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.

Pagodas in Yangon bustling with pilgrims celebrating Thadingyut Festival

PAGODAS in Yangon, including the Great Shwe dagon Pagoda, Maha Wizaya Pagoda, Botahtaung Pagoda, Thiri Mingala Gaba Aye Pagoda, Shwe Phone Pwint Pagoda, historically-renowned Aparazita Sandawshin Kyaikwyne Pagoda, Nga Htet Gyi Pagoda, Chauk Htet Gyi Pagoda, and Waradahtar Dartuzaytiya Swetawmyat Pagoda, are alive with pilgrims celebrating Thadingyut festival.

Buddhists offered food, water, flowers, oil lamps to the Buddha images and stupas in respective pagodas. Members of the Pagoda Board of Trustees, religious associations and staff recited the Abhidhamma and held praying ceremonies in pagodas yesterday. In the evening, members of the Shwedagon Pagoda Board of Trustees and staff lit a total of 11,000 oil lamps donated by the people around the Shwedagon Pagoda.

Thadingyut is the seventh month of the Myanmar lunar calendar, in which monks who have been fasting since the first day of the fullmoon of Waso are free from living in their temples. The festival was a celebration to welcome the Buddha's descent from heaven where He preached to His mother. Based on this offering, Buddhists have traditionally offered lanterns to the Buddha on the fullmoon of Thadingyut.

Similarly, on the fullmoon of Thadingyut Abhidhamma Day, people pay homage to the pagodas with flowers and offertories, share good deeds on the streets in various townships, pay homage to elders, parents and grandparents, observe five precepts, and lit candles, lanterns and colourful electric lights.— Ko Ko Zaw/Kyaw Soe Win/ GNLM

People are thronging to celebrate Thadingyut Festival at the Shwedagon Pagoda. **PHOTO: ZAW MIN LATT**

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9,000 oil lamps offered to Shwezigon Pagoda in Bagan-NyaungU Archaeological Zone

A total of 9,000 oil lamps were offered to Shwesigon Pagoda, which is located in the Bagan-NyaungU Archaeological Zone on the evening of 20 October (Fullmoon of Thadingyut Lighting Festival or Abhidhamma Day).

"At this pagoda, oil lamps are offered by devotees from all over Myanmar on special occasions.

"On the full moon of Thadingyut (Abhidhamma Day), the Shwezigon Pagoda Board of Trustees donated 5,000 oil lamps to the pagoda", said U Than Myint Aung, head of the Pagoda Board of Trustees.

Shwezigon Pagoda

Likewise, devotees also donated oil lamps to Alotawpyae Pagoda, Dhammayangyi Pagoda, Lawkananda Pagoda, Thatbinnyu Pagoda, Ananda Pagoda, Shwe Gu Gyi Pagoda, Ingyin Pagoda, Bu Pagoda, Shwesandaw Pagoda, Shin Issa Gawna Pagoda, Sulamani Pagoda, Ywarhaung Gyi Pagoda, Nagayone Pagoda, Abe Yadanar Pagoda, Soe Mingyi Pagoda, Sinmyarshin Pagoda, DhammaYarzika Pagoda and Htilominlo Pagoda on the occasion of the Thadingyut festival.

On the first day of the full moon of Thidingyut, a thousand oil lamps will be offered to the Shwezigon Pagoda, according to the Pagoda Board of Trustees. — Ko Htein (KPD)/ GNLM

Political maturity

POLITICAL maturity and unity of stakeholders and the entire people play a crucial role in building the Union based on democracy and federalism. It is necessary to take lessons that Myanmar could not achieve the deserved development due to requirements in political maturity in successive eras. We must try hard to overcome such challenges. We need to build political maturity and unity with wise mental faculty for ensuring the peace of the nation.

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

MRTV holds consecration ceremony of Buddha images, Mahabodhi tree

UNION Minister for Information U Maung Maung Ohn attended the Consecration Ceremony of the Buddha Images and Mahabodhi tree in the Myanma Radio and Television (MRTV) in Nay Pyi Taw-Tatkon yesterday morning.

Firstly, the Union Minister and party offered alms, flowers, water and fruits to eight numbers of Buddha Images on the Mahabodhi Aungmyay hill, and Chair of the Sangha Nayaka, Head of Maha Janaka Monastery Nayaka Sayadaw Ganthavacaka Pandita Bhaddanta Wunnaraha and monks consecrated eight Buddha statues and Mahabodhi tree.

After receiving five precepts from the monks, Union Minister U Maung Maung Ohn and wife Daw Khin Swe Win and officials donated offertories to the Sayadaw and monks and presented water to the Buddha statues and Mahabodhi tree. Afterwards, the Union Minister and wife opened the stone inscription of the donation and concluded the ceremony.

The Union Minister also cordially met the MRTV staff and gave them souvenirs. He also commended the efforts of the staff who have to work on public holidays, unlike other types of employees, for the people and the State.

The Myanma Radio and Television are broadcasting information, education and entertainment through MRTV-HD, NRC, Farmers, Education, Sports, Hluttaw Channel, as well as with the collaboration with MITV, MRTV Entertainment Channel. Radio broadcasts are broadcast on Myanmar Radio, Ethnic Language Programme, Thabyay Radio, May Yu FM and Myanmar Radio (FM Channel). MRTV Web Portal has been established and is broadcasting daily through online media in the form of public service media. — MNA

The MoI Union Minister opens and sprays the scented water to the stone inscription at the event.

Kyaikkhami mid-water pagoda, Setse beach teeming with people in Thadingyut festival

Travellers are seen on the Setse beach.

THE Kyaikkhami mid-water pagoda located in Thanbyuzayat Township of Mawlamyine District in Mon State was opened to the public in line with the COVID-19 health rules during the three-day Thadingyut holidays.

After visiting Kyaikkhami mid-water pagoda, the travellers go to Setse beach.

Moreover, devotees also made pilgrimages to the Myotawoo pagoda and Ingyin Taung pagoda of Thanbyuzayat township. — Thida Win (IPRD)/GNLM

More visitors throng on Chaungtha beach during Thadingyut festival

THE people across the nation travelled to Chaungtha beach in Pathein District of Ayeyawady Region during the Thadingyut festival.

The discipline supervisory members, region police force and traffic police served duties at the entry and exit gates of the town, junctions and they also conducted COVID-19 health checks. The hotels and guesthouses were also packed with people who visit Chaungtha beach. – Kyaw Soe Win/GNLM

Chaungtha Beach.

Nay Pyi Taw pagodas thronged with pilgrims on Thadingyut fullmoon day

THE full moon day of Thadingyut marks the end of Buddhist rains retreat and Buddha recited Abhidhamma during the three-month Vasa period, and the Buddha descended back to the human realm from Tavatimsa (the world of deities).

On that day, the Buddhists keep Sabbath, recite Paritta and pay homage to the elderly and parents, teachers and do good deeds.

The people are crowded at Uppatasanti Pagoda, Buddha Gaya (Nay Pyi Taw), Maha Thetkyayanthi Yat Taw Mu Buddha Image, Yan Aung Myin Shwe Lat Hla Pagoda, Dartucaya Datpaungsu Pagoda, Eternal Peace Pagoda, Hlay Khwin Taung Pagoda, Koe Na Win Pagoda, Sutaungpyae Lawkamarazein Pagoda, Than Tha Yar Nyein pagoda, Phaya Koe Su, Koe Khan Gyi Pagoda, Law Ka Yan Hnein Pagoda, Phaung Taw Chat Ma Zedi, Lat Lote Taung Zedi in Nay Pyi Taw starting yesterday morning.

Uppatasanti Pogada.

Yanaung Chanthagyi Pagoda. **PHOTOS: KO KO AYE**

Yan Aung Myin Shwe Lat Hla Pagoda.

Maung Pyae Phyo Aung who visited Uppatasanti Pagoda said, "Today is public holiday. Therefore, I came here with my friends. We cleaned the pagoda platform. Then, we went to Yanaung Chanthagyi pagoda yesterday morning and we participated in the 1,000 oil lamps festival in our ward. We donate the juices and pay homage to the elderly people and teachers at night. May all our Myanmar people overcome the pandemic."

Moreover, many people feed the white elephants in the Uppatasanti Pagoda compound and the shops are also crowded with buyers.

"Fullmoon day of Thadingyut is a special day for all Buddhists. We have a strange feeling for coming to the pagoda and paying homage to the Buddha image. I think all the people might have such feelings. May all the people living in Myanmar overcome the pandemic and peaceful in health, social and economic sectors," said U Aung Toe Win, from Yay Oh Sin Village of Lewe Township who visited Yanaung Chanthagyi Pagoda.

Dartucaya Datpaungsu Pagoda.

Similarly, the Nay Pyi Taw Ocean Super Centre, Junction Centre, Nay Pyi Taw Wholesale Centre are also thronged with people as well as at Mingala Kantaw.

In the evening, the oil lamp offering ceremonies are held at every pagoda and house of townships and villages. Moreover, the people pay homage to the elderly people and teachers.

The health workers and members of the Red Cross Society distributed masks and checked the body temperatures of pilgrims and the security members conducted patrol to ensure the safety of the people. — Hein Aung/GNLM

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Over 5,000 pilgrims flock to Bagan Cultural Zone in Thadingyut celebration

BAGAN cultural heritage zone in NyaungU Township, Mandalay is crowded with over 5,000 pilgrims who came to celebrate the auspicious, significant and noble fullmoon day of Thadingyut (Abhidhamma Day) on 20 October, said U Than Myint Aung from Shwezigon Pagoda board of trustees.

Bagan cultural heritage zone, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, was eerily empty due to the tight restriction period of the COVID-19. It was reopened beginning from 8 February 2021, in line with the health guidelines for COVID-19, NyaungU Township Administration Council stated.

The pilgrims from Heho, Tagaung, Taunggyi, Hopong, Natmauk, Magway, Bago, Pakokku, Kyaukpadaung, Yangon, Mandalay and Nay Pyi Taw visited the zone these days.

Around 2,500-5,000 visitors were seen in the famous historical temples of Bagan city; Shwezigon Pagoda, Tuyintaung Pagoda, Tantkyitaung Pagoda, Htilominlo Temple, Ananda Pagoda, Bu Pagoda, Thatbyinnyu Temple, Dhammayangyi Temple, Sulamani Temple, Mahabodhi Temple, Manuha Temple, Shwesandaw Pagoda, and other famous pagodas, according to the board.

The local pilgrims are interested to observe the temples, stupas and mural paintings. Those pilgrimages can revive small businesses such as horse-riding businesses, motorcycle and electric bike rental businesses, hotels, motels, guesthouses and souvenir businesses as the local tourism industry was battered by COVID-19.

Shwezigon Pagoda.

Those engaged in local transportation rental business (three-wheel, boat, horse-riding, car, e-bike, cycle, motorcycle), hotels and guesthouses, restaurants and souvenir shops are suffering from this. The businesses relying on tourism were earlier closed amid the COVID-19 negative impacts.

Thadingyut fullmoon day recorded the highest number of pilgrims in Bagan Cultural Zone in the last two years. The pilgrims must strictly obey the health guidelines issued by the Ministry of Health, U Tin Hla Oo, chair of Htilominlo Pagoda Board of Trustees. – Ko Htein KPD/GNLM

Famous pagodas in Mandalay packed with pilgrims on Abhidhamma Day

THE residents in each township of Mandalay Region celebrate Fullmoon of Thadingyut (Abhidhamma Day), offering flowers, water and candlelights to the Buddha and sharing many good deeds.

The devotees presented flowers, water, candlelights and gold robes to Mahamuni Pagoda in the early morning of fullmoon day, accordingly to the health guidelines issued by the Pagoda Trustees Board.

Furthermore, pilgrims visited Sutaungpyae Pagoda on Mandalay Hill, Kyauktawgyi Pagoda, Sandamuni Pagoda, Kuthodaw Pagoda, Aungtawmu Pagoda and Kyauksein Pagoda (Jade Pagoda), made merits and prayed for wellbeing. They were seen reciting sermons.

Mahamuni Pagoda.

Additionally, according to Buddhism's customs, the devotees offered alms and recited sermons, Paritta, Pathana Pali verses and Dhammacakka. They also pay respects to the patients and the elder people and pray for peace, health and prosperity.

The locals also marked the auspicious day with candle lights to Buddha on the terraces of Sutaungpyae Pagoda and Kyauktawgyi Pagoda in the evening. Houses are also decorated with paper lanterns and candles. — Min Htet Aung (Mandalay Sub-Printing House)/GNLM

Monks, nuns receive COVID vaccines in Sagaing, Bago regions

Immunization programme for monk and nuns in progress.

THE Ministry of Health is accelerating the vaccination of the COVID-19 virus according to priority groups and programmes and the vaccination to monks and nuns continues unabated during the Thadingyut traditional festival.

Health officials from the Ministry of Health gave COVID-19 vaccines to 1,691 monks, 563 nuns and 1,083 lay attendants from 667 monasteries in Pyay Township, Bago Region at two designated places yesterday afternoon.

Led by Bago Region Chief Minister U Myo Swe Win,senior officials from the station Region Cabinet Ministers, Regional, District and Township level departmental officials visited the vaccination sites and provided subsidies for departmental staff working in the syringe ward.

Similarly, the Sagaing District Public Health Department continues to intensify the COVID-19 vaccination to monks and nuns in Mingun and Sagaing Hills during the holy season.

As of 15 October, 3,600 monks had been vaccinated in the area.

Healthcare officials also gave the COVID-19 vaccines to 190 monks at Sitagu Sangha Hospital and Mingun area in Sagaing Chaung on 19 and 20 October, which is the full moon day of Thidingyut or public holidays.

Next, the vaccination for COVID-19 to monks, nuns and abbots will be continued constantly throughout the country, according to the Ministry of Health. —MNA

COVID vaccine roll-out extends to different states, regions

HEALTH workers and volunteers, military medical teams, physicians and nurses from public hospitals are working hard to provide vaccinations to the public in different states and regions.

Local people of all races and religions, including religious leaders, Buddhist monks and nuns, people over the age of 55, prisoners, people with disabilities, ethnic armed groups, people with chronic diseases, people from IDP camps and over 12-year-old middle and high school students across the nation are participating in the vaccination programme.

In collaboration with volunteers, Tatmadaw medical teams, doctors and nurses from public hospitals, and relevant health workers yesterday gave the COVID-19 vaccines to 1,456 local people in Myeik Township in Taninthayi Region, 1932 local people in North Okkalapa Township, and Tamway Township in Yangon Region, 51,886 local people in 26 townships in Ayeyawady Region, 7,520 local people in seven districts in Mandalay Region, 360 local people in Htantabin Township, Bago Region respectively.

Likewise, the vaccination is being given to school students to ensure that students are not exposed to the virus and to reopen the basic education school in the future so as not to affect the educational programme of the students.

On 18 October and yesterday, 26,868 students from 26 townships in Ayeyawady Region, 17,540 students from seven districts in Mandalay Region received the COVID-19 vaccines administered by the military medical teams, doctors and nurses from public hospitals, health workers and volunteers.

It is reported that the commanders and officials from the relevant regional headquarters visited the vaccination sites and encouraged the necessary coordination. —MNA

893 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 20 October, total figure rises to 490,901

MYANMAR'S COVID-19 positive cases rose to 490,901 after 893 new cases were reported on 20 October 2021 according to the Ministry of Health. Among these confirmed cases, 443,719 have been discharged from hospitals. Death toll reached 18,444 after 28 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 19-10-2021, a total of 12,003,200 people have been vaccinated. Of them, 4,984,335 people have been vaccinated two times and 7,018,865 people once.—MNA

MoC conducts daily import processes for anti-COVID-19 medical products

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 anti-COVID-19 products, by arranging continuous importation through trading posts, international airports and seaports with Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).

On 20 October (yesterday), anti-COVID-19 equipment, medical products, including oxygen plants and concentrators, were imported by three companies and transported by four vehicles.

A total of 25 tonnes of masks were imported via Muse and Chinshwehaw trading zones.

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

Ancient pagodas in MraukU host large numbers of visitors

THE ancient pagodas in MraukU Township of MraukU District in Rakhine State were thronged with people starting yesterday morning.

The people visited the Yanaung Zeya Pahtoe Taw Gyi, Shitthaung pagodas and Htukkam Thein pagoda to study the ancient Rakhine architectures, mural and 550 Buddha stories, including traditional costumes of Rakhine people.

Then, the pilgrims and students also viewed the ancient Rakhine architectures and heritages in the pagoda compounds and the souvenirs shops were also packed with people. — Khin Maung Tun (IPRD)/GNLM

Over 11 mln people get vaccinated against COVID-19 in Myanmar

Healthcare workers carry out Covid vaccination programme.

MORE than 11 million people have been vaccinated against COVID-19 in Myanmar until 19 October, according to the Ministry of Health.

Up to 19 October, there were 4.98 million people, who had received full doses of vaccine and about 7.01 million people, who had received single doses of COVID-19. A total of over 11.22 million have received over 16 million doses in total, Ministry stated.

Ministry elaborated that about 24 million Sinopharm vaccines have been purchased from China. When vaccines will arrive, the ministry will offer vaccines to 12 million people aged between 40 and 64. The target groups are also expanded.

The people involved in the new target groups are 55 years old and above, who are people with disabilities and chronic and non-communicable diseases.

Fifty per cent of the total population is expected to get vaccinated at the end of this year.

Both Sinopharm and Sinovac vaccines from China have been approved by the WHO for emergency use.

Since January 2021, the country has been administering vaccinations, using the China-made Sinopharm and Sinovac vaccines, across the country.

Myanmar has reported a total of 490,008 cases with 18,416 deaths and 442,610 recoveries as of 20 October 2021. — Aye Maung/GNLM

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Speak out true, valuable speeches to avoid mistakes

GIVING speeches in front of crowds is an artistic work. If good speakers wish to persuade audiences into following the topics of their speeches, they have to study better ways and methods of speeches.

Everybody, especially politicians and those who take heavy responsibilities of any bodies, needs to take care of giving speeches to all. It is because mistakes in their speeches will be jokes among the audiences. If so, their speeches bringing special plans for the society would be fantastic dreams that the people or audiences do not convince it.

The wrong usages in the speeches will be recorded in the mind of audiences. The speeches comprising mistakes will be useless among the people. In fact, audiences do not express any remarks when the speakers deliver speeches without mistakes but they always eye on speech errors and satirize them.

> Everybody needs to take a conscience for all things. The conscious mind is of great importance for the speakers and speech writers so as to create the best artistic works to occupy the trust and hearts of the target audiences. Hence, now is the best time for improving themselves to post the memorable milestones in their lives.

As such, not only the speakers but the speechwriters need to take care of their professions. These speeches would be archives for the history of the nation. The best works, as well as the worst works of the speeches, will be recorded as milestones of all speakers. In fact, speeches of the politicians and government will be orders to build the nation, and these will reflect the nation and the nationals.

Mostly, some politicians and those taking heavy responsibility, who speak and write impromptu without using the speech notes, generally face the unmovable, regrettable and undeniable shame due to unexpected errors. To be able to erase the shame, they have to strive for serving the interests of the State and the people for many years.

To avoid these errors, speakers need to build capacity themselves with accumulating knowledge through reading. At a time when they have precious experiences in talking speeches, their talks will be capable of winning the hearts of audiences. To reach this stage of good speakers, they must invest their time and efforts for many years.

Everybody needs to take a conscience for all things. The conscious mind is of great importance for the speakers and speech writers so as to create the best artistic works to occupy the trust and hearts of the target audiences. Hence, now is the best time for improving themselves to post the memorable milestones in their lives.

■ ■ ■

First case of Delta Covid strain's subvariant shows up in Israel

"The variant AY 4.2. that has been discovered in a number of countries in Europe has been identified in Israel," a ministry statement said.

ISRAEL has confirmed a case of a subvariant of the Delta strain of the coronavirus previously reported in some European countries, the health ministry said.

"The variant AY 4.2. that has been discovered in a number of countries in Europe has been identified in Israel," a ministry statement said late Tuesday.

An 11-year-old boy arriving from Europe was the carrier, the ministry said, adding that the case was identified at Ben Gurion airport in Tel Aviv. The boy was quarantined and no further contacts have been discovered, the ministry said.

The AY 4.2. variant has turned up several times in the United Kingdom.

Francois Balloux, professor of computational systems biology at University College London, has told AFP that the subvariant is rare and does not appear to pose the same risk of significantly increased transmission as other strains.

The variant was discovered as Israel considers loosening restrictions on tourism following a drop in cases.

An earlier plan to reopen the borders foundered amid a rise in cases driven by the Delta strain.

In late August and early September, new cases topped 11,000 a day.

Authorities launched an aggressive campaign to inoculate citizens with a third, booster shot of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, which drove down infections.

On Wednesday, authorities reported 1,487 new cases over the previous 24 hours.

SOURCE: AFP

Israeli children undergo Covid-19 testing in Netanya on 23 August. **PHOTO: AFP**

Buoyed by pandemic boost to books, Frankfurt fair returns

The Frankfurt Book Fair is the world's largest trade fair for books, based both on the number of publishing companies represented, and the number of visitors. It is considered to be the most important book fair in the world for international deals and trading. The five-day annual event in mid-October is held at the Frankfurt Trade Fair grounds in Frankfurt am Main, Germany. The first three days are restricted exclusively to professional visitors; the general public attend the fair on the weekend.

THE Frankfurt book fair, the world's largest, opens its doors this week to a publishing industry in robust health after the pandemic boosted reading — but supply chain concerns threaten to dampen the mood.

After going almost fully digital last year to curb the coronavirus spread, this year's fair is returning as an in-person event but will still be a more muted version of past editions.

Fewer international exhibitors and authors are descending on the western German city than before Covid, and much of the action will be online.

Fair director Juergen Boos, who will host the opening press ceremony on Tuesday, said "it's still not a normal book fair" but offered a chance for the industry to "reconnect".

The Frankfurt book fair, the world's largest, returns this week as an in-person event after going almost fully digital last year to curb the coronavirus spread.
PHOTO: ARNE DEDERT POOL/AFP

It comes as the book business has been "doing pretty well over the past 18 months", he said, with people in many countries using the slower pace of life during lockdown to read more — adolescents especially.

"Young people didn't just want to play computer games all day," Boos recently told reporters. In the United States, printed book sales rose by more than eight per cent in 2020 to record their best year in a decade, according to the NPD research group.

Growth was driven by teen categories but also adult non-fiction, as people turned to cookbooks and DIY books to pass the time at home. In Germany, the European Union's largest book market, bookstores used the shutdowns to expand their online sales, leading to a 20-per-cent jump in internet revenues to 2.2 billion euros ($2.5 billion). Audio and e-books also saw double-digit growth.

Christmas concerns

Books "proved to be a particularly resilient and popular medium during the pandemic," Boos said.

But the news isn't all good. The book trade, with global revenues of around $100 billion annually, isn't immune to the worldwide shortages of raw materials and supply chain disruptions roiling national economies as they rebound from the coronavirus downturn.

With the crucial Christmas holiday season fast approaching, publishers are sounding the alarm about paper and cardboard shortages, bottlenecks at shipping ports and a lack of lorry drivers.

"I fear that this Christmas people cannot be sure of getting any book they want at short notice," Jonathan Beck, head of renowned German publishing house C.H. Beck, told the Handelsblatt financial daily. He also warned that books could become more expensive.

Atwood phoning in

This week's Frankfurt gathering is the latest example of trade fairs stirring back to life, and comes after the German city of Munich welcomed 400,000 visitors to the IAA auto show in September.

Nevertheless, the pandemic will loom large over the Frankfurt fair.

Daily visitor numbers are capped at 25,000 and fairgoers must show proof of vaccination, a negative test or prove that they have recovered from Covid.

Masks must also be worn inside the conference centre and the aisles will be wider to avoid the usual shoulder-to-shoulder crowds at publishers' booths.

More than 1,500 exhibitors from more than 70 countries will be present, well below the 7,500 exhibitors from over 100 countries that came in 2019. Just 200 authors are travelling to Frankfurt.

Uncertainty about travel restrictions and virus concerns are keeping many large publishing houses and big-name writers away, particularly from the US, Asia and South America.

As a result, much of the networking and haggling over licencing and translation rights will be done on digital platforms. Canada meanwhile is getting a second chance as guest of honour, after last year's Covid curbs upended the country's plans for the fair.

SOURCE: AFP

Myanmar Daily Weather Report

(Issued at 7:00 pm Wednesday 20 October 2021)

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

FORECAST VALID UNTIL NOON OF THE 21 October 2021: Rain or thundershowers will be widespread in Kachin State, fairly widespread in Upper Sagaing Region and Chin, Rakhine States, scattered in Mandalay, Bago, Ayeyawady, Taninthayi Regions and Shan, Kayah States and isolated in the remaining Regions and States with isolated heavyfalls in Kachin state. Degree of certainty is (80%).

STATE OF THE SEA: Sea will be slight to moderate in Myanmar waters. Wave height will be about (4– 7) feet off and along Myanmar Coasts.

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Likelihood of scattered to fairly widespread rain or thundershowers in Kachin and Shan States.

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 21 October 2021: Isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (80%).

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 21 October 2021: Isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (80%).

FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHB0URING AREA FOR 21 October 2021: Isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (80%).

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About 5,000 rice bags sold at fairer prices over one month

MYANMAR Rice Federation (MRF) and its affiliated associations sold about 5,000 rice bags at a fairer price in Yangon Region, MRF stated.

This scheme is implemented by MRF, Myanmar Rice and Paddy Traders Association, rice wholesale centre (Wahdan), traders and brokers, with a view to offering the rice at a fairer price starting from 14 September 2021. About 5,000 108-pound rice bags have been sold as of 20 October 2021.

Ayeyawady Pawsan, Shwebo Pawsan, Pawkywel, short matured rice varieties (90 days) and sticky rice are being sold at a cheaper price between K23,500 and K54,000 per bag.

About one to five 108-pounds bags can be individually purchased. Those who want to buy them can come and buy at the Wahdan rice wholesale centre located at No 100 between Lanthit and Wahdan Street, Port Compound, Lanmadaw Township, Yangon through the contact numbers (09421167474 and 01218266-68) of the centre.

The Ministry of Commerce, Myanmar Inspection and Testing Service (MITS), the authorized organization of the State and MRF implemented a rice reserve scheme last year and sold the reserved rice at a fairer price than the prevailing price.

The state's emergency rice reserve is to ensure food security, keep the price stable in the domestic market, protect the farmer's interest at harvest time, continue to export them regularly and lessen the worries of the consumers during the COVID-19. — NN/GNLM

Rice bags are loaded onto a lorry.

Myanmar ships $144 mln worth of over 214,000 tonnes of pigeon peas in FY2020-2021

Merchants and traders are seen at the Mandalay pulses and beans market.

MYANMAR exported more than 214,090 tonnes of pigeon peas to the foreign trade partners between 1 October and 30 September of the last financial year 2020-2021, generating an income of US$144 million, according to the Ministry of Commerce's trade data.

At present, the price of pigeon peas is quite stable in the domestic market. The pigeon peas fetch around K1,285,000 per tonne, according to Bayintnaung wholesale centre's price data.

Myanmar's pigeon peas are 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 domestic bean market is positively related to the law of supply and demand, said an official of Myanmar Pulses, Beans and Sesame Seeds Merchants Association.

India set an import quota on beans including black gram and pigeon peas starting from 2017. Myanmar earlier had to export black bean and pigeon peas under the quota system and limit period.

On 15 May 2021, India's Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare approved not only black gram but also other pulses being imported from Myanmar that have the bill of lading up to October-end 2021, with relaxations of conditions regarding clearance consignment extended up to 30 November 2021.

Additionally, Myanmar can export 250,000 tonnes of black gram (urad) and 100,000 tonnes of pigeon peas under the G-to-G (government to government) pact during the April-March period between the 2021-2022 financial year and the 2025-2026FY, as per the Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Commerce and India's counterpart signed on 18 June.

This year, the G-to-G pact ensured a strong market next five years, along with other relaxations on import quota, Myanmar Trade Promotion Organization under the Ministry of Commerce stated.

Myanmar's agriculture sector is the backbone of the country's economy and it contributes to over 30 per cent of Gross Domestic Products. The country primarily cultivates paddy, corn, cotton, sugarcane, various pulses and beans. Its second-largest production is the pulses and beans, counting for 33 per cent of agro products and covering 20 per cent of growing acres. Among them, black gram, pigeon peas and green grams constitute 72 per cent of bean acreage. Other beans, including peanut, chickpea, soy pea, black-eyed beans, butter beans and rice beans, are also grown in the country. — KK/GNLM

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Japan to start trials requiring vaccination proof, test results at restaurants

THE Japanese government said Monday that it would start conducting trials using proof of COVID-19 vaccinations or negative test results at eateries this week, aiming to maintain economic activities while preventing the spread of infections. To extend the opening hours of restaurants, the trails will allow individuals with either proof of COVID-19 vaccinations or negative test results to eat in larger groups.

Many local governments still maintained some preventive measures after the COVID-19 state of emergency was lifted across Japan on 1 Oct.

According to the Japanese government, the step as a preparation for another possible wave of infections this winter will start on Thursday in Kyoto Prefecture at a Japanese restaurant. After that, a Japanese-style "izakaya" pub in Hokkaido and a hotel restaurant in Fukuoka Prefecture will join in.

Although the daily COVID-19 infections in Japan have declined steadily since logging record cases in the summer, many medical experts warned that another wave of infections may occur during the winter. The Japanese government wants to use the trials as a framework to avoid another strike on the economic activities.

Trials using proof of vaccination or negative test results have been conducted at professional soccer matches.— Xinhua ■

The Japanese government said Monday that it would start conducting trials using proof of COVID-19 vaccinations or negative test results at eateries this week, aiming to maintain economic activities while preventing the spread of infections. **PHOTO: KYODO NEWS**

EU has exported 'over 1 billion' Covid-19 vaccine doses

THE European Union has exported "over one billion" doses of Covid-19 vaccines in the past 10 months, the bloc's chief Ursula von der Leyen said on Monday.

"Very clearly, the European Union is the largest exporter of Covid-19 vaccines," she said, announcing the "important milestone" in a brief broadcast and statement.

Von der Leyen said that 87 million of the doses had been funnelled through the WHO-led Covax scheme to mid- and low-income countries.

Most of the exports are orders paid for by other countries for Covid-19 vaccine doses manufactured in the EU. Von der Leyen said that, separate from the export figure, "the EU will donate in the next months at least 500 million doses to the most vulnerable countries". She urged other countries "to step up, too". Her declaration comes in the context of a sharp divide between wealthier regions and poorer ones in terms of Covid vaccination rates.

The European Union, the United States, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Singapore and Japan all among those to have more than half of their populations fully vaccinated.—AFP ■

Most of the exports are orders paid for by other countries for Covid-19 vaccine doses manufactured in the EU. **PHOTO: EC.EUROPA.EU/AFP**

Ukraine sets new Covid deaths record

Middle Eastern tourists play with bubbles in Lviv, Ukraine, 14 Aug, 2021. **PHOTO: AFP**

UKRAINE on Tuesday reported record coronavirus deaths as the country sees a surge in infections and struggles to roll out jabs to its vaccine-sceptic population.

A government tally in the ex-Soviet country whose public health service is under-resourced reported 538 deaths over the past 24 hours, the highest figure since the beginning of the pandemic.

Officials registered 15,579 new infections in 24 hours and 2,852 hospitalizations.

Authorities in the country of around 40 million people initially struggled to source vaccines, but are now fighting to convince Ukrainians to get jabbed.

The vaccination campaign has also been hampered by a proliferation of forged vaccination certificates and fake PCR tests.

Four vaccines including AstraZeneca, Pfizer and Moderna are available in Ukraine, but only 16 per cent of Ukrainians have been fully vaccinated, according to government statistics.

In mid-September, the government re-introduced anti-virus measures that restrict mass events and limit occupancy rates at cinemas, theatres and other venues. Ukraine has recorded more than 2.6 million coronavirus cases and over 61,000 deaths since the start of the pandemic.— AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Unvaccinated players unlikely to get Australian Open visa

UNVACCINATED tennis stars are unlikely to get visas to play in the Australian Open, a local official warned Tuesday, throwing defending champion Novak Djokovic's participation into serious doubt.

Victoria state premier Dan Andrews said he expected no exceptions from Australia's Covid-19 vaccine rules for players competing in January's Grand Slam.

"I don't think an unvaccinated tennis player is going to get a visa to come into this country," Andrews said.—AFP ■

Colin Powell dies of Covid-19 complications: family

COLIN Powell, a US war hero and the first Black secretary of state who saw his legacy tarnished when he made the case for war in Iraq in 2003, has died from complications from Covid-19. He was 84.

"We have lost a remarkable and loving husband, father, grandfather and a great American," the family said in a statement posted to social media on Monday.

The retired four-star general and former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff who served four presidents made his reputation as a man of honor distant from the political fray – an asset in the corridors of power.—AFP ■

United States to allow vaccine booster 'mix and match': reports

THE US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is preparing to allow "mix and match" coronavirus vaccine boosting, in which people get a different additional shot to the dose they initially received, US media reported.

Citing sources familiar with the situation, the New York Times said the FDA might make the announcement on Wednesday when it is also expected to authorize boosters for the Moderna and Johnson & Johnson vaccines.—AFP ■

China property, construction sectors contract for first time since COVID

The Hangzhou Asian Games village housing under construction in preparation for the 2022 Asian Games in Hangzhou, China. Property and construction are pillars of the Chinese economy, underpinning other important sectors such as commodities and furnishings. **PHOTO: DAN SANDOVAL / PUBLICITY DEPARTMENT OF HANGZHOU/AFP**

CHINA'S real estate and construction sectors shrank in the third quarter for the first time since the early stage of the pandemic, official data showed on Tuesday, as they face increasing pressure from a sprawling crackdown on the country's ailing property industry. The figures come a day after figures showed the world's second-biggest economy grew slower than forecast in the same period owing to the regulatory tightening as well as an energy crunch. Real estate output shrank 1.6 per cent on-year, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) said in a report breaking down changes in gross domestic product. The reading marks the first contraction since the first three months of 2020 — when China's COVID-19 outbreak was at its height — and a reverse from its 7.1 per cent growth in April-June.

At the same time, output from construction slipped 1.8 per cent, the report said, also representing its first decline since the first quarter of last year. Before the pandemic, China's construction sector had never shrunk since at least 1992 when data started being collected, according to data cited by Bloomberg News. Property and construction are pillars of the Chinese economy, underpinning other important sectors such as commodities and furnishings. But they have taken a hit as Beijing wages a regulatory clampdown on the real estate sector, including by tightening rules on lending.

The move comes against the backdrop of a $300 billion (€259bn) debt crisis at China Evergrande — one of the nation's biggest property developers — that has hammered investor sentiment and fuelled fears of a spillover into the wider economy.— AFP ■

UK inflation dips but rate rise still forecast

BRITISH annual inflation cooled slightly in September, official data showed Wednesday, remaining close to a nine-year peak that still risks a UK interest rate rise next month.

The annual inflation rate fell to 3.1 per cent from 3.2 per cent in August, which was the highest level since early 2012, according to the Office for National Statistics.

Despite the headline figure easing, analysts still expect the Bank of England to next month raise its main interest rate from a record-low level of 0.1 percent.

"As the dip... still left inflation above the 3.0-per-cent rate the BoE forecast back in August, it's unlikely to significantly reduce expectations that the BoE will raise interest rates before the end of the year," said Paul Dales, chief UK economist at Capital Economics.

Analysts noted that inflation dropped only because a government scheme one year earlier encouraging people to visit restaurants had dropped out of the calculation, adding that the annual rate was forecast to rise again in the coming months.

High inflation is weighing on companies and consumers globally, while rate tightening is used by central banks to try and dampen price rises.

"Global shocks have pushed up prices around the world, and we are working with businesses and international partners to address these pressures," British finance minister Rishi Sunak said following the latest UK inflation data.—AFP ■

High inflation is weighing on companies and consumers globally. Shoppers in Oxford Street, London. The rise in prices was widespread, ranging from food and second-hand cars to fuel, clothing and footwear. **PHOTO: NIKLAS HALLE'N / AFP**

Sudan's key Red Sea ports coveted by regional powers

FROM Washington to Moscow, Tehran to Ankara, Sudan's strategic Red Sea ports, blockaded for a month by protesters, have long been eyed by global powers far beyond Africa's borders.

Blessed with natural resources such as gold and rich in maritime biodiversity, the picturesque region of white sands and mangroves stretches some 714 kilometres (444 miles) — from Sudan's borders with Egypt in the north to Eritrea in the south.

"Sudan's Red Sea ports are a trade hub for neighbouring landlocked countries like Chad, Ethiopia and central Africa," Ahmed Mahgoub, head of Port Sudan's southern terminal, told AFP. But traffic through Sudan's main maritime nerve centre Port Sudan has been paralysed since anti-government protests broke out in mid-September amid disenchantment with the region's political and economic marginalization.—AFP ■

Demonstrators have been blockading the key Port Sudan for more than a month. **PHOTO: ASHRAF SHAZLY /AFP**

NEWS IN BRIEF

Indonesia, China begin feasibility study on 560 mln USD coal-to-methanol plant

Indonesia and China have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to conduct a feasibility study of a 560-million-U.S. dollar coal-to-methanol plant, according to a recent press release from Indonesia's Industry Ministry. Held in Indonesia's capital Jakarta on Monday, the signing ceremony was attended by Industry Minister Agus Gumiwang Kartasasmita and representatives from PT Powerindo Cipta Energy (PT PCE) and China National Chemical Engineering Corporation (CNCEC).

"The cooperation to build a coal-to-methanol plant is very important for the industrial sector. The Industry Ministry really appreciates companies with a vision to initiate coal gasification projects and support this pioneering industrial investment plan," Kartasasmita said on Monday. According to the press release, the plant was expected to be built in Meulaboh city situated in the country's westernmost province of Aceh.

With an investment value of 560 million US dollars, the plant will process 1.1 million tonnes of coal into 600,000 tonnes of methanol per year. "This project will absorb 600 to 700 workers. Based on the plan, the project will enter the construction stage in mid-2022," the minister said.—Xinhua ■

Japan's September car exports down 40% amid parts supply crunch

JAPAN'S car exports in September fell 40.3 per cent from a year earlier, as supply chain disruptions in Southeast Asia due to the coronavirus pandemic and a global semiconductor crunch forced domestic automakers to cut output, government data showed Wednesday.

Auto shipments marked the first year-on-year drop in seven months and the sharpest decrease since a 49.9 per cent dive logged in June last year amid the initial shock of the pandemic, according to a preliminary report by the Finance Ministry, in a development that could put a damper on the nation's economic recovery.

The slump in car exports slowed growth in Japan's overall goods exports in the reporting month to a 13.0 per cent rise from a year earlier to 6.84 trillion yen ($60 billion), compared with a 26.2 per cent gain in August and a 37.0 per cent jump in July. **PHOTO: KYODO NEWS**

The slump in car exports slowed growth in Japan's overall goods exports in the reporting month to a 13.0 per cent rise from a year earlier to 6.84 trillion yen ($60 billion), compared with a 26.2 per cent gain in August and a 37.0 per cent jump in July.

Goods exports nevertheless saw a double-digit percentage increase for the seventh straight month, according to the ministry.

Imports expanded 38.6 per cent to 7.46 trillion yen, up for the eighth month in a row, mainly pushed up by surging prices for crude oil purchased from producers such as the United Arab Emirates. As a result, Japan's trade balance registered a deficit of 622.76 billion yen, turning negative from a 667.36 billion yen surplus a year ago to post red ink for the second consecutive month.

A ministry official told reporters that Japanese automakers have been cutting production in response to parts shortages caused by factory shutdowns in Southeast Asian nations as coronavirus cases surged there as well as the prolonged worldwide chip crunch.—Kyodo News ■

Technology helps Xinjiang cotton break yield record

AS vast swathes of blooming cotton in Northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region awaits the harvest this month, technology adopted in planting, spraying and other processes have gradually manifested its effect.

A team of agronomists from multiple departments confirmed last week that the cotton yield in a demonstration test field reached a record high of 620.4 kg per mu, or 9,306 kg per hectare, in Yuli county of the Mongolian autonomous prefecture of Bayingolin, a major cotton production base in China.

Such yield, which was measured in three plots randomly selected in the 33-hectare test field on 15 October, was 26.2 per cent higher than that of nearby ordinary farmland planted with the same cotton breed, said Qu Tao, the team leader from the agricultural technology extension centre of the prefecture.

Qu said because of the weather change this year, the cotton yield is slightly lower than that of last year in general, but a new kind of fertilizer adopted in the test field has contributed to the bumper harvest.

"The organosilicon fertilizer can adjust the pH value of the saline land for a better soil structure," said Qu.

Xinjiang is home to up to one-third of China's saline and alkaline land, which has severely restricted the sustainable development of the region's agriculture. Therefore, the organosilicon fertilizer has brought tangible benefits to cotton farmers in improving the yield.

Shi Junyi, a cotton farmer in Yuli, decided to expand the cotton plantation area next year using the new fertilizer. —Xinhua ■

A cotton picker works in fields in Yuli County, northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, 15 October 2021 **PHOTO: XINHUA**

Credit Suisse to pay $475 mn to settle charges in Mozambique 'hidden debt' scandal

CREDIT Suisse has agreed to pay $475 million to US and British authorities to resolve charges of "fraudulently misleading investors" and violating anticorruption law in the bond offerings in Mozambique, US officials announced Tuesday. Mozambique's "hidden debt" scandal stemmed from loans in 2013 and 2014 to three public companies to finance a tuna fishing project, debt the government masked from the nation's parliament.

When details finally surfaced in 2016, donors such as the International Monetary Fund cut off financial aid, and the southern African country was plunged into a financial crisis, as it defaulted on debt payments and the currency collapsed. The transactions "that raised over $1 billion were used to perpetrate a hidden debt scheme, pay kickbacks to now-indicted former Credit Suisse investment bankers along with their intermediaries, and bribe corrupt Mozambique government officials," the US Securities and Exchange Commission said in a statement.

Credit Suisse bankers "falsely represented" to investors that proceeds from the loans would go exclusively to develop Mozambique's tuna fishing industry and generate revenues to pay debt payments, the SEC said.—AFP ■

A branch of Swiss banking Credit Suisse in Gstaad, Switzerland. **PHOTO: AFP**

NEWS IN BRIEF

Alibaba shares soar after Jack Ma reported on Europe trip

ALIBABA shares surged more than six per cent on Wednesday after billionaire founder Jack Ma was reported to be in Europe, fuelling investor hopes that the worst of China's regulatory crackdown for the internet giant might be over.

Ma has kept a low profile ever since mainland officials spiked what would have been a world record $37 billion initial public offering for Alibaba's financial group Ant last November.

That shock decision kicked off what became a cascading series of crackdowns by Chinese authorities on a host of tech and other industries deemed to have become too powerful, unregulated or monopolistic.

Ma's presence in Spain — for a "study tour of the agricultural industry and technology related to the environment" — was reported by the South China Morning Post, which is owned by Alibaba.

The paper said the 57-year-old, who retired from the role of Alibaba's chairman in 2019, was attending a series of business meetings in Europe.

It said he had also stayed in Hong Kong for "private time" with his family before his trip abroad, citing an anonymous source familiar with Ma's itinerary.—AFP ■

US Capitol riot panel votes to hold Trump ally Bannon in criminal contempt

LAWMAKERS investigating the deadly assault on the US Capitol voted unanimously Tuesday to pursue criminal contempt charges for a key ally of former president Donald Trump for refusing to testify.

Former White House advisor Steve Bannon failed to comply with a subpoena to appear before the cross-party January 6 congressional select committee on Thursday last week.

The right-wing political advisor had told the panel he would be withholding testimony and documents until Trump's claim of "executive privilege," which allows presidents to keep certain conversations with aides secret, had been resolved.

But the nine-member committee said Bannon's position was not a lawful basis to ignore the order and voted unanimously to adopt a report setting out the case against him.

"Mr Bannon has no legal right to ignore the committee's lawful subpoena," Representative Liz Cheney, vice-chair of the committee and one of only two Republican members, said Tuesday during the vote.

Experts believe Trump's claims that he is entitled to block Bannon giving evidence to investigators are likely baseless, since the presidential "executive privilege" carve-out is not generally understood to apply to former occupants of the White House.

Furthermore, Bannon wasn't even serving in government at the time covered by the subpoena. The move paves the way for the Democratic-controlled House of Representatives to vote to refer the 67-year-old former White House chief strategist to the Justice Department to consider charges.—AFP ■

Lawmakers investigating the deadly assault on the US Capitol voted unanimously Tuesday to pursue criminal contempt charges for a key ally of former president Donald Trump for refusing to testify. **PHOTO: AFP**

10 years since Kadhafi death, stability still eludes Libya

TEN years since dictator Moamer Kadhafi was slain by Libyan rebels, the North African country is still struggling to emerge from the violence sparked by his overthrow.

A year-long ceasefire and a UN-led peace process have barely papered over deep divisions, and upcoming elections are unlikely to resolve the crisis, analysts say.

Kadhafi ruled Libya with an iron fist for 42 years after a 1969 coup against the monarchy, portraying himself as a revolutionary, Arab and African hero while mercilessly crushing all opposition.

In 2011, he was toppled in a revolt inspired by the Arab Spring uprisings and backed by NATO. On 20 October of that year, rebels tracked him down to his hometown Sirte, tortured him and killed him in the street, displaying his body in a market.

His death has failed to bring democracy or stability.

Instead, Libya has fractured along regional and ideological lines, with an assortment of mafia-like militias and their foreign backers vying for control of the oil-rich country.

Last October's ceasefire was followed in March by the appointment of a unity government with a mandate to lead Libya to elections.

So with a presidential poll set for 24 December and legislative elections in January, is Libya finally turning the page on a decade of chaos?

"Relative to the past 10 years, Libya is in a much-improved situation," said Hamish Kinnear, an analyst with the research institute Verisk Maplecroft.— AFP ■

People gather along the beach in Libya's eastern city of Benghazi, on 15 October 2021. **PHOTO: AFP**

NEWS IN BRIEF

US 'very concerned' over China's hypersonic test

THE United States is "very concerned" about China's hypersonic missile tests, US disarmament ambassador Robert Wood said Monday, after reports that Beijing launched one with a nuclear capacity in August.

On Saturday, the Financial Times reported that China had launched a hypersonic missile that completed a circuit of the planet before landing, missing its target. "We are very concerned by what China has been doing on the hypersonic front," said Wood, who next week steps down from his post in Geneva after seven years. Hypersonic missiles, like traditional ballistic missiles, can fly more than five times the speed of sound (Mach 5). But they are more manoeuvrable than their ballistic counterparts and only need a low trajectory in the atmosphere, making them harder to defend against.—AFP ■

Inmate who leaked Russia prison rape video seeks French asylum

THE former inmate behind a video leak showing alleged rape and torture inside a Russian prison said he could no longer keep the explosive revelations to himself, speaking to AFP from France where he is now seeking asylum.

Belarus-born whistleblower Sergei Savelyev "was authorized to enter French territory to file his asylum application within eight days", his lawyer, Aude Rimailho, told AFP on Monday evening.

Savelyev fled after his release from prison in February, fearing kidnapping or even death. He smuggled shocking footage out of a jail in the central city of Saratov showing abuse in several jails, including one allegedly showing a male prisoner screaming while being raped with a broomstick.—AFP ■

Portugal seizes 5.2 tonnes of cocaine from sailing ship

PORTUGUESE authorities said Monday they had seized a 5.2-tonne haul of cocaine from a Spanish-registered sailing ship, arresting two Spanish citizens and a Peruvian.

Showing off 183 bales of the drug at a navy base outside Lisbon, judicial police chief Luis Neves said it was "the biggest narcotics haul in Portugal in 15 years".

"This is a heavy blow for those who want to flood Europe with cocaine," he told reporters.

Investigators pounced on the ship as part of an operation dubbed "White Tide", in cooperation with Spanish authorities and with support from the US and Britain.

The three men arrested on Saturday are suspected of belonging to a powerful criminal network smuggling large amounts of cocaine from Latin America into Europe.

One is a trafficker already known to authorities and subject to an arrest warrant since March, Spanish authorities said in a statement.

Cooperation between the two countries "lets us send a clear message that it won't be easy to smuggle in Spain and Portugal", Spain's narcotics police chief Antonio Martinez Duarte said.—AFP ■

Judicial police chief Luis Neves said it was 'the biggest narcotics haul in Portugal in 15 years'. **PHOTO: AFP**

Russia hosts Taliban for talks after warning against IS threat

RUSSIA hosts the Taliban for talks in Moscow on Wednesday, seeking to assert its influence on Central Asia and push for action against Islamic State fighters which it says have massed in perennially volatile Afghanistan.

The talks, which draw officials from 10 countries, including China and Pakistan, are one of the Taliban's most significant international meetings since seizing power in mid-August.

They come after Russian President Vladimir Putin warned last week that IS fighters were gathering in Afghanistan to spread discord in former Soviet republics flanking Russia.

Russia's veteran foreign minister, Sergei Lavrov, is set to address the gathering.

The Taliban delegation is headed by Deputy Prime Minister Abdul Salam Hanafi, a senior figure in the new Afghan leadership who led talks with the European Union and the United States last week.

Those followed talks in Ankara between the Taliban and Turkish officials.

Brussels has pledged one billion euros ($1.2 billion) to avert a humanitarian crisis after the hardline group's takeover.

Russia's foreign ministry said on Tuesday that one of the aims of the Moscow meeting was to consolidate the "efforts of the international community to prevent a humanitarian crisis".

Moscow also said the formation of an "inclusive government" would be on the agenda, and that parties to the talks were expected to release a joint statement afterwards.

The talks will be attended by officials from 10 countries. **PHOTO: AFP**

Moscow has reached out to the Taliban and hosted its representatives in Moscow several times in recent years, even though the Taliban is a designated terrorist organization in Russia.

IS, drug trafficking concerns

Senior Russian officials, including Putin, have been voicing a slew of other security-related concerns since the Taliban wrested control of Afghanistan and foreign troops pulled out after nearly 20 years.—AFP ■

FBI raids US properties of sanctioned Russian oligarch

FBI agents outside the Washington home of Russian oligarch Oleg Deripaska. **PHOTO: AFP**

US Federal Bureau of Investigation agents conducted raids on Tuesday at luxury properties in Washington and New York linked to Russian oligarch Oleg Deripaska, a close ally of Russian leader Vladimir Putin.

An FBI spokesman said agents had carried out "court-authorized law enforcement activity" at a home connected to Deripaska in an upscale neighbourhood of the US capital. Yellow crime tape surrounded the multi-million dollar mansion near Washington's Embassy Row and FBI agents were seen entering and leaving the property carrying cardboard boxes. At one point they towed away a black car from the residence.

The New York Times reported that the FBI had also raided a home in New York's Greenwich Village that is linked to Deripaska, a billionaire metals tycoon.

The newspaper said the raids were carried out as part of an investigation into whether Deripaska had violated sanctions imposed on him by the United States in 2018.

Announcing the sanctions, the Treasury Department said Deripaska is being investigated for money laundering, extortion and racketeering.

"There are also allegations that Deripaska bribed a government official, ordered the murder of a businessman, and had links to a Russian organized crime group," the Treasury Department said.— AFP ■

Growing in numbers and power, criminal gangs terrorize Haiti

LAST week's kidnapping in broad daylight of 17 US and Canadian missionaries and their families in the Haitian capital highlighted criminal gangs' growing hold on the country, fuelled by a deep political crisis and the powerlessness of the judicial system.

Cases of kidnappings have more than doubled over the past year as gangs have grown increasingly numerous and powerful, leaving an already weak police force unable to cope. In the most recent kidnapping on Saturday outside Port-au-Prince, members of the brazen 400 Mawozo gang are demanding $17 million for the release of the missionaries and their families, according to Haitian officials.

More than 600 cases of kidnappings for ransom were recorded in the first three quarters of 2021, compared to 231 during the same period last year, according to the Centre for Analysis and Research in Human Rights, a Haitian civil society group.

Gangs have increased their hold on the country in recent years. More than 150 criminal groups, some of them previously dormant, were identified in the Caribbean country in 2019, according to Marie-Yolène Gilles of the Je Klere Foundation, a human rights group. Today, they are too numerous to be counted, said Gilles, adding that "in each neighbourhood, an armed man is there to be the leader."—AFP ■

A man walks by tires set on fire after a general strike launched by several professional associations and companies to denounce insecurity in Port-au-Prince on 18 October 2021. **PHOTO: AFP**

NEWS IN BRIEF

Ex-soldiers storm Guatemala Congress parking lot, torch cars

FORMER Guatemalan soldiers stormed the rear area of Congress on Tuesday and torched several vehicles in protest over unpaid compensation for their service during the country's civil war from 1960 to 1996.

A crowd of hundreds of protesters, some armed with sticks, machetes and others throwing glass bottles, broke through a metal gate and forcibly entered a parking lot behind the Congress building, placing chains with padlocks on several doors to prevent deputies and staff from leaving the building.

The veterans set fire to several vehicles that were parked in the lot, with local television broadcasting images of fire and plumes of smoke pouring out of the cars.

Riot police then arrived and used tear gas to disperse the crowd. At least five people were treated for minor injuries.

The Interior Ministry said on Twitter that police helped evacuate everyone from inside the Congress building.—AFP ■

Nigerian army kills 50 'bandits' in the northwest

NIGERIAN helicopter gunships have killed more than 50 "bandits" during an operation in the restive northwest, regional authorities said on Tuesday. Heavily armed gangs known locally as bandits have terrorized northwest and central Nigeria for years, raiding and looting villages, but the attacks have become even more violent in recent months. "In an inspiring success for the security forces, over 50 bandits have been neutralized during a combined ground and air assault" in the Birnin Gwari district of Kaduna state, regional security official Samuel Aruwan said in a statement.

The armed bandits, on motorcycles, were spotted "waiting to ambush the ground forces", said Gwari. "They were engaged vigorously by the helicopter gunship, and were wiped out," he added. A second helicopter gunship joined the operation "and many more fleeing bandits were neutralized by precise strikes. Assessment revealed that more than 50 bandits were neutralized during the joint operation," the official said.—AFP ■

Republic of the Union of Myanmar
State Administration Council
Nine Objectives

1. Political affairs

(a) To build a Union based on democracy and federalism, through a disciplined and genuine multiparty democratic system that is fair and just.

(b) To emphasize the achievement of enduring peace for the entire nation in line with the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA).

(c) To continue implementing the principle of peaceful co-existence among countries through an independent, active and non-aligned foreign policy.

2. Economic affairs

(a) To enhance production based on agriculture and livestock through modern techniques and strengthen all-round development in other sectors of the economy.

(b) To develop a stable market economy and promote international investment in order to enhance the economic development of the entire National people.

(c) To promote and support local businesses to create employment opportunities and increase domestic production.

3. Social affairs

(a) To ensure a strong and dynamic Union spirit, the genuine spirit of patriotism.

(b) To respect and promote the customs and traditions of all National peoples and preserve and safeguard their cultural heritage and national characteristics.

(c) To enhance the health, fitness and education quality of the entire nation.

2022 Women's Asian Cup Qualifiers: Myanmar to play Guam today

THE second day of the 2022 AFC Women's Cup Qualifiers for Group D will continue on 21 October (today) and Myanmar women's national football team will play against Guam women's team.

The second day of the group match will also be played between UAE and Lebanon at 12:30 pm (Myanmar Standard Time) today and Myanmar will take on Guam at 5:30 pm (Myanmar Standard Time).

In the opener of the 2022 Women's Asian Cup Qualifiers, team Myanmar trounced Lebanon 4-0 while the UAE made their sweet victory over Guam by 2-1.

The Myanmar team will play against Guam, who have lost in the opening match, and if team Myanmar wins again, they will be in a good position to advance to the next stage. Due to the current ability and players, the Myanmar team is almost superior to the Guam team and it is almost certain to win again, football experts said. Myanmar is in Group D with the UAE and Lebanon.

Only the top team with the most points will qualify for the 2022 Women's Asian Cup tournament. —Ko Nyi Lay/GNLM

Foden dazzles as Palmer cameo showcases Man City youngsters

Phil Foden excelled against Club Brugge playing as a false number nine. **PHOTO: AFP**

PHIL Foden ran the show for Manchester City in their 5-1 hammering of Club Brugge in the Champions League, but it was the goalscoring cameo of fellow academy graduate Cole Palmer that underlined the club's vast strength in depth.

Operating in a false number nine role, Foden tormented the Brugge defence before he was withdrawn on 64 minutes — with City 3-0 up and cruising against a side that had held Paris Saint-Germain in their opening game.

Three minutes later and Palmer, just on as a replacement for Kevin De Bruyne, added to City's lead with a clinical finish from Raheem Sterling's pass for his first European goal.

England coach Gareth Southgate recently called Foden's emergence as an England star "fabulously exciting", and the 21-year-old, who missed the Euro 2020 final with injury, did not disappoint in Belgium.

His sublime chipped pass for Joao Cancelo resulted in the Portugal defender breaking the deadlock after City dominated the first 30 minutes against overmatched opponents.

Foden's constant movement forged numerous openings for City, whose failed pursuit of Harry Kane in the summer has forced Pep Guardiola to get creative with his attack to compensate for the lack of a genuine centre-forward.

"He can play as a striker, dropping when he wants and going in behind. He can attack really well with Rodri, with Kevin. Phil has a special talent," said Guardiola.

"We don't have a real striker to score 25 goals so we have to put as many players as possible close to the box to score a goal. He's one of the guys."—AFP ■

Murray hails 'unbelievable battle' after marathon victory

ANDY Murray said that he had "never played a match like it" after the former world number one battled past the American Frances Tiafoe in an epic at the European Open.

The 34-year-old Scot, who has suffered career-threatening hip injuries, saved two match points to pull off a 7-6 (7/2), 6-7 (7/9), 7-6 (10/8) victory in a thrilling first-round clash in Antwerp.

At 3hr 45min it was the longest best-of-three match this year, the ATP said, eclipsing the 3hr 38min played by Rafael Nadal and Stefanos Tsitsipas in the Barcelona final in April.

"I don't think I've ever played a match like that," an exhausted Murray said.

"I think it's the longest three-set match I've played by quite a distance. I'm tired right now, obviously it was an unbelievable battle."

Murray, who shared a warm embrace with the 23-year-old Tiafoe afterwards, added: "Nowadays obviously my body is old now. I've played a lot of matches on the Tour.

"I don't mind playing long matches, but that was taking it to another level."—AFP ■

Andy Murray battled past the American Frances Tiafoe in an epic at the European Open. **PHOTO: BELGA/AFP**