP**

GERMAN investor sentiment jumped in January amid growing confidence Europe's top economy will bounce back from the brutal blow of the coronavirus pandemic, data showed Tuesday.

The ZEW institute's monthly barometer measuring economic expectations in

Europe's largest economy rose 9.4 points to a new reading of 71.2 points in January.

It was the highest score since September, before the second wave of the pandemic hit.

The financial market experts polled "are optimistic about the future" and

"confident that the German economy will be back on the growth track within the next six months", ZEW president Achim Wam-bach said in a statement. In December, Germany tightened restrictions to curb the spread of the virus, closing most shops after a previous shutdown closed restaurants, bars, gyms and cultural activities.

Last week Chancellor Angela Merkel and state leaders extended the measures until March 7 but raised the prospect of a gradual reopening if new infection numbers continue to fall and highly contagious variants can be kept at bay. —AFP ■

## Iran, Russia start joint naval drill in Indian Ocean

THE Iranian and Russian militaries have kicked off a joint naval drill in the Indian Ocean aimed at boosting security of maritime trade in the region, Iran's state TV reported on Tuesday.

The TV said units from Iran's Navy and the powerful Revolutionary Guard's navy will take part in the exercise dubbed "Iran-Russia Maritime Security Belt 2021" in the northern part of Indian Ocean, spanning a stretch of about 17,000 kilometers (10,600 miles).

According to Iranian Adm. Gholamreza Tahani, the drill spokesman, a Russian destroyer, logistics ship and a helicopter were

to participate in the drill. This is the second such joint Russia-Iran exercise since 2019, when the two nations plus China held a four-day exercise.

Tehran has been seeking to step up military cooperation with Beijing and Moscow amid regional tensions with the United States. Visits to Iran by Russian and Chinese naval representatives have also increased in recent years.

In the last few months, Iran has stepped up military drills as the country tries to pressure US President Joe Biden over the JCPOA nuclear accord, which he has said America could reenter.

Last Thursday, Iran's



In this photo released Feb. 16, 2021, by the Iranian army, a Russian warship enters Iranian waters for a joint naval exercise with the Iranian navy and Iran's Revolutionary Guard navy. **PHOTO: IRANIAN ARMY/AFP**

Revolutionary Guard conducted a ground forces drill near the border with Iraq in which drones, helicopters and military tanks were used.

In January the Guard conducted a drill and launched anti-warship ballistic missiles at a simulated target in the Indian Ocean. —AFP ■

## Millions struggle without power as cold snap grips US



Residents clear snow from a sidewalk on February 16, 2021 in Chicago, Illinois. **PHOTO: AFP**

MILLIONS were left without power as a winter storm gripped the southern and central United States Tuesday with record-low temperatures in ill-prepared areas, and a tornado claiming three lives.

More than 20 storm-related deaths have been registered so far, including in traffic accidents in

Texas, Kentucky and Missouri, according to local media.

In hardest-hit Texas, where freezing conditions prompted utility companies to implement rotating blackouts, a woman and girl died from carbon monoxide poisoning after using a car to generate heat, according to NBC News. —AFP ■

### NEWS

### IN BRIEF

#### Singapore hindu temple priest charged in \$1.5 million gold pawning case

THE former chief priest of Singapore's oldest Hindu temple has been charged with repeatedly pawning gold religious ornaments for a total of \$1.5 million, court officials said Wednesday.

Kandasamy Senapathi would redeem the pawned ornaments when he had raised enough money and return them to the temple, according to local media -- but his ruse was uncovered when he could not get enough cash to buy the gold back after the coronavirus pandemic hit. The 37-year-old Indian national worked at the Sri Mariamman Temple, a 194-year-old, ornately decorated place of worship in downtown Singapore that is popular with devotees and tourists alike. He is accused of having pawned the gold items five times between 2016 and 2020 when he was still chief priest. Temple authorities discovered the items were missing during an audit and he was arrested, and later stripped of his role as chief priest. Kandasamy later managed to redeem the gold items and returned them to the temple. The total pawn value of the items, which were frequently used in prayers, was more than Sg\$2.0 million (US\$1.5 million), according to court documents seen by AFP. The ornaments were supposed to be kept in the custody of the chief priest in the temple's inner sanctum. —AFP ■

#### 1 student shot dead, hundreds kidnapped by gunmen In Nigeria: Report

GUNMEN believed to belong to a criminal gang have kidnapped hundreds of schoolboys from their hostels along with some of teachers in central Nigeria, an official and a security source told AFP Wednesday.

The attackers wearing military uniforms stormed the Government Science College in "huge numbers" in the town of Kagara in Niger state late on Tuesday, herding the students into a nearby forest, the sources said. One student was dead during the kidnapping, the official said. Northwest and central Nigeria have increasingly been targeted by criminal gangs known locally as "bandits" who kidnap for ransom, rape and pillage across the region. "Bandits went into GSC Kagara last night and kidnapped hundreds of students and their teachers," said an official who asked not to be identified due to the sensitivity of the issue. "One of the kidnapped staff and some students managed to escape. The staff confirmed a student was shot dead during the kidnap operation," the official said. The school has around 1,000 students and it was not immediately clear how many were taken. —AFP ■

#### Hamas condemns Israel for blocking Covid-19 vaccines to Gaza

HAMAS on Tuesday blasted Israel's refusal to allow some 2,000 coronavirus vaccine doses destined for Gaza health workers through its blockade of the territory as a "violation" of international law.

The Palestinian Authority, based in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, had planned to send the Russian Sputnik V doses through Israel to Gaza, a separate territory run by Islamist movement Hamas. But on Monday evening, the PA health ministry said Israel had blocked the delivery. But on Monday evening, the PA health ministry said Israel had blocked the delivery. Israel's move marked "a real crime and a violation of all international laws and humanitarian standards," Hamas spokesman Hazem Qassem said. —AFP ■



# Hong Kong remains competitive as global financial hub: officials

AS trading resumed on Hong Kong's financial markets Tuesday after the Chinese Lunar New Year holiday, officials of the global financial center said Hong Kong has shown resilience and retained competitiveness over the past year despite the COVID-19 fallout.

While the pandemic put international markets to the test, Hong Kong's status as a financial hub has remained firm, showing strong momentum and making considerable progress, Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special



The pandemic has dealt a savage blow to Hong Kong's economy. PHOTO: AFP

Administrative Region (HKSAR) Carrie Lam said in her video speech at the Lunar New Year Open Market Ceremony

of Hong Kong's Chinese Gold & Silver Exchange. The gold price opened at 16,800 Hong Kong dollars (about 2,167.74 U.S.

dollars) per tael on Tuesday's morning session, down 250 dollars from the previous trading day. — Xinhua ■

## Australia casino group CEO resigns after laundering probe

ONE of Australia's biggest casino groups has seen a boardroom exodus after being declared unsuitable to hold a gambling licence, with the CEO of Crown Resorts becoming the latest executive to resign on Monday. A public inquiry last

week recommended Crown Resorts should be denied a licence to run a new multi-billion-dollar casino that dominates Sydney's skyline, over its failure to address allegations of money laundering and links to organised crime.

Crown Resorts CEO Ken Barton stepped down Monday after more than a decade with the firm, including as chief financial officer. He follows three directors out the door in the wake of the scathing re-

port into the firm, which was long run by media scion and billionaire James Packer. Two of the departed directors represented Packer's holding firm, CPH, which holds around 35% of Crown shares. — AFP ■

## Tokyo stocks close lower on profit-taking



Japan logged a trade deficit of 323.9 billion yen (\$3 billion) in January, according to finance ministry data released shortly before the opening bell. PHOTO: AFP

Tokyo stocks closed lower Wednesday on profit-taking, taking a pause after recent rallies. The benchmark Nikkei 225 index lost 0.58%, or 175.56 points, to 30,292.19, while the broader Topix index slipped 0.18%, or 3.59 points, to 1,961.49. "It is natural to see profit-taking after the Nikkei rose so fast in the past few weeks," said Shinichi Yamamoto, a broker at Okasan Securities in Tokyo.

Some dealers said the market was overheating, "but sentiment is not weak at all," Yamamoto told AFP. "Although investors tend to lock in profits at this level, the market is expected to remain bullish for now," he said. The dollar fetched 105.85 yen in Asian afternoon trade, against 105.99 yen in New York late Tuesday. Toyota fell 0.67% to 8247 yen after announcing plans to suspend 14 lines

at nine of its 15 automobile assembly plants in Japan for up to four days as parts procurement has been affected by an earthquake that hit the northeastern part of the country on Saturday. Procurement has also been affected by cold weather across parts of the United States. Among Toyota's rivals, Honda was up 0.88% at 3,088 yen and Nissan jumped 2.55% to 617.9 yen. Bridgestone lost 4.13% to 4,271 yen after announcing an annual net loss. Sony fell 0.32% to 12,200 yen and SoftBank Group lost 0.14% to 10,405 yen, both on profit-taking, but Nintendo gained 0.39% to 68,610 yen. Japan logged a trade deficit of 323.9 billion yen (\$3 billion) in January, according to finance ministry data released shortly before the opening bell. —AFP ■

### CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V ISEACO WISDOM VOY. NO. (1133S/N)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V ISEACO WISDOM VOY. NO. (1133S/N)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **18-2-2021** 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 LINES**

### CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V GREEN PACIFIC VOY. NO. (010N/S)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V GREEN PACIFIC VOY. NO. (010N/S)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **18-2-2021** 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 SAMUDERA SHIPPING LINE**

### Ministry of Transport and Communications Myanma Port Authority Open Tender Invitation

1. Myanma Port Authority is planning to construct the following vessel, funded by foreign currency USD (United States Dollar) only, within the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 fiscal years. Therefore, interested Tenderers are cordially invited to submit the complete project proposal for the following:

No	Particular	Currency	Tender closing date and time
1	Buoy Vessel (Multi-Purpose Buoy Handling Vessel) (1 unit)	USD Only	25-03-2021 13:00 PM

2. Tender forms can be purchased at the Main Store Department, New Strand Road (Concrete Road), near Tollgate, Botahtaung Township, Yangon, Myanmar, during the office hours, starting from 23<sup>rd</sup> February, 2021.
3. The Tender Submission will be accepted in terms of one tender two sealed envelopes system, i.e., Prequalification Bid and Price Bid to be submitted with each sealed envelope. The Explanation Session for the Prequalification Bid will be held at 13:00 PM on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2021, at the Meeting Room (First Floor) of the Head Office of Myanma Port Authority, No.10, Pansodan Street, Kyauktada Township, Yangon, Myanmar.
4. Should you need more detailed information, please contact us at +951-8610218, +951-8610225, and email: [arkar.mpa@gmail.com](mailto:arkar.mpa@gmail.com); [info@mpa.gov.mm](mailto:info@mpa.gov.mm).



## WTO needs to show results on economic crisis, vaccines: Okonjo-Iweala



Nigeria's Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala will take over leadership on March 1.  
**PHOTO: AFP**

NIGERIA'S Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, newly selected head of the World Trade Organization (WTO), said Tuesday she will push for concrete results in addressing the dual economic and health crises facing the globe.

Her immediate goals are to ensure vaccines are produced and distributed worldwide, not just for rich nations, and to resist the push toward protectionism that worsened during the pandemic, so that free trade can help

the economic recovery.

"I think the WTO is too important to allow it to be slowed down, paralyzed and moribund," she told AFP in an interview. "That's not right."

She will take over leadership on March 1 of an institution that has become weighed down and increasingly defanged, especially by the open hostility of Donald Trump's administration.

Amid the turmoil, including the US move that shutdown the dispute resolution court in De-

cember 2019 about complaints about handling of disputes with China, her predecessor stepped down last August, a year before his term was up.

Selected by the membership on Monday, after US President Joe Biden's administration backed her candidacy, Okonjo-Iweala promised to breathe fresh life into the trade body which she says has lost focus on helping improve living conditions for real people.

"I believe the WTO can contribute more strongly to a resolution of the Covid-19 pandemic by helping to improve access accessibility and affordability of vaccines to poor countries," she said.

"It's really in the self-interest of every country to see everyone vaccinated because you're not safe until everyone is safe."

Some countries, such as India and South Africa, have been pushing for a suspension of trade rules on patents to allow more rapid vaccine rollout.

But rather than get caught in another squabble among WTO members, Okonjo-Iweala said the organization could promote a quicker path. —AFP ■

## Coffee sector full of beans despite pandemic

AS cafes and office canteens shuttered worldwide due to the coronavirus pandemic, coffee growers feared 2020 would be a bitter year for business.

But the sector was saved from ruin by a blend of rising home consumption, good prices, and better-than-expected production yields in some countries.

### Coffee break

Synonymous with social interactions from business meetings to first dates, coffee too has been confined to the home for much of the last year, as millions of people worked from houses and apartments, still needing their caffeine fix.

As people became their own domestic baristas, supermarket sales partly made up for revenue lost to takeaway and sit-down coffees, with overall global sales falling by a less-than-expected 2.4 percent.

This despite flight bans se-

verely disrupting product movement and harvests.

According to the International Coffee Organization (IOC) in London, some 168.68 million bags of beans were harvested in the "coffee year" that ran from October 2019 to September 2020.

This was slightly more than the 164.53 million bags of coffee beans guzzled over the same period -- the third year in a row of production exceeding consumption.

A projected 1.9-per cent increase in global production in the 2020/21 year will yield an excess of 5.27 million bags, as out-of-home consumption of the beverage is likely to remain lower than usual, said the IOC.

With more supply than demand, this could spell a period of lower prices in a volatile market also swayed by harvest predictions and futures speculation.

—AFP ■



A man harvests coffee in the Santuario municipality, Risaralda department, Colombia, in May 2019. **PHOTO: RAUL ARBOLEDA AFP/FILE**

## Kuwait plans to shorten oil supply deals for some Asian buyers: sources



KPC officials said the state-run company's next oil supply contracts with Indian buyers would run from April to December rather than to March 2022. **PHOTO: AFP**

OIL producer Kuwait Petroleum Corp. (KPC) is in talks to shorten its annual supply deals with some customers in India and Japan to nine months this year to meet demand from its new refinery, sources close the matter told Reuters.

At a meeting with Indian refiners this month, KPC officials said the state-run company's next oil supply contracts with Indian buyers would run from April to December, the sources said, rather than to March 2022.

The fourth-biggest producer in the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)

said it would assess the situation in over October and November before committing supplies for the first quarter of 2022, the sources said.

The proposed change follows a decision by Iraq, OPEC's second-biggest producer, to cut its oil exports to India this year to comply with OPEC quotas just as Indian refiners ramp up output to meet a demand uplift as the world's third-largest crude importer emerges from the COVID-19 pandemic.

KPC's 615,000 barrel per day Al-Zour refinery, the country's fourth, is due to start operating to-

ward the end of the year, turning the nation into one of the biggest fuel producers in the region, the sources said.

"The company is aligning and arranging its contracts with customers as domestic demand will rise early next year. To avoid making any full-year commitment, KPC has cut the contract duration to nine months," said one of the sources, adding that KPC will again sign 12-month contracts from April 2022.

KPC did not respond to Reuters' emailed request for comment.

### Supply squeeze

Indian refiners had planned to ramp up imports of Kuwaiti oil this year after Iraq cut term supplies of its Basra Light grade this year, the sources said.

Bharat Petroleum Corp. has sought a 25% increase in its KPC supplies to 60,000 bpd with an option to buy an additional 50,000 bpd for 2021/22. The company had an option to buy 28,000 bpd in this financial year to March 31, the sources said. —AFP ■

## Ecuador ex-president who dollarized economy dies

FORMER Ecuador president Gustavo Noboa, who dollarized the economy in 2000, has died at the age of 83, President Lenin Moreno announced on Tuesday.

"Ecuador is in mourning. From tomorrow I will declare a national mourning in memory of Gustavo Noboa," said Moreno on Twitter.

Centrist Noboa, who was vice-president at the time, assumed the presidency in January 2000 when Jamil Mahuad was overthrown during a rebellion by soldiers and indigenous people.

Two months later, Ecuador

adopted the dollar in a bid to resolve a banking crisis in which spiralling prices threatened to bring hyperinflation to the South American country.

Moreno described Noboa as a "beloved friend, respected democrat, moral developer of youth, patriot."

Noboa died at the Jackson Memorial hospital in Miami where he underwent an operation on February 9 on a tumour on the brain.

Although the operation appeared to have gone well, he suffered a heart attack on Tuesday, local press reported. —AFP ■



# Princess Caroline’s husband sues son over German castle



Prince Ernst August of Hanover, the husband of Princess Caroline of Monaco, is suing his son to win back control of a German castle and prevent it from falling into public hands, a court said Tuesday. **PHOTO: AFP**

PRINCE Ernst August of Hanover, the husband of Princess Caroline of Monaco, is suing his son to win back control of a German castle and prevent it from falling into public hands, a court said Tuesday.

Ernst August, 66, gave his son the fairytale-like Marienburg castle and several other properties between 2004 and 2007, but now wants them back citing “gross ingratitude”, the district court of Hanover said in a statement. It is the latest public spat to hit the aristocratic family, whose patriarch has over the years been nicknamed “the party prince” and even “the brawling

prince” over his jet-set lifestyle and drunken escapades.

According to the court statement, Ernst August filed a lawsuit at the end of last year seeking to revoke the gifts of Marienburg Castle, the Calenburg manor house and a royal property in Herrenhausen.

He accuses his son, Ernst August junior, of acting against his wishes and going behind his back by offering Marienburg Castle to the state of Lower Saxony as public property - partly because of the huge costs of maintaining the mid-19th century Gothic-style building.

The plaintiff, who lives in

Austria, also accuses his son of improperly appropriating artworks and antiques owned by the family.

Ernst August senior estimates the total value of the disputed properties and items at some five million euros, the court said. Ernst August junior, 37, told German news agency DPA that the case had no merit, saying all the arguments raised “have already been invalidated out-of-court in the past”.

He said the deal struck to transfer ownership of Marienburg Castle to the regional authorities of Lower Saxony was “legally secure”. —AFP ■

# India bus plunges into canal, killing at least 40 passengers



Members of National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) conduct a rescue operation at the site of a bus accident near Patna village in Sidhi district, about 493 km east of Bhopal, the capital city of Madhya Pradesh, India, Feb. 16, 2021. **PHOTO: AFP**

AT least 40 passengers were killed and several others went missing on Tuesday after a bus carrying them skidded off the

road and plunged into a canal in the central Indian state of Madhya Pradesh, officials said.

Seven people survived the

accident and among them, some swam safely to the bank and others were rescued.

The accident took place near Patna village in Sidhi district, about 493 km east of Bhopal, the capital city of Madhya Pradesh. According to officials, the driver of the bus lost control over his vehicle and plunged into the canal, where it submerged completely in water. Following the accident, locals alerted the police who rushed to the spot to carry out searches for the missing.

“As of now 40 people were killed in this tragic accident,” an official at the district magistrate office Sidhi said. “The deceased include 21 men, 18 women and a child.” —Xinhua ■

# COVID-19 seen spurring hate speech against LGBTI in Europe, including Malta

HATE speech against LGTBI people in Europe and Central Asia has spiked during the coronavirus pandemic, a group defending their rights said on Tuesday.

Verbal attacks on members of lesbian, gay, trans, bisexual and intersex communities by politicians have risen in Albania, Azerbaijan, Bosnia, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Hungary, Italy, Kosovo, Latvia, Moldova, North Macedonia, Poland, Russia, Slovakia and Turkey, the ILGA-Europe federation said in its annual report surveying 54 countries.

Religious leaders in Belarus, Greece, Slovakia, Turkey

and Ukraine are also accused in the report of hate speech, with some of them alleging LGBTI people are behind the spread of COVID-19.

The federation, representing 600 associations, also pointed the finger at increased hate speech in online media in Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Malta, Montenegro, Russia and Turkey - and in mainstream media in some cases, notably in Slovenia and Ukraine.

“There has been a resurgence of authorities and officials using LGBT people as scapegoats,” ILGA-Europe’s chief, Evelyne Paradis, said. —AFP ■



Hate speech against LGTBI people in Europe and Central Asia has spiked during the coronavirus pandemic, a group defending their rights said on Tuesday. **PHOTO: AFP**

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Sweden readying to close gyms, restaurants, hair salons

Sweden, known for its softer approach to the pandemic, is preparing to use new legislation to close gyms, restaurants and hair salons ahead of a feared third wave of virus infections, the government said Wednesday.

Sweden in January adopted a pandemic law giving the government new powers to curb the spread of the virus.

The country has never imposed the type of lockdown seen elsewhere in Europe, controversially relying on mostly non-coercive measures.

It has however gradually tightened measures since November, including a ban on alcohol sales after 8:00 pm and on public gatherings of more than eight people. —AFP ■

### Blood banks in Yemen face severe shortage as demand surges

Blood banks in hospitals of Sanaa, Yemen’s capital, are having difficulty providing enough blood for those in need as the demand increases rapidly, a health official said on Tuesday.

Adnan Hakimi, technical director of the National Centre for Blood Transfusion and Research in Houthi-controlled Sanaa, said hospitals in the capital have seen a surging demand for blood as the war and economic crisis are creating more patients.

“We are facing a severe shortage of blood, which forces us to launch a blood donation campaign,” said Hakimi. —AFP ■



## Yangon United signs Magwe FC defender on loan

YANGON United confirmed that Magwe FC defender Hein Htet Sithu has joined the squad with two-year contract, according to the team statement.

The 21-year-old defender has expressed his feeling about joining the well-known

Myanmar domestic football club, Yangon United.

“I am proud to be here, and a dream come true. I will take time to adapt to the squad and learn from my senior players here. As the club already has its history and fans, I will

serve more for this team”, said defender Hein Htet Sithu.

Hein Htet Sithu started his youth professional life at National Football Academy in Mandalay from 2010 to 2015. He was selected in Myanmar National League U-18 team

in Myanmar National Youth League which was held in 2015. Next, he was offered by Magwe FC and played for U-21 team of Magwe FC for three consecutive years. Then he was selected for the senior squad of Magwe FC in 2019.

Again, he was chosen in Myanmar National teams and participated in Thanh Nien Newspaper International U-21 Competition in Viet Nam to secure the bronze medal for the team Myanmar.—GNLM ■

## Juventus forced to shuffle defence for visit to Porto

TURIN — Juventus will have to juggle their defence when they visit Porto in the Champions League on Wednesday in a round-of-16 first leg that will take Cristiano Ronaldo back to his native country.

Juventus coach Andrea Pirlo told an online press conference on Tuesday that central defender Leonardo Bonucci and Argentine midfielder Paulo Dybala are out of the game but Welsh midfielder Aaron Ramsey will return to the squad.

“Ramsey is available, Dybala is not ready and Bonucci is out,” Pirlo said.

Juventus had already announced that Colombian wing-back Juan Cuadrado would miss the game after suffering a thigh injury.

Dybala, out since mid-January with a knee problem, has



Juventus will have to juggle their defence when they visit Porto in the Champions League on Wednesday in a round-of-16 first leg that will take Cristiano Ronaldo back to his native country. **PHOTO: AFP**

resumed training but “is not ready to play”, Pirlo said.

“We’ve missed Dybala’s

goals a bit and we haven’t had him available often, we hope he can find continuity and he will

be like a new signing,” Pirlo said.

The coach said Bonucci

was “already not right” last week. He has had “another small physical problem” and is “not available”.

Both Dybala and Bonucci will make the trip to Portugal “because they all want to be close to the team,” said Pirlo.

Even without Bonucci, Juventus can choose between veteran club captain Giorgio Chiellini, 21-year-old Mattijs de Ligt and 22-year-old Merih Demiral at centre-back.

Chiellini said he was confident they would cope.

“All four of us are centre-backs of a high standard,” he said. “The team wins, we alternate, and there is a great feeling among us.”

At 36 and out of contract in June, Chiellini said he was not thinking “in the long term”. —AFP ■

## Liverpool stun Leipzig 2-0 to snap losing run



Liverpool’s Mohamed Salah and Sadio Mane were on target to snap a three-match losing run as their side stunned RB Leipzig 2-0 in the Champions League Round of 16 first-leg on Tuesday. **PHOTO: AFP**

BUDAPEST — Liverpool’s Mohamed Salah and Sadio Mane were on target to snap a three-match losing run as their side stunned RB Leipzig 2-0 in the Champions League Round of 16 first-leg on Tuesday.

Juergen Klopp has written off his team’s chances of winning back-to-back Premier League titles after they lost three successive domestic matches but they are alive in Europe.

They gained a clear advantage in their tie going into the March 10 return leg thanks to two blunders by Leipzig.

Salah easily intercepted a back pass by Leipzig’s Marcel Sabitzer to put the Reds ahead in the 53<sup>rd</sup> minute and on course for their first win in any competition since late January.

Mane then pounced on another mistake when Nordin Mukiele failed to clear a long ball five minutes later, leaving the Germans stunned in Budapest’s Puskas Arena where the game had been relocated due to COVID-19 restrictions in Germany.

“It was an important game for us, a tough game,” Liverpool captain Jordan Henderson said.

“Keeping a clean sheet was important for us. —AFP ■

## Melbourne to lift lockdown, allow fans at Australian Open

MELBOURNE — Stay-at-home orders will be lifted for 6 million residents of Victoria, Australia’s second-most populous state, on Wednesday (Feb 17), as officials determine the number of fans to let back in for the Australian Open tennis tournament.

A snap five-day lockdown had been ordered for Victoria state on Friday after a small outbreak of the more infectious UK coronavirus variant prompted fears that Australia’s successful battle to contain the pandemic could be undone.

State Premier Daniel Andrews said most mobility restrictions will be lifted at midnight, but masks will remain mandatory both indoors and outdoors when social distancing rules cannot be followed.

“In a broader sense, we are safe and open,” Andrews said in a televised media conference, but cautioned the latest outbreak had not yet been fully contained. The lifting of restrictions will allow at least some spectators at the Australian Open tennis tournament in Melbourne, where players have competed in empty stadiums during the lockdown.

“There will be meetings early this afternoon ... where we will go through what is a safe number and will get that decision made as soon as possible,” Andrews said.

The virus cluster linked to a hotel quarantining travellers returned from overseas has grown to 19 people, but there were no new cases reported on Wednesday. —AFP ■