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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.

Efforts must be made for improvement of Myanmar's sport arena in coming decade, says Senior General



State Administration Council Chairman Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing views round National Indoor Stadium-1 in Thuwunna of Thingangyun Township in Yangon Region on 26 December 2021.

THE players need to take adequate time for having skills of playing football encouraged by the large number of spectators, said Chairman of the State Administration Council Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing in inspecting the National Indoor Stadium-1 of Thuwunna in Thingangyun Township, Yangon Region, yesterday morning.

Union Minister for Sports and Youth Affairs U Min Thein Zan reported on hosting sports

events at local and international levels at the National Indoor Stadium-1, upgrade of the stadium, further maintenance and future plans.

Speaking on the occasion, the Senior General said taking sports events must be encouraged to contribute to strong and dynamic patriotic spirit, nationalistic spirit and national characters. At present, Myanmar's sport is weak in development. Hence, it is necessary to consider the uplift of sport standard

to meet appropriate standard. Efforts must be made for being famed Myanmar's traditional sports to the world with inserting the Myanmar's traditional sports into the contests.

As the sport is basic for the youths, sports competitions need to be held at schools and universities. Timetable of academic matters must be added with sports and physical exercises schedules with encouragement for actual activities. Qualified athletes must be en-

couraged by holding the sports competitions at different levels.

Selection of national level athletes must be based on talent, physical strength and physical and mental nature. Region/state and district levels must be facilitated with a gymnasium a standardized stadium and a swimming pool each. Arrangements must be made for granting the national selected players for their life with deserved cash awards and entitlement. Businesspersons must be invited

to develop the sport sector. The Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs needs to create public areas for the public to take sport exercises and coordinates with the sports officers to hold the sports events. Uplifting the sports arena reflects safeguarding the State and improving the mindset of the youths. Hence, efforts must be made for multiple development of sports sector within coming decade.

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Public Notice

1. The government seizes/uncovers illegal arms and ammunition, mines, communication equipment and other related materials in addition to terrorist attacks of NUG and CRPH, which were declared as terrorist groups in the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, and their subordinates PDF groups with homemade guns, gunpowder, mines and accessories, as well as arms and ammunition, mines, communication equipment and other materials imported via border areas by some ethnic armed organizations aiming to make political and military profits on a daily basis, and it also exposes the cases of the terrorists who possess firearms in various ways.
2. Moreover, some terrorists take advantage of the honesty of the people and they make them keep their illegal arms and ammunition, mines, communication devices and other related materials, including restricted materials using different ways and forms.
3. Therefore, in order to prevent unnecessary legal action against those who are not related to the terrorists, all the citizens should hand over the illegal arms and ammunition, mines, communication equipment and other related materials, including drugs banned by the government according to the law no later than 31 December 2021 to the respective wards/village administration offices/security forces if they keep these things in their houses, apartments and other places for various reasons and ways, and if they are found after the deadline, action will be taken against them under the existing laws.

*Information Team
State Administration Council*

Four national objectives of 74th Anniversary of Independence Day 2022

1. All ethnic nationals to safeguard non-disintegration of the Union, non-disintegration of national unity, and perpetuation of sovereignty;
2. To ensure the emergence of a good and clean government and administrative system by implementing a genuine disciplined democracy;
3. All ethnic nationals to amicably and unitedly cooperate in the country development based on the genuine Union spirit;
4. To strive for restoring perpetual peace the entire people aspire.

110 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 26 December, total figure rises to 529,613

MYANMAR'S COVID-19 positive cases rose to 529,613 after 110 new cases were reported on 26 December 2021 according to the Ministry of Health. Among these confirmed cases, 507,210 have been discharged from hospitals. Death toll reached 19,254 after 3 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 25-12-2021, a total of 20,425,113 people have been vaccinated. Of them, 14,649,345 people have been vaccinated two times and 5,775,768 people once.—MNA

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*

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Public Notice

1. The Anti-Corruption Commission has established corruption prevention units within ministries to effectively curb corruption.
2. The ACC used SMS on the mobile phone to ask the public who seek services at an office of the department of the relevant ministries via Short Code No "1111" for feedbacks, including the Public Feedback Programme-PFP.
3. According to the PFP the right replies of the citizens via Short Code No "1111" will provide the quality of services of each department and the requirements for corruption prevention to be fixed.
4. Therefore, the public should make a reply to the questions of the ACC and corruption prevention units of the ministries via SMS at Short Code No "1111" and such doing is a supportive measure for PFP, and the people are urged to cooperate in the operations.

Anti-Corruption Commission

Answer "1111" to fight against corruption
Answer "1111" to improve services
Let's work together to eliminate corruption towards prosperity

Spread democracy!

We must spread democracy and must try to build an independent Myanmar through this system. Only democracy is suitable for independence as it is the only system that supports peace. So, democracy must be our goal!

(Excerpt from the speech delivered by Bogyoke Aung San at the fourth State leaders meeting in August 1945)



Efforts must be made for improvement of Myanmar's sport arena in coming decade, says Senior General



State Administration Council Chairman Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing visits the gym at Youth Training Centre (Thuwunna).

FROM PAGE-1

The Senior General and party viewed round maintenance of the National Indoor Stadium-1.

On arrival at the Myanmar Football Federation at the Youth Training Centre in Thuwunna,

the Senior General heard reports on maintenance of the stadium, construction of more sport grounds, holding of Myanmar National League and international sports events by officials.

The Senior General stressed

the need to nurture Myanmar footballers since their young age to easily seek the sports standard of the country as the players need to take adequate time for having skills of playing football encouraged by the large

number of spectator. The Sports and Youth Affairs Ministry, Education Ministry and Myanmar Football Federation have to join hands in nurturing the athletes in young age to become new generation players. The Youth Train-

ing Centre (Thuwunna) must host not only football sport but track and field and other sport events.

The Senior General and party visited the gym in the stadium.—MNA

Press release from MoFA

IT is learnt that some western embassies in Yangon issued a joint statement on 24 December 2021 regarding the attacks in Kayin State. It is observed that the joint statement contained matters related to the attacks on civilians and accusations against security forces.

It is reported that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs sent diplomatic notes to respective embassies on 26 December and expressed their joint statement is based on unverifiable sources such as anti-government elements, terrorists and insurgent groups. The Ministry also warned that such kind of statement meddled in the internal affairs of the receiving State and violated the principles stipulated in the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations and the Charter of the United Nations.

It is also learnt that the Ministry expressed its objection to the said joint statement.—MNA

UEC continues third-day meeting of electoral reforms with political parties

THE Union Election Commission organized the third-day meeting of electoral system together with the political parties in Yangon yesterday.

During the meeting, one representative from each of six political parties read out the election design papers regarding the PR system based on the results of two sessions conducted on 24 and 25 December.

The paper of team (1) for Pyithu Hluttaw was read by U Tun Yi from National Unity Party. It stated that it should develop the Closed List PR.

In determining the constituencies of the Pyithu Hluttaw, it should be divided according to the number of representatives just like the previous numbers in regions and states and should not base on the population which may cause disputes.

Constituencies should be considered with equal numbers of population as much as possible when determining the constituencies based on the number of representatives received by regions and states.

For making threshold for parties, it should conduct for each constituency, use the Closed List PR and the political parties should cooperate to achieve better ways in electoral reforms.

Then, U Tin Swe from Democratic Party (Myanmar) presented the paper created by team (2) for Pyithu Hluttaw. He said all the parties attending the event agree the PR system for Pyithu Hluttaw election as well as the Closed List sys-



The third-day meeting of electoral system organized by UEC is in progress.

tem and stipulation of Section 51 (d) of the Constitution. It should express the photo and name of the candidates under the name of party with vinyl or posters at the entrance to polling stations so that the voters can cast vote as they like.

The paper of team (3) was briefed by U Parsi Pyi Hein of People's Party. It stated that the Closed List-PR system is the best way in holding the three Hluttaws in accordance with the 2008 Constitution. Currently, more than 100 countries adopt the PR system. Based on the districts to fix the constituencies is suitable size. The paper also included the formula to calculate the votes for the parties including independents.

Dr Myo Sett Thway of PPP read the paper of team (4) for Amyotha Hluttaw. The paper said they agree the PR system.

It should use Closed List-PR System initially and when the education level of voters and political tide reaches to a certain extent, it should change into Open List-PR System or other PR system designs, and only the FPTP should be for self-administered division/zones. According to the different geographical locations, it should set 36 constituencies for Amyotha Hluttaw and the UEC should set proper laws or regulations to solve the impact of PR system as there would be plenty of parties.

Daw Nang Thaik Thaik Win Kyaw of Phalon-Sawaw Democratic Party presented the paper of team 5 for Region/State Hluttaw. She said it should change into PR system with Closed List PR. For the constituencies of region/state Hluttaw, there should be one constituency for one district.

However, if it is a densely populated district or township with a large number of townships, more than one constituency needs to be designated.

There also should be one constituency for regions/states with below 10 townships. It should use FPTP system in selecting the Hluttaw MP for ethnic constituency. It also highlighted the voting system with ID cards and other transparent vote counting system in the presence of parties and candidates and educating campaign regarding PR system.

U Khaw Teint of New Democracy Party (Kachin) read the paper of team (6) for Region/State Hluttaw. It should use Closed List-PR system and the Largest Remainder Formula in counting the votes for Region/State Hluttaw elections. One constituency should be for one township and two

MPs should be elected with PR system and FPTP system should be for the candidates of ethnic affairs Hluttaw.

In his conclusion remarks, UEC Chairman U Thein Soe expressed words of thanks to the political parties for joining the discussions for electoral reforms. The election system and design play a key role in holding the election to form a government and legislate.

By demarcating constituencies widely and electing proportionate representatives in accordance with the will of the voters, the qualified MPs will be emerged and a more coordinated and politically stable multiparty democracy will be developed.

He also talked about the activities to be conducted with PR system within the boundary of 2008 Constitution, Closed List-PR system, stipulation of 2008 Constitution in choosing constituencies by the UEC, suggestions to express the photo and name of candidates at the entrance to polling stations, the change to PR system for FPTP system and cooperation work with UEC, political parties and entire people.

He pledged that the UEC will amend necessary laws depending on the discussions for changing to the PR system to be appropriate for the country. The UEC will work together with the political parties to elect the skilled MPs in coming election.

A total of 115 representatives of 62 political parties joined the event.—MNA

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To produce the COVID-19 vaccine

COORDINATION is being undertaken with China to produce the COVID-19 vaccine. A plan is underway to start production of the vaccine in the coming January. Since its operations, a target was set to produce five million units of vaccine per month.

(Excerpt from the speech delivered by Chairman of the State Administration Council Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing at the meeting 18/2021 of the State Administration Council on 13-12-2021)

Deputy Information Minister meets staff at Monghsat, Tachilek IPRD offices

DEPUTY Minister for Information U Ye Tint visited District Information and Public Relations Department Office in Monghsat Township, Shan State on the morning of 25 December and met officials and staff from Mongton, Mongkhok, Punpakyem and Monehta.

In the afternoon, he inspected the retransmission station in Monghsat, and met with the staff.

On the morning of 26 December, the Deputy Minister met with the officials and staff from Mongphyat, Mongyawng, Mongyu and Kenglek townships at Tachilek District IPRD. He then inspected the retransmission station in Tachilek and met with the staff.

During the meeting with the staff, the Deputy Minister called on the staffs to work in ethnic areas, paying respect to local customs and cooperate with the people. To end the current unrests and bring peace and stability to the country, the staff need to mobilize all ethnic people for ensuring peace and stability and development of the State. He also stressed the need for maintain prevention and control of infection rate of the pandemic. Efforts must be made for nurture the youths to be qualified in skills and technologies.—MNA

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Deputy Minister for Information U Ye Tint meets service personnel from township Information and Public Relations Departments at Tachilek District IPRD.



MoC arranges smooth import of anti-COVID-19 equipment

THE Ministry of Commerce is arranging smooth import of essential medical supplies and anti-COVID-19 devices for COVID-19 prevention, control and treatment activities through trade camps, international airports and seaports.

A bowser is carrying liquid oxygen from border trade zone to respective city.

Anti-COVID-19 equipment was imported by four companies using seven vehicles.

One oxygen storage container, one liquid oxygen distributor, 80 oxygen concentrators for home use, 19,400 PPE suits and 12 tonnes of masks were imported via Muse 105th-Mile Trade Zone, and Chinshwehaw trade camp yesterday.

Officials from the relevant departments are cooperating

to facilitate and expedite the standard operating procedures, including online registration for the import process.

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

Marle Nattaung dam to irrigate 1,100 acres of summer crops in Singu Township

MARLE Nattaung dam will provide irrigation water to over 1,100 acres of summer crops in Singu Township, Mandalay Region, starting from 15 February 2022, said U Aung Aung Soe, an officer of Madaya Township Irrigation and Water Utilization Management Department.

The dam is currently holding water up to 31,964 acre feet and 24,555 acre feet can be reused. Depending on irrigation capacity of the dam, about 800 acres of summer rice paddy and 300 acres of other crops are projected for irrigation.

“Marle Nattaung dam was upgraded to secure more acres in irrigation last year.

The dam can provide adequate irrigation water for the farmers depending on the rainfall amount. Additionally, the farmers also need to save water and minimize water loss,” he elaborated.

This dam mostly supplies water to summer crops and monsoon crops acres. It covered 3,200 acres of monsoon paddy this year. The water use team has been formed and the department aims to establish association in future.—Min Htet Aung (Mandalay sub-printing house)/GNLM

Marle Nattaung Dam is storing water to irrigate croplands in open season. PHOTO: MIN HTET AUNG



Nawngkhio resumes train service for tourism recovery



A train is ready to drive along Mandalay-Lashio railway section in Nawngkhio of northern Shan State. **PHOTO: HTWENGE**

NAWNGHKIO Township in northern Shan State restarted train services in order for the tourism industry to raise its head again.

With the local ethnic people singing and dancing, they welcomed the domestic travellers who left for the jaw dropping Gokteik viaduct by train through Mandalay-Lashio railway section, which is the famous tourist site in Nawngkhio Township on the Christmas Day.

U Sai Thaw Lin, general manager of Myanmar Railways, U San Thar Aung, assistant general manager of MR (Upper Myanmar branch), and officials of Division-3 of MR, the deputy director of northern Shan State Directorate of Hotels and Tourism and officials,

chairman of Nawngkhio Township Administration Body and officials from the related departments also made a warm welcome to the rail service.

There is a total of 140 passengers on this train journey. Train service is set to run on Sundays, departing at 8:30 am from PyinOoLwin and arriving at 11:30 pm in Gokteik viaduct. The train will return after 1 hour stop for the travellers to go sightseeing.

The visitors can enjoy breathtaking scenery view of green fields and hills.

The Directorate of Hotels and Tourism is working together with the related departments for the tourism recovery.—Htwe Nge (IPRD)/GNLM

Terrorists launch mine attacks on two BEPPSs in Pauk Township

THE terrorists committed homemade bomb attacks on two Basic Education Post-Primary Schools in Pauk Township of Magway Region.

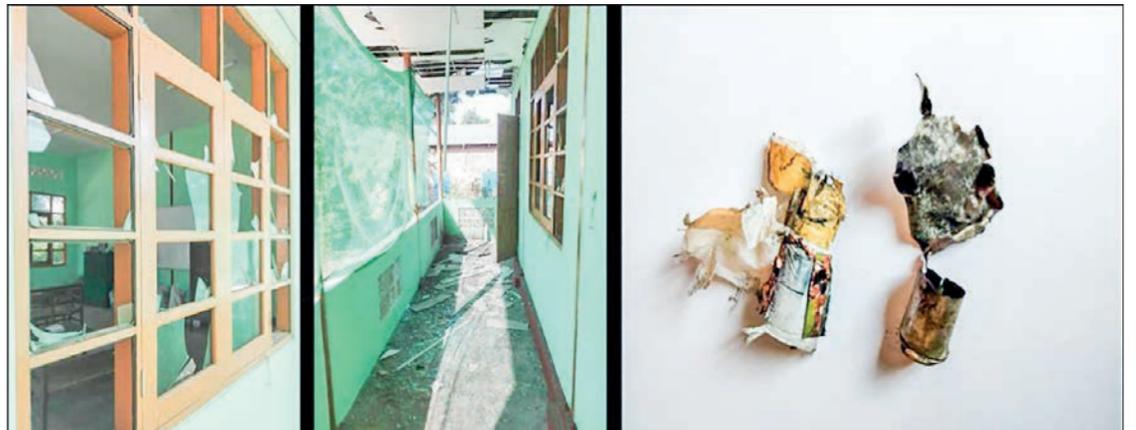
At about 9:30 am on 25 December, one terrorist riding a motorcycle threw a homemade bomb into No (2) BEPPS in Aungtawmu Ward of Pauk Township in Magway Region.

The bomb blast destroyed 10 sheets of ceiling and 20 window glasses of school building. Similarly, at about 10:20

am on the same day, a packet was found at No (1) BEPPS in Aungchantha Ward. The teachers and security forces examined the black plastic packet about 15 ft from the fence of school.

They found a homemade mine made of a part of PVC pipe in the packet and deactivated it.

The security forces conducted investigation to arrest the terrorists who attacked the schools. —MNA



Homemade bomb blast destroys window glass, ceiling sheets and school building at BEPPS-2 in Pauk Township.

Kyaukse Township grows 5,202 acres of edible oil crops



Sunflower plantation is bearing successful seeds. **PHOTO: THET MAUNG**

MANDALAY Region officials estimated to grow 11,585 acres of peanut, sesame and sunflower in Kyaukse Township and it has already planted in 5,202

acres of croplands.

The edible oil crops are planted in respective areas of Kyaukse Township. The peanut is planted in 30 acres of station

(1) while 80 acres in station (2), five acres in station (5), 20 acres in station (11), and 167 acres in station (12).

The sesame is grown in 82 acres of croplands in station (6) while 35 acres in station (8), 287 acres in station (11) and 1,090 acres in station (12).

The sunflower is planted in 647 acres of croplands in station (1) while 376 acres in station (2), 320 acres in station (4), 10 acres in station (5), 40 acres in station (6), 350 acres in station (8), 420 acres in station (10), 446 acres in station (11) and 797 acres in station (12), according to the Department of township Agricultural Land Management and Statistics.—Thet Maung (Kyaukse)/GNLM

Over K310 millions of opium seized in Kywetetson Village of Thazi Township

MORE than K310 millions worth of opium were seized in Kywetetson village, Thazi Township, according to the Myanmar Police Force.

A combined team consisting of members of the Anti-Drug Task Force arrived at Thazi Township at 12 mid-night on 22 December.

A 12-wheeled FUSO driven by Saw Thura Aung from Kalaw to Thazi was reportedly searched at the combined checkpoint in Kywetetson Village on Kalaw-Thazi Road. A total of 354 kilogrammes of opium worth over K310 millions were confiscated from the vehicle.

According to the investigation, the seized opium was transported from Shan State (South) to Mandalay Region.

He is taken action and the perpetrators are still being investigated, according to the officials. — MNA



354 kilogrammes of opium was seized in Thazi Township of Mandalay Region.

Clay pot businesses in Taunggon village ramp up production for toddy sap collection season

THE villagers are prepping the clay pots for its toddy sap collecting season, said U Myint Swe, a clay pot maker in Ngathayauk town, NyaungU Township, Mandalay Region.

Taunggon village in Ngathayauk town has been relying on the earthen pot making businesses for generations. The villagers execute that business on a commercial scale and send the pots to other regions and states.

A FAW truckloads of clay is worth K50,000. The villagers are preparing the necessary raw materials before toddy sap collection season.

The clay pots for drinking water are demanded the whole year. Other pots for flower vase (Buddhist offering) and earthen pots for cooking, earthen toys and money saving box are also sold. The clay pots from Ngathayauk town is famous for its quality.

The clay pot brokers from Taungtha, Pakokku and Kyaukpadaung townships come the village to buy the pots, U Myint Swe explained.

The prices of clay pots range between K2,000-K7,000 depending on design, size and quality.—Ko Htein KPD/GNLM



Clay pots for collecting toddy sap are seen in sun ray in production process. PHOTO: KO HTEIN (KPD)

Chinese traders purchase sesame seeds at low price



Local farmers are harvesting sesame plants in dry zone of Myanmar.

THE prices of sesame varieties which are primarily demanded by China have fallen on account of poor quality and Kyat revaluation on US dollar in recent days, said U Tin Ko Ko, Monywa Commodity Centre's Information and Public Relations officer.

"The prices of black sesame and white sesame are on the decline. Meanwhile, the prices of brown sesame and yellow sesame are stable. At the present, Chinese traders are steadily buying sesame and green grams," said U Tin Ko Ko.

The price of black sesame plummeted into K58,000 per basket on 25 December, indicating a drastic drop of over K20,000 per basket. Furthermore, the price of white sesame slightly slid from K45,500 to

K45,000. Yellow sesame, brown sesame and red sesame are priced around K40,000, according to price data of Monywa Commodity Centre.

Both raw sesame seeds and valued-added sesame seeds are conveyed to China. When the COVID-19 cases fall and transportation barriers are eased, the sesame market will raise its head again for sure, an exporter said.

Normally, Myanmar exports about 80 per cent of sesame products to foreign markets. Myanmar's sesame is shipped to China, the Republic of Korea, Japan, Singapore, European Union countries and China (Taipei).

The EU markets prefer organic-farming sesame seeds from Myanmar. Japan prefers Myanmar black sesame seeds,

cultivated under good agricultural practices (GAP), and purchases them after a quality assessment. At the present time, the country is relying solely on the Chinese market and facing a hurdle to place the sesame on other foreign countries.

Sesame is cultivated in the country throughout the year. Magway Region, which has gained a reputation as the oil pot of Myanmar, is the main producer of sesame seeds. The seeds are also grown in Mandalay and Sagaing regions.

Of the cooking oil crops grown in Myanmar, the acreage under sesame seed is the highest, accounting for 51.3 per cent of the overall oil crop plantation. About 600,000-800,000 tonnes of sesame seeds are yearly produced.—KK, Lu Lay/GNLM

Fresh pigeon pea flowing into Monywa Commodity Centre

NEWLY harvested pigeon pea is supplied to Monywa Commodity Centre at K35,000 per basket, said U Tin Ko Ko, Monywa Commodity Centre's Information and Public Relations officer.

"The fresh beans and pulses will enter the market in January," he said.

"Monywa Commodity Centre is conducting trade online amidst the instability. The goods are instantly flowing into the Centre. Large supply, however, brings down the price slightly by K5,000-K7,000 per basket these days," U Tin Ko Ko stated.

Myanmar exported more than 214,000 tonnes of pigeon pea to the foreign trade partners between 1 October and 30 Sep-

tember in the previous financial year 2020-2021, generating an income of US\$144 million, according to the Ministry of Commerce's trade data.

Myanmar's pigeon pea is primarily shipped to India, and also exported to Singapore, the US, Canada, Pakistan, the UK, and Malaysia. But, the export volume to other countries rather than to India is extremely small.

The G to G pact between Myanmar and India will ensure strong market next five years, along with other relaxations on import quota, Myanmar Trade Promotion Organization under the Ministry of Commerce stated.—Lu Lay, KK/GNLM



Merchants are checking quality of pulses and beans at Commodity Centre in Monywa.

Take preparation for responding to natural disasters

NOWADAYS, climate change causes a larger number of natural disasters which are very severe more than previous ones throughout the world.

Natural disaster management needs to monitor the changing nature of disasters, intensity and destructive power in order to seek the best way to mitigate the loss and damage in the events. That is why people should be on the alert for responding to natural disasters and prepare the emergency response and long-term preventive measures.

Efforts must be made to identify various kinds of natural disasters depending on regions, situations and seasons as well as climate and geographical conditions. Hence, it is necessary to analyze the possibility of breaking out the natural disasters and make preparation to respond to the disasters.

Preparations should be done in regions and states for monitoring the intensities of natural disasters which happen in the winter, summer and monsoon seasons. Moreover, relentless assessments must be conducted for the unexpected emergence of natural disasters based on climate change.

The people need to be ready to respond not only to the outbreak of natural disasters such as strong winds, flash flooding, inundation and landslides but also to earthquakes in real-time. Hence, all responsible persons must have a conscience and activeness.

Relevant ministries, Nay Pyi Taw Council and region and state governments are to coordinate the tasks in unison without delay. Their prompt efforts will reflect the search and rescue process whenever natural disasters fall.

As a Myanmar saying goes: 'Prevention is better than cure', necessary preparedness and protective measures must be undertaken with farsightedness for countering the natural disasters, rather than the acts of committing the management matters to respond to the disasters when they faced.

If so, it will be sure to conquer the natural disasters by saving the lives and property of the people if the responsible persons have completed preparatory tasks in advance. It is because the critical thinking of humans can win over all things even though natural disasters would have terribly destructive powers.

In fact, human is living being at the level of capacity for initiating, analyzing, monitoring and reviewing all events before the emergence of consequences. Thus, it is easy for a human to conquer the victory over anything including natural disasters, applying experiences and initiating creation to fight back even the catastrophe.



Hailing the 74th Anniversary of Independence Day March towards the restoration of perpetual peace across the nation

By Aung Kyaw Thant

“SO, if you want to get the Independence, you have to follow the disciplines deserved to regain the independence. If you want to get independence, you have to sustain the unity deserved to regain independence. If you want to get independence, you have to perform rehabilitation deserved to regain the independence. After that, if you want to enjoy the fruits of independence, I'd like to urge you all that you have to work, abide by disciplines and change your old, worse mindsets.”

The above-mention quotation was excerpted from the speech delivered by General Aung San at the City Hall in Yangon on 13 July 1947. The Radio Myanmar broadcasts that speech on the night of every martyr day which falls on 19 July every year.

General Aung San, the architect of the Independence, urged us how to do things in the future. How many people do they follow the guidance of General Aung San? Most of the people paid respect to General Aung San but how many people do they pay respect to each other?

Now, the Republic of the Union of Myanmar is an independent nation but peace cannot cover all over the country yet. At a time when Myanmar regained its independence, the colonialists kept a spark among the ethnic people. It is because Myanmar is home to 135 national races. Those ethnic people have many common concepts as well as different ones. Taking an advantage of such difference, the colonialists sow a seed of spark among the national brethren with instigation.

The spark has been gradually bigger and bigger in decades. It triggered the misunderstanding as an instigation wedged into the hearts of national races. When the time had gone with the wind for decades, the hearts of the national races injured by the instigation of the colonialists were harder and harder as a stone. The injuries on the hearts healed but the scars did not appear. Whenever they saw their scars on their hearts, the misunderstanding among the ethnic nationals triggers the conflicts.

Now, we all know the root cause of the injuries on the hearts. So, we should seek the appropriate drugs to be used in treating the injuries. Thanks to the succes-



Yangon Region government organizes the flag-hoisting and saluting ceremonies to mark 73rd Independence Day at Maha Bandoola Park in Yangon on 4 January 2021. PHOTO: MNA

sive governments and the entire people, we all have already known the appropriate drugs for the injuries. Peace is the best medicine for curing injuries based on a misunderstanding. We have to restore the peace. We have to bring peace into the hearts of the ethnic national people.

Nowadays, all the entire people cannot fully enjoy the fruits of independence. We can see the impacts of internal conflicts and terror acts across the nation. All the people are waiting for the time to restore the perpetual peace throughout the nation. It will be the best award for them. Such a best award is not far from here.

In line with the speech of General Aung San, if we want to enjoy the fruits of independence, we have to change our old, worse mindsets. If we have changed our mindsets, we all would have a common opinion to rebuild the nation based on democracy and federalism.

Since 2018, the Tatmadaw has been issuing a large num-

ber of statements with the aim of restoring perpetual peace. It suspended one-sided military operations from 2018 to the end of February 2022, showing its genuine goodwill for the restoration of perpetual peace. Hence, all signatories and non-signatories of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) should consider the potentials of the statements issued by the Tatmadaw whether it leads to the prosperity of the nation or a worse situation.

As the essence of democracy, all stakeholders of the nation need to analyze everything related to the future of the nation. They all have to choose the similarities as a common concept and set aside the non-similarities. They all have to implement the similarities at first while trying to reach a compromise for the non-similarities. Those stakeholders should seek the best way for solving the non-similarities based on the compromise. Gradually, they may transform the non-similarities into similarities. That day all

the national people aspire would be the most significant and auspicious for the motherland.

Now is the time to hold the dialogues instead of fighting. All the people wish to hear the sweet sound of white doves instead of the noisy gunfire. The day when all stakeholders changed their mindsets will be ceasing the noisy gunfire. The whole Myanmar country will be peaceful and prosperous. Verily, as every dream is not implemented, it will be just a dream. Otherwise, the dreams can be turned into true. To do so, all the national people, as well as all stakeholders of the country, should march towards a better society of Myanmar with new mindsets.

Once, internal conflicts and terror acts left the nation with damaged parts of property, life, limb, blood and fear in the nation. Everybody knows these were undesirable events that brought physical and mental injuries to the souls of the people. Now is a good chance for them to solve

their dissatisfactions and losses on the table of dialogue. The successfulness in the dialogue can transform their arms and ammunition into the doves for peace. How wonderful it is!

The journey from end to end is not a far distance. Likewise, the journey from hatred to peace is not far distant. We all should seek the ways and means to shrink the distance. Although the people and stakeholders start their trip from the hatred, they are sure to find peace at the end of the other side. We all have already know the answer to the question. So, everybody should not waste the valuable time of their lives. We all should join hands in marching towards the gold.

The entire people have been dreaming of the emergence of a democratic nation. Such a country must practise multiparty democracy. Seven regions and seven states are combined as a Union. Currently, the government is shaping the Union based on democracy and federalism.

We have to prioritize the desire of the majority and recognize the desire of the minority in line with the essence of democracy whenever we face a situation to make decisions. As such, if we face two options to hand down the decision, the option of the majority must be implemented without fail but the option of the minority must be considered whether it should be implemented or not. If necessary, the option of the minority must also be implemented. If all options are beneficial to the State, we need to implement both options as part of the creation of satisfaction for both sides. If so, those from the majority and the minority will sustain the mutual understanding, trust and respect between them. Consequently, their consideration will create unity and harmony in nation-building tasks. If so, the Republic of the Union of Myanmar would be a paradise for the posterities in the future.

Let's change our mindsets!



Myanmar Daily Weather Report (Issued at 7:00 pm Saturday 26 December 2021)

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

FORECAST VALID UNTIL NOON OF THE 27 December 2021: Rain will be isolated in Upper Sagaing, and Taninthayi regions and Kachin, (Northern and Eastern) Shan, Kayin and Mon states. Degree of certainty is (80%). Weather will be partly cloudy in Mandalay Region and Southern Shan, Chin and Kayah states and generally fair in the remaining regions and states.

STATE OF THE SEA: Sea will be slight to moderate in Myanmar waters. Wave height will be about (4-6) feet off and along Myanmar Coasts.

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Likelihood of isolated light rain in Upper Sagaing Region and Kachin State.

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 27 December 2021: Generally fair weather.

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 27 December 2021: Generally fair weather.

FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 27 December 2021: Generally fair weather.

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NEWS
IN BRIEF

Study to understand reservoir of HIV infection in body

SCIENTISTS have now developed a method that for the first time allows these specific immune cells to be genetically manipulated under physiological conditions in an efficient and uncomplicated manner. The research has been published in the 'Nature Methods Journal'. The research was led by Prof.

Oliver T. Keppler from the Max von Pettenkofer Institute at LMU. Resting CD4+ T cells had been scarcely amenable to genetic manipulations, because the available methods generally presuppose dividing cells, as Keppler explained. "And resting cells do not divide by definition," he said. As the first step in the development of the new method, the team of scientists optimized the cultivation conditions.

As a result, the researchers were able to keep these cells alive in the laboratory after extracting them from the blood of healthy donors not just for 3-4 days as before, but for up to six weeks. — ANI ■

Spain declares Canaries volcano eruption officially over

THE eruption of a volcano on the Spanish island of La Palma that destroyed hundreds of homes and large swathes of farmland has ended, officials said Saturday over three months after it began.

The announcement follows 10 days of low-level activity from the Cumbre Vieja volcano on the tiny isle, part of the Canary Islands which lie off Africa's north-west coast.

No injuries or deaths have been directly linked to the eruption, which began on September 19, spewing rivers of molten rock and sending ash plume containing toxic gases into the air.

But it destroyed 1,345 homes, mainly on the western side of La Palma, as well as schools, churches, health centres and farm irrigation infrastructure. Dramatic footage from the first days of the eruption have been repeatedly aired on Spanish TV, showing a cloud of dense smoke engulfing the bell tower of a church before it collapsed. — AFP ■

China revises law to boost sci-tech innovation



Photo taken on 3 December 2020 shows robotic arms displayed at the China (Foshan) International Intelligent Robot Expo 2020 in Foshan, south China's Guangdong Province. PHOTO: XINHUA

CHINESE lawmakers on Friday voted to adopt a law revision to further advance innovation in science and technology.

Lawmakers approved the revision to the Law on Progress of Science and Technology at a session of the Standing Committee of

the National People's Congress, which started Monday.

The revised law encourages sci-tech research and devel-

opment, to support the goal of peaking carbon dioxide emissions and achieving carbon neutrality.

It also demands establishing and improving a sound laboratory system led by national laboratories, with national key laboratories as supporting forces.

Awards in the sci-tech fields, including the country's top science and technology award, have been enshrined in the newly revised law, which highlights national support for institutions of higher education in developing basic research, as well as cultivating talents in the area.

In terms of advancing regional sci-tech innovation, the law calls on all localities to leverage regional advantages to choose a development path with regional characteristics. — Xinhua ■

Scientists developing once-a-month oral contraceptive pill

A team of researchers from the Brigham and Women's Hospital and MIT is designing a new method to help improve adherence and reduce the risk of pregnancy by offering an oral contraceptive that could be taken once a month. The study has been published in the 'Science Translational Medicine Journal'. "Our capsule represents a major advancement toward providing women with a once-a-month contraceptive.

For many, this may be hard to believe. But our pre-clinical data is encouraging us along that road," said co-corresponding author Giovanni Traverso, MD, PhD, a gastroenterologist and physician-researcher at Brigham and MIT. "We began our work on extend-

ed drug release by working with treatments for malaria, tuberculosis and HIV. But early on, we were having conversations about the potential impact that extended drug release could have on family planning.

We wanted to help empower women with respect to fertility control and are pleased to report our progress toward that goal," Traverso added.

The team designed a drug-delivery vehicle that consists of six arms joined by an elastic-coated core. The arms were loaded with the oral contraceptive drug levonorgestrel and folded up into a capsule that can be swallowed. Once in the stomach, the arms unfold and have a span that is larger than the opening of the human py-



Representative image: A team of researchers from the Brigham and Women's Hospital and MIT is designing a new method to help improve adherence and reduce the risk of pregnancy by offering an oral contraceptive that could be taken once a month. PHOTO: AFP

lorus, helping the system stay in the stomach where it can release the drug over time.

The research team tested the concentration of oral contraceptives over time in a pig model

and measured the presence of the drug in the bloodstream for animals that had been given the extended-release form versus an immediate-release tablet. — ANI ■

Heavy rains displace thousands in northeast Brazil



This handout picture taken on 12 December 2021 and released by the Brazilian presidency showings a flooded area in Itamaraju, in the south of Bahia State, Brazil, after heavy rains. PHOTO: AFP

MORE than 11,000 people have been displaced in the Brazilian state of Bahia due to flooding, with authorities scrambling Saturday to provide relief to residents without alternate housing.

The heavy rains have killed 17 people since November, including the latest death on Thursday, the state's civil protection agency said.

A total of 4,185 people were seeking shelter, according to data released by the agency on Friday, after the rains struck 19 cities particularly hard, including Guaratinga, Itororo and Coaraci in the state's south.

The agency reported that a total of 11,260 people had been

forced to flee their homes.

The Bahia and federal governments mounted a joint operation on Saturday, in collaboration with other states, to mobilize personnel, aircraft and equipment, as well as provide relief to residents in the flooded areas.

"We are fully mobilized, taking all measures to ensure the necessary support to the victims of the heavy rains that hit Bahia this Christmas," the state's governor, Rui Costa, said in a video message. Flooding and traffic blocks were reported on 17 roads, with some caused by landslides and rockslides, the state's infrastructure secretary reported. — AFP ■

India: Covid-19 vaccines to start for ages 15 and up from January

INDIA will open its Covid vaccination drive for adolescents and start administering booster doses to its at-risk adult population, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced on Saturday.

The highly-infectious Omicron variant has gained a foothold in the country, and the health ministry has raised concerns about its onward spread.

“Omicron is a matter of discussion right now,” Modi said.

“After looking at global developments and examining the last 11 months of our Covid-19 vaccination drive, our scientists have taken key decisions today,” he said in his national address.

It is time to be “careful and cautious”, he added, announcing that vaccines will be available for children aged 15 and up from 3 January.



The decision to reopen schools for younger children in Delhi was taken amid a significant drop in COVID cases in the capital. PHOTO: ANI

The country’s healthcare and frontline workers, people above 60 years and citizens with

underlying conditions will also start receiving their “precaution dose” a week later, the premier

added.

India’s vaccination drive got off to a slow and glitchy start

in January but picked up pace after the devastating second wave in May that thoroughly exposed the national health infrastructure.

New Delhi has since administered more than 1.41 billion, mostly domestically produced, Covid-19 vaccine doses.

“We understood the importance of vaccines early and because of that more than 61 per cent of adults have received both their doses and 90 per cent have received at least one dose,” Modi said. The country’s nearly 480,000 Covid deaths are the third-highest, behind the tolls in the United States and Brazil. But under-reporting is widespread and some studies have estimated India’s true toll could be up to ten times higher. — AFP ■

Scientists advise UK Government to toughen COVID-19 restrictions until late March



Members of the public queue outside the newly-set up Wembley Stadium vaccination centre to receive their the Covid-19 vaccine or booster at a mass vaccination event in London. PHOTO: AFP

THE United Kingdom can significantly reduce COVID-19 deaths and hospitalizations if tougher restrictions are introduced and kept until the end

of March, a group of Warwick University pandemic experts said in a consensus statement for the government’s Scientific Advisory Group for Emergen-

cies (SAGE).

On December 8, UK Prime Minister announced so-called Plan B restrictions in England, including mandatory face masks and health certificates.

British media said tougher restrictions can be considered as Omicron cases soared.

The Scientific Pandemic Influenza Group on Modelling, Operational sub-group (SPI-M-O) has carried out modelling to assess effects of the potential return to so-called Step 2 restrictions, which were part of last year’s four-step anti-coronavirus roadmap, if introduced for a period of two weeks, four weeks or three months. — ANI ■

Pregnant women with COVID-19 give normal births: Study

A study found that babies born to women who had COVID-19 during pregnancy had shown reassuring patterns of growth and development at six-month follow-up. The research has been published in the ‘Journal of Perinatal Medicine’. “Our results should be reassuring to pregnant women with COVID-19 who are worried about how the virus might affect the baby,” said senior author Malika Shah, MD, a neonatologist at Lurie Children’s and Medical Director of the Prentice Women’s Hospital Newborn Nursery, as well as Associate Professor of Pediatrics at North-



A study found that babies born to women who had COVID-19 during pregnancy had shown reassuring patterns of growth and development at six-month follow-up. PHOTO: AFP

western University Feinberg School of Medicine.

“At 6-month follow-up, we observed normal growth pat-

terns and developmental milestones, with the rate of developmental referrals not higher than what we normally see. — ANI ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

EU to limit validity of digital COVID-19 pass to 9 months

THE European Union (EU) digital COVID-19 certificate will only be valid for travel for nine months, the European Commission said on Sunday.

The Commission said it had adopted a binding acceptance period of nine months (270 days) for vaccination certificates for the purposes of travel within the EU. The policy will come into effect from 1 February.

“A clear and uniform acceptance period for vaccination certificates will guarantee that travel measures continue to be coordinated,” the Commission said.

So far, 807 million certificates have been issued within the EU. Meanwhile, 60 countries and territories across five continents have adopted a similar system, the Commission said. The nine-month validity period of the EU digital COVID certificate takes into account guidance from the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control that booster doses should be given at the latest six months after completion of the first vaccination cycle. A three-month grace period has been added to allow national vaccination campaigns to adjust, and ensure that citizens have access to booster doses. For a single-dose vaccine, the 270 days start from the first and only shot. For a two-dose vaccine, the 270 days begin after the second shot, or if it is the member state’s policy, following the first and only shot after having recovered from the virus. — Xinhua ■

France: 100,000 barrier broken for 24-hour Covid infections

COVID infections in France hit six figures Saturday, health officials recording 104,611 cases over the previous 24 hours, the third consecutive day the numbers have been record highs.

The latest figures, from France’s public health agency, come ahead of a video-conference meeting Monday in which President Emmanuel Macron and key members of his government will discuss new Covid safety measures.

Officials are concerned about the effect of the rapid spread of the Omicron variant. Already on Friday, the health authority recommended adults receive a booster jab three months after their initial vaccination.

Now the government is moving to make the health pass issued to the vaccinated valid only if people accept the booster jab.

The pass is required for access to cafes, restaurants and public spaces, as well as for international travel. Some regions have already enacted their own safety measures. — AFP ■

Biden's Indo-Pacific framework may shape race with China in 2022

AMID China's ongoing quest to expand its economic clout in Asia and beyond, the US administration of President Joe Biden will gear up next year to launch an "Indo-Pacific Economic Framework" to deepen engagement with the region.

But the odds are not necessarily in favour of Washington in the absence of a robust strategy for regional trade, an area where the world's second-largest economy seems increasingly eager to fill the void.

The idea to develop the economic framework was first announced by Biden in virtual regional summits in the fall, and it could take shape early next



A full load vessel is seen docked at a container port terminal in Singapore on 17 October 2019. **PHOTO: AFP**

year following talks with US allies and partners. The frame-

work remains vaguely defined as an agreement that will pursue

"shared objectives," including those around trade facilitation,

the digital economy and technology, supply chains, clean energy, infrastructure, worker standards and other priorities.

"The Biden administration has to turn this economic framework into something real, and that means partly fleshing out the details," said Matthew Goodman, an expert on international economic policy at the Centre for Strategic and International Studies, a Washington think tank.

What has driven the Biden administration toward the launch of a seemingly half-baked initiative appears to be China's clear efforts to ramp up its influence over trade policy in the fast-growing region. — Kyodo ■

Kishida must turn to Abenomics to satisfy financial markets: ex-PM Abe

FORMER Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on Sunday called on Japan's current leader to commit to the so-called "Abenomics" policy mix pursued during his time in office to satisfy wishes of financial markets.

Abe said on a TV programme that financial markets are not looking for a fundamental change in economic strategy from the government of Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, rather they want a continuation of the big-spending, growth-seeking

programme maintained throughout the term of Abe's successor Yoshihide Suga.

Kishida has vowed to bring a "new capitalism" to the country in hopes of promoting growth via a pathway of wealth redistribution, among other central steps, aimed at expanding the country's middle class.

"Markets could react negatively if they take (the new capitalism policy) as being socialist," Abe said during the TV programme. "We shouldn't

be viewed as moving our focus from growth."

Despite presenting a new direction, Kishida, like Abe and Suga, remains committed to drastic monetary easing and fiscal spending in hopes of rejuvenating the domestic economy.

Some economists have observed Kishida appears to wish to address criticism that the previous economic policy mix boosted corporate earnings and thus stock prices but not the middle class. — Kyodo ■

Hong Kong retailers forge new path without mainland Chinese tourists



When the pandemic struck, Dream Law saw a silver lining in the rock-bottom rents and started BeWater Mart, which focuses on "made in Hong Kong" goods. **PHOTO: AFP**

THREE years of democracy protests followed by a pandemic have devastated Hong Kong retailers who had grown used to relying on cash from mainland Chinese tourists.

In a city that once boasted some of the world's highest retail rents, the market has cratered. But a border town has seized the chance to evolve its local economy.

Sheung Shui is the first town from the main overland border crossing and once thrived as a place where tax-free goods could be snapped up for resale back in mainland China — a process known as parallel trading. "People's impression of Sheung Shui is of parallel traders and mainland China," said Eugene Chan, 22, who has lived in the neighbourhood since childhood.

Chan recalled pavements swamped by people filling their luggage with cosmetics, baby formula or household sup-

plies to meet huge demand across the border. But all that vanished in the wake of huge democracy rallies followed by pandemic-related border closures.

In January 2019, just before the protests began, arrivals from the mainland reached an all time high of 5.5 million, a remarkable figure given Hong Kong's population is 7.5 million.

Two years later that figure fell below 3,000.

"That's a huge loss of demand," Simon Smith, senior director of research and consultancy at Savills, told AFP.

"That wave of mainland spending, particularly focused on luxury, watches, jewellery, designer goods, it really propelled rents to world-beating levels." Hong Kong's popular shopping districts previously boasted "golden streets" where store rents were more expensive than those in New York City's Fifth Avenue. — AFP ■

2021 global venture capital investment on pace for record high

GLOBAL venture capital investment is on course to double this year from 2020 to a record high of more than \$580 billion, driven by investor interest in online services in the health care, financial and retail sectors spurred by monetary easing in major economies, according to data from a US research firm.

Venture companies raised a total of \$437.7 billion worldwide in the first nine months of 2021, marking five straight quarters of growth, data from CB Insights show.

The same pace of investment in startups into the fourth quarter would bring the annual figure to \$583.6 billion, far ex-

ceeding \$284.2 billion last year. Investors are paying close attention to digitalization and seeking to capitalize on monetary easing amid the coronavirus pandemic.

During the first three quarters, the health care, financial technology and retail sectors raised \$97.1 billion, \$94.7 billion and \$82.5 billion, respectively, according to the data released in October by CB Insights.

By country, fund-raising by venture companies in the United States stood at \$210.4 billion, accounting for nearly half of the global total during the nine-month period, with large investment deals involving data management firm Databricks Inc., grocery delivery company Gopuff and financial-technology company Chime Financial Inc.

In Asia, \$125.5 billion was raised during the same period, with \$25.5 billion by Chinese startups and \$9.9 billion invested in India. — Kyodo ■



People walk past the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) on Wall Street on 15 July 2021 in New York City. **PHOTO: AFP**

5,700 flights scrapped as Omicron hits Christmas weekend travel

AT least 5,700 flights have been cancelled worldwide over the long Christmas weekend and thousands more were delayed, a tracking website reported Saturday, as the highly infectious Omicron variant brings holiday travel headaches to millions.

According to Flightaware.com, more than 2,500 flights were scrubbed around the globe on Christmas Day, including more than 870 originating from or headed to US airports, with some 4,200 delays as of 1430 GMT.

On Friday, there were around 2,400 cancellations and 11,000 delays, while Sunday cancellations have already topped 800.

Pilots, flight attendants and other employees have been calling in sick or having to quarantine after exposure to Covid, forcing Lufthansa, Delta, United



As of Saturday afternoon, Delta Airlines, United Airlines, JetBlue Airways and American Airlines had canceled a combined 950 Saturday flights. PHOTO: AFP

Airlines, JetBlue and many other short-staffed carriers to cancel flights during one of the year's peak travel periods.

"Help @united flight cancelled again. I want to get home for Christmas," one exasperated traveler from the US state of Vermont tweeted to the airline early Saturday.

Flightaware data showed United cancelled around 200 flights each day Friday and Saturday, or 10 percent of those that were scheduled.

A scramble to reroute pilots and planes and reassign employees was underway, but Omicron's surge has upended business.

"The nationwide spike

in Omicron cases this week has had a direct impact on our flight crews and the people who run our operation," United said in a statement Friday. "As a result, we've unfortunately had to cancel some flights and are notifying impacted customers in advance of them coming to the airport," the airline said. — Xinhua ■

China's telecom sector reports robust revenue growth

CHINA'S telecommunications industry registered robust growth in revenue in the first 11 months of this year, official data shows.

The combined industrial revenue rose 8.1 percent year on year to over 1.35 trillion yuan (about 212 billion US dollars) in the January-November period, according to the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology.

The growth was down 0.1 percentage points from the figure for the January-October period, the data showed.

By the end of November, China's three telecom giants — China Telecom, China Mobile and China Unicom — had over 1.64 billion mobile phone users, a net increase of 47.92 million users compared with the end of last year. The number

of 5G mobile subscribers reached 497 million, up 298 million from the end of last year, according to the ministry.

The three telecom companies also saw a steady increase in the number of fixed broadband internet users by the end of November, with subscribers rising by 51.85 million from the end of last year to stand at 535 million. — Xinhua ■

Iran closes land borders with neighbours over Omicron concerns

IRAN on Saturday announced the decision to close its land borders with neighbouring countries

for 15 days to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 variant of Omicron.

Ruhollah Latifi,

spokesman for Iran's Customs, said Iran's land borders with Turkey, Iraq, Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Pakistan and Armenia are closed for half a month from Saturday.

Iran's Health Ministry on Saturday reported 1,121 new COVID-19 cases, raising the country's total infections to 6,182,905.

The pandemic also claimed 42 lives in the past 24 hours, taking the death toll to 131,348, according to the ministry.

A total of 6,024,211 people have recovered

from the disease or been discharged from hospitals across the country, while 2,781 remain in intensive care units, it said.

By Saturday, 59,464,524 Iranians have received their first vaccine doses, 51,096,388 two jabs, and 5,478,443 in the country third booster shots. A total of 41,388,312 tests have so far been carried out across the country. On 19 December Iran detected the first Omicron case in a traveller who returned from the United Arab Emirates. — Xinhua ■



Iran's land borders with Turkey, Iraq, Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Pakistan and Armenia are closed for half a month from Saturday. PHOTO: XINHUA

NEWS IN BRIEF

2021 college graduate employment rate down for 2nd yr amid pandemic

A total of 74.2 per cent of those who graduated from college in Japan this March found jobs, down 3.5 percentage points from the previous year for the second straight yearly fall amid the coronavirus pandemic, according to government data.

The number of university graduates who landed a job fell to 432,790, the education ministry data showed last week, with an official saying employment offers decreased in some sectors due to the spread of COVID-19.

Meanwhile, the number of those who went on to graduate school increased about 4,000 to 68,776, or 11.8 per cent of the total, while 56,228 graduates, or 9.6 per cent, did not get a job or proceed to graduate school, up about 15,000 from the year before.

The official said more graduates apparently believed it was better to stay in school amid difficult employment conditions.

The academic and business year starts in April for most educational institutions and companies in Japan.

Of those who found employment, 41,802 took permanent jobs, down about 16,000 from the previous year.

Those who were on fixed-term contracts of one year or longer as opposed to those offered permanent positions rose some 2,500 to 15,947, the data said. — Kyodo ■

Ministry of Electricity and Energy

Invitation for Expression of Interest –EOI

1. The Ministry of Electricity and Energy hereby announced an Invitation to Expression of Interest – EOI to the eligible Consultant/ Consulting firm who has international experiences to provide the consultancy services by technically, commercially and legally to assist in preparation of the Tender for the renovation and leasing of the existing Fertilizer Plants and Refineries and constructing of new Fertilizer Plants and Refinery under the Ministry of Electricity and Energy.
2. EOI proposals shall be submitted to the following address in person or by parcel express not later than (12:00) noon at the date of 27 January 2022;
Director (Planning and Economic Branch)
Oil and Gas Planning Department
Office No. 6, Nay Pyi Taw
Phone no. 067 3411114, 3411115
Email: oilandgasplanningdepartment@gmail.com
3. The required information for EOI can be available in the Ministry's Website <https://www.moe.gov.mm>. Please contact to the above mentioned address to enquire further information in office hours.

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V KANG PING VOY.NO. (031N)

Consignees of cargo carried on M.V KANG PING VOY.NO. (031N) are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on 27-12-2021 and cargo will be discharged into the premises of AWPT where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

No claims against this vessel will be admitted after the Claims Day.

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Shipping Agency Department
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NEWS
IN BRIEF

Number of shooting victims continues to rise in New York City

IN New York City, 1,828 people have been shot so far this year, surpassing the number of 1,821 in the same period of 2020 which was the worst crime surge year in more than a decade.

New York Police Department (NYPD) data show that by 19 December the number of shootings in the city's five boroughs reached 1,526, as compared with 1,490 during the same period last year.

In the past few days following 19 December shootings continued in the city, including five people shot on Christmas Eve in two separate incidents in Brooklyn, and a 27-year-old NYPD school safety agent, who was shot dead on Thursday in Queens, with two others injured in the same case, according to the NYPD. This makes this year's number of shooting victims and incidents even larger. According to statistics on the NYPD website, NYC recorded 1,868 shooting victims in 2020, a steep rise of 102 per cent over the number of 923 in 2019, while shooting incidents rose from 777 to 1,531, a rise of 97 per cent. — Xinhua ■

Israeli-Palestinian stalemate likely to persist amid Israel's improved ties with Arab countries

THE leadership changes in both Israel and the United States in 2021 had little impact on moving the stalled Israeli-Palestinian peace process forward. Furthermore, a bloody conflict in May also failed to lead to renewed diplomatic push to break the protracted stalemate.

These events revealed a harsh reality that the Palestine cause, once at the core of achieving Middle East peace, is increasingly marginalized by the fast unfolding of geo-political changes in the region, featured by the accelerated normalization of Israel's ties with Arab states since last year.

The US lack of resolve and attention as well as the easing of pressure from the Arab world have further weakened Israel's willingness to yield to the Palestinians' demands, not to mention return to the negotiation table. — Xinhua ■

China calls on Japan to support Beijing Winter Olympics

CHINA called Friday for Japan to support the upcoming Beijing Olympics, hours after Tokyo announced it will not send a government delegation to the Winter Games slated for February.

Japan should implement its commitment to supporting each other's Olympic Games, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian told reporters.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirokazu Matsuno told a news briefing on Friday that Japan will not send a government delegation to the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics. Instead, it will send Seiko Hashimoto, a House of Councilors lawmaker and president of the organizing committee of the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics, and two others



Photo shows the indoor Cross-Country Skiing training facilities in Jilin City, northeast China's Jilin Province, 1 October 2020. PHOTO: XINHUA

with ties to the Olympics to the February events, and Japanese athletes will attend the Games as scheduled, Kyodo News reported on Friday.

Matsuno did not say whether the decision represents a "diplomatic boycott," instead explaining that the government "does not have a special term"

to describe the move.

Japanese media said the announcement was made by Matsuno rather than Prime Minister Fumio Kishida was because Japan did not want to directly provoke China as the two countries are set to mark the 50th anniversary of the normalization of diplomatic relations in 2022.

While expressing that China welcomes the Japanese Olympic Committee and athletes to attend the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian at Friday's media briefing also said we hope and urge the Japanese government to honor its commitment to support each other in hosting the Olympics and depoliticize sports. — Kyodo ■

New chapter for Baghdad's book street

THE Iraqi capital Baghdad on Saturday celebrated the renovation of the historic heart of its book trade, in the latest sign of an artistic renaissance after decades of conflict and strife.

In a city where explosions once could mean only one thing — violence — colourful fireworks lit up the sky during festivities organised by Baghdad municipality to inaugurate the renovated Al-Mutanabbi Street.

Its new look comes alongside art exhibitions, gallery openings, book fairs and festivals reflecting a fledgling cultural renaissance, and recalling a golden age when Baghdad

was considered one of the Arab world's cultural capitals.

Al-Mutanabbi Street was first inaugurated in 1932 by King Faisal I and named after the celebrated 10th century poet Abul Tayeb al-Mutanabbi, who was born under the Abbasid dynasty in what would become modern-day Iraq.

A narrow street in the heart of old Baghdad, Al-Mutanabbi has long drawn students and young people, usually on Fridays. But it is also frequented by intellectuals and older bibliophiles.

Normality still hangs by a thread in the Iraqi capital,



Clowns and musicians performed. PHOTO: AFP

where rocket and drone attacks sometimes target its highly fortified Green Zone, and where a

July suicide attack on a market killed more than 30 people. — AFP ■

Taliban sack World Bank employees due to shortage of money for salaries: Report



The Afghan Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) has sacked several employees, however, it is not clear yet how many employees will be let go. Afghan labourers take part in the construction of a bridge at Barikowt, in Afghanistan's eastern Kunar province on 3 April 2009. PHOTO: AFP

THE Taliban-led government in Afghanistan has dismissed a number of the World

Bank's employees as it cannot afford to pay their salaries anymore, a media report said.

The Afghan Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) has sacked several employees, however, it is not clear yet how many employees will be let go, Sputnik reported on Saturday citing a letter from the ministry. "Yes, I saw this letter. The number of World Bank contract employees is up to 15,000. The fate is not yet known. The Taliban (under UN sanctions for terrorism) have replied that they will not be able to pay salaries in the new fiscal year. Waiting for the World Bank to say what it wants," an employee of the World Bank working for MRRD said. Since the Taliban's takeover in mid-August, Afghanistan has been facing a number of humanitarian issues.

Several Afghans, includ-

ing state workers, the UN and the World Bank's staff, education and healthcare personnel, have not received their salaries for several months, according to multiple reports. Salary delays have impacted nearly half a million state workers, the reports added. Earlier this month, the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund, which is managed by the World Bank, said it planned to transfer USD 100 million to UNICEF and USD 180 million to the World Food Programme to help Afghans. Martin Griffiths, who is also Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, said humanitarian operations in Afghanistan are set to be the largest anywhere in the world in 2022, reaching some 22 million people. — ANI ■

Armed intruder arrested from Windsor Castle grounds as Queen celebrated Christmas

A 19-year-old armed intruder from Southampton was arrested on Saturday after breaking into the grounds of Windsor Castle on Christmas Day.

Officers responded to reports of a security breach around 8:30 am local time, according to police. Thames Valley Police Superintendent Rebecca Mears said in a statement that security protocols were initiated “within moments of the man entering the grounds.” The suspect, a 19-year-old man from Southampton, did not enter any buildings, she said, reported

CBS News.

Britain’s Queen Elizabeth was celebrating this Christmas at Windsor Castle with Prince Charles and Camilla, the Duchess of Cornwall, after cancelling her traditional plans of going to Sandringham.

He remains in custody and an investigation is ongoing, reported CBS News.

“The man has been arrested on suspicion of breach or trespass of a protected site and possession of an offensive weapon,” Mears said. “We do not believe there is a wider danger to the public.” — ANI ■



Armed police officers and wardens guard the entrance to Windsor Castle in Windsor. PHOTO: ANI

Egyptian, Russian leaders agree to intensify efforts to settle Libyan crisis



A picture taken on 20 January 2020, shows a view of Martyr's square capital Tripoli, Libya. PHOTO: AFP

EGYPTIAN President Abdel-Fattah al-Sisi and Russian President Vladimir Putin stressed Saturday the importance of intensifying joint efforts to settle the Libyan crisis.

During a phone conversation, both presidents reviewed the current situation in Libya, where Sisi highlighted Egypt’s ongoing efforts to bring the views of the Libyan parties

closer so that Libya can cross the current transitional phase and activate the free will of the Libyan people in choosing their leaders and representatives, the Egyptian presidency said in a statement.

According to the statement, Sisi and Putin also stressed the importance of intensifying joint efforts and mutual coordination between their countries to settle the Libyan crisis and achieve the desired aspirations of the Libyan people for a better future, as well as combating and undermining armed militias and terrorist organizations and putting an end to illegal foreign interference in Libyan affairs. — Xinhua ■

Russia blocks rights monitor website for promoting ‘terrorism’

RUSSIA has blocked the website of a rights monitor tracking political persecution, saying it promoted terrorism and extremism, amid an unprecedented official crackdown on dissent.

The move comes in a year that has seen the opposition dismantled and scores of independent media and rights groups branded as “foreign agents” or banned outright.

OVD-Info, which tracks opposition protests and also provides legal support to victims of political persecution, said the Roskomnadzor media regulator had blocked its website earlier this week.

“At the moment, we have not received a notice and do not know the reason for being blocked,” the group tweeted.

A Roskomnadzor registry



A woman holds a placard reading “You can’t shut up everyone!” during a protest in Moscow in September 2021. PHOTO: AFP

of blocked websites showed that a Moscow region court had issued a ruling dated 20 December to “limit” access to the site.

The website was not accessible by AFP journalists in Russia on Saturday.

Later Saturday, Russian

news agencies cited Roskomnadzor as confirming that it had blocked OVD-Info’s website because the Moscow region court had ruled that the group’s activities were aimed at promoting “terrorism and extremism” in Russia. — AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

General Assembly approves UN regular budget for 2022

THE General Assembly on Friday approved an annual regular budget for the United Nations (UN) of about 3.122 billion US dollars.

The 2022 budget is slightly lower than that of the previous year.

The regular budget covers UN activities across a range of areas, including political affairs, international justice and law, regional cooperation for development, human rights and humanitarian affairs, and public information.

The world body has a separate budget for its peacekeeping operations. The peacekeeping budget is 6.38 billion dollars for the fiscal year ending on 30 June 2022.

The regular budget covers the calendar year. — Xinhua ■

Tens of thousands in Sudan anti-coup rallies as tear gas fired

TENS of thousands of Sudanese protesters rallied Saturday two months after a military coup, demanding that soldiers “go back to the barracks” and calling for a transition to civilian rule.

Waving flags, beating drums, dancing and chanting, crowds marched on the streets of Khartoum despite severed communications and a heavy presence of security forces who later fired tear gas to disperse them.

An AFP journalist saw injured people being evacuated by demonstrators.

The Doctors’ Committee, part of the pro-democracy movement, reported that security forces fired tear gas into hospitals, attacking doctors as well as the wounded.

Officers had earlier barricaded bridges connecting the capital to suburbs, cut phone lines and restricted internet access ahead of the planned protests.

At least 48 people have died in crackdowns during weeks of demonstrations, according to the Doctors’ Committee, and Khartoum’s state governor has warned that security forces “will deal with those who break the law and create chaos”.

Demonstrators converged on the presidential palace in Khartoum, the headquarters of the military government in control since General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan seized power on 25 October.

International pressure

Burhan held civilian leader Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok effectively under house arrest for weeks.

After international pressure including a cut-off of vital aid, Burhan reinstated him on 21 November under a deal promising elections for July 2023.

The move alienated many of Hamdok’s pro-democracy supporters, who dismissed it as providing a cloak of legitimacy for Burhan’s coup. — AFP ■

ASEAN Club Championship scheduled to be held next year

THE ASEAN Football Federation (AFF) is planning to resume the ASEAN Club Championship in 2022, which has not been held for more than a decade.

The tournament has been scheduled for 2020 but could not be held in 2020 and 2021 due to the COVID-19 epidemic.

The competition was held twice, in 2003 and 2005, after which it was suspended for some time.

The federation is planning to resume the tournament as there is no regional competition for clubs in Southeast Asia.

Clubs from the Southeast Asian region will be allowed to compete in the tournament, with qualified teams which will be competing in first priority.

In some countries, two teams will be allowed to compete, and in addition to the qualified team, a runner-up team or a losing team will be allowed to

compete.

Of the two previous competitions, the Customs Team competed for Myanmar in the 2005 competition, but no representing team for Myanmar in 2003 competition.

If it will be held next year, the defending champions of the 2020 Myanmar National League, Shan United FC, will be eligible to compete.—Ko Nyi Lay/GNLM ■

Early drama in Covid-hit Sydney to Hobart yacht race



LawConnect took an early lead in the annual Sydney to Hobart yacht race. PHOTO: AFP

AUSTRALIAN super maxi LawConnect snatched the lead in a dramatic start to the annual Sydney to Hobart race Sunday as a Covid-depleted fleet of 88 yachts embarked on one of the world's toughest ocean events.

Heading into the teeth of brisk southerly winds, LawConnect grabbed the front position from rival 30-metre (100-foot) super maxi SHK Scallywag from Hong Kong, which hit a major

technical problem with a jib sail fitting after having led the fleet out of Sydney Harbour.

Some four hours after the race started, LawConnect was in first position ahead of another super maxi, Black Jack.

SHK Scallywag, which had to hoist a less powerful storm jib while the crew tried to effect repairs with waves crashing over them, lay in third place.

Spectator boats had crowd-

ed into a cloudy, breezy Sydney Harbour to enjoy the return of the blue-water classic, which was forced by Covid into an outright cancellation last year for the first time since it began in 1945.

The pandemic still cast a shadow, with some of the fastest yachts kept away this year, including the previous line-honours winner super maxi Comanche and nine-time line honours winner Wild Oats XI.—AFP ■

Novak Djokovic "Won't Go" To Pre-Australian Open ATP Cup

NOVAK Djokovic will not play in the ATP Cup ahead of the Australian Open, where his participation is in doubt because he refuses to say if he has been vaccinated against Covid-19, his team have told Serbian newspaper Blic. "It is 99 per cent sure that Novak won't go to the ATP Cup. He is training (in Belgrade) but he has decided to give that tournament a miss," an unnamed member of his team said. The ATP Cup in Sydney is a team tournament that traditionally kicks off the men's season.

World number one Djokovic could win a record 21st Grand Slam title at the Australian Open, which starts on 17 January but to enter Australia he and members of his entourage will have to be vaccinated and the 34-year-old has previously expressed his opposition to the vaccine.

His father Srdjan said in late November that Djokovic would probably not play the Australian Open and accused the organisers of "blackmail".—AFP ■

Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Administration 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.

Premier League: Aston Villa Boss Steven Gerrard Tests Positive For COVID-19

ASTON Villa head coach Steven Gerrard will miss the club's next two Premier League games after testing positive for Covid-19, the club announced on Saturday.

"Aston Villa can confirm Head Coach Steven Gerrard will be unable to attend our next two Premier League matches with Chelsea and Leeds United as he will be isolating after testing positive for COVID-19," the club tweeted. Gerrard will miss the Boxing Day game at home to Chelsea and Tuesday's visit to Leeds, if

that game goes ahead.

Aston Villa's last game, at home to Burnley, was postponed shortly before kick-off on 18 December after a coronavirus outbreak in the Villa camp.

Three of Sunday's scheduled Premier League games have been called off, including the Leeds visit to Liverpool, because of a Covid outbreak and injury problems at the Yorkshire club. That puts a question mark over Villa's match at Elland Road on 28 December will be played.—AFP ■



PHOTO: AFP