

THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

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Five-Point Road Map of the State Administration Council

1. The Union Election Commission will be reconstituted and its mandated tasks, including the scrutiny of voter lists, shall be implemented in accordance with the law.
2. Effective measures will be taken with added momentum to prevent and manage the COVID-19 pandemic.
3. Actions will be taken to ensure the speedy recovery of businesses from the impact of COVID-19.
4. Emphasis will be placed on achieving enduring peace for the entire nation in line with the agreements set out in the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement.
5. Upon accomplishing the provisions of the state of emergency, free and fair multiparty democratic elections will be held in line with the 2008 Constitution, and further work will be undertaken to hand over State duties to the winning party in accordance with democratic standards.

Chaungwa bridge project, connecting Ayeyawady Region and Rakhine State, completed by 45%

THE construction of the Chaungwa Bridge, which will connect the Ayeyawady Region and Rakhine State, is now 45 per cent complete, according to the Ministry of Construction. The Department of Bridge, Ministry of Construction, has been implementing this bridge project with 12 specialized engineers from the Bridge Task Force (16) and over 100 workers, for K7,040 million from the Ayeyawady Region Capital Fund.

The Chaungwa Bridge construction project is located on Ngayotekaung-Gawragyi Island road in Ngayotekaung, Ngaputaw Township, Patheingyi Township, Ayeyawady Region, crossing the Chaungwa River.

As the Department of Highways is implementing the Ngayotekaung- Sinma- Ngwe Saung- Shwe Thaug Yan- Ma Gyi Zin- Kyauk Chon- Gwa Beach Ring Road, the Chaungwa bridge will become a part of the ring road. When the two projects are completed, the roads will be accessible directly to Gawragyi Island in the southern part of Ngayotekaung, according to the Bridge Task Force (16).

The bridge will be a two-lane bridge with a length of 390 metres (1,280 feet), 24 feet of the lanes and more than 3 feet long sidewalks on each side. The bridge will be built in reinforced



An aerial view of the project site.

concrete and the upper body will be built in Girder, RC Girder and RC Slabs.

With K550 million received from the 2019-2020FY, the pillar works on the Ngayotekaung side, cap works, shaft works and cross beam works were completed, and the pillar construction in the mid-water was completed with K 2,106.5 million from the 2020-2021

FY. The works that need to be done on the Gawragyi Island side will be continued in this coming Mini Budget year.

Regarding the bridge and the beach ring road construction, a resident of Ngayotekaung town said, “As we do not have a beach ring road, we have to travel from one place to another by sea and through nearby villag-

es; if this ring road finishes, the transport will be convenient and local people in nearby fishing villages will be able to travel by motorbike and flow of local goods will be easily transported.”

As local people in Ayeyawady Region rely on agriculture and fisheries, by the time the bridge construction is completed, the transportation of

the fish, rice, and crops will be convenient and easy, as well as social, economic, health, and education sectors for the residents will be improved.

The Chaungwa Bridge project started on 1 March 2020 and it is expected to be completed at the end of March 2023, according to the Ministry of Construction. —Pwint Thitsar/GNLM

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State Administration Council Press Release

Re-invitation to Myanmar citizens who reside in various regions for many reasons

1. Some student youths, State service personnel and citizens, with worries, have evaded to areas of EAOs and foreign countries due to the incitements and intimidation of NLD members, extremist followers, unlawful associations and terrorist groups such as CRPH and NUG, stimulation of CDM, and persons and organizations at home and abroad not wishing to restore peace and stability of the State since Tatmadaw assumed the State responsibilities on 1 February 2021.
2. They are further worried about the dictatorship statement and speeches of unlawful association and terrorist group CRPH and NUG, and some relevant persons. As they face no security guarantee and difficulties in socio-economic life in those areas, they wish to return to their native lands.
3. **The State Administration Council will specifically ease restrictions for service personnel, intellectuals and intelligentsia, and persons from various arenas and citizens who, with worries, absconded from the country except for persons who committed murders, robberies, setting fires, mine explosions and intentional attacks on security troops, those who crowded to attack public service personnel and some people, those who destroyed government and private-owned buildings and those who are highly involved in the CDM activities by providing monetary assistance and other means.**
4. As those who evade their native areas are also citizens, the State Administration Council will arrange their returns from the evaded areas to various parts of Myanmar.
5. As such, the information was released that if those who evaded to various areas, except for persons who committed any kinds of crime, wish to return to their native lands in Myanmar of their own accord due to multiple worries, the citizens abroad can contact nearby ward, village, township and district administration bodies and relevant embassies, military attaché offices and consulates in accord with the easing restrictions under the law.

Information Team
State Administration Council

THE State Administration Council will specifically ease restrictions for service personnel, intellectuals and intelligentsia, and persons from various arenas and citizens who, with worries, absconded from the country except for persons who committed murders, robberies, setting fires, mine explosions and intentional attacks on security troops, those who crowded to attack public service personnel and some people, those who destroyed government and private-owned buildings and those who are highly involved in the CDM activities by providing monetary assistance and other means.

MoH rolls out COVID-19 jabs for children aged 12 and above

THE Ministry of Health is offering the Sinovac vaccine for children aged 12 and above who are learning at Basic Education Middle School, the Basic Education High School, private schools and monastic schools, in a bid to ensure safe education life.

This vaccination programme will cover 1,886 elementary schools and BEHSs, 215 private schools and 165 monastic schools, totalling 2,266 schools.

The children get COVID-19 jabs at the designated place in line with the guidelines for the COVID-19.

Dr Lin Lin Chit, assistant director of Public Health Department, Chanayethazan Township, gave a remark that this time, the children are prioritized. Two doses can be extracted from a single vial of Sinovac. This move is to mitigate the risks and contain the spread of COVID-19. The kids were checked for temperature and blood pressure. They have to answer questions. They are asked to sit and wait a 30-minute observation period after the COVID-19 shot. Health awareness is also conducted during



this period. We are responsible for the physical and mental development of children. Public obedience to health protocols is crucial in combating the COVID-19”.

The handwash basins are also installed at the designated place. Those eligible individuals must wear face masks and face shields. The health care staff and education staff help check blood pressure, blood oxygen,

pulse and temperature before the COVID jab.

The staff asks for approval from the parents before administering the vaccine. The children are to be observed after the jab. For any emergency cases, the medical team is placed on standby.

U Maung Kyal, deputy director-general of Mandalay Region Education Administer office stat-

ed that the vaccine is planned for those who have enrolled on the school and attended the school. At present, the children who are attending the school in the current academic year are eligible for the COVID-19 vaccination depending on the COVID-19 supply. The programme is available until November. There are 161 designated places across Mandalay Region. The schools are

expected to be reopened after they have been fully vaccinated”.

The fully vaccinated children can go back to school in line with health guidelines issued by the Ministry of Health. Vaccination plans will proceed for the remaining students as well.

“I like to suggest my friends to get vaccinated. I feel safe now. I am also excited to return to school”, said a middle schooler from BEHS No.8 of Aungmyayethazan Township.

“The COVID-19 vaccines will help reduce the spread of the COVID-19. It will also support the children’s education and health. I am satisfied that the children can be vaccinated. I want to call for the fellow parents to trust in the vaccination and get their children COVID-19 shot”, said a parent.

This vaccination plan is aimed to create educational opportunities for the children, reduce the death rate, and contain the spread of the COVID-19 to the parents and the neighbours through children.—Min Htet Aung (Mandalay Sub-Printing House)/GNLM

1,002 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 17 October, total figure rises to 487,853

MYANMAR’S COVID-19 positive cases rose to 487,853 after 1,002 new cases were reported on 17 October 2021 according to the Ministry of Health. Among these confirmed cases, 440,259 have been discharged from hospitals. Death toll reached 18,359 after 30 died.

COVID-19 vaccine is being injected to those of priority groups in regions and states for prevention and control of the disease. Up to 16-10-2021, a total of 11,223,285 people have been vaccinated. Of them, 4,574,418 people have been vaccinated two times and 6,648,867 people once.—MNA

Promoting and cementing Union Spirit

LIKEWISE if one is too eager to embrace the past, one may lose the road to the future". The government has decided to further promote the process of cementing the Union Spirit and peace process before the forthcoming Diamond Jubilee Union Day and Independence Day.

(Excerpt from the Message sent by Chairman of the State Administration Council Prime Minister Chairman of National Unity and Peacemaking Central Committee Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing to mark Sixth Anniversary of signing Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement-NCA on 15-10-2021)

Union Minister for Hotels & Tourism visits Tourism Village in Hsihseng

UNION Minister for Hotels and Tourism Dr Htay Aung accompanied by Deputy Director-General of the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism U Aung Aye Han and members, Chairman of the Pa-O Self-Administered Zone U Khun Ye Htwe and members of the delegation visited Panlun village, which is being developed as a tourism village in Bang Yin village tract, Hsihseng Township, Pa-O Self-Administered Zone, southern Shan State on 16 October.

With Shan State Government Capital Expenditure of the budget year 2020-2021, K70 million funds are being used for the infrastructure construction of Panlun village as a Tourism Village under the One Township, One Village Project and K10 million funds are being used for conducting tourism



MoHT Union Minister Dr Htay Aung and party visits the Hsihseng Tourism Village. PHOTO: MYO MYAT

marketing and tourism marketing.

Firstly, Union Minister Dr

Htay Aung and party paid homage to the patron Sayadaw of the Panlun village monastery.

Next, the Union Minister met with Township Administrator U Htin Kyaw, Township

General Administration Department staff, and local ethnic people.

During the meeting, the head of State Department of Hotels and Tourism U Htin Aung Naing explained about the infrastructure construction work being developed as a Tourism Village.

Then, the Union Minister inspected the renovation of traditional bakeries in the village, construction sites of Welcome Centre and the port site and made necessary orders.

By establishing Panlun village as a tourist village in Bang Yin Village Tract, Hsihseng Township, the socio-economic life of the local ethnic people will be improved and the township development will be implemented. —Myo Myat (Hsihseng)/GNLM

Officials welcome 400 returnees from Laos to Tachilek

A total of 400 Myanmar nationals from Laos came back home through land borders on 16 October, officials said.

On 16 October, 249 males and 151 females came back home from Wang Pong Port, Mongphone (A) Village Tract, Tachilek, Eastern Shan State.

Healthcare officials from relevant public hospitals and members of the Tatmadaw Medical Corps conducted COVID-19 tests and provided quarantine entry documents for the returnees.

With the supervision of the Prevention, Control and Treatment Committee for COVID-19, the returnees were diagnosed with RDT Rapid Test Kit.

According to the test results, the COVID-19 virus was detected by one male and he will stay in COVID-19 Centre to receive further medical treatment.

The remaining 399 returnees are being kept in separate areas and the necessary medical and administrative matters are being coordinated, officials said.

A total of 3,671 Myanmar migrant workers have been received from Laos since 30 July, and officials in Tachilek have been able to help them reach their respective destinations and arrange for the vehicles to be repatriated. — Yar Say (IPRD)



Returnees from Laos are repatriated on 16 October 2021. PHOTO: YARSAY



Yangon region chief minister, officials encourage vaccination to students

YANGON REGION Chief Minister U Hla Soe accompanied by Minister for Social Affairs of the Yangon regional government, Yangon Region Advocate-General U Htay Aung, Head of the Yangon Region Public Health Department Dr Tun Min, Regional Education Head Dr Hnin Kyi, Chairman of the District Administration Council U Moe Zaw Soe, encouraged the vaccination to the students at the age of 12 and above in No (2) Basic Education Primary School in

Kamayut Township yesterday. The Yangon Region Chief Minister and party cordially met with the students vaccinated against the COVID-19 disease, distributed masks, and gave necessary instruction to officials. It is reported that 70 middle/high school students received the first jab of the COVID-19 vaccine, and a total of 2,499 students in 11 schools including public and private schools in Kamayut Township, Yangon Region. — Township IPRD/GNLM

COVID-19 inoculation to over 8,000 students begins in Myeik

COVID-19 vaccination to students at the age of 12 and above in Myeik Township, Taninthayi Region started yesterday. The Government has implemented the vaccination against COVID-19 for students across the country to provide them with access to education.

A total of 8,311 middle/high school students from 78 schools in Myeik Township will receive their first doses of the Sinovac COVID-19 vaccine within five days, according to U Kyaw Shein, Township Education Officer.

Before the COVID-19 immunization, parents of the students were informed about the vaccination, and only with the consent of

the parents, students were inoculated. A total of 8 medical teams will inject 24 vaccination sites.

Yesterday, students from the No (1), (2), (3), (4) Basic Education High Schools in the township received the vaccines alongside their parents/guardians, and teachers, charities, and administration bodies provided necessary assistance.

Officials supervised the vaccination, and Chairman of the Myeik District Administration Council U Nyan Zaw, Head of the Regional Public Health Department Dr Aye Thein and officials encouraged the immunization process.—Khin Htoo (Myeik IPRD)/GNLM



Immunization roll-out is underway.

Over 6,400 students aged 12 and 18 above vaccinated in Thaton



VACCINATION against COVID-19 to students at the age of 12 and above was carried out yesterday morning in Thaton Township, Mon State. The vaccination aims for the students to be able to access education healthily and happily.

“We held a meeting with parents and schools for the vaccination, and the parents were provided with required information about the vaccine in advance, and the students will be vaccinated only if their parents allowed them. I have seen many of them came to receive the vaccine,” said Thaton Township Education Officer Daw Khin Aye Maw.

“We are so glad that the heads of the State arrange for the students,” she added. A total of five vaccination sites have been arranged in schools in Thaton Township to vaccinate a total of 6,428 students between the age of 12 and 18 from 71 schools in the township including basic education schools, monastic schools, and private schools.

It is also reported that the vaccination was conducted under the supervision of relevant authorities, health care professionals, volunteers under the COVID-19 prevention measures, and Chairman of the Township Administration Council U Zin Maung Maung and officials encouraged and provided the necessary assistance.—Ko Ko Oo (IPRD)/GNLM

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Crop acreages under GAP grow year over year

THE crop acreages under Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) is increasing year over year in Sagaing Region, said Dr Tin Mar Mar Oo, in charge of Public Relations and International Affairs section of Sagaing Region Agriculture Department.

“Over 21,300 acres of 20 crops have been issued GAP certificates. The remaining growers are also striving for GAP certificates,” Dr Tin Mar Mar Oo explained.

The mango cultivation under the GAP system started in the 2016-2017 financial year. It is to promote food products, reduce the risks of contaminating products and fetch a higher price, the growers said.

There are GAP certified over 12,000 acres of monsoon paddy, over 770 acres of monsoon peanut, over 2,300 acres of winter sesame, over 360 acres of winter peanut, over 2,500 acres of summer sesame, 30 acres of summer paddy, 490



The number of acreages cultivated under good agricultural practices (GAP) increased year over year, on account of the benefits of GAP. PHOTO: LU LAY

acres of pre-monsoon green gram, 180 acres of cucumber, over 1,700 acres of mango, 50 acres of watermelon, 15 acres of chilli pepper, 50 acres of banana, 3 acres of grape, over 180 acres of chickpea, over 70 acres of sunflower, over 100

acres of corn, about 40 acres of onion, 40 acres of monsoon green gram, 10 acres of dragon fruit and 15 acres of papaya plants in the region.

The GAP adoption and certificate are required to penetrate more external markets

and the international markets prefer the fruits produced under the GAP system.

The GAP ensures food safety, and the GAP growers can get more market access, locally and internationally, according to the Agriculture

Department.

In addition to food safety, GAP also ensures worker safety, health and welfare, and conservation of the environment.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation has encouraged farmers to use its GAP protocol in a bid to boost productivity, profitability, market access, and competitiveness in the agricultural sector. The Agriculture Department raised awareness of GAP among growers by providing courses. The GAP protocol and guidelines include the most consumed and major export items — mango, pomelo, honeydew, watermelon, avocado, chilli, tomato, onion, cabbage, corn, sesame, various beans, rice, and coffee.

The number of acreages cultivated under good agricultural practices (GAP) increased year over year, on account of the benefits of GAP — Lu Lay/GNLM

Myanmar mineral exports down by \$975 mln in 2020-2021FY

THE value of Myanmar's mineral exports drastically sank to US\$895.6 million last FY2020-2021, reflecting a drop of \$975 million, the Ministry of Commerce's data indicated.

The mineral exports hit over \$1.87 billion in FY2019-2020.

The coronavirus related disruptions led to the slump in mineral exports this FY. The heightened COVID-19 measures also shut down the events like gem emporium and expo last year, a trader said.

Additionally, Lonekhin, Phakant, Mawlu and Mawhan gem and jade mining in Kachin State will be temporarily suspended from 1 October 2021 to March-end 2022 to support sustainable resource extraction, and ensure safe and efficient operation of jade and gems mines, according to Myanmar Gems Enterprises.

So far, excavation of over 1,250 mining blocks has been permitted on a manageable, small, medium, and large

scale, mostly in Mandalay and Sagaing regions, according to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation.

Due to the limited extraction of natural resources, exports of forest products and minerals had dropped significantly in the previous years. Permits for mining blocks were suspended in 2016, but after two years, Myanmar's mining sector has now been opened to local and foreign investors, according to the ministry.

The Myanmar Mines Law was enacted on 24 December 2015, but the law came into force when the rules were issued on 13 February 2018.

Under the new regulations, foreign firms can invest in large blocks which cover up to 500,000 acres (about 202,000 hectares), while local firms can invest in all kinds of blocks.

Investors can seek a permit to mine for minerals such as gold, copper, lead and tin. The permits cover prospect-

ing, exploration, and production.

Myanmar's mineral exports have shown a marked increase in the FY2019-2020, touching \$1.87 billion, an increase of \$405.48 million compared with the year-ago period,

according to data from the Ministry of Commerce.

Oil and natural gas are included in the list of major export items of Myanmar. About six per cent of the country's total export earnings come from the sale of natural gas. About

80 per cent of mineral products are shipped to external markets through sea trade, while 20 of them are sent to neighbouring countries through border trade channels. — KK/GNLM



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News and Periodicals Enterprise

Over-12s middle, high school students get jabbed against COVID-19 in states, regions



Hsihseng Township



Kyaukme Township



Kya-in-Seikkyi Township



Magway Region



Minhla Township



Taunggyi Township



Thegon Township



Maungtaw Township



Madaya Township



Thuwunnawady Township

Heavy rains cause Kyeoohn-Kyeewa Dam in Pwintbyu to overflow

HEAVY rains from 16 October to yesterday in Pwintbyu Township, Magway Region flooded the Kyeoohn-Kyeewa Dam, causing the dam to overflow 5.7 feet above the dam's 340 feet water level yesterday afternoon, said U Soe Tint, in charge of the dam.

Under the close supervision of U Soe Tin, staff in charge of the dam is con-

stantly monitoring the flood situation, and local people under the dam have been informed promptly.

At present, the flood situation from the overflow of the dam is not a cause for concern for the local people and if there is any significant situation, the local people will be notified immediately, he added. — Ye Win Naing (NyaungU)/GNLM



Current view of the Kyeoohn-Kyeewa Dam after heavy rains.

A man caught by crocodiles on shores of Meinmahla Island



Meinmahla Island in Bogale Township.

A man was bitten by a crocodile on 12 October at around 5 pm on the shores of Meinmala Island Wildlife Sanctuary in Bogale Township, Pyapon District, Ayeyawady Region, which is a place for freshwater crocodiles.

Sai Khant Zaw, a 16-year-old resident of Pade Kaw village, and his uncles were catching crabs

on the shores of Meinmahla Island on the other side of Pade Kaw village, Sat Kyun Village Tract in Bogale Township.

A 12-foot-long crocodile arrived suddenly and bite the body of Sai Khant Zaw and thus, Villagers are searching for the body of the victim.

Similarly, on 22 August, a

young woman was bitten by a crocodile while fetching water for bathing in Bawgawadi village, Tharaw Chaung Village Tract, Bogale Township.

Likewise, on 30 August, a man was bitten by a crocodile while washing paddy seeds in the Bawgawadi creek. — Moe Sak (Boagale)/GNLM

Public request by Ministry of Health

ONLY when the people cooperate will the work process achieve success in a short time for effective prevention, control and treatment of COVID-19 among the people. As such, all the people are requested to abide by the following points: -

1. Stay at home as much as possible.
2. Don't accept the guests at the house. You don't visit other houses.
3. The older persons above 65 or those suffering from chronic diseases such as diabetes, hypertension and heart must be worn masks in the house. They must be placed at well-ventilated sites.
4. Wear masks if you go outside without fail. Systematically wash hands. Take a six-foot distance from others. Avoid visits to the rooms where ventilation is not good.
5. Avoid the crowds.
6. If possible, go shopping once a week. Don't buy anything from the vendors who don't systematically wear masks.
7. Take care of carrying the virus to the houses whenever return home from outside. Systematically discard the used masks and single disposable equipment outside the houses. Avoid close contact with family members before changing clothes or washing the body.
8. As the vaccines for your quota is the best, accept vaccinations for full time. Despite receiving the vaccination, you should abide by the protective ways.
9. Systematically cooperate in prevention, control and treatment of the disease with manpower, money, materials and expertise.

Ministry of Health (2-8-2021)

Daily imports of anti-COVID-19 equipment, medical products continue

THE Ministry of Commerce is making efforts to ensure people have access to the essential medical supplies that are critical to the COVID-19 prevention, control and treatment activities, including liquid oxygen and oxygen cylinders, by arranging continuous importation through trading posts, international airport and seaports with Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).

On 17 October (yesterday), anti-COVID-19 equipment, medical products including oxygen plants and concentrators were imported by four companies and transported by

12 vehicles.

A total of 42,850 PPE suits and 66 tonnes of masks were imported via the Chinshwehaw trading post.

Officials from the relevant departments are cooperating to facilitate and expedite the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) including online registration for the import process.

It is reported that the Ministry of Commerce is coordinating with relevant departments, treatment of COVID-19, as well as contact persons for inquiries can be reached through the Ministry's Website — www.commerce.gov.mm. — MNA



Chinshwehaw

Reduce oil consumption to save life and income of consumers

PRODUCTION of palm oil declines in Myanmar because of the outbreak of COVID-19 and climate change. The cost of importing palm oil to Myanmar is also on the increase while the forex rate is also up.

Myanmar people need to reduce oil consumption because of hazards to health and high prices based on the forex rate.

If so, they can avoid suffering from diseases such as cardiac, obesity and diabetes. As such, self-control of oil consumption will help the nation reduce the import of edible oil abroad and manage the spending of their incomes necessarily.

So, efficient consumption of edible oil cuts the cost as well as prevents hazardous health conditions.

In Myanmar, local farmers grow edible oil crops on eight million acres of land but the product of oil crops cannot meet the local demand. Insufficient volume of edible oil becomes a push to import the palm oil from the foreign market, spending a large sum of foreign exchange.

Some 800,000 tonnes of palm oil were imported due to domestic demand from 1 October 2020 to 17 September 2021 in the 2020-21 financial year. Prices of palm oil increase in the world. So, the cost of importing palm oil to Myanmar was also on the increase.

The Ministry of Commerce stated that 768,000 tonnes of palm oil were imported in 2017-18 financial year, 370,000 tonnes in the mini-budget of 2018, 855,000 tonnes in 2018-19 financial year and 888,000 tonnes in 2019-20 financial year. This fiscal year, some 790,000 tonnes of palm oil was imported from 1 October 2020 to 17 September 2021.

Myanmar needs some 1 million tonnes of palm oil per year. The entire people of the nation consume some 600,000 tonnes of cooking oil per year while restaurants, hotels, foodstuff industries and fried industries use the rest.

The consumption rate of edible oil is terrible. Everybody needs to take care of their health conditions not to face the dangerous diseases triggered by the impacts of edible oil, especially palm oil. They need to save their life in time based on reduction of oil consumption as part of curing diseases at inner body organs and thriftiness of finance.

The people will have the chance to spend their income on any other sectors because of reducing the oil consumption as part of systematic management of their incomes. If so, they can avoid suffering from diseases such as cardiac, obesity and diabetes. As such, self-control of oil consumption will help the nation reduce the import of edible oil abroad and manage the spending of their incomes necessarily.



No-nonsense masks, strict bubble: What to expect from China's Winter Olympics

Beijing, which will host the 2022 Winter Olympics, is staging a series of test events—giving a strong taste of what the Games will look like and what coronavirus measures will be in place.

AFP Sport takes a look at what athletes and spectators—only people living in mainland China are allowed to attend—can expect when the real thing happens on February 4-20 next year:

What are the rules for athletes?

China plans to host the Games under what could be the strictest Covid-19 safety rules at a mass sporting event since the pandemic began, even compared to the summer's mostly crowd-free Tokyo Olympics.

Chinese officials say participants will stay in a "closed loop" -- a strict bubble insulating them from spectators and the outside world for the whole Games.

Athletes will have to be fully vaccinated or undergo a 21-day quarantine on arrival in the Chinese capital. Athletes did not have to be vaccinated in Tokyo.

Everyone in the closed loop will have to take daily virus tests.

Like in Tokyo, athletes will have to wear masks pretty much all of the time, except when they are competing and for a quick photo on the podium if they win a medal.

China has largely sealed its borders since the virus emerged there towards the end of 2019, but about 2,000 overseas athletes, coaches and team officials were expected to be involved in the test events.

State media showed overseas participants landing in

Beijing met by police in hazmat suits.

What are athletes saying?

The ongoing test events, which are a chance for organisers to fine-tune preparations, last until the end of the year and include domestic and international competitions in everything from ice hockey to luge and speed skating.

Athletes currently in Beijing appear resigned to the rules.

"The pandemic prevention management of this competition provides athletes with great protection," speed skater Sophie Kraaijeveld of the Netherlands, told Chinese state media.

Dutch speed skater and



A staff member holds a sign reminding skaters to put on their face masks during a medal ceremony. PHOTO: AFP

Youth Winter Olympics champion Isabel Grevelt said the measures "make me feel safe", Xinhua reported.

Chinese snowboarder Cai Xuetong said that the main disruption has been in the build-up to the Games -- China's sports authorities have prevented athletes from competing overseas because of the virus.

"We always travel to different countries and do lots of competitions, but last season, it was totally off," Cai recently told AFP in Shanghai.

What about fans and media?

Unlike Tokyo's mostly empty stadiums, the Beijing Games will take place in front of crowds, albeit tickets will only

be sold to people living in China.

There have been no crowds yet at the test events, but others, such as AFP reporters, had to prove they tested negative for the virus in the previous 48 hours and show their recent travel history.

Once inside, they had to wear N95 masks -- a higher-spec alternative to surgical masks -- and interview athletes via video only.

That is different from Tokyo, where reporters were able to interview athletes face to face, albeit at a distance. Such rules could yet change for the real thing in February.

Large signs at Beijing venues remind everyone to maintain social distancing, wash hands and refrain from eating.

Will it work?

Organisers argue that the measures will give Beijing the best chance to hold a safe, smooth Games.

But they also admit they face "great pressure in epidemic prevention and control".

If any athletes test positive for the virus they will be taken in negative-pressure ambulances to designated medical centres for treatment, said Zhao Chengfang, deputy director for Covid-19 prevention at the Capital Indoor Stadium.

A small army of about 100 emergency-response personnel is on standby to enter the stadium if needed, Zhao added.— AFP ■



Coronavirus Pandemic Continues To Slow

THE coronavirus pandemic slowed for a seventh week in a row around the world. Here is the global state of play based on an AFP database.

In Decline

The number of new daily cases decreased by five per cent globally to 403,300, according to an AFP tally to Thursday.

The pandemic had gained ground since mid-June fanned by the highly contagious Delta variant, but since late August it has been in decline. The confirmed cases only reflect a fraction of the actual number of infections, with varying counting practices and levels of testing in different countries.

Europe Bucks Trend

This week saw an improve-



Israelis get a "green pass" after vaccination which is being used to grant access to venues and events. PHOTO: JACK GUEZ/AFP

ment in most regions of the world, with 23 per cent fewer cases in Africa, 21 per cent fewer in Latin America and the Caribbean, 19 per cent fewer in the Middle East, 16 per cent fewer in Asia and 14 per cent fewer in the United States (US) and Canada region.

Biggest Spikes

Georgia, where only 27 per cent of the population has received

one vaccine dose, saw the biggest spike in the number of new cases, with a 79 per cent increase.

Beyond the Caucasus, the week's biggest increases took place in Europe, with cases rising by half in Ireland, and 49 per cent in the Netherlands, where more than 66 per cent of the population has already received two vaccine doses. Cases increased by 42 per cent in Poland and Latvia.

Biggest Drops

At the other end of the spectrum, Israel saw the biggest drop with a 48 per cent decrease in the number of cases, followed by Cuba (32 per cent fewer), Guatemala (31 per cent down), Costa Rica (29 per cent down) and Vietnam, where cases were down by a quarter.

US Has Most Infections...

The US remained by far the country with the biggest number of new cases, with 86,800 per day, a decrease of 14 per cent. It was followed by the United Kingdom with 38,700, a 13 per cent increase, and Turkey 30,500, an increase of five per cent.

On a per capita basis the country that recorded the most new cases this week was Latvia with 623 cases per 100,000 inhabitants, before Serbia (598) and Georgia (585).

... And Most Deaths

The US also recorded the biggest number of deaths per day at 1,563, followed by Russia with 967, and Mexico 350.

At a global level the number

of daily deaths continued to fall to 6,741, a drop of six per cent.

Vaccinations

Cuba leads the vaccination race among countries with more than one million inhabitants, inoculating 1.92 per cent of its population every day.

Iran followed with 1.57 per cent, New Zealand with 1.46 per cent, Lebanon (1.24 per cent), South Korea (1.22 per cent) and Vietnam (1.20 per cent).

The United Arab Emirates and Portugal have the most advanced vaccination drives, having fully vaccinated 86 per cent and 85 per cent respectively of their populations. Spain and Singapore follow on 78 per cent each.— AFP ■




Myanmar Daily Weather Report

(Issued at 7:00 pm Sunday 17 October 2021)

BAY INFERENCE: Weather is cloudy over the North Bay and Eastcentral Bay and monsoon is weak to moderate over the Andaman Sea and elsewhere over the Bay of Bengal.

FORECAST VALID UNTIL AFTERNOON OF THE 17 October 2021: Rain or thundershowers will be isolated in Northern Shan State, scattered in Sagaing, Mandalay Regions and Kachin, Kayah States, fairly widespread in (Southern and Eastern) Shan State and widespread in the remaining Regions and States with likelihood of isolated heavyfalls in Nay Pyi Taw, Mandalay, Magway, Yangon, Ayeyawady, Taninthayi Regions and Chin, Rakhine, Mon States. Degree of certainty is (100%).

STATE OF THE SEA: Squalls with moderate to rough seas are likely at times Deltaic, off and along Rakhine Coasts. Surface wind speed in squalls may reach (30-35) mph. Sea will be moderate elsewhere in Myanmar waters. Wave height will be about (7-9) feet in Deltaic, off and along Rakhine Coasts and about (5-7) feet in Gulf of Mottama, off and along Mon-Taninthayi Coasts.

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Weak monsoon over the Andaman Sea and South Bay of Bengal.

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 17 October 2021: One or two rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (100%).

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 17 October 2021: Some rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (100%).

FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 17 October 2021: Isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (80%).

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Astronauts Ye Guangfu, Wang Yaping and Zhai Zhigang (left to right). PHOTO: CCTV/AFP

Chinese astronauts arrive at space station for longest mission

THREE astronauts successfully docked with China's new space station on Saturday on what is set to be Beijing's longest crewed mission to date and the latest landmark in its drive to become a major space power.

The three blasted off shortly after midnight (1600 GMT Friday) from the Jiuquan launch centre in northwestern China's Gobi desert, the China Manned Space Agency said, with the team expected to spend six months at the Tiangong space station.

The space agency declared

the launch a success and said the crew "were in good shape".

The Shenzhou-13 vessel carrying the three completed its docking with the radial port of the space station less than seven hours after the launch. The mission, which is expected to last twice as long as a previous 90-day visit, will involve the crew setting up equipment and testing technology for future construction on the Tiangong space station. Mission commander Zhai Zhigang, 55, a former fighter pilot who performed the country's first spacewalk in 2008,

said the team would undertake "more complex" spacewalks than during previous missions. The crew include military pilot Wang Yaping, 41, who is the first woman to visit the space station after becoming China's second woman in space in 2013.

The other team member is People's Liberation Army pilot Ye Guangfu, 41. Pictures released by the space agency showed the three astronauts waving to wellwishers who held up slogans of encouragement at a send-off ceremony before the launch. — AFP ■

NASA launches Lucy probe to explore Jupiter asteroids

NASA launched a spacecraft called Lucy on a 12-year mission to explore Jupiter's Trojan asteroids for the first time on Saturday, gathering new insights into the solar system's formation.

The Atlas V rocket responsible for propelling the probe took off at 5:34 am local time (0934 GMT) from Cape Canaveral.

Named after an ancient fossil of a pre-human ancestor, Lucy will become the first solar-powered spacecraft to venture so far from the Sun, and will observe more asteroids than any probe before it -- eight in all. Lucy will also make three Earth flybys for gravity assists, making it the first spacecraft to return to our planet's vicinity from the outer solar system.

"Each one of those asteroids, each one of those pristine samples, provide a part of the story of the solar system, the story of us," Thomas Zurbuchen, associate administrator of NASA's Science Mission, told reporters on a call.

Lucy's first encounter will be in 2025 with asteroid Donaldjohanson in the Main Belt, between Mars and Jupiter. The asteroid is named after the discoverer of the Lucy fossil. — AFP ■



Workers inside the Astrotech Space Operations Facility in Titusville, Florida, move the first half of the United Launch Alliance (ULA) payload fairing toward NASA's Lucy spacecraft on 30 September 2021. PHOTO: NASA/BEN SMEGELSKY

Smart technologies help reshape coal mining industry in China

WITH a few clicks on a smartphone, a giant machine roared to life and coal briquettes began to be transported to the surface of the conveyor belts.

"I can even control the conveyor and other equipment in the coal mine from home by using a management application on my phone", said 32-year-old Cai Jin at a spacious and illuminated work platform that is around 280 metres below ground at the Caojiatan Coal Mine, northwest China's Shaanxi Province.

Cai, who is in charge of a mechanical and electrical team at the mine, said there are only several workers at the platform, unlike stereotypical coal mines, and the environment is largely free of harmful coal dust.

Located in Yulin City, the Caojiatan Coal Mine covers an area of around 108.5 square

kilometres with annual coal production of 15 million tonnes.

Benefiting from smart technologies, the mine has realized integrated management of fully-mechanized coal mining, tunnel boring, and coal transport. The new drainage systems and dust reduction techniques have also greatly improved the working environment of coal miners.

Workers were replaced by patrol robots to monitor the status of the downhole water pumping station and substation, said Li Zhiguo, maintenance worker of Cai's team, adding that the replacement significantly reduces the safety risks of miners.

"Robots acquire accurate real-time data of the station to secure smooth operation by detecting sound, temperature, and images," said Li. — Xinhua ■

Russian crew return to Earth after filming first movie in space



Russian actress Yulia Peresild spent 12 days on the International Space Station shooting scenes for the first movie in orbit. The International Space Station (ISS) crew member Russian actor Yulia Peresild waves farewell as she boards the Soyuz MS-19 spacecraft for the launch, 5 October 2021. PHOTO: ANDREY SHELEPIN/ RUSSIAN SPACE AGENCY ROSCOSMOS/AFP

A Russian actress and a film director returned to Earth Sunday after spending 12 days on the International Space Station (ISS) shooting scenes for the first movie in orbit.

Yulia Peresild and Klim

Shipenko landed as scheduled on Kazakhstan's steppe at 0436 GMT, according to footage broadcast live by the Russian space agency.

They were ferried back to terra firma by cosmonaut Oleg

Novitsky, who had been on the space station for the past six months.

"The descent vehicle of the crewed spacecraft Soyuz MS-18 is standing upright and is secure. The crew are feeling good!" Russian space agency Roscosmos tweeted.

The filmmakers had blasted off from the Russia-leased Baikonur Cosmodrome in ex-Soviet Kazakhstan earlier this month, travelling to the ISS with veteran cosmonaut Anton Shkaplerov to film scenes for "The Challenge".

If the project stays on track, the Russian crew will beat a Hollywood project announced last year by "Mission Impossible" star Tom Cruise together with NASA and Elon Musk's SpaceX.

The movie's plot, which has been mostly kept under wraps along with its budget, centres around a surgeon who is dispatched to the ISS to save a cosmonaut. — AFP ■

Latvia's president contracts Covid despite being vaccinated

LATVIAN President Egils Levits has contracted Covid-19 despite being fully vaccinated, his chief of staff said Friday.

After returning from a visit to Denmark and Sweden, the president took a PCR test which came back positive. Levits is said to be doing well, and he is working remotely.

The news forced Finland's President Sauli Niinisto to isolate as well, as the pair had lunch together on Wednesday.

Latvia, a country of 1.9 million people, posted a new daily record of 2,408 coronavirus cases

on Thursday.

In response to surging infections, the nation on Monday declared a three-month state of emergency.

Only 48 per cent of Latvians are fully vaccinated -- the fourth-worst vaccination rate in the European Union after Bulgaria, Romania and Croatia.

A government scientific advisory group has said it would no longer work for the government after it said its advice during the summer to avoid the current fourth wave of infections was ignored. — AFP ■



People line up at a local community vaccination centre in Ventspils, a Latvian port city on the Baltic Sea. PHOTO: AFP

UK records over 40,000 COVID-19 cases for third day in a row



People walk past ambulances at the Royal London Hospital in London, Britain, on 9 April 2021. PHOTO: XINHUA

BRITAIN has recorded more than 40,000 COVID-19 cases for the third consecutive day, bringing the total number of cases in the country to 8,361,651.

LONDON, Oct. 15 (Xinhua) -- Another 44,932 people in Britain have tested positive for COVID-19 as the country recorded more than 40,000 COVID-19 cases on the third successive

day, according to official figures released Friday.

It brought the total number of coronavirus cases in the country to 8,361,651.

The country's coronavirus-related death toll rose by 145 to a total of 138,379. These figures only include the deaths of people who died within 28 days of their first positive test.

There are currently 7,086 patients in hospital with COVID-19.

The data came as National Health Service (NHS) Test and Trace estimated that 400,000 coronavirus test samples were processed through the Immensa Health Clinic lab in Wolverhampton and an estimated 43,000 people may have been given incorrect results between 8 Sept and Oct. 12.

An investigation was launched into reports of people receiving negative PCR test results after they had previously tested positive on a lateral flow device.

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) said most were in the South West of England. More than 85 per cent of people aged 12 and over in Britain have had their first vaccine dose, and over 78 per cent have received both, the latest figures showed. — Xinhua ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Pfizer submits data to EU agency for Covid jab ages 5-11

PFIZER and BioNTech said Friday they had submitted data to the EU's medicines watchdog for the approval of their coronavirus vaccine for children aged 5 to 11, following a similar step in the United States.

The vaccine makers announced last month that trial results had shown their jab was safe and created a "robust" immune response in that age group.

US pharma giant Pfizer and German partner BioNTech said they had submitted data from their study involving 2,268 children ages five to 11 to the European Medicines Agency (EMA) with a view to securing "Conditional Marketing Authorisation in the European Union". — AFP ■

Laos to extend national lockdown due to COVID-19 concern

AS the number of the COVID-19 case keeps rising in Laos, the government on Friday decided to extend the ongoing lockdown by 15 days.

Deputy Head of the Prime Minister's Office Thipphakone Chanthavongsa told a press conference in the Lao capital Vientiane on Friday that the restrictions are necessary to ensure Lao citizens and foreign residents living in Laos remain safe from COVID-19 and preventing as many deaths as possible.

Local cases of COVID-19 continued to increase and spread across multiple provinces in Laos. The country reported 573 new cases on Friday, bringing the national tally to 31,188. The new cases included 571 local infections and two imported cases. — Xinhua ■

Covid vaccine stand-off between Chicago mayor, police hits courts

A Chicago judge on Friday banned a police union president from making public statements on the city's Covid-19 policy as a stand-off over vaccine mandates sparked dueling lawsuits.

The dispute between mayor Lori Lightfoot and police union head John Catanzara has made the city the latest flashpoint in a deeply polarized debate over vaccines and whether governments have the right to mandate them.

Lightfoot sought and received an injunction against Catanzara Friday when the judge issued a 10-day restraining order that bans him from

making statements that encourage members not to report their vaccination status.

The police union filed its own lawsuit Friday against Lightfoot and Chicago Police Superintendent David Brown that seeks to force arbitration over the matter.

Like all city employees, Chicago police officers have been mandated to report their vaccine status to an online portal by midnight Friday. Those not vaccinated will be subject to twice-weekly testing.

Those who refuse to disclose their status have a few days' grace to explain themselves --



According to the Officer Down Memorial Page, 228 officers have died from Covid-19 this year, making it by far the leading cause of death in the line of duty. PHOTO: AFP

but face being placed on unpaid leave and eventually fired.

In two videos released this

week, Catanzara urged police officers to ignore the order and risk loss of pay.

On Tuesday, he predicted that if a large number of officers refused to be tested or report their vaccinations, Chicago would have a "police force at 50 percent or less for this weekend."

Lightfoot responded by saying: "I cannot and will not stand idly by while the rhetoric of conspiracy theorists threatens the health and safety of Chicago's residents and first responders."

She also said Catanzara was "encouraging a work stoppage or strike."

Both state law and the union contract prohibits Chicago police from striking. — AFP ■

Japan to set up 100 bil. yen fund for advanced technologies R&D

JAPAN will establish a 100 billion yen (\$880 million) fund to support research and development in advanced technologies to strengthen industrial competitiveness, economic revitalization minister Daishiro Yamagiwa said Sunday.

Speaking on a Fuji TV program, Yamagiwa said the fund would help accelerate the application of artificial intelligence, biotechnology, and robotics, adding, "Japan's economy will not grow unless we make changes to the industrial structure with science and technology as the foundation."

The plan is expected to be included in stimulus measures to be compiled by the end of



The fund would help accelerate the application of artificial intelligence, biotechnology, and robotics. Five unmanned ground vehicles are shown at the economy ministry in Tokyo. **PHOTO: KYODO/FILE**

this year by the government of Prime Minister Fumio Kishida.

Turning to the novel coronavirus, Yamagiwa, who is in

charge of the government's pandemic response, said that he expects people "will be able to live without any restrictions in

November" if the current downward trend in infections continues.

Local governments have asked dining establishments to

remain operating under shortened business hours for around a month following the lifting of the state of emergency on 1 Oct.

In response to concerns that some private businesses' asking customers and event participants to show proof of COVID-19 vaccination or negative test results would result in discrimination, Yamagiwa stressed that the government would "not place restrictions on the activities of the private sector" and that no administrative guidance is currently being considered. Yamagiwa also expressed his intent to shorten the 10-day quarantine period for vaccinated overseas arrivals.—
Kyodo News ■

Frustrated and weary over long pandemic hours, more US workers are striking



These workers in Davenport, Iowa are among more than 10,000 US employees of the John Deere farm equipment maker now on strike, part of a growing nationwide movement. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

EXHAUSTED after working long hours during the coronavirus pandemic and resentful that their bosses are not sharing sometimes huge profits, tens of thousands of nurses, laborers and entertainment workers are going on strike across the United States.

If they fail to reach agreement with the Hollywood studios on a new collective bargaining contract, 60,000 members of the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees plan to strike on Monday. The IATSE includes cinematographers, hairdressers, makeup artists and sound editors.

Some 31,000 employees of the Kaiser Permanente healthcare group in the western states of California and Oregon are also poised to strike soon.

Since Thursday, 10,000 employees of the John Deere farm equipment company have been on strike; while 1,400 workers walked off the job at the Kellogg's cereal company on 5 October, and more than 2,000 employees of Mercy Hospital in Buffalo, New York, began striking on October 1. — AFP ■

Nigeria's high inflation slightly drops in September

NIGERIA'S high inflation has witnessed a gradual decline for six months, with the Consumer Price Index (CPI) slightly down from the 17.01 per cent growth rate recorded in August.

The figure was up 16.63 per cent year-on-year in September.

According to the latest CPI report by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), the urban inflation rate increased by 17.19 per cent year-on-year in September, down from 17.59 per cent recorded in August, while the rural inflation rate increased by 16.08 per cent year-on-year in September, down from 16.45 per cent in August 2021.

The composite food index rose by 19.57 per cent in September compared to 20.3 per cent in July, indicating that food prices, one of the biggest contributor to inflation in Nigeria, also saw slow-

er growth in September. Speaking at a news briefing in Abuja on Friday, Simon Harry, head of the NBS, attributed the declin-

ing inflation rate to the effective intervention by the government.

"Some of the policies put in place by the government are

impacting positively on most of the commodities that make up the basket for the CPI," Harry said. — Xinhua ■



Inflation Rate in Nigeria averaged 12.60 per cent from 1996 until 2021. **PHOTO: ICIRNIGERIA.ORG/XINHUA**

NEWS IN BRIEF

Shekel surplus weighs down Palestinian economy

PALESTINIAN businesses flush with too much Israeli cash: it may not be the most talked about aspect of the occupation, but experts warn it is a growing concern for the Palestinian economy.

Palestinians in the West Bank use the Israeli shekel but, beyond that commonality, the two financial systems are dramatically different.— AFP ■

Oil prices rise, notching weekly gains

OIL prices rose on Friday, recording solid gains for the week. The West Texas Intermediate for November delivery added 97 cents, or 1.2 per cent, to settle at 82.28 U.S. dollars a barrel on the New York Mercantile Exchange. Brent crude for December delivery increased 86 cents, or 1 per cent, to close at 84.86 dollars a barrel on the London ICE Futures Exchange. Prices were "being lent buoyancy by the bullish tenor in yesterday's IEA monthly report," Carsten Fritsch, energy analyst at Commerzbank Research, said Friday in a note. In its closely-watched monthly report released on Thursday, the International Energy Agency (IEA) said "the ongoing energy crisis has prompted a switch to oil that could boost demand." — Xinhua ■

China's Hubei sees foreign trade surge in first three quarters

CENTRAL China's Hubei Province saw a 31.9-per cent year-on-year growth in foreign trade in the first three quarters of 2021, according to Wuhan Customs.

Hubei's import and export value totaled approximately 384 billion yuan (about 59.6 billion U.S. dollars) during the period.

The figure contributed by the province's private sector reached

224.5 billion yuan, up 37.9 per cent year on year, accounting for 58.5 per cent of the province's total.

From January to September, the province's trade with its major trading partners, namely the Association of South-east Asian Nations (ASEAN), the United States and the European Union, reached 52.1 billion yuan, 51.6 billion yuan and 50.4 billion yuan respectively. — Xinhua ■

Less product, same price: 'Shrinkflation' hits US shoppers

MORE air in that bag of chips? Fewer flakes in your cereal box? You're not imagining it: "Shrinkflation," a tactic used by industry to hide price increases, is back in vogue. Facing the post-pandemic inflationary surge, partly fueled by bottlenecks in global supply and trouble finding workers, companies are under more pressure to deal with rising costs.

Consumer advocate Edgar Dworsky, who has followed the phenomenon he calls downsizing for quarter of a century, says



Consumer advocates say they have identified dozens of products in recent months that have seen sneaky price increases. PHOTO: AFP

he has identified dozens of products in recent months that have seen sneaky price increases.

He found goods ranging from Charmin toilet paper rolls to Cheerios cereal, to Royal Canin canned

cat food, where the size or weight has shrunk, but the price remains the same.

In September, food giant General Mills, maker of Cheerios, flagged the soaring costs for materials and labor to justify conventional price increases but also changes to "PPA" -- price pack architecture -- a technical term for the adjustment of size or quantities.

While these small changes in size could pass largely unnoticed in the past, the internet era puts them in the spotlight. — AFP ■

Hong Kong's epidemic prevention, control measures do not undermine its sound business environment: industry insiders

HONG Kong's epidemic prevention and control measures do not undermine its sound business environment, and Hong Kong's economy is bound to recover and develop further in the future, industry insiders in Hong Kong have said.

Since the outbreak of

the epidemic, the global business environment has been greatly challenged. Industry insiders told Xinhua recently that those who can effectively prevent and control the epidemic will be able to resume business activities and have a sound business environment.

Yang Yuchuan, a pro-

fessor with the Hong Kong Financial Services Institute, said Hong Kong's epidemic prevention and control measures have been gradually improved and the business environment has improved markedly with businesses generally recovered. "At present, a large number of enter-

prises in Hong Kong do not have to bear the pressure brought by epidemic prevention," Yang said, adding that thanks to the containment of the epidemic, Hong Kong's economy grew 7.8 per cent year-on-year in the first half of 2021, which is quite remarkable. — Xinhua ■



A technician works on the lithium battery production line of a new energy company in Yichang, Hubei province. PHOTO: XINHUA

Peach Aviation to offer unlimited travel passes to revive tourism

LOW-COST carrier Peach Aviation Ltd. will offer an unlimited travel pass that will allow holders to take any of the airline's domestic flights for one month in an effort to revive the tourism industry hit hard by the coronavirus pandemic.

The Osaka-based company will begin selling a total of 150 passes from noon on Tuesday with the price ranging from 19,800 yen (\$170) to 39,800 yen depending on different options, after Japan eased travel restrictions following a decline in COVID-19 cases

nationwide. Pass holders will be able to board on all 33 domestic routes offered by the carrier in November, the airline said, adding that it hopes people will explore different parts of the country or even enjoy so-called "workations," allowing people to take a trip while working online.

While railway companies often sell all-you-can-ride passes, it is rare for a Japanese airline to offer such services, the company said. People aged 12 and over with a valid photo ID are eligible for the passes.

Japan saw record numbers of coronavirus cases during this summer's fifth wave of infections, prompting the government to issue a state of emergency for Tokyo and other parts of the country that urged people to refrain from making unnecessary outings and traveling across prefectural borders.

The state of emergency as well as a quasi-state of emergency ended in September following a steady decline in COVID-19 infections nationwide. — Kyodo News ■



Passengers head to board a Peach Aviation Ltd. aircraft at Kansai airport in Osaka Prefecture on 1 July 2021. PHOTO: KYODO NEWS

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V MCC SHENZHEN VOY.NO. (140S/141N)

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V MCC SHENZHEN VOY.NO. (140S/141N) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 18-10-2021 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of MITT/MIP where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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 SEALAND MAERSK ASIA PTE., LTD.

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V MAERSK NARVIK VOY.NO. (139W/141E)

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V MAERSK NARVIK VOY.NO. (139W/141E) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 18-10-2021 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of MITT/MIP where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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 SEALAND MAERSK ASIA PTE., LTD.

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V MCP GRAZ VOY.NO. (21003S)

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V MCP GRAZ VOY.NO. (21003S) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 18-10-2021 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 X-PRESS FEEDERS LINES

Russia says it chased US Navy ship from its waters, as Washington denies that

MOSCOW said Friday that one of its warships chased away a US Navy destroyer after it attempted to violate Russia's territorial waters in the Sea of Japan, but Washington denied this.

The incident took place as Russia and China were conducting naval exercises in the area.

The Russian Defense Ministry said in a statement that at around 5 pm local time (0800GMT), the destroyer USS Chafee, which had been operating in the Sea of Japan for several days, "approached the territorial waters of the Russian Federation and attempted to cross the border."

Russia's Admiral Tributs destroyer issued a warning to the US ship "about the inadmissibility of such actions."

However, the USS Chafee ignored the warning and "took action to violate the national border of the Russian Federation," according to the Russian Defense Ministry.

"Acting within the framework of the international rules of navi-



The USS Chafee can be seen in this 2009 file photo. Russia says it chased the US ship out of its waters. **PHOTO: AFP**

gation, the Admiral Tributs set a course for ousting the intruder from the Russian territorial waters." After that, the USS Chafee turned around and set off "on the opposite course" when it was less than 60 meters away from

the Russian ship. The US Navy dismissed the Russian account as "false."

It said in a statement that its ship "was conducting routine operations in international water in the Sea of Japan" when a

Russian destroyer came within approximately 65 yards of the USS Chafee "while the ship was preparing for flight operations."

"The interaction was safe and professional," the US navy said. — AFP ■

Cyprus to revoke 45 'golden passports'

NICOSIA said Friday it would revoke the citizenship of 45 foreign investors and relatives who obtained a Cypriot passport through its disgraced citizenship-by-investment scheme, which collapsed last year under corruption allegations.

The cabinet based its decision on an independent inquiry into the programme that recommended looking into rescinding citizenships and other actions in 102 cases, government spokesperson Marios Pelekanos said.

"The cabinet decided to launch the revocation process for 39 investors and six members of their families," he said in a statement.

Cabinet would be examining a further six cases and monitoring another 47, he added.



Former supreme court judge Myron Nikolatos headed an independent committee that conducted the inquiry into the issuing of so-called "golden passports" between 2007 and last year. **PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/AFP**

Two Hindu men killed in fresh Bangladesh religious unrest

TWO Hindu men have been killed in fresh religious violence in Bangladesh, police officials said Saturday, taking the death toll to six from recent unrest in the Muslim-majority country.

Protests began on Wednesday after footage emerged of a Koran being placed on the knee of a Hindu god during celebrations for the Hindu festival Durga Puja. The minority community make up about 10 percent of the

population.

Police said the latest violence occurred in the southern town of Begumganj when hundreds of Muslims formed a street procession after Friday prayers on the final day of Durga Puja.

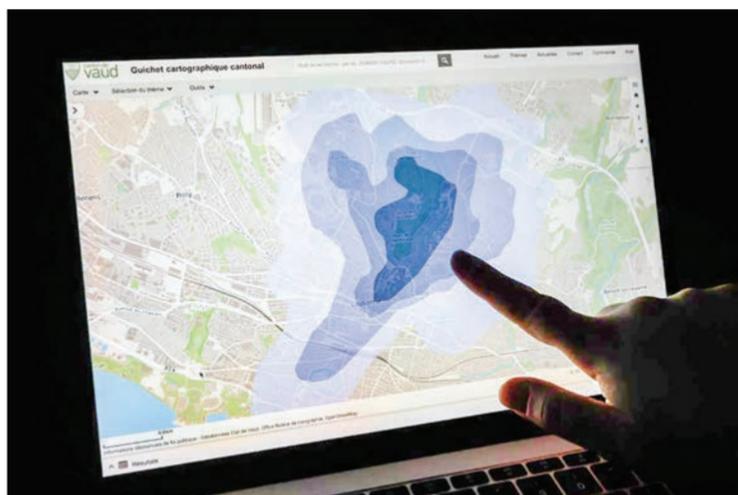
More than 200 protesters attacked a temple where members of the Hindu community were preparing to perform the last rites of the

10-day festival, local police station chief Shah Imran told reporters.

The attackers beat and stabbed to death an executive member of the temple committee, he said.

On Saturday morning, another Hindu man's body was found near a pond next to the temple, district police chief Shahidul Islam told AFP. — AFP ■

Switzerland's Lausanne in shock after soil found to be toxic



A map of the dioxin polluted area in the centre of Lausanne. **PHOTO: AFP**

LAUSANNE, the capital of Olympic sport overlooking Lake Geneva, is reeling after discovering that much of its soil is polluted with toxic compounds belched out by an old incinerator.

The situation, which has troubling implications for children and eating home-grown food, is unprecedented in wealthy Switzerland, which prides itself on its pristine mountains, lakes

and pastures. A domestic waste incineration plant in the Alpine nation's fourth-biggest city -- closed since in 2005 -- is being blamed for the dioxin fall-out.

Dioxins, which belong to the so-called 'dirty dozen' dangerous chemicals known as persistent organic pollutants, have the potential to be highly toxic. They have been shown to affect several organs and systems. The problem was discovered by sheer chance between January and May this year at a planned new ecological allotment in the city. For years, pollution monitoring had focused on air and water.

"As we did not look for dioxins, we never found them," Natacha Litzistorf, the city councillor for the environment, told AFP.

The discovery triggered

soil analysis measurements at 126 sites across the city. Experts also looked at the risks associated with exposure to polluted soils.

Pollution map

This week Lausanne announced that those studies found the dioxin levels, and the expanse of the affected area, were much worse than previously thought.

The city has issued a map showing four concentric rings, with zones containing concentrations in the soil of 20-50 nanogrammes (ng) per kilogramme, 50-100, 100-200 and then above 200 in the middle. A peak of 640 was recorded in the city centre.

The affected zone stretches 5.25 kilometres (3.2 miles) inland and measures around 3.6 kilometres across. — AFP ■

Former supreme court judge Myron Nikolatos headed an independent committee that conducted the inquiry into the issuing of so-called "golden passports" between 2007 and last year. The probe found there was "criminal and political" responsibility.

"It is obvious the Cyprus Investment Programme was operating between 2007 and 2020 with gaps and deficiencies, an inadequate legislative framework and almost no regulatory framework," Nikolatos had told reporters in June.

A damning report said that 53% of the 6,779 passports issued under the scheme were granted illegally, and pointed to a due diligence vacuum and insufficient background checks. — AFP ■

Japan's PM Kishida visits crippled Fukushima nuclear power plant

PRIME Minister Fumio Kishida on Sunday visited the crippled Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant for the first time since taking office to inspect progress in decommissioning it.

Kishida told executives of the plant's operator, Tokyo Electric Power Company Holdings Inc., that decommissioning is a "prerequisite for reconstruction" of Japan's northeastern region, devastated by a magnitude-9.0 earthquake, tsunami and subsequent nuclear crisis in 2011.

"I would like you to work steadily by valuing a relationship of trust with the local community," said Kishida, who took office on Oct. 4 after winning the leadership election of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party.

After inspecting the plant, which suffered multiple melt-downs, Kishida offered flowers and prayed at a monument to the disaster in Namie, a town that was once entirely off-limits due to the nuclear crisis.

Kishida's trip to several places in Fukushima Prefecture came a day after he visited the country's northeastern region for the first time since becoming prime minister and two days before official campaigning for the upcoming general election starts.

Kishida dissolved the House of Representatives on Thursday for the Oct. 31 election, seeking a public mandate for his new government and policies.

Kishida and the ruling party



Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida (L) visits the crippled Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant on 17 Oct 2021, in Fukushima Prefecture. A plant unit is seen behind Kishida. PHOTO: POOL PH/KYODO

have promoted the use of nuclear power. He has said the government will restart nuclear power plants that meet safety stand-

ards by gaining local consent to help Japan reach its goal of attaining carbon neutrality by 2050. — Kyodo News ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Iraq's cleric sets conditions for dealing with Washington when taking office

IRAQ'S prominent Shiite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr set several conditions on Saturday to deal with the United States if his Sadrist Movement takes office.

One of the conditions is that the diplomatic relations between the United States and Iraq should be "state-to-state with full sovereignty," al-Sadr tweeted, after his party appeared the frontrunner in the Oct. 10 parliamentary elections.

Al-Sadr noted that the talks should be serious about the U.S. troops' withdrawal from Iraq. — Xinhua ■

Sadat's nephew negotiates way out for Egypt prisoners



Mohamed al-Sadat, nephew of former Egyptian president Anwar al-Sadat, speaks during an interview with AFP at his office in the capital Cairo. PHOTO: AFP

THE fate of dissidents languishing in Egypt's prisons has long been under scrutiny, but one veteran is leveraging

his political prowess in a bid to have them released.

Mohamed al-Sadat, 66, nephew of former president

Anwar al-Sadat, the first Arab leader to strike peace with Israel, has long been a fixture of Egypt's political scene.

Now, he has become an unofficial negotiator advocating on behalf of figures imprisoned under the uncompromising administration of President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi.

"Dialogue with the state's institutions isn't just a one-man job, there are many others in close contact... but lately we've been successful in using a language that is being listened to," he told AFP in his plush office in an upscale Cairo suburb.

"This has been effective in some cases (of political prisoners) being re-examined,"

he said.

Forty-six prisoners were freed in July, including prominent activists such as rights lawyer Mahienour el-Massry.

But as many as 60,000 political prisoners are serving time in Egyptian jails, according to human rights defenders.

Sisi, a former army chief, became president in 2014 after leading the military ouster of Islamist president Mohamed Morsi a year earlier. He has since overseen a sweeping crackdown on dissent.

Those jailed for criticising the political status quo have included academics, journalists, lawyers, activists, comedians, Islamists, presidential candidates and MPs. — AFP ■

Germany's Laschet takes rap for CDU's poll drubbing

ARMIN Laschet, the chief of outgoing German Chancellor Angela Merkel's party, on Saturday took the rap for its worst ever poll result and said he would quit as the head of the country's most populous state.

Armin Laschet, the chief of outgoing German Chancellor Angela Merkel's party, on Saturday took the rap for its worst ever poll result and said he would quit as the head of the country's most populous state.

The CDU's 16 years in power came to an end in the September ballot when it garnered only 24.1 per cent of the vote. — AFP ■

Fugitive businessman close to Venezuela's Maduro extradited to US

A fugitive businessman accused of acting as a money launderer for Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro's regime was extradited Saturday to the United States from Cape Verde, US justice officials said.

The Justice Department said in a statement that Alex Saab was due to appear in court in Florida on Monday and expressed "admiration" to authorities in Cape Verde for their help in the case.

Venezuela reacted furiously, suspending talks with the US-backed opposition on ending the country's political and economic crisis.

Saab, a Colombian national, and his business partner Alvaro

Pulido are charged in the United States with running a network that exploited food aid destined for Venezuela, an oil-rich nation mired in an acute economic crisis.

They are alleged to have moved \$350 million out of Venezuela into accounts they controlled in the United States and other countries. They risk up to 20 years in prison.

Saab, who also has Venezuelan nationality and a Venezuelan diplomatic passport, was indicted in July 2019 in Miami for money laundering, and was arrested during a plane stopover in Cape Verde off the coast of West Africa in June 2020.

Venezuela's opposition has



A man walks past graffiti reading 'Freedom for diplomat Alex Saab, kidnapped by the government of Cape Verde' in Caracas, Venezuela. PHOTO: AFP

described Saab as a frontman doing shady dealings for the populist socialist regime of Maduro.

Colombian President Ivan Duque praised Saab's extradition. — AFP ■

Iranian navy repels pirate attack on trade convoy in Gulf of Aden

IRANIAN commandos repelled a pirate attack on an Iranian trade convoy in the Gulf of Aden, the commander of the Iranian Navy said on Saturday.

Shahram Irani told reporters that commandos of the fleet, consisting of the Alborz destroyer, took timely action when two Iranian tankers were attacked by five pirate boats on Saturday morning.

The operation forced the attacking boats to leave the scene and their attack was aborted, he said. — Xinhua ■

Myanmar to play Lebanon in opener of 2022 Women's Asian Cup Qualifiers today



Myanmar Women's National Football Squad pose for a group photo before an international friendly match. **PHOTO: MFF**

MYANMAR women's national football team will play against the Lebanon team in the opener of the 2022 AFC Women's Asian Cup Qualifiers today (18 October).

Myanmar team is falling in Group D together with Lebanon, the UAE and Guam.

The tournament is divided into eight groups and only the top team in each group will win the tourney.

The AFC has decided to

hold the Group D matches of team Myanmar in Kyrgyzstan from 18 to 24 October.

According to the fixtures, Myanmar will also take on Guam on 21 October and the UAE on the 24 October respectively.

The Myanmar team made the best preparations for the tournament with the best-selected player.

The current squad includes veteran players plus senior players from U-19 and

U-16 Myanmar teams.

Some group matches from the AFC Women's Asian Cup Qualifiers have been completed and six teams:

Viet Nam, Indonesia, South Korea, the Philippines, Iran and Thailand have already qualified to the next stage.

Today's match against Lebanon is a crucial one for team Myanmar to decide advancing to the next stage.—GNLM

Basilashvili books spot in ATP Indian Wells final

NIKOLAZ Basilashvili booked his spot in the ATP Indian Wells Masters final, defeating American Taylor Fritz 7-6 (7/5), 6-3 on Saturday to post one of the biggest wins of his career.

Basilashvili will next play another surprise finalist the 21st seeded Cameron Norrie, who eased past Bulgaria's Grigor Dimitrov 6-2, 6-4 earlier in the day.

The 29th seeded Basilashvili

is gunning for his third ATP title of the season after triumphs in Doha and Munich.

He clinched the semi-final win over crowd favourite Fritz on the fourth match point, hammering a forehand winner that froze the American in his tracks.

"It is an unbelievable feeling," the 29-year-old Basilashvili said. "I am super happy. I was nervous and stressed. I got very

tight but I just tried to focus on the game. "When you focus the stress goes away. I know I can play good tennis I just have to not get too tight." Basilashvili saved three set points to take the opening set in a tiebreaker.

The players stayed on serve throughout the match until the seventh game of the second set when Basilashvili got the break to go ahead 4-3.—AFP ■

Beijing flame to be lit in a vacuum in Olympia

THE Olympic flame will once again be lit in an empty stadium on Monday as it starts its truncated journey to Beijing for the Winter Games in February.

Like the ceremony in March 2020 to light the flame for Tokyo, and like those Games, which were put back a year, Monday's ceremony is a victim of coronavirus restrictions.

"Due to the situation created by the Covid-19 pandemic, the Lighting Ceremony will be held in strict compliance with local health protocols," the Hellenic Olympic Committee

announced in September. The ceremony is conducted at the ruins of the Temple of Hera in Olympia, site of the ancient Greek games from eighth century BC to the fourth century AD.

Clear skies are forecast for 11.30 local time (0830 GMT) when the flame is due to be lit by the rays of the sun concentrated in a concave. Priestess Xanthi Georgiou will light the torch from the flames.

Before the pandemic, the flame had been lit behind closed doors once, in 1984, when Greek

organisers wanted to protest against the decision of the Los Angeles organizers to accept sponsorship of stretches of the torch relay in the United States.

This time the ceremony will be held in front of an audience limited to the members of the International Olympic Committee, the Greek and Chinese Olympic committees as well as the president of Greece, Katerina Sakellaropoulou, and vaccinated members of the media.

While Greek skiers will run the first and last legs, and a Chinese participant will also

Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Administration Council Council Nine Objectives

1. Political affairs

- To build a Union based on democracy and federalism, through a disciplined and genuine multiparty democratic system that is fair and just.
- To emphasize the achievement of enduring peace for the entire nation in line with the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA).
- To continue implementing the principle of peaceful co-existence among countries through an independent, active and non-aligned foreign policy.

2. Economic affairs

- To enhance production based on agriculture and livestock through modern techniques and strengthen all-round development in other sectors of the economy.
- To develop a stable market economy and promote international investment in order to enhance the economic development of the entire National people.
- To promote and support local businesses to create employment opportunities and increase domestic production.

3. Social affairs

- To ensure a strong and dynamic Union spirit, the genuine spirit of patriotism.
- To respect and promote the customs and traditions of all National peoples and preserve and safeguard their cultural heritage and national characteristics.
- To enhance the health, fitness and education quality of the entire nation.



The crowds that came out to see actor Gerard Butler in Sparta brought the last torch relay in Greece to a premature end. This time organizers are avoiding the risk. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

carry the torch in a brief relay, the usual journey round the country. — AFP ■