

## NATIONAL

Rice, offertories donated to monasteries, nunneries in Pynmana, Pobbathiri townships

PAGE-3

## NATIONAL

COVID-19 vaccination starts in Nay Pyi Taw and Yangon Region

PAGE-6

# THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

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## Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Administration Council Chairman Senior General Min Aung Hlaing sends Message of Greetings on 73<sup>rd</sup> Anniversary Chin National Day

### Esteemed national brethren of Chin State,

All the national brethren living in Myanmar or abroad, apart from Chin State, I wish you all auspiciousness and prosperity on the 73<sup>rd</sup> Anniversary of Chin National Day.

After annexing entire Myanmar in 1885, the colonialists adopted the rule that divided the hill regions and plains. Chin people sacrificed lots of blood, sweat, and property, struggling to free the country from colonial rule. After regaining Independence in 1948, a mass conference was held in Falam, Chin State, and decided to change the administration system from the community leader (chieftain) ruling system to democracy. On 20 February, the mass meeting was held to replace the old administrative system with democracy. It was designated as the Chin National Day at the 7<sup>th</sup> Chin Traditional Council meeting held in Yangon on 9 October 1950. Chin National Day, which was initiated in 1948, reaches its 73<sup>rd</sup> Anniversary now. It

is a historic day for all the ethnic groups of Chin people who use a similar language and embrace the similar culture, historical tradition and custom.

Geographically, Chin State is formed by mountain ranges running from north to south and is also the place where natural resources like Khawnuson Mountain, which is the home to various species of fauna and flora, wonderful Reed Lake, Kaladan River, Manipur River, Bwenu River and Bontala Falls are located. Nature tourism will develop with added momentum, alongside the transport improvement.

During the past successive periods, Chin State was governed by consecutive generations of chieftains, community leaders and villages. The day on which the resolution was adopted to replace the old feudal system and colonial system with democracy. So, it is a historical day full of the essence for all the ethnic Chin races.

SEE PAGE-3

## Consultation with government agencies for implementation of Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) Agreement commences via videoconferencing

U AUNG NAING OO, Union Minister for Investment and Foreign Economic Relations delivered the opening remarks at the consultation with government agencies for the implementation of Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) Agreement which was virtually commenced on 19 February 2021.

The consultation was attended by U Than Aung Kyaw, Deputy Minister for Investment and Foreign Economic Relations, Director-Generals, senior officials and the representatives from the concerned ministries.

In his opening remarks, the Union Minister stated that the RCEP Agreement which is one of the mega trade pacts and virtually signed in witness of the leaders by 15 countries on 15 November 2020. He highlighted that Myanmar had enjoyed the benefits from the implementation of ASEAN plus one Free Trade Agreements.

The Union Minister mentioned that RCEP Agreement



Union Minister U Aung Naing Oo makes an opening speech at the consultation with government agencies to implement the RCEP Agreement, online on 19 February 2021.

would be delivered the opportunities for Myanmar business communities through the formulation of export promotion and import substitution policies and facilitating the foreign and citizen investment. He also underscored that RCEP would create job opportunities and technology transfer through investments.

Then, the Union Minister ex-

plained the public-private awareness programme of RCEP's provisions with the cooperation of the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (UMFCCI) and its affiliated associations and suggestions and comments from the private sector would be incorporated in the implementation work programme. He urged

the representatives from the concerned ministries, in order to support the private sector, to provide necessary inputs and recommendations for successful implementation of RCEP.

The Union Minister said that the Ministry of Investment and Foreign Economic Relations would act as a focal ministry to support the technical assistance

through international and regional organizations. He briefed the outline plan of implementation of RCEP Agreement that includes developing National Plan, organizing steering committee and working committees and the schedule of the ratification process. He also informed that the ratification of RCEP Agreement would be completed earlier than the previous schedule, and the Union Minister urged the officials to actively participate in the process of the ratification of the RCEP Agreement.

After that, the Deputy Minister explained the features of RCEP and the opportunities and obligations of the treaty. The Deputy Minister responded the queries of the participants regarding the implementation of the RCEP Agreement.

The series of this consultation with government agencies for the implementation of the RCEP Agreement will be continued until the first week of March 2021. —MNA

Republic of the Union of Myanmar  
State Administration Council  
Order No (75/2021)

8<sup>th</sup> Waxing of Tabodwe 1382 ME  
19 February 2021

Appointment of Deputy Minister

The State Administration Council has appointed U Aung Kyaw Tun as Deputy Minister for Transport and Communications, in accordance with Section 419 of the State Constitution.

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

Republic of the Union of Myanmar  
State Administration Council  
Public Notification

8<sup>th</sup> Waxing of Tabodwe 1382 ME  
19 February 2021

Although some persons sought to undertake medical treatment at the public hospitals, they did not get healthcare services as there were no doctors, nurses and other medical workers at the hospitals. People may complain about their losses to the Region/State Administration Council office, or its district/township offices.

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

- 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.
- 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.

Soldier drunkenly took part in Monywa protest: report



PHOTOS of a soldier taken part in the protest in Monywa Township on 18 February was rampant on social media.

It was investigated that the soldier is Sergeant Clerk Than Lwin from No. 16 Light Infantry Battalion, and he arrived at the Oboe Prison ward to purchase foodstuffs on 17 February after he completed his security duty on 17 February night.

He drank liquor with some persons at a school and slept there.

The next morning, four men came there

with foods and more liquor, and they drank together there again. The men incited the soldier to take part in the protest, and he told their words.

Although he heard police telling him to leave the protesters, he remained silent in the crowds.

He stayed at the Shwe Nadi Guest House after the protest, and he returned to his battalion after he woke up at 2 am.

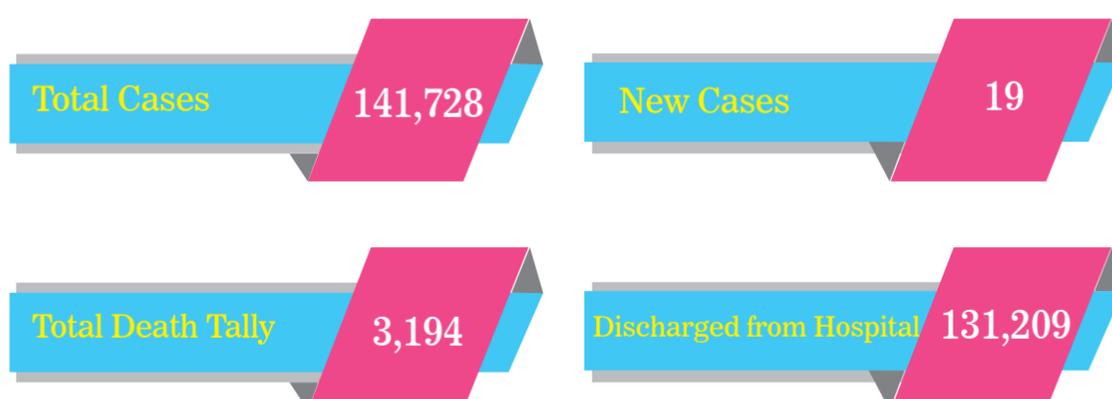
He will be charged with the disciplinary rules of the armed forces accordingly.—MNA

Sergeant Clerk Than Lwin reportedly took part in Monywa protest while intoxicated.

19 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 19 February, total figure rises to 141,728

MYANMAR'S COVID-19 positive cases rose to 141,728 after 19 new cases were reported on 19 February 2021 according to the Ministry of Health and Sports. Among these confirmed cases, 3,194 died, 131,209 have been discharged from hospitals.—MNA

Updated at 8 pm, 19 February 2021



Daily death toll until 8 pm 19-2-2021



Ministry of Health and Sports

## Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Administration Council Chairman Senior General Min Aung Hlaing sends Message of Greetings on 73<sup>rd</sup> Anniversary Chin National Day

**FROM PAGE-1**

Chin people joined hands with other nationalities in the anti-colonialist, anti-fascist and Independence struggles. Since the Independence has been restored, Chin nationalities have been living in unity and weal or woe in Union along with other national races. As there are love and unity among the Chin people, naturally, Chin State is peaceful and stable.

The government has been prioritizing the work of building new roads and upgrading the existing ones to improve the once-poor transport of Chin State. It is also opening primary education schools, repairing the education facilities, increasing the teacher strength, opening more hospitals and clinics and providing more doctors for the residents' socio-economic development.

The government is also extending the reach of the national grid in Chin State, implementing the first airport project of the State in Falam and Kaladan basic development project in Paletwa. All the projects are showing signs of marked progress. Chin nationalities should join hands with the State that is implementing the regional development undertakings for them.

The State is working intending to promote further the traditions, culture, customs, language, literature and rights of the ethnic races. I would urge Chin national

aces to preserve and promote their language, literature, culture and traditions. A diversity of cultures, customs, languages, and kinds of the literature of the national races is like the country's multiple eye-catching decorations. So, I would urge all the ethnic races of the country to beautify the Union through the enhanced culture, custom, language and literature conservation and promotion programmes.

Although ethnic Chins has different languages and kinds of literature area-wise, they must use it as a strength that comes from the unity in diversity for the harmonious development of the entire Chin State and producing qualified human resources. Like the au' chin bird (hornbill) that has united the Chin as a whole race, loyalty, honesty, and justice are the characteristics of today's Chin people. These subtle characteristics must be preserved and protected.

Placing in the force of the national cause, the Tatmadaw has striven together with the people for ten years on the path to multiparty democracy to successfully build a Union, aspired by the entire nationalities, where, democracy, equality and discipline flourish. In all seriousness, I would urge all the Chin brethren to continue to join hands with all other nationalities in partaking in the task with strong Union spirit.

## Rice, offertories donated to monasteries, nunneries in Pyinmana, Pobbathiri townships

THE Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture held the 3<sup>rd</sup> rice donation ceremony at Mingalar Byuhar Sasana Beikman in Pyinmana Township of Nay Pyi Taw Union Territory yesterday.

The donation aimed for the monasteries and nunneries in Pyinmana and Pobbathiri townships.

Five monks, including Ovadacariya of Uppatasanti Pagoda Board of Trustees Patron Sayadaw Agga Maha Pandita Agga Maha Saddhamma Jotikadhaja Bhaddanta Vimala Bodhi of Mingalar Zeyone Pali Takkattho Monastery and Union Minister for Religious Affairs and Culture U Ko Ko, the Permanent Secretary, Directors-General, Deputy Permanent Secretaries and other

officials attended the ceremony.

Firstly, the Union Minister and party took five precepts from Presiding Sayadaw Bhaddanta Vimala Bodhi of Mingalar Zeyone Pali Takkattho Monastery and listened to Yadana Sutta, Metta Sutta and Pubbana Sutta recited by Sayadaws.

Then, Union Minister presented the donations for the monasteries in Nay Pyi Taw, especially in the COVID-19 pandemic— 852 rice bags in May 2020, 914 rice bags in October; reopening of pagodas across the nation starting 8 February 2021 and efforts for the propagation of Pariyatti, Paripatti and Sasana.

The Union Minister and party donated the offertories and rice to Sayadaws, and Sayadaw



Union Minister U Ko Ko and party are taking five precepts from and listening to the Suttas recited by the Sayadaws at the donation ceremony in Pyinmana Township on 19 February 2021.

Bhaddanta Vimala Bodhi delivered a sermon. The Ministry donated a total of 214 rice bags— 113 rice bags to 10 monasteries and 4 nunneries in Pyinmana Township and 101 rice bags to 6 monasteries and 3 nunneries in Pobbathiri township.—MNA

## 137 courses for diploma, postgraduate in medical education to be conducted

A total of 2,082 trainees will be allowed for 137 courses of diploma and postgraduate at medical universities and related universities under the Ministry of Health and Sports in 2021 academic year.

The applications for these courses shall be submitted commencing 2<sup>nd</sup> week of February.

| Sr    | University                         | Diploma | M.Sc | Doctorate | Total |
|-------|------------------------------------|---------|------|-----------|-------|
| 1     | Universities of Medicine           | 7       | 31   | 47        | 85    |
| 2     | Universities of Dental Medicine    | 2       | 10   | 9         | 21    |
| 3     | Universities of Nursing            | 1       | 9    | 1         | 11    |
| 4     | Universities of Medical Technology | 1       | 3    | 3         | 7     |
| 5     | Universities of Pharmacy           | -       | 4    | 4         | 8     |
| 6     | University of Public Health        | 1       | 2    | 1         | 4     |
| 7     | University of Community Health     | -       | 1    | -         | 1     |
| Total |                                    | 12      | 60   | 65        | 137   |

# Interest of individuals through peace and stability of the country

He continued to say about legal actions against voter list errors, the systematic holding of elections after the State of Emergency, priority on the livelihood, peace, stability, the rule of law and peace processes and interest of individuals through peace and stability of the country.

*(Excerpt from the speech to the coordination meeting of the State Administration Council made by the Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Administration Council Chairman Senior General Min Aung Hlaing on 16 February 2021)*

## 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*

## 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.

## 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 |

## MoSWRR minister hears reports on works of conflict-related sexual violence prevention committee



Union Minister Dr Thet Thet Khine holds meeting with officials on prevention and response to conflict-related sexual violence.

UNION MINISTER for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Dr Thet Thet Khine, accompanied by the Permanent Secretary, Directors-General and Deputy Directors-General of Social Welfare Department, inspected the May May Yin Khwin kindergarten for under 3-year old and provided snacks, soy milk and toys to the children, yesterday.

Then, the Union Minister held a meeting with officials over the formation and work plans of national-level committee and work committee on prevention and response to conflict-related sexual violence.

During the meeting, the Union Minister talked about a wide range of work at the

ministry, cooperation work between UN, NGOs, CSOs and other related ministries, implementation of policies and international agreements for the development of the country and good drive in implementing the work plans.

The Director-General and Director of Social Welfare Department then presented the organization and assignment of national committee and work committee on prevention and response to sexual violence in conflicts, the related figures and work plans of national level.

Union Minister coordinated the discussion and instructed the necessary things.—  
MNA



The mini-buses and buses are seen ferrying the civil service personnel from/to their living quarters to/from the workplaces and departments concerned in Nay Pyi Taw on 19 February 2021. These are the welcoming signs for those who still fail to return to work to serve the people and the country.



## Announcement of COVID Vaccination Fund Management Sub-Committee

FROM 11-2-2021 to 18-2-2021, local / foreign donors contributed 1.010 million Kyats to the COVID-19 Vaccination Fund Myanmar currency account OA 013733 opened at the Myanma Economic Bank (Nay Pyi Taw). The status of the fund account as of 18-2-2021 is as follows:

### COVID-19 Vaccination Fund OA-013733 List

Kyat

Account opening balance on 11-2-2021 30,109,148,115.39  
Received amount of money from (11-2-2021 to 18-2-2021) 1,010,000.00

**Closed balance on 18-2-2021 30,110,158,115.39**

### COVID-19 Vaccination Fund EDC 600012 List

USD

Account opening balance on 11-2-2021 178,140,149.53  
Received amount of money from (11-2-2021 to 18-2-2021) -

**Closed balance on 18-2-2021 178,140,149.53**

## NOTICE TO INFORM

THE Myanmar Police Force has issued a statement saying to report about those who have been issued the arrest warrants, for peace and stability in the country.

The statement said that a state of emergency had been declared in the country since 1 February 2021, in accordance with Article 417 of the 2008 State Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and efforts are being made to ensure the rule of law and regular functioning of the state machinery. Meanwhile, Min Ko Naing (a) Paw Oo Tun, Kyaw Min Yu (a) Jimmy, Htwe Lin (a) Lin Lin, Innsein Aung Soe, Myo Yan Naung Thein, Eaint Poe U (a) Ei Pansalo and Maung Maung Aye have been charged under Section 505 (b) of the Penal Code in the relevant courts for writing articles and speeches by using their popularity on social media that could harm the peace and order of the country, and the relevant courts have issued arrest warrants under the Code of Criminal Procedure.

As every citizen is responsible for the stability and peace of the country, if you find any fugitives mentioned above or if you have information about them, report to the nearest police station or call the telephone numbers issued in each state, region and Nay Pyi Taw and those who receive them will be taken action in accordance with the law.

## COVID-19 vaccination starts in Nay Pyi Taw and Yangon Region

THE Department of Public Health in Nay Pyi Taw Union Territory has been COVID-19 vaccinating officials of Union-level ministries at the Nay Pyi Taw Municipal Guesthouse since 18 February, and a total of 457 officials from the 6 Union-level ministries were vaccinated yesterday.

Similarly, the Department of Public Health in Yangon Region have vaccinated a total of 171 people in Hmawby Township, 540 people in Mingaladon Township and 14 people in Mayangon Township, respectively.—MNA



## 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 8th April.—MNA

## New pandemic cases reduced by half since January



The new phase of vaccinations was launched at Jakarta's Tanah Abang textile market. **PHOTO: ADEK BERRY/ AFP**

THE Covid-19 pandemic has seen a sharp slowdown in the number of new cases, which have been cut in half from a peak in early January, according to data gathered by AFP.

Here is the state of play worldwide:

### Fewer than 400,000 cases per day

The number of new daily cases this past week dipped to its lowest level in four months, standing at 362,000, according to an AFP tally to Thursday.

New infections dropped by 12 per cent over the week, after reaching a record 743,000 in the first half of January.

Since that peak the number of new cases worldwide has dropped by half (51 per cent less). It is the sharpest and most

prolonged decline since the start of the pandemic.

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

### Middle East exception

The only region to see an acceleration of the pandemic was the Middle East, where new cases increased by 11 per cent.

Every other area of the world saw a slackening off, with cases down 28 per cent in the United States and Canada, nine per cent in Africa, Asia and Europe, and seven per cent in Latin America and the Caribbean.

### Steepest falls

The biggest decrease was in Portugal, where the number

of new cases dropped by 51 per cent, at 2,100 new cases per day.

Bolivia had the next big drop at minus 41 per cent, (800 cases per day), Spain (minus 37 per cent, 11,500), the United States (28 per cent fewer, 72,800) and Colombia (minus 26 per cent, 4,700).

### Biggest spikes

Iraq for the second consecutive week is the country where the epidemic is picking up most speed, with 62 per cent more, or 2,900 new cases per day.

Iraq has re-imposed partial lockdown measures after detecting the UK-based strain of the virus, which is thought to be more contagious than earlier forms. Jordan follows with 44 per cent more, or 2,100 new cases, then Hungary (23 per cent, 1,700), Poland (18 per cent, 6,300) and Austria (15 per cent more, or 1,500 cases).

The ten sharpest rises of the week were recorded in the Middle East and Europe.

### US still has most cases, deaths

Although seeing a major decline in cases, the US remains the country with by far the highest number of new infections, with 72,800 per day on average, a 28 per cent decrease over the previous week. —AFP ■

## Pfizer first dose 85% effective after 2-4 weeks: study

THE first dose of the Pfizer vaccination is 85 per cent effective against coronavirus infection between two and four weeks after inoculation, according to a study published in the Lancet medical journal.

The survey was carried out on healthcare workers at the largest hospital in Israel, which on December 19 launched a mass vaccination campaign regarded as the world's fastest.

Israeli studies have found the Pfizer vaccine to be 95 per cent effective one week after a second jab, while the Lancet report focused on more than 9,000 medical staff at Sheba hospital near Tel Aviv.

Some 7,000 of them received the first dose and the rest were not inoculated.

From the group, 170 were diagnosed with Covid-19 after tests carried out only on those showing symptoms or who had been in contact with coronavirus

carriers.

Fifty-two per cent of them were found to have not been vaccinated.

Comparing the two groups, the Sheba study calculated that the vaccine was 47 per cent effective between one and 14 days after inoculation, rising to 85 per cent after 15 to 28 days.

"What we see is a really high effectiveness already right after

two weeks, between two weeks to four weeks after vaccine, already high effectiveness of 85 per cent reduction of symptomatic infection," Gili Regev-Yochay, co-author of the study, told a small group of journalists. He said that despite the vaccine being "amazingly effective", scientists are still studying whether fully vaccinated people can transmit the virus to others. —AFP ■



An Israeli health worker prepares to administer a dose of Pfizer-BioNTech coronavirus vaccine inside a van in the Israeli coastal city of Tel Aviv-Jaffa. **PHOTO: AFP**

## Allianz upbeat despite rare drop in annual profit

GERMAN insurance giant Allianz on Friday reported a drop in annual net profit for the first time since 2011, with natural disasters and the coronavirus pandemic taking their toll.

Net profit came in at 6.8 billion euros in 2020, down 14 per cent, the group said in a statement. Operating profit was 10.8 billion euros, down 9.0 per cent, weighed down

partly by 1.3 billion euros in pandemic-related costs.

The fourth quarter showed a more solid performance, with total revenues stable and operating profit up 8.2 per cent.

Costs linked to Covid-19 included payouts for cancelled events and suspended activities, with the group also feeling the pinch of lower premiums. —AFP ■

## Pfizer/BioNTech say vaccine can be stored at warmer temperatures



Germany's BioNTech and its US partner Pfizer on Friday said tests have shown that their coronavirus vaccine can withstand warmer temperatures than initially thought, potentially simplifying the job's complex cold-chain logistics. **PHOTO: AFP**

GERMANY'S BioNTech and its US partner Pfizer on Friday said tests have shown that their coronavirus vaccine can withstand warmer temperatures than initially thought, potentially simplifying the job's complex cold-chain logistics.

The companies said they have asked the US Food and Drug Administration to allow for the vaccine to be stored for up to two weeks at -25 to -15 degrees Celsius, temperatures commonly found in pharmaceutical freezers and refrigerators.

Under the existing guidelines, the BioNTech/Pfizer jab needs to be stored at a frigid -80 to -60 C until five days before use, a delicate process that requires special ultra-cold containers for shipping and dry ice for storage.

"If approved, this new storage option would offer pharmacies and vaccination

centres greater flexibility in how they manage their vaccine supply," said Pfizer CEO Albert Bourla in a statement.

The BioNTech/Pfizer jab, based on novel mRNA technology, was the first vaccine against COVID-19 to be approved in the West late last year.

It was soon followed by US firm Moderna's vaccine, which uses similar technology but can remain stable at minus 20 C for six months and at normal fridge temperature for up to 30 days.

Another approved shot, developed by AstraZeneca/Oxford, uses more traditional vaccine methods and can be stored and shipped at standard fridge temperatures.

BioNTech CEO Ugur Sahin said BioNTech and Pfizer were continuing to work on "new formulations that could make our vaccine even easier to transport and use". —AFP ■

# Improving weather systems key to reducing extreme weather events

The world's poorest countries bear the brunt of climate change's wrath. They are shouldering the mortality burden to climate change-induced catastrophes such as storms, flooding, and heatwaves.

Almost half a million people have been killed in natural disasters linked to extreme weather events in the last 20 years.

In 2020 - one of the three hottest years on record - the global average temperature was about 1.2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial times, according to the World Meteorological Organization.

An analysis of more than 11,000 extreme weather events showed nearly 480,000 fatalities since 2000, with Puerto Rico, Myanmar, and Haiti the worst-hit countries.

Our country is also experiencing major disruptions from more intense droughts, fires, heatwaves, floods, destructive tropical cyclones and other extreme events.

The situation has underlined the capacity building needs of our meteorological and hydrological system through enhancing our operational staff's understanding of severe weather and impact-based forecasting and warning services.

This must include instruction on communicating warning services to the key stakeholders and users, including disaster risk managers, media, and the general public.

The Disaster Risk Reduction sector has sought to shift disaster-prone countries' focus from response preparedness, where actions plans are simply put in place to deal with the aftermath of disasters, to disaster risk reduction, where a greater level of resilience is built into communities to make them more able to endure disasters.

Weather disasters are being affected by climate change that is caused by humans. Extreme weather conditions and changing patterns of precipitation can lead to a decrease in crop productivity.

The devastation can be worsened if we fail to invest in building resilience, despite the evidence of runaway climate change.

Now, we're in a pattern of increasingly frequent and severe weather. A once-in-a-century event seemingly occurs every year. The extreme is the new norm.

These situations stressed the need to develop ecosystem management practices and establish institutional capacities for vulnerability assessment at the national level.

The improvement of the effectiveness of emergency preparedness, response and recovery efforts is key to reducing the impact of shocks on vulnerable people and their livelihoods, and reducing the humanitarian burden.



# WHO waits on COVID vaccine makers to uphold pledges

## The World Health Organization on Thursday urged COVID-19 vaccine manufacturers to make good on their commitments as the planet's poorest countries await their first doses.

WHO director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said the Covax facility—the global COVID-19 vaccine procurement and distribution effort ensuring poorer countries can access doses—was now ready to begin.

Around 336 million AstraZeneca-Oxford doses and 1.2 million Pfizer-BioNTech doses—the only two vaccines with WHO approval—are set to start being shipped out later this month through Covax.

"At the beginning of the year I issued a call to action to ensure that vaccination of health workers was under way in all countries within the first 100 days of the year," Tedros told a news conference.

Friday "marks the half-way point, and we have made progress, but we are not there yet."

"With the emergency use listing of two versions of the AstraZeneca vaccine this week, Covax is ready to roll out vaccines

and is waiting for several manufacturers to make good on their commitments," he said, without elaborating.

**Concerns for small states**  
On Monday, the WHO gave the seal of approval to the AstraZeneca vaccine being manufactured in plants in India and South Korea, meaning it can now be shipped out via Covax.

The facility is set to issue its final distribution list for the first wave of deliveries next week. The first doses will be delivered by the end of February, with the bulk in March.

Around 145 economies are set to receive enough doses to immunise 3.3 per cent of their collective population by mid-2021.

During his news conference, Tedros noted that countries in Europe—which have been striking their own deals with manufacturers—were aiming to vaccinate 70 percent of their populations in a similar same time frame.

Trinidad and Tobago's Prime

Minister Keith Rowley, chairman of CARICOM, the 15-member Caribbean Community, voiced fears that small states, lacking bargaining power, would be shut out of the global vaccination drive.

**'Invisible destroyer'**  
"As there is the understandable rush to receive the vaccines and inoculation of our various populations, we are more than a little bit concerned that there is, or is to be, hoarding and price-gouging as well as undue preference in some quarters," Rowley told the WHO press conference, via video-link.

"We are all yoked to an invisible destroyer. It is my hope and plea that... on this occasion, the rich take care of the poor."

"All we ask as members of the family of nations is that we not be forgotten, ignored—or worse, taken advantage of in this business of life and death."

The WHO launched its annual Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan for 2021 on



Around 145 economies are set to receive enough doses to immunize 3.3 per cent of their collective population by mid-2021. PHOTO: AFP

Thursday, saying \$1.96 billion was needed to fund another year of battling the pandemic.

The plan's six objectives

are to suppress transmission; reduce exposure; counter misinformation; protect the vulnerable; reduce death and illness;

and accelerate equitable access to vaccines, diagnostics and therapeutics.

SOURCE: AFP

# COVID-19 vaccines online or in development

## With several COVID-19 vaccines either being rolled out or under trial, here is a rundown of the various stages of their development.

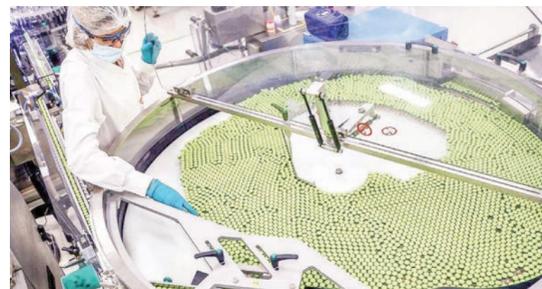
### On the market PFIZER/BIONTECH

The mRNA vaccine developed by US pharma giant Pfizer and German start-up BioNTech is already approved for use in the European Union, the United States, Canada, Britain and several other nations.

Clinical trials showed the vaccine, which delivers instructions to the body to help the immune system identify and destroy COVID-19 molecules, is more than 95 per cent effective.

**MODERNA**  
Another mRNA vaccine, with a 94.1-per cent efficacy rate, has been approved for use in the EU, North America, Britain, and several other nations, including Israel and Singapore.

**ASTRAZENECA/OXFORD**  
This viral vector vaccine is authorized for use in the EU,



The drugs giants racing to develop and produce new vaccines at scale in record time are international, but many of their global supply chains intersect in Belgium. PHOTO: KENZO TRIBOUILLARD/ AFP/FILE

Britain and other countries such as India.

It was shown to be 60 per cent effective in trials, but a relative lack of safety and efficacy data among older participants has led several countries to recommend against administering the vaccine

to those over 65.

**SPUTNIK V**  
Russia's vaccine works in a similar way to the AstraZeneca/Oxford jab, but has a 91.6-per cent efficacy according to trial results.

More than a dozen nations

have authorised its use, including Belarus, Armenia, Iran, Algeria, Argentina, South Korea and Venezuela.

Its makers have begun the process of asking for approval from the European Medicines Agency. Hungary is the sole EU member state that has started administering doses.

**SINOPHARM**  
Two vaccines developed in China use the traditional technique of injecting the deactivated virus in order to trigger an immune response.

As well as the United Arab Emirates, Hungary, Cambodia, Peru and Zimbabwe have all started administering the vaccine, which its makers say is 79 per cent effective.

**SINOVAC**  
The other Chinese-developed vaccine uses a similar technique

and is authorized for use in China, Chile, Brazil and Turkey.

Others such as Ukraine and Uruguay have pre-ordered doses.

Its makers say it is 50 per cent effective against COVID-19 (and 80 per cent effective against severe illness), but trial results have not yet been made public.

**JOHNSON & JOHNSON**  
The US pharma giant has asked for emergency use authorization for its single-shot vaccine in the US and EU.

South Africa became the first country to begin administering the Johnson & Johnson vaccine after saying it would prioritize its procurement over the AstraZeneca jab.

Trials showed it to be 66 percent effective against COVID-19 and up to 85 per cent effective against serious forms of infection.

**BHARAT BIOTECH**  
This inactivated virus vaccine is used currently in India.

**CANSINO**  
A Chinese-made viral vector vaccine was authorized for use in Mexico last week, but has not yet been administered to the public.

**NOVAVAX**  
This American vaccine is under rolling review by the EMA, which has the ultimate say on EU medical authorizations.

It is based on "sub-unit" proteins that trigger an immune response without delivering the whole virus. Its makers say it is 89.3 per cent effective.

**CUREVAC**  
The German vaccine entered EMA review last week. It uses similar technology to the Moderna and Pfizer/BioNTech jabs. SOURCE: AFP



## Myanmar Daily Weather Report (Issued at 7:00 pm Thursday 19 February, 2021)

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

**FORECAST VALID UNTIL NOON OF THE 20 February, 2021:** Rain or thundershowers will be fairly widespread in Shan States, scattered in Mandalay Region, Kachin and Kayah States and isolated in the remaining Regions and States. Degree of certainty is (80%).

**STATE OF THE SEA:** Strong easterly winds with moderate to rough seas are likely at times Gulf of Mottama, off and along Mon-Taninthayi Coasts. Surface wind speed in strong easterly winds may reach (30-35)m.p.h. Sea will be moderate elsewhere in Myanmar waters. Wave height will be about (6-9) feet in Gulf of Mottama, off and along Mon-Taninthayi Coast and about (4-6) feet in Deltaic, off and along Rakhine Coast.

**OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS:** Likelihood of isolated rain or thundershowers in Kachin, Shan and Chin States.

**FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 20 February, 2021:** Likelihood of isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (60%).

**FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 20 February, 2021:** Likelihood of isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (60%).

**FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 20 February, 2021:** Likelihood of isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (60%).

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## Coronavirus variants spreading rapidly in Germany, health minister warns

THE more contagious variants of coronavirus are spreading rapidly in Germany, Minister of Health Jens Spahn told journalists here on Wednesday.

In particular, the variant that was first detected in the United Kingdom (UK) is “causing us concern,” Spahn said. “We must expect that variant to soon become the dominant one in our country as well.”

The Robert Koch Institute (RKI) and laboratories in Germany have analyzed more than 23,000 positive polymerase chain reaction (PCR) tests. The results showed that the variant identified in the UK already accounted for more than 22 per cent of all new infections, according to Spahn.

Two weeks ago, the share of the variant known as B.1.1.7 in the examined samples stood at six per cent only, the RKI said.

“As has been observed in other countries, the share of infections with this variant of the virus doubles around every week,” Spahn said.

Germany’s daily coronavirus infection figures remained below the previous week’s level on Wednesday. A total of 7,556 new infections within one day were recorded, according to RKI. To date, more than 2.35 million infections have been registered in Germany since the outbreak of the pandemic.

Although the coronavirus variants continued to spread in Germany, Spahn noted that it was “encouraging” that the infection numbers were declining, showing that the anti-virus measures were working. However, in view of the rapid spread of variants, it remains important to be “very careful” with lockdown relaxations. —

Xinhua ■

## EU launches bio-defence preparedness plan against COVID-19 variants



A researcher at Aalborg University analyzes Danish coronavirus samples for the U.K. variant. **PHOTO: HENNING BAGGER/RITZAU SCANPIX/AFP**

THE European Union (EU) on Wednesday stepped up its efforts to detect and fight COVID-19 variants by bringing together various stakeholders to develop new and adapted vaccines.

A new project called “HERA Incubator” will gather researchers, biotech companies, manufacturers and public authorities in the EU and globally to detect new coronavirus variants, provide incentives to develop new and adapted vaccines, speed up

the approval process for these vaccines, and ensure the scaling up of manufacturing capacities.

The incubator will also serve as a blueprint for the EU’s long-term preparedness for health emergencies, the European Commission said in a statement.

“New variants of the virus are emerging fast and we must adapt our response even faster,” said European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen.

Thanks to the incubator,

Europe is “tackling parallel or subsequent series of pandemics deriving from the variants,” said European Commission Vice President Margaritis Schinas, adding that it is pooling resources to ensure solidarity across the EU and the world.

The EU will spend 75 million euros (90.3 million U.S. dollars) on detecting, analyzing and assessing virus variants by supporting genomic sequencing in its member states, and a further 150 million euros on stepping up research and data exchange on variants, according to the Commission. Mechanisms have also been devised to improve clinical trials and ramp up the production of COVID-19 vaccines.

The actions, the Commission said, are in preparation for the European Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority (HERA), which will be a permanent structure for risk modeling, global surveillance, technology transfers, supply chain risk mapping, flexible manufacturing, and vaccine and medicine research and development. —AFP ■

## V4 countries call for faster vaccine deliveries

THE prime ministers of Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia met in the southern Polish city of Krakow on Wednesday to discuss the COVID-19 pandemic and to mark the 30th anniversary of the Visegrad Group (V4) cooperation framework.

The four leaders jointly urged the European Union (EU) to step up COVID-19 vaccine production and distribution.

“We have discussed how we can strengthen the EU through accelerating the vaccination process and through solidarity in producing the vaccines within the EU,” Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki said at a press conference. “A true partnership cannot exist without solidarity and a responsible approach to the most challenging issues. The pandemic and vaccination are such issues.

“The fight against the pandemic needs to be expedited, while protecting the common

EU market and at the same time keeping the economic future in mind,” Morawiecki said.

The Visegrad Group is an informal alliance of central European countries based on common policy goals. The group was formed on Feb. 15, 1991. Its aim is to advance cooperation in military, cultural, economic and energy matters.

The four leaders also discussed the EU’s migration and climate policies, its relations with Belarus and Russia, and the Eastern Partnership. The meeting was attended by European Council President Charles Michel, who agreed that increasing vaccine production is a “top priority.” — Xinhua ■



Photo taken on Feb. 17, 2021 shows a scene of the Visegrad Group (V4) summit in Krakow, Poland. The prime ministers of Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia met in Krakow on Wednesday to discuss the COVID-19 pandemic and to mark the 30th anniversary of the Visegrad Group (V4) cooperation framework. **PHOTO: EUROPEAN UNION/HANDOUT VIA XINHUA**



Pedestrians wearing facial masks walk outside a COVID-19 test centre in Frankfurt, Germany, Jan. 20, 2021. **PHOTO: XINHUA/LU YANG**

## US to pay over \$200 mln to WHO

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Wednesday that the United States intends to pay over \$200 million in assessed and current obligations to the World Health Organization (WHO) by the end of this month.

“This is a key step forward in fulfilling our financial obligations as a WHO member,” Blinken said in his remarks to a virtue UN Security Council briefing on COVID-19.

“It reflects our renewed commitment to ensuring the WHO has the support it needs to lead the global response to the pandemic, even as we work

to reform it for the future,” he added.

Accusing the WHO of mishandling the pandemic, the previous Donald Trump administration last year announced US withdrawal from the organization and redirected its funding for the body to other UN assessments, which led to criticisms at home and abroad.

President Joe Biden, on his first day in office, reversed his predecessor’s decision of withdrawing from the WHO. — Xinhua ■

## Biden at G7 debut vows action on climate, Covid recovery

JOE Biden makes his presidential debut at the G7 on Friday as America's partners re-focus their collective heft on pandemic recovery and climate change after the psychodramas of the Trump era.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, this year's chair of the club of wealthy nations, will convene the virtual talks at 1400 GMT, vowing to free up any surplus coronavirus vaccines for poorer countries at a future date.

White House officials said Biden would pledge \$4 billion (4.6 billion euros) in US aid to the UN's Covax programme to buy vaccines for global dis-

tribution.

The European Union plans to double its own Covax funding to one billion euros, an EU source said.

But French President Emmanuel Macron demanded richer nations go further by transferring 3-5 percent of their existing stock to Africa.

"It's an unprecedented acceleration of global inequality and it's politically unsustainable too because it's paving the way for a war of influence over vaccines," he told the Financial Times, as Russia and China step up free or low-cost distribution of their own jabs. —AFP ■



Joe Biden makes his presidential debut at the G7 on Friday as America's partners re-focus their collective heft on pandemic recovery and climate change after the psychodramas of the Trump era. PHOTO: AFP

### NEWS IN BRIEF

#### Germany marks a year since deadly racist shooting

GERMANY on Friday marks a year since nine people were killed in a racist shooting in the city of Hanau, an assault that has fuelled fears of far-right terror in the country.

German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier will lead a commemorative event gathering 50 people, scaled down due to Covid-19 restrictions, in Hanau's Congress Park.

Businesses, schools and religious organisations in the city are also expected to hold their own commemorations. —AFP ■

## US seeks fallback Saudi bases in case of Iran tensions



Members of the Royal Saudi Land Forces and the US Army participate in a closing ceremony during one of their latest joint military exercises. PHOTO: SPA/AFP

THE US military is looking for fallback bases in Saudi Arabia to prevent its troops deployed there from becoming obvious targets in the event of tensions with Iran, a senior US military official said Thursday.

"We are not looking for

new bases. I want to be clear on that," said General Kenneth McKenzie, head of the US Army Central Command (Centcom), during a tour of the Middle East.

"What we would like to do, without shutting down these (current) bases ... is to have

the ability to go to other bases to operate in a period of heightened risk," he explained.

"These are things that any prudent military planner would want to do to increase their flexibility, to make it more difficult for the adversary to tar-

get them."

The Wall Street Journal reported on plans for ports and air bases in the kingdom's western desert, which the US military would seek to develop as positions to be used if war were to break out with Iran.

At the year's end, the US military deployed the aircraft carrier USS Nimitz to the region and had two B-52 bombers overfly the area. The show of force was intended to deter Tehran from carrying out any attack on US forces on the first anniversary of the assassination by the United States of top Iranian general Qassem Soleimani.

President Joe Biden's administration said Thursday it was ready to meet with Iranian officials under EU auspices to jumpstart diplomacy, and reversed Trump's widely derided contention that the United Nations had imposed new sanctions on Iran. —AFP ■

#### Indonesia volcano erupts, spews red-hot lava

INDONESIA'S Mount Merapi, one of the world's most active volcanoes, erupted on Friday, belching out fiery red lava.

The volcano, close to Indonesia's cultural capital Yogyakarta on Java island, had already spewed lava almost two dozen times over the two last days and caused hundreds of minor volcanic quakes, according to a report by Indonesia's geological agency.

"This morning, lava avalanches were observed seven times," the agency said, with the lava travelling up to 700 metres to the southwest. —AFP ■

#### UK's Prince Harry to lose all honorary titles

BRITAIN'S Prince Harry will relinquish his honorary military appointments and patronages after confirming to Queen Elizabeth II that he and his wife Meghan Markle will not return as working royals, Buckingham Palace announced Friday.

The Duke and Duchess of Sussex, as they are formally known, rocked the British monarchy when they quit frontline royal duties a year ago.

They have since embarked on a new life involving several commercial ventures in the United States, and now live in California. —AFP ■

## Saharan dust expected to hit Europe again this weekend

DUST and sand particles whipped up from the Sahara will once again blanket skies over Europe this weekend, impacting air quality, the European Union's Copernicus satellite monitoring service said on Friday.

It said wind predictions showed a "substantial plume" of Saharan dust would hit southern Europe over the weekend into next week, reaching as far north as Norway. Mark Parrington, senior scientist at the Copernicus Atmosphere Monitoring Service, said that like a similar event

earlier in February, the dust would likely be visible to the naked eye in the skies across Europe.

"Dust plumes from the desert can cause red skies, limited visibility or stains on cars and windows from dust deposition, but these impacts are difficult to predict quantitatively as far as four or five days in advance," he said. Parrington said it was likely that the "high concentrations" of dust would affect air quality and could have some health impacts.

A previous dust cloud in

early February darkened the skies in many regions of western Europe, carrying particu-

late concentrations "several hundred times" more than normal, Copernicus said. —AFP ■



Dust and sand particles whipped up from the Sahara will once again blanket skies over Europe this weekend, impacting air quality, the European Union's Copernicus satellite monitoring service said on Friday. PHOTO: AFP

## India police: Six killed in Kashmir fighting

ANTI-INDIA rebels in Indian-controlled Kashmir killed two police officers in an attack Friday in the disputed region's main city, officials said. Elsewhere in the Himalayan region, three suspected rebels and a policeman were killed in two gunbattles.

The violence came a day after diplomats from more than 20 countries stationed in India's capital concluded a two-day visit to the region.

Police said militants sprayed bullets at two policemen near a police station in Srinagar city. Both died later at a hospital.

A short video of the attack circulated on social media shows a man in a pheran, a Kashmiri tunic worn during the winter, taking out what appears to be an automatic rifle and shooting at the policemen. He then quickly runs away.

Police and soldiers searched the area and later detained a young man for questioning.

No rebel group immediately claimed responsibility for the attack.

In a separate incident, a gunfight erupted shortly after scores of counterinsurgency police and soldiers launched an operation late Thursday in a village in southern Shopian district following a tip that three militants were there, Inspector-General Vijay Kumar said.

All three were killed in an exchange of gunfire early Friday, Kumar said. He said police recovered two rifles and a pistol. Residents said government forces used explosives to blast a civilian house during the fighting, a common tactic by Indian troops in Kashmir. —AFP ■

## Gunfire in Mogadishu as political tensions soar

GUNFIRE broke out in Mogadishu on Friday as the opposition tried to march against delayed elections in the Somali capital where roads have been sealed off and heavy security deployed over the planned protest, witnesses said.

Months of political tensions over the holding of elections in the fragile Horn of Africa nation have burst into the open, prompting the United Nations to call for "calm and restraint".

Somalia missed a deadline to hold an election by February 8, when President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed, better known by his nickname Farmajo, was due to step down, creating a constitutional crisis.

Farmajo and leaders of the country's federal states have been unable to resolve squab-

bles over how the vote is to be conducted, after hopes of hosting Somalia's first one-person, one-vote ballot since 1969 were abandoned over security and political problems.

A coalition of opposition candidates have said they no longer recognize Farmajo as president and had vowed mass protests until he steps down, to begin on Friday.

A small group of protesters attempted to march down the main airport road, when the shooting started.

### 'Heavy explosion'

It was unclear who opened fire first, but one witness Yusuf Mohamed reported a "heavy exchange of gunfire" between security forces and armed guards protecting opposition supporters. —AFP ■

## Cyprus slams Turkey over asylum-seeker 'burden'



Asylum-seekers protest over delays in their application process and what they described as inhumane living conditions at Pournara camp, in Kokkinotrimithia, some 20 kilometres outside the Cypriot capital Nicosia, on February 1, 2021. PHOTO: AFP

CYPRUS hit out at Turkey on Friday for acts it said were behind the creation of a new migration route that had "disproportionally burdened" it with the EU's highest percentage of asylum-seekers.

The Republic of Cyprus, a member of the European Union

since 2004, has seen a surge in asylum-seekers in recent weeks and months.

Many enter by illegally crossing the UN-patrolled buffer zone that divides the island between the Greek-majority south and a breakaway Turkish Cypriot state in the north.

Cyprus said it has had the highest proportion of asylum applications in the EU for four consecutive years, at four per cent of its population compared with the bloc's average of close to one per cent.

"The overwhelming majority of migration flows originated from Turkey, a country that fails to implement all agreements regarding migration towards Cyprus," its foreign and interior ministries said in a joint statement. "In fact, Turkey's stance has led to the creation, rather than prevention, of a new migration route in the eastern Mediterranean, which disproportionately burdens Cyprus, and places enormous strain on the national asylum system."

Nicosia would raise "the extent of the migration crisis faced by Cyprus" in Brussels to ensure it "receives the assistance required to effectively address it", the statement said. —AFP ■

## French mountaineer's killing: Algiers trial opens

THE trial opened before an Algiers court on Thursday in the 2014 kidnapping and beheading of a French mountaineer claimed by a radical faction affiliated to Daesh.

Just one of the alleged kidnappers of 55-year-old mountain guide instructor Herve Gourdel was in court for the trial — the other seven are being tried in absentia.

Members of Gourdel's family, including his partner Francoise Grandclaude, were in the public gallery.

The main defendant Abdelmalek Hamzaoui was brought to court by ambulance in a wheelchair accompanied by a medical team and watched over by police special forces.

At the request of defence lawyers, the trial opening had been delayed for two weeks because of his ill health.

Hamzaoui could face the death penalty if convicted. Six other defendants in court are accused of failing to inform authorities promptly of Gourdel's abduction.

Five were Gourdel's climb-



Francoise Grandclaude arrives to the Algerian Dar Al-Baida tribunal in the capital Algiers on February 18, 2021, for the trial of men accused of murdering her husband Herve Gourdel. PHOTO: AFP

ing companions and spent 14 hours in captivity along with him.

The sixth is accused of failing to promptly report the theft of his car by the kidnappers to transport the captive Frenchman.

All six face up to five years in prison if they are found guilty. Gourdel's murder sparked outrage in both France and Algeria.

The adventure enthusiast had traveled to Algeria at the invitation of his climbing companions to try out a new climb.

His kidnappers from the Jund Al-Khilafa (Soldiers of the Caliphate) group demanded an end to airstrikes against Daesh in Iraq and Syria by a US-led coalition that included France. —AFP ■



Men flee the site of the violent clashes in the Somali capital. PHOTO: AFP

## Top UK court to rule on Uber drivers' employment status

BRITAIN'S Supreme Court is to rule Friday on the employment status of Uber drivers in a judgement with wider implications for the "gig economy".

The ruling is set for 0945 GMT after a years-long legal battle, with the US taxi and delivery company suffering court defeats in 2017 and 2018.

Lower courts have ruled in favour of a group of 20 Uber drivers who argue they were entitled to employee status given the length of time they had been working through the Uber app, and the way that the company oversaw their work.

Employee status would mean that they were entitled to benefits including a minimum hourly wage and paid holidays.

Uber insists that the drivers are self-employed since they choose their own hours and place of work, and often find passengers through rival apps. If the Supreme Court finds against Uber, the complainants who launched the case can ask an employment tribunal for compensation, and it could trigger further-reaching changes affecting all ride-hailing drivers.

The ruling could equally affect the online



Britain's Supreme Court is to rule Friday on the employment status of Uber drivers in a judgement with wider implications for the "gig economy". PHOTO: AFP

platforms behind the so-called gig economy in Britain — people doing short-term work without formal contracts, or working without guaranteed hours.

Couriers for the Deliveroo food app are currently fighting in the Court of Appeal in London for the right to collective bargaining. —AFP ■

## China's central bank injects liquidity into market

CHINA'S central bank on Friday conducted 20 billion yuan (about 3.09 billion U.S. dollars) of reverse repos to maintain reasonably ample liquidity in the banking system.

The interest rate for the 7-day reverse repos was set at 2.2 per cent,

according to a statement on the website of the People's Bank of China.

A reverse repo is a process in which the central bank purchases securities from commercial banks through bidding, with an agreement to sell them back in the future.

China's central bank has pledged to make its prudent monetary policy more targeted and flexible to adapt better to the needs of high-quality development and put more focus on the efficiency of financial services to support the real economy. — Xinhua ■

## Bitcoin goldrush sparks fears of speculative bubble

BITCOIN has enjoyed a record-breaking week after electric carmaker Tesla and Wall Street finance giants sparked a goldrush for the world's most popular virtual currency, but bubble fears persist. Investors and mega-corporations alike have been wooed by dizzying growth and the opportunity for profit and asset diversification.

The unit blasted past

\$50,000 on Tuesday following a week in which Tesla invested \$1.5 billion in bitcoin and vowed customers could use it to buy vehicles and both New York bank BNY Mellon and credit card titan MasterCard announced plans to support bitcoin.

The cryptocurrency then vaulted higher, topping \$52,000 on Wednesday after investment fund giant BlackRock also con-

firmed a push into the booming sector.

Yet this week's astonishing ascendancy of bitcoin has sparked renewed fears of a big bubble which the market had last experienced four years ago. US software firm MicroStrategy meanwhile announced plans on Wednesday to sell convertible bonds in order to buy more bitcoin, raising eyebrows in some quar-

ters. "Suddenly it feels like 2017 again when everyone wanted (to) ... ride the crypto wave," warned OANDA analyst Craig Erlam. "If companies' fundamentals are going to become closely tied to movements in bitcoin because they have suddenly become speculators on the side, we are going to be in bubble territory before you know it." —AFP ■

## Brazil drops WTO suit against Canada over commercial aircraft subsidies

THE Brazilian government announced on Thursday that it has formally withdrawn its 2017 suit against the Canadian government at the World Trade Organization (WTO) over commercial aircraft subsidies.

The South American country challenged the subsidies granted by the Canadian government for the launch, development and production of the C-Series aircraft by Bombardier, a Canadian manufacturer of business jets.

According to the Brazilian government, the more than 3 billion U.S. dollars granted distorted competitive conditions in the commercial aviation market and caused serious losses to Brazilian manufacturer Embraer.

"Brazil remains convinced of the soundness of the arguments presented in the case. However, litigation before the WTO has proven ineffective in remedying the impacts of such large-scale subsidies on the commercial aircraft sector," Brazil's Foreign Affairs Ministry said in a statement, adding that the aviation industry has changed since the dispute was initiated.

Bombardier's withdrawal from the commercial aviation market, in particular the sale of its C-Series programme to European company Airbus, which moved part of its final production to the United States, "minimized the chances of obtaining a resolution to the litigation against Canada," the statement said.

"With the conclusion of the litigation, Brazil will now focus with renewed impetus on launching negotiations for more effective disciplines on government support of the commercial aviation sector, covering the launch, development and production of commercial aircraft and related technologies," the foreign ministry said. — Xinhua ■



The Brazilian government announced on Thursday that it has formally withdrawn its 2017 suit against the Canadian government at the World Trade Organization (WTO) over commercial aircraft subsidies. PHOTO: AFP

### CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V IAL 001 VOY. NO. (092N/S)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V IAL 001 VOY. NO. (092N/S)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **21-2-2021** 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 INTER ASIA LINES

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

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Shipping Agency Department  
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M/S REGIONAL CONTAINER LINES

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Botahtaung Township, Yangon,

The Republic of the Union of Myanmar

Dated 20<sup>th</sup> February 2021

lmm@kcyangon.com



# Unique festivals in **Mongyawng**

**T**HE festivals around the Myanmar year are traditionally held with new ideas in Mongyawng township of Tachilek district in Shan State (east) where is full of natural scenes and waterfalls.

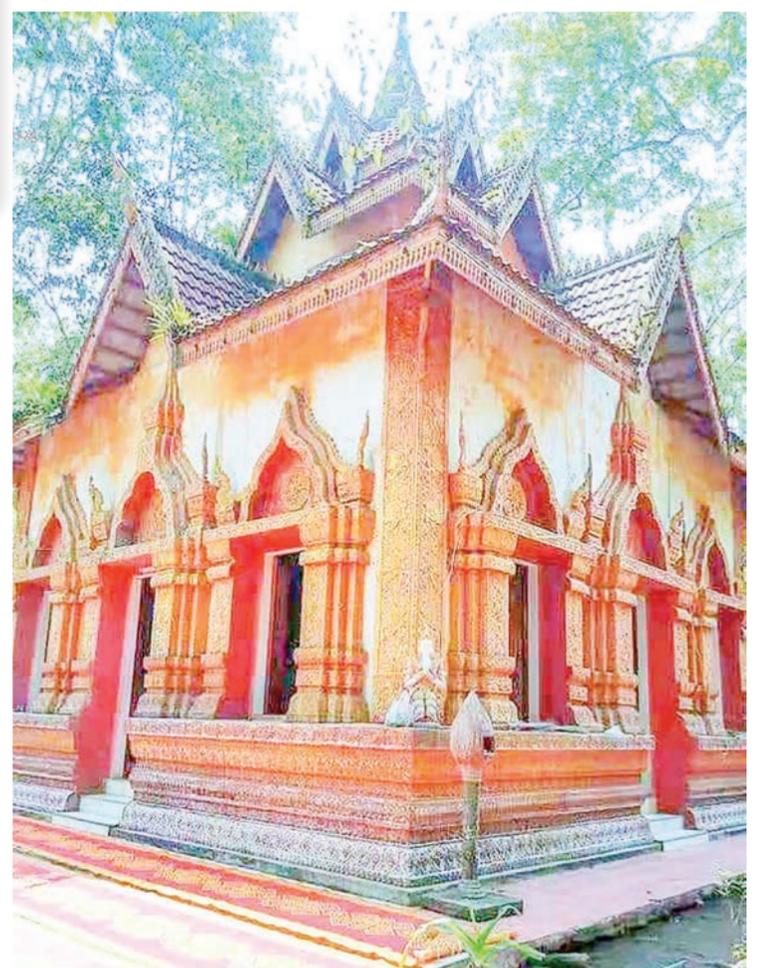
The Mongyawng residents celebrate pwe pan mone(nat festival), pwe san khan (Thingyan), pwe aw wah (Thadingyut), pwe tan htan (Vessantara zet), tan htet site (sand pagoda festival), tan aw salat (donation by creating paper mache elephant sculptures), pwe dauk fine (fireworks), pwe pee mine (new year festival) and lwal ka htone (floating oil lamps on the river) in respective months and those visit to Mongyawng are also satisfied with the warm hospitality of local populace.

According to a saying, " ta mu ya loe ta pae hlu, doh Shan taung thu tu naing yoe lar," the donations of Shan people are very impressive and the other people are also filled with empathetic joy on the donations.

The living standards of young Shan women wearing traditional costumes are high and simple.

The Akha, Lahu, Lawal and Myanmar people are also living collectively in Mongyawng and all value the freedom and equality. The visitors can see the pagodas everywhere of the region and the propagation of Theravada Buddha Sasana.

The people should pay a visit to famous pagodas in eastern Shan State in the post-COVID-19 pandemic such as Det Lone Swan Yaung (Htet Lone) pagoda, Shwe Nyaung Pin (Wan Mine Sali Mun), Dhamma Gambira sasana cave (or) son heung cave and Phali Lone Par Wone monestary. The visitors can also visit the businesses opportunities of Shwe Mongyawng, rice bowl of eastern Shan State, Wan Pone hot spring and Mong Yu waterfall located on Mongyawng -Mong Yu highway road. –Sai Aung Zaw Lin



# Pyu bead (Chin bead) business relies on online sales in Natogyi



**T**HE Pyu bead (Chin bead) business in Natogyi Township is relying on online sales at present. Pyu beads are made of Petrified wood (Ingyin Kyaut) and are meticulously made into beads and wristbands.

The beadwork was done by hand in the past, but in modern times, it has been mechanized. In order to make the beads, the Petrified woods are first ground by machine. Afterwards, they are made into rounded shape by machine and drilled to make holes. Once the holes have been drilled, they are put in a steam pot to make the step-by-step colour coating. Then the beads can be painted. During the painting to the beads, a metal tweezer is used to hold the bead and put the natural paints made of mixed natron, neem syrup, borax and lime stone. After the natural painting, various designs are made with black ink, a mixture of breast milk, sulfur, blue vitriol and yellow orpiment by toasting on a charcoal stove.

Depending on the quality of the stone, the price is different. The price of a necklace with Pyu beads is around 10,000 kyats and a necklace with 100 Pyu beads costs over 20,000 kyats and wristbands are sold 5,000 kyats and at present the business relies on online sale.

*Soe Shwe(Myit Nge)*



## Set Set Yo village with Myanmar's ancient hairstyle

**SET SET YO** Village located in Nga Thayouk township of Nayung U district of Mandalay Region still conserves the vanishing coiffures to date.

The young villagers of Set Set Yo still wear their hair in *yaung pay soo*, the traditional topknot style with a circular fringe, *oo-soon-phote* or *kwat-mauk-kay* and *kyat-taung-si*. The people at different ages wear such hairstyles to keep their tradition of village and even the old men wear *yaung-gyi-bway* top-knot, said Set Set Yo village administrator U Aung Naing.

Some of the people think that the village is an ancient one. The village hosted local and foreign travellers before the outbreak of COVID-19. The film directors make movies just in the village and also the local



and foreign photographers come there to take photos.

The villagers are well-versed in the secular world and worldly affairs and are also educated nowadays.

Although the village faced water shortage problems in the past, almost every house has their own tube wells now. The people establish rural dispensaries and libraries in the village. No



matter how much the materials change, the young boys and girls still wear their traditional hairstyles so far.

Some of the villagers from Khet Lan Kan village, Taung Taw village and Pha Lan Kan village in Nga Thayouk township also wear *yaung pay soo*, *oo-soon-phote* and *yaung-gyi-bway* hairstyles.—Wadi

## Yangon United signs Zwegapin defender on loan

IN preparation for a new football season of the Myanmar National League, Yangon United Football Club recently confirmed that defender Kyaw Phyto Wai from Zwegapin United has joined the football squad for a two-year loan agreement, according to the team statement.

The 21-year-old defender has expressed his feeling upon joining the top domestic league football club.

“I am grateful to be here to continue my professional journey. The chance is in my hands, and I am very excited when this great team welcomes me to join. I will try

to fit with the team squad and bring a good result for the fans,” said Kyaw Phyto Wai.

Kyaw Phyto Wai was brought up in the Sagaing region and stated his young football career in Mandalay Academy from 2010 to 2016.

Next, he was selected in the Myanmar national football team in 2016.

Along with the Myanmar football squad, he assisted the team in winning second place in U-16 AFF Tournament in Cambodia.

In the Myanmar National League, he played for Zwegapin United from 2018 to 2020. —GNLM ■

## Juventus goalkeeper Buffon fined for blasphemy

MILAN — Juventus goalkeeper Gianluigi Buffon was on Thursday fined 5,000 euros (\$6,000) by the Italian Football Federation for blasphemy.

The 43-year-old Italian World Cup winner, who escaped a ban for the offence, was overheard using a “blasphemous expression” towards teammate Manolo Portanova during Juve’s 4-0 league win over Parma on December 19.

Buffon, who holds the record for Serie A matches played with 653 to date, was not caught on camera but there was an audio recording of the incident.

Since 2010, the Italian FA have taken disciplinary action against several players and



Juventus goalkeeper Gianluigi Buffon was fined for blasphemy. **PHOTO: AFP**

coaches heard disrespecting God or the sacred.

But the penalties have increased this season with empty

stadiums allowing the microphones and cameras to capture heated exchanges between players and coaches. —AFP ■

## Zaha to stop taking a knee before Premier League games



Crystal Palace forward Wilfried Zaha is going to stop taking the knee before Premier League matches. **PHOTO: AFP**

LONDON — Crystal Palace forward Wilfried Zaha says he is going to stop taking a knee before Premier League matches and instead wants to see concrete action to tackle racism.

Players, officials and staff at Premier League and English Football League matches have been making the gesture before kick-off since the 2019/20 season resumed in June to show support for racial equality.

Premier League club shirts also carried a Black Lives Matter slogan during the latter stages of last season before being changed for this campaign to feature a patch promoting the league’s own

anti-discrimination campaign “No Room For Racism”.

But a number of players including Manchester United’s Anthony Martial and Marcus Rashford have been targeted with racist abuse on social media in recent weeks.

Several teams, including Championship side Brentford, have stopped taking a knee before games and Zaha feels it has become an empty gesture.

The Ivory Coast international, 28, speaking at the Financial Times Business of Football Summit on Thursday, said his parents had told him he should be proud to be black and should “stand tall”. —AFP ■

## Pressure on Djokovic in Australian Open final, says Medvedev



Russia’s Daniil Medvedev will play his second Grand Slam final on Sunday. **PHOTO: AFP**

MELBOURNE — Russia’s Daniil Medvedev insisted the pressure was all on Novak Djokovic in the Australian Open final after he breezed past Stefanos Tsitsipas in straight sets in the semis on Friday.

Medvedev, now into his second Grand Slam decider on the back of a 20-match winning streak, said the world number one has “more things to lose” on Sunday.

Djokovic, with 17 major

titles, has won all eight of his Australian Open finals and is looking to close the gap on the record of 20 Slam trophies held by Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal.

“I like that I don’t have a lot of pressure because he never lost in eight times that he was here in the final,” said the 25-year-old world number four.

“So it’s him who has all the pressure, getting to Roger and Rafa in the Grand Slams (list).”

“So I just hope that I’m going to get out there, show my best tennis. As we see I can beat some big names if I play good.”

“For sure he has more experience, but more things to lose.” —AFP ■