STRICTLY AVOID ABUSE OF ALLOCATED LAND PLOTS, FARMLANDS PAGE-8 (OPINION)

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.

Mini Gems Emporium 2021 continues into fifth day

THE Mini Gems Emporium 2021 showcased pearl and jade lots on its fifth day at Mani Yadana Jade Hall in Nay Pyi Taw keeping in line with COVID-19 health rules.

The local and foreign jade merchants observed jade lots displayed inside and outside of the jade hall.

On the fourth day of the emporium, the number of jade lots from 251 to 500 were on sale via an open tender system and 195 lots were sold out. The numbers of lots from 501 to 780 were also on sale through an open tender system yesterday and the local and foreign jade traders inspected the jade lots and submitted their bids.

The bidding was closed at 3 pm and the winners of jade lots will be declared on 22 December.

A total of 330 pearl lots and 780 jade lots were displayed during the event and the numbers of pearl lots from 1 to 220 were on sale via an open tender system starting the second day of the emporium, while from 221 to 330 pearl lots on the third day, and 110 pearl lots were sold and a total of 199 jade lots was also sold out of the number of jade lots from 1 to 250. — Aye Aye Win/GNLM

Gem traders are evaluating the jade lots at the Mini Gems Emporium 2021 on its fifth day in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. **PHOTO: KO KO NAW**

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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.

259 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 21 December, total figure rises to 528,639

MYANMAR'S COVID-19 positive cases rose to 528,639 after 259 new cases were reported on 21 December 2021 according to the Ministry of Health. Among these confirmed cases, 506,096 have been discharged from hospitals. Death toll reached 19,230 after 4 died.—MNA

Inlay Lake receives over 10,000 migratory, resident birds in November

The Inlay Lake Wildlife Sanctuary—habitat both for migratory and for resident birds (in pictures). **PHOTOS : KANU**

MYANMAR'S Inlay Lake Wildlife Sanctuary hosted 10,359 migratory and resident birds of 106 species in November and more birds will enter the lake as a stopover in winter.

The migratory birds have been constantly flocking to Inlay Lake Wildlife Sanctuary since October. The numbers of winged visitors to Inlay Lake were estimated at 2,985 migratory birds of 30 species and 2,094 resident birds of 82 species in November 2019, 5,961 migratory birds (31 species) and, 4,547 resident birds (58 species) in November 2020 and 5,248 migratory birds (45 species) and 5,111 resident birds (61 species) in November 2021.

Of them, 1,061 birds (27 species) in November 2019, 2,875 birds (21 speceis) in 2020 and 1,884 (25 species) in 2021 are shorebirds.

Inlay Lake Wildlife Sanctuary is home to migratory birds from the North Pole during winter to escape from the extreme weather. The number of Ibis and other migratory birds increased 3,000 more than the bird population recorded in the year-ago period this month.

According to Inlay Lake Conservation Project (2019-2020 to 2027-2028) and 10-year Inlay Lake Ramsar Site project from 2020-2021, maintaining the diversity of the ecosystem, preventing hunting, coordination with the Irrigation Department to keep the lake clean and green, restoration of the habitats and establishing the protection areas for the birds are being implemented.

In a bid to conserve the biodiversity in the Inlay Lake and ecosystem in the wetland area, Inlay Lake Wildlife Sanctuary was set up on 30 January 1985. It was declared as ASEAN Heritage Park in 2003 on account of its importance to maintaining biodiversity in the sanctuary. It was listed as Inlay Lake Biosphere Reserve on 9 June 2015 as it illustrated residents living and working in harmony with nature.

Inlay Lake is strategically situated in the Shan plateau of Myanmar. This beautiful highland lake was also established as Inlay Lake Ramsar Site. The lake has become an East Asian-Australian Flyway site on 2 February 2020 as it is a habitat of the migratory birds from the North Pole.

Inlay Lake Wildlife Sanctuary expanded across 158,720 acres during its establishment and it is 131,884 acres wide at the moment.

Every year, migratory birds flock to the freshwater lake, where there is abundant food, away from colder regions with frozen lakes and a short food supply that make it difficult for them to survive. — Nyein Thu (MNA)/GNLM

The meaning of independence

Independence does not mean an undisciplined way of life. Independence strictly dictates that we live a disciplined life. Independence can survive only with discipline. After we achieve independence, the people need to observe discipline more strictly. Our country needs to achieve independence in a disciplined manner.

(Excerpt from Bogyoke Aung San's speech made at the City Hall on 13 July 1947.)

Myanmar to play an active role in negotiating ASEAN-Canada free trade agreement

THE preparatory meeting for the ASEAN-Canada free trade agreement negotiation meeting was held yesterday in Nay Pyi Taw. At the meeting, Union Minister for Investment and Foreign Economic Relations U Aung Naing Oo said it is necessary to prepare for the benefits of not only the ASEAN but also Myanmar and to assign only experts who fully understand the international agreements and the laws of the country as negotiations on the ASEAN-Canada Free Trade Agreement will soon begin.

The Union Minister said that the meeting is held for the organizations to prepare in advance and for Myanmar to play an active role in negotiating the trade agreement to be launched in 2022. The Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (FTA) is expected to be one of the high-quality FTA agreements with ASEAN.

He highlighted the need to prioritize negotiations over market access for the country's exports and access to high quality and responsible investment. In addition, necessary measures to be taken to protect the country's manufacturing and service sectors are required to negotiate under the existing laws of the country and the international agreements signed by the country.

The preparatory meeting for the ASEAN-Canada free trade agreement negotiation meeting in progress yesterday.

As the negotiations are scheduled to be finalized within two years, starting at the beginning of 2022, policy issues, requirements for coordination, technical supports need to be submitted in a timely manner, and his ministry will provide assistance as necessary, the Union minister continued.

Afterwards, officials explained areas included in the reference document negotiated for the ASEAN-Canada Free Trade Agreement and the situations of the two sides to reach an agreement on the document; establishment of working groups for the negotiation of the agreement and the agenda of the negotiations to be held in 2022; the plans to be implemented by the Ministry of Investment and Foreign Economic Relations on behalf of Myanmar. The meeting also discussed the preparations for the negotiation of the trade agreement and the negotiation plan.

Canada joined ASEAN in 1977 as a dialogue partner. Studies on the establishment of the ASEAN-Canada Free Trade Area have been underway since 2016, and the 10th ASEAN-Canada Economic Ministers' Meeting in November 2021 announced the formal negotiations on the ASEAN-Canada Free Trade Agreement.

Canada is the eighth-largest economy in the world and sixth in ASEAN. ASEAN is Canada's sixth-largest trading partner. Canada is the 15th-largest trading partner of ASEAN. In 2020, the value of ASEAN-Canada trade reached US$20 billion. Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) inflows from Canada to ASEAN countries amounted to US$12.5 billion, while ASEAN inflows into Canada amounted to US$1.2 billion.

Canada ranks 26th among Myanmar's current trading partners. Bilateral trade reached US$130 million in the 2019-2020 financial year. Canada currently has US$158 million in investment in Myanmar, as the 16th among the countries investing in Myanmar.

According to a study by the ASEAN-East Asia Economic Research Group, the Canadian World Affairs Group and international economists, the signing of the ASEAN-Canada Free Trade Agreement will make ASEAN countries, including Myanmar, more cooperative in trade and investment. — MNA

MoC oversees daily imports of anti-COVID-19 equipment

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

Three companies imported 20 tonnes of liquid oxygen and seven tonnes of masks using three vehicles via the Muse 105th mile trading zone, Myawady trading zone and Chinshwehaw trading zone yesterday. Liquid oxygen carried by a bowser was imported to Yangon via the Myawady trading zone.

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 inquires can be reached through the Ministry's Website – www.commerce.gov.mm. — MNA

A truck-load of anti-Covid equipment to states/regions.

MoI Union Minister meets contestants who will compete in music festival to commemorate Diamond Jubilee Union Day

MoI Union Minister U Maung Maung Ohn views the rehearsal of the contestants who will be singing traditional songs at the coming contest.

UNION Minister for Information U Maung Maung Ohn met nine contestants from regions and states who will be competing in Group C of the "Happy Together Music Festival" in commemoration of the Diamond Jubilee Union Day at the Myanma Radio and Television (MRTV) meeting hall, yesterday morning.

During the meeting, the Union Minister said the Prime Minister has instructed to hold a special programme to commemorate the Diamond Jubilee Union Day. The purpose of the music festival is to bring about friendship and harmony amongst ethnic brothers and sisters of the regions and states and resolve the distress of the people, he elaborated. He urged the contestants to compete with dignity without losing the essence of the competition as it is a national level competition.

Afterwards, the Union Minister watched rehearsals of the contestants who will be singing traditional songs on 24 December. In the afternoon, he met the MRTV staff and underlined that the ministry provides services to the public through the media and it is an important department for the State that is serving the people with the purpose of informing, educating and entertaining. He said the department is being initiated to be fresh and he urged them to carry out their duties with serious thoughts. He stressed he respects and acknowledges the responsibilities of the employees and urged them to work together to become a successful department. — MNA

MoSWRR Union Minister meets departmental staff of Kyaukpyu, An, Thandwe townships

UNION Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Dr Thet Thet Khine received the staff of the Social Welfare Department and Disaster Management Department of Kyaukpyu township on 19 December.

During the meeting, the Union Minister discussed plans to improve the socio-economy and natural disaster management and proper cooperation work of staff in implementing these measures.

Then, the Union Minister and party went to the preschool of An township and gave guidance based on the reports of staff.

On 20 December, the Union Minister visited the Women's Vocational Training School of the Ministry of Border Affairs in An township and discussed matters related to the development processes for the women.

At noon, the Union Minister also inspected the land where the Social Welfare Department constructs Preschool in Thandwe township and another land area where the Thandwe township office of the Disaster Management Department will be built.

The Union Minister and party then arrived at Thandwe District Office of the Disaster Management Department and cordially met the department staff.

The Union Minister also inspected the rescue materials warehouse of Thandwe District Office. — MNA

Statement to appreciate teachers' efforts

TEACHERS are honoured as part of the Five Infinite Venerables, and the manner of paying respect to the teachers can be only seen in Myanmar as a tradition. The teachers teach their pupils based on their goodwill like their own children and dutifully serve a teacher's duties. They must train their pupils and students in the best discipline. They see that they grasp their lessons well. They instruct them in the arts and sciences, they provide for their safety in every quarter, and they introduce them to their friends and associates.

As the COVID-19 infection rate is controlled to a certain extent, the basic education high, middle and primary schools under the Department of Basic Education have reopened across nation for the 2021-2022 academic year starting 1 June.

Those who want to seek good sake of one party, political extremist NLD members and supporters, NUG, CRPH and PDF committed arson attacks at the schools using mines, homemade bombs and grenades to fail the teaching processes, and threatened the teachers in addition to the incitements, social punishment and threats against education staff to join CDM while the officials made preparations for the reopening of schools and during the current teaching period. Their doings left some causalities, and the State Administration Council has expressed its deepest condolences and sympathy to the victims' families.

The SAC also appreciates the concerted efforts of teachers, who understand two virtues, Hiri — shame at doing evil —and Otappa—fear of the results of doing evil —for teaching the new generations of the country amid such difficulties and challenges.

The security forces will take extraordinary measures to ensure the safety of teachers who are making efforts in the academic sector for the next generations in order to promote the education qualification. The people should keep security awareness and cooperate with the security members in community peace and peaceful learning of children.

Information Team
State Administration Council

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)

COVID-19 vaccination continues in different states, regions

DOCTORS and nurses from public hospitals, medical teams, healthcare workers and volunteers are working hard to administer COVID-19 vaccines in different states and regions as the vaccination programme is one of the most important activities in the prevention, control and treatment of COVID-19 disease.

COVID-19 vaccine is being given daily to target groups regardless of race or religion including Buddhist monks and nuns, local people over the age of 40, religious leaders, prisoners, people with disabilities, ethnic armed groups, people with chronic diseases, and people in IDP camps respectively.

Doctors and nurses from public hospitals, medical teams, relevant healthcare workers in collaboration with volunteers have already given COVID-19 vaccines to 10,548 people from 14 townships in northern Shan State, 3,095 people from five townships in eastern Shan State, 11,297 people from 14 townships in Kayin and Mon states, 2,450 people from three townships in Yangon Region, 27,000 people from 26 townships in Ayeyawady Region, 34,731 people from 10 townships in Rakhine State, 9,637 people from seven districts in Mandalay Region and 1,920 people from Bago Region respectively.

Health staff administer Covid vaccines to locals in Ayeyawady Region.

Similarly, healthcare officials gave the vaccines to 1,164 students from six townships in northern Shan State, 96 students from eastern Shan State and 971 students from 26 townships in Ayeyawady Region.

It is reported that officials visited the site and coordinated the necessary work. — MNA

COVID-19 vaccination continues in Dawbon Township

Above 12-year-old schoolchildren get inoculated against COVID-19 in Dawbon.

HEALTH officials gave COVID-19 vaccination to students in Dawbon Township, Yangon Eastern District yesterday afternoon.

Healthcare workers made the programme to prevent infecting the COVID-19 virus to students over the age of 12 at the primary school, officials said.

Health officials measured the body temperature, blood pressure and monitored oxygen level before the vaccination.

Vaccines were given systematically to the school children, and only those with normal conditions are vaccinated.

After resting for about 30 minutes after being vaccinated, children were given healthcare education and then allowed to leave, officials added. — Yin Maw (IPRD)/GNLM

Officials administer 2nd dose of COVID vaccines to people in Shwetaung

HEALTHCARE officials gave the second dose of COVID-19 vaccines to over 18-year-old people in Shwetaung Township, Pyay District, Bago Region yesterday morning.

The vaccination programme was held at Kyarnikan ward Sasana Beikman of the township.

Vaccination activities are documented by officials followed by measuring body temperatures, blood pressure, and monitoring oxygen levels.

The vaccination is overseen by the township administration body and the township health officials. Members of the Red Cross, a joint team of social organizations also provided necessary assistance. — Ko Ko Min (IPRD)/GNLM

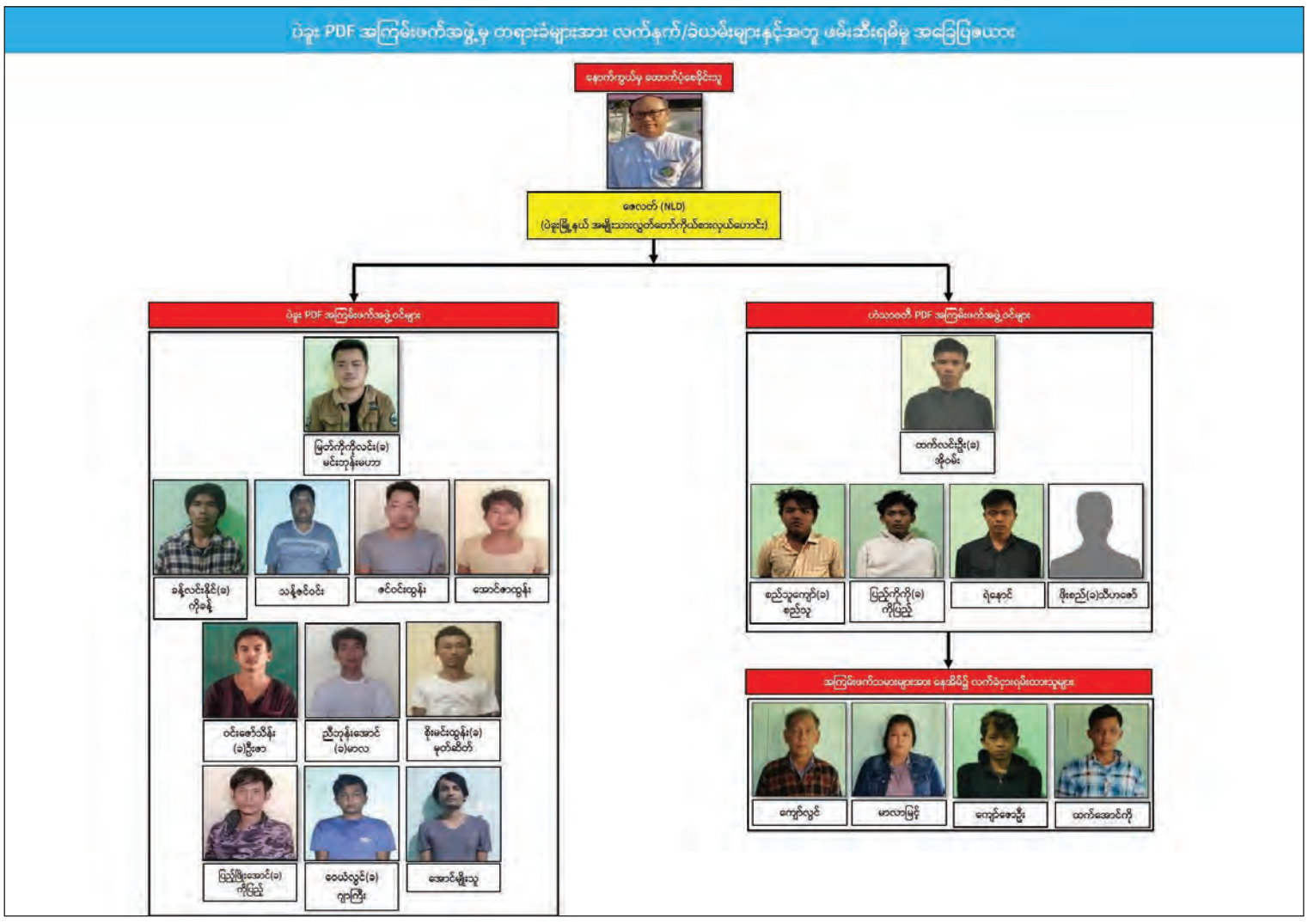
COVID-19 tests conducted free in Hsihseng Township

HEALTH officials conducted the free COVID-19 test to teachers and students at No.3 Basic Education Primary School in Hsihseng Township, Pa-O Self-Administered Zone, Shan State (South) on 20 December.

A total of four teachers plus 140 students participated in the programme and three schoolboys and two schoolgirls were tested positive for the COVID-19 virus and seven other family members who came in contact with them tested negative for the virus, according to the public health department. — Myo Myat (Hsihseng)/GNLM

Free Covid test is underway in southern Shan State.

Bago PDFs arrested together with firearms



A network of arrestees in Bago.

ON 12 December, the security forces received a tip-off that Khant Lin Naing (aka) Ko Khant, a member of Bago PDF went to Mandalay from Bago by express bus. Therefore, the combined security team conducted the inspection and arrested him at 158th-mile post of Yangon-Mandalay Expressway.

According to his confession, Myat Ko Ko Lin (aka) Min Phone Maha, Pyae Phyo Aung (aka) Ko Pyae, Zin Win Tun and Aung Zar Tun were arrested at a hostel in Ward (6) of Bago together with various types firearms including mobile phones.

Based on the words of suspects, the police arrested Win Zaw Thein (a) U Zar, Nyi Phone Aung (aka) Marla at Anawrahta street in Ward (1) of Ottha Myothit of Bago together with two homemade bombs and another suspect Soe Min Tun (a) Mokseik at No (2) Ward of Phayagyi Township.

According to the words of Myat Ko Ko Lin (aka) Min Phone Maha, the security forces seized one grenade, three TNTs, seven gunpowder packs and other explosives at the house of Bo Bo Aung, who is on the run, on 13 December.

On 14 December, the police arrested Thant Zin Win, Bago PDF member, at Lalti village of Mayoethaung village-tract of Hinthada Township and Wai Yan Lwin (aka) Gyar Gyi and Aung Myo Thu near Thabangon village of Hinthada township.

According to the confession of Myat Ko Ko Lin (aka) Min Phone Maha, the police seized various types of firearms at the house of Maung Kyaw, who is still at large, located in Gway Tan Shay Village of Bago on 16 December.

According to the words of the suspects, on 18 December, the police arrested Kyaw Lwin, Mar Lar Myint and Htet Aung Ko at Margha street in Bogon ward of Bago together with explosives. They also detained Sithu Kyaw (aka) Sithu and Kyaw Zaw Oo at Bogon Ward based on the words of Htet Aung Ko while Htet Lin Oo (aka) Owan, Pyae Ko Ko (aka) Ko Pyae and Ye Naung at Zawtikayon Monastery in Myothit ward based on the words of Marlar Myint.

A total of 19 suspects — 18 males and one female — were arrested together with four small, three homemade guns, five magazines, 124 bullets, 12 grenades, 7 homemade mines, three TNTs, 11 gunpowder packs and other explosives.

Myat Ko Ko Lin (aka) Min Phone Maha, Khant Lin Naing (aka) Ko Khant, Zin Win Tun, Soe Min Tun (aka) Mokseik and Pyae Phyo Aung (aka) Ko Pyae joined the explosive training at KNLA brigade 5 area while Htet Lin Oo (aka) Owan, Sithu Kyaw (aka) Sithu, Pyae Ko Ko (aka) Ko Pyae, Ye Naung and Hein Lay (still at large) at Lay Kay Kaw of KNLA brigade 6 and Khant Lin Naing (aka) Ko Khant and Zin Win Tun at TNLA brigade 7 area.

According to the confession of suspects, Zay Latt (still at large), former Amyotha Hluttaw MP of NLD, Bago instructed them to organize terrorist group Bago PDF and on 26 June. Myo Ko (still at large) and Ye Htut (still at large) organized the group with Myat Ko Ko Lin (aka) Min Phone Maha, Khant Lin Naing (aka) Ko Khant, Thant Zin Win, Zin Win Tun, Win Zaw Thein (aka) U Zar, Nyi Phone Aung (aka) Marla, Soe Min Tun (aka) Mokseik, Pyae Phyo Aung (aka) Ko Pyae, Wai Yan Lwin (aka) Gyar Gyi, Aung Myo Thu, Thar Htoo, Min Min Thant, Aung Pyae Pho, Htet Sett Nyunt, Yan Naing and Sithu Phyo. On 30 October, Htet Lin Oo (aka) Owan formed Hanthawady PDF with Sithu Kyaw (aka) Sithu, Pyae Ko Ko (aka) Ko Pyae, Ye Naung and Phoe Si (aka) Thiha Zaw (still at large).

Under the instructions of suspects who are still at large Myo Ko and Ye Htut, Thant Zin Win, Myat Ko Ko Lin (aka) Min Phone Maha, Pyae Phyo Aung

A handmade bomb thrown at the Myawaddy Bank in Bago on 14 March 2021.

Seized firearms and explosives in Bago on 18 December 2021.

A handmade mine blast at the township EPC office in Bago on 4 July 2021.

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One woman arrested with detonators used in bombings in Mandalay int'l airport

ONE woman was arrested with 98 detonators to be used in terrorist bombings at the Mandalay International Airport in TadaU township, Mandalay Region, on 20 December.

While security personnel on duty at No (1) Exit X-ray were conducting search at the airport, 98 detonators were found in the SOD (special ordinary detonator) container, mixed with Fluza medicines inside the box of Ma Moe Myint Hlaing, 20, a resident of Sinthay village, Hkamti Township, Sagaing Region.

According to her statement, Ma Aye Aye Chit (a) Boksone Ma, a resident of Mahaaungmye Township, who instructed her to deliver, and Daw Law Hway (a) Daw Kyaung Fahway (a) Daw Tin Thein, the mother of Ma Moe Myint Hlaing, who was to receive the detonators, were arrested at their respective houses.

According to the statement of Ma Aye Aye Chit, U Thein Tun and his wife Daw Khin Phyu Win (a) Zai Tung Pi, who came and delivered more detonators at her house, were arrested with 1,000 detonators in the evening.

It is reported that actions will be taken effectively against them under the law, according to MPF. — MNA

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Explosives and related items are confiscated in Bago.

(aka) Ko Pyae, Soe Min Tun (aka) Mokseik and Ko Kyaw (from Bago, still at large) communicated with Nay La (from Yangon, still at large), Kalar Gyi and Ko Paing (the two are from Bago, still at large), Joker (from Myawady, still at large) and Mickey (from Nyaunglebin, still at large) to transport the explosives and firearms hiding in paddy bags, gas cylinders, under the floor of the car putting in their cars or passenger buses.

According to the confession of Htet Lin Oo (aka) Owan, Myat Ko Ko Lin (aka) Min Phone Maha and Soe Gyi (still at large) bought one pistol and 50 rounds of .380 ammunition bullets from U Kyaw(still at large), leader of Phaya Thonesu PDF.

Khant Lin Naing (aka) Ko Khant and Myat Ko Ko Lin (aka) Min Phone Maha created homemade bombs according to the instructions of Myo Ko and Ye Htut (who are still at large) and distributed them to PDFs of Nyaunglebin, DaikU, Waw, Thanetpin and Kawa townships.

The terrorists committed nine bomb attacks in Bogo township as follows;

-Wai Yan Lwin exploded Myawady Bank of Bago township on 14 March and Hanthawady stadium on 4 May, Bago municipal office on 6 June.

- Wai Yan Lwin and Aung Pyae Khant (still at large) threw homemade bombs into Zay Pine Ward's township EPC and Hanthawady ward administrator office of Bago on 4 July and Yan Naing and Nyein Chan (still at large) watched the condition of security forces for them to do so.

- Sithu Kyaw and Aung Nyi Nyi Thwin (still at large) also threw a homemade bomb into the municipal office in Hanthawady ward of Bago on 20 October.

- Thiha Naung Naung (aka) Naung Naung (still at large) committed mine attack on the house of U Aung Htay, USDP member, in Punnasu ward of Bago on 1 November.

-Ye Naung exploded Ward (2) administration office in Ottha Myothit it of Bago on 12 November.

- Thiha Naung Naung (aka) Naung Naung (still at large) attacked the Myoyogon vegetable market in the Punnagon ward of Bago on 24 November.

-Zay Latt (former Amyotha Hluttaw MP of NLD, Bago) supported and instructed PDF terrorists to commit murders and bomb attacks in Bago Township.

Action will be taken against these suspects and the people are urged to report the nearest security forces secretly regarding the hiding places and movements of terrorists to ensure community peace. — MNA

Confiscated weapons and explosives in Bago on 12 December 2021.

A handmade bomb hurled into the house of the USDP member in Bago on 1 November 2021.

A handmade mine blast at the ward administration office in Bago on 4 July 2021.

22 DECEMBER 2021
THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

Strictly avoid abuse of allocated land plots, farmlands

THE governments in successive eras allocate farmlands, croplands, forest areas and public areas to the people for their livelihoods and residences.

Some businesspersons and local people apply for allotments of farmlands to cultivate various sorts of crops and to breed farming cattle in order to earn income and to contribute towards the food sufficiency for the people.

Verily, the farmlands should be used for agriculture and livestock tasks only under the relevant laws. But, some persons abuse the allotted farmlands by allowing the resettlement of residents as illegal movements without abiding by the existing laws, rules, regulations and directives.

> The correct restrictions of local authorities are sure to eliminate the illegal use of land plots and farmlands as well as the illegal resettlement of some residents. Consequently, such proper efforts of local authorities will benefit the land management procedures of the government. Hence, those taking the land plots and farmlands need to be loyal to the State by showing real implementation of the projects without malpractices.

Moreover, some businesspersons and people apply for land plots with the purpose of implementing housing projects in some regions and states. Relevant ministries allotted large land plots where housing apartment buildings will be constructed. But, some of them fail to implement the projects.

Truly, the farmlands taken by the persons with a guarantee to grow various species of crops should not be abused. If so, those wishing to genuinely perform farming works will miss the chance for operating the farmlands. Likewise, if the businesspersons who have got the project land plots allotted by the government for construction projects fail to do so, other businesspersons who missed the chance in competition to get the land plots will face great loss.

Indeed, they offend the existing laws with the acts of failure to implement the construction projects of housing apartments for the people and with the malpractice of illegal resettlement on the farmlands in various ways beyond the laws. It is because some businesspersons sell the small land plots from their project areas to the local people.

As such, local authorities at different levels need to adopt the restrictions for those who committed the illegal acts of abusing the allotted farmlands and project areas. If necessary, action should be taken against those who offended the disciplines related to the land plots subsidized by the government.

The correct restrictions of local authorities are sure to eliminate the illegal use of land plots and farmlands as well as the illegal resettlement of some residents. Consequently, such proper efforts of local authorities will benefit the land management procedures of the government. Hence, those taking the land plots and farmlands need to be loyal to the State by showing real implementation of the projects without malpractices.

■■■

WHO chief says 2022 must be year 'we end the pandemic'

THE world must pull together and make the difficult choices needed to end the Covid-19 pandemic within the next year, WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said on Monday.

"2022 must be the year we end the pandemic," the World Health Organization's director-general told reporters in Geneva.

As end-of-year festivities approach, the UN health agency chief said countries should rein in national events linked to the holidays because allowing crowds to gather would be a "perfect platform" for Omicron to spread.

It would be better to cancel events now and celebrate later "than to celebrate now and grieve later", he added.

Since it was first reported in South Africa in November, Omicron has been identified in dozens of countries, dashing hopes that the worst of the pandemic is over.

People walk past Christmas decorations in Singapore's Orchard Road shopping district on 14 December 2021.
PHOTO: AFP / ROSLAN RAHMAN

'Really fast' spread

The WHO has said the heavily mutated variant is spreading at an unprecedented rate.

"There is now consistent evidence that Omicron is spreading significantly faster than the Delta variant," Tedros said, cautioning that the strain appears to have the ability to double its infections every 1.5 to three days.

"That is really fast."

In addition to increased transmissibility, early data has shown signs of worrying resistance to vaccines. There have also however been indications that it is sparking less severe symptoms than previous strains, but WHO chief scientist Soumya Swaminathan told Monday's press conference it was "early days to conclude that this is a milder variant".

She warned that South Africa and other places reporting lower hospitalisation rates from Omicron had been hit hard in earlier waves, so many of the Omicron cases may have been reinfections.

"The variant may be behaving differently in people with prior immunity," she said.

'End inequity'

Tedros pointed out that regardless of the variant's severity, "the sheer number of cases… may overwhelm the health system" and more people could die.

More than 5.3 million people have died since the start of the pandemic, though the true toll is believed to be several times higher.

Amid growing concern over Omicron, many governments are scrambling to roll out vaccine booster shots to populations, with early data suggesting that a third dose offers increased protection against the variant.

But the WHO has repeatedly voiced concern that such booster programmes could deepen already glaring inequity in vaccine access between wealthy and poorer countries. Many vulnerable people around the world are still waiting for a first vaccine dose, and the UN health agency has said it is better to prioritize them over providing fully vaccinated health adults with boosters. "If we are to end the pandemic in the coming year, we must end inequity," Tedros said.

SOURCE: AFP

Omicron now dominant in US as WHO urges greater effort to end pandemic

THE fast-spreading Omicron variant is now the dominant strain of Covid-19 in the United States, health authorities reported Monday, as the WHO called for greater efforts to ensure the pandemic ends next year.

The new variant has helped fuel record case surges, forcing a return to harsh restrictions in some countries. But in the United States, President Joe Biden does not plan on "locking the country down", press secretary Jen Psaki said earlier in the day.

Omicron now accounts for 73.2 per cent of new US cases over the past week ending Saturday, the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention said. In some regions of the country — the Pacific Northwest, South and parts of the Midwest — it already comprises more than 90 per cent of new infections.

With Biden set to deliver an address on Covid-19 Tuesday, the White House reported that a mid-level, fully vaccinated and boosted staff member had tested positive for Covid-19 after spending 30 minutes in proximity to the president three days prior. Biden has so far tested negative.

Early data suggests Omicron could be more infectious and possibly have higher resistance to vaccines, despite indications that it is not more severe than the Delta variant.

Since it was first reported in South Africa in November, Omicron has been identified in dozens of countries, dashing hopes that the worst of the pandemic is over.

WHO director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus called for nations to redouble efforts to help end the pandemic, calling for new year events to be cancelled because it was better to "celebrate later than to celebrate now and grieve later.

"We have to focus now on ending this pandemic," he said.

More restrictions

The European Union approved its fifth Covid-19 jab Monday — from US firm Novavax — with Europe already far ahead of other parts of the world with its rollout of vaccines and booster shots.

Authorization of the jab, which uses a more conventional technology than other Covid vaccines, has raised hopes that people worried about getting vaccinated might now come forward.

The other vaccines approved in the bloc are from Pfizer, Moderna, AstraZeneca and Johnson & Johnson, and the EU has already signed a deal to buy up to 200 million doses of the two-shot Novavax vaccine. "At a time where the Omicron variant is rapidly spreading... I am particularly pleased with today's authorization of the Novavax vaccine," EU chief Ursula von der Leyen said in a statement.

London on Monday announced it had cancelled a New Year's Eve event in the central Trafalgar Square for 6,500 people.

Paris has already cancelled its new year celebrations, and Germany is expected to roll out tight restrictions on private parties and close nightclubs, according to a proposal seen by AFP.

"New Year's Eve celebrations with a large number of people are unjustifiable in the current situation," reads the draft document.

Morocco has announced a blanket ban on New Year's Eve celebrations.

But British Prime Minister Boris Johnson ruled out any further tightening of England's coronavirus rules over Christmas, while pledging to keep the situation "under constant review."

Queen Elizabeth II is nonetheless understood to have cancelled plans to spend Christmas at her Sandringham estate and will instead take "sensible precautions" and stay at Windsor Castle, according to British media.

The Netherlands has already imposed a Christmas lockdown, and von der Leyen has warned that the Omicron variant could be dominant in Europe by mid-January.

WEF off

As the pandemic gathers pace, weary populations are faced once again with new rounds of restrictions and cancellations of big events.

The World Economic Forum said it was postponing its annual January get-together of the world's rich and powerful in the Swiss ski resort of Davos because of the new variant.

"Despite the meeting's stringent health protocols, the transmissibility of Omicron and its impact on travel and mobility have made deferral necessary," the WEF said Monday.

Israel's health ministry recommended banning nationals from travelling to the United States, and added several European countries to its Covid "red list".

The world of sport continues to be buffeted by the virus spread, with several English Premier League football teams recording outbreaks that forced games to be abandoned in recent days.

SOURCE: AFP

Europe is already far ahead of other parts of the world with its rollout of vaccines and booster shots. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

MYANMAR GAZETTE

Head of Service Organization transferred and appointed

THE State Administration Council has transferred and appointed U Myo Zarni Win, Managing Director of the Myanma Pharmaceutical Enterprise under the Ministry of Industry, as Director-General of Minister's Office of the same ministry from the date he assumes charge of his duties.

Myanmar Daily Weather Report

(Issued at 7:00 pm Tuesday 21 December 2021)

BAY INFERENCE: According to the observations at (17:30) hrs M.S.T today, the lowpressure area over South Andaman Sea and adjoining Malacca Strait still persists. Weather is partly cloudy to cloudy over the South Andaman Sea and Southeast Bay of Bengal and a few cloud over the North Andaman Sea and elsewhere over the Bay of Bengal.

FORECAST VALID UNTIL AFTERNOON OF THE 22 December, 2021: Light rain are likely to be isolated in Yangon, Taninthayi Regions. Degree of certainty is (60%). Weather will be partly cloudy in Upper Sagaing, Mandalay, Ayeyawady Regions and Kachin, Shan, Chin, Rakhine 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 (4-7) feet off and along Myanmar Coasts.

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Likelihood of slight decrease of night temperatures in Shan, Kayah, Kayin and Mon States.

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 22 December, 2021: Generally fair weather.

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 22 December, 2021: Partly cloudy.

FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 22 December, 2021: Partly cloudy.

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One in five watermelon trucks remains undamaged due to long queue

AS watermelon trucks heading to China is facing long queues, most of the watermelons turned bad. Only one in five trucks are left undamaged with quality watermelon, said U Sai Khin Maung from the Khwanyo Fruit Depot.

A kilogramme of watermelon is priced at 6-7 Yuan at present.

"The news of watermelon fetching a good price is spreading on the social network. It is real that the traders receive 6-7 Yuan per kilo. However, we cannot expect how many quantities remained in good condition. About 20-tonne truckloads of watermelons are left unhurt out of 5-6 trucks in the previous days. Such an unfortunate event will happen again upon the prolonged delay triggered by the driver-substitution system at the border. We cannot predict anything in the difficult times of the COVID-19 pandemic. If the price drops, the warehouse owners will suffer great loss amid the high transportation charges," U Sai Khin Maung stressed.

As watermelon trucks heading to China is facing long queues, most of the watermelons turned bad. Only one in five trucks are left undamaged with quality watermelon.

The market will raise its head only after reducing delays in China sides, getting entry permits for Myanmar short-haul drivers to the market beyond Chinese drivers and cutting the red-tape and trade barriers in Myanmar sides, he continued.

Additionally, the Muse 105th mile fruit centre notified on 16 December that watermelons of inferior quality and rotten ones will be rejected by Chinese counterparts and quality plays a pivotal role in trade.

Furthermore, the truck drivers must get vaccinated two times and they must present the vaccination certification to the authorities, according to the centre.

Quality deterioration occurred owing to a 20-days wait.

On 9 December, some watermelon trucks out of 26 in the first batch entered the market and four truckloads of watermelon were sold at 90,000 Yuan, the Khwanyo Fruit Depot stated.

The watermelons can be offered a higher price for better quality, U Sai Khin Maung elaborated.

He urged the exporters to figure out the queue times rather than the price.

In addition to COVID-19 restriction measures, Chinese customs regulations resulted in delays.

That is why both the growers and traders have to carefully observe the market conditions before harvesting.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, trade facilitation is unlikely to happen according to China's trade policy. Trade will go back to normality after China eases the rule and restriction measures for COVID-19.

Kyinsankyawt border post between Myanmar and China, which was previously closed down from 8 July, has been reopened starting from 26 November on a trial run. — NN/GNLM

Local cotton from Myothit still in trade regularly despite slightly gaining price

Now, the cotton prices are ranging between K1,500 and K1,600 per viss. The cotton is mostly conveyed to the Mandalay market, it is learnt.

LOCAL people from Myothit township, Magway region has grown a total of 23,757 acres of cotton farmland this year. They have cultivated more 298 acres of cotton than their expected acreage.

Now, the cotton is being harvested and sold in the market, according to the Township Agriculture Department.

Most of the people are growing model long-staple cotton species such as Shwetaung 8, Shwetaung 10 and Ngwechi 9, Ngweche 11 and Ngwechi 6. But they primarily cultivate Shwetaung 8 cotton variety which is suitable for the region and having good yield.

Each acre of cotton farmland can yield about 600 visses. If we can provide more irrigated water, it can produce about 800 visses per acre. The cotton is started harvesting in September and sold them back in the market, it is learnt.

Last month, it was also the rainy season when the cotton plants were harvested. And the cotton was sold for K1,000 per viss because of the low moisture content. Now, the cotton prices are ranging between K1,500 and K1,600 per viss. The cotton is mostly conveyed to the Mandalay market, it is learnt. — Than Win Tun (IPRD)/GNLM

MAI, Air KBZ to fly Yangon-Sittway and Yangon-Thandwe daily

MYANMAR Airways International (MAI) and Air KBZ will fly Yangon-Sittway and Yangon Thandwe flights daily for domestic travellers, according to the press release of the airlines.

These airlines will run the Yangon-Kyaukpyu flight every Monday, Thursday and Saturday.

To control the spread of COVID-19, the country has extended the COVID-19 entry restriction for most international travellers until 31 December, according to the statement of the Central Committee on Prevention, Control and Treatment for COVID-19.

All of these restrictions were extended until the end of November 2021 earlier, but the restriction has now been extended until 31 December to implement more effective measures to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Foreigners travelling for urgent reasons, including diplomatic issues, may contact a Myanmar diplomatic mission to receive an exemption. However, the travellers must produce a negative COVID-19 PCR test result taken within 72 hours before arrival.

According to a statement from the Ministry of Transport and Communications, the international passenger aircraft will not be allowed to operate at Yangon International Airport until 31 December to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus in Myanmar via air travel.

Myanmar has received US$69.2 million as revenue from e-Visa and over 1.7 million tourists applied for e-Visa from 2016 to August 2020, according to the official data of the Ministry of Immigration and Population.

Myanmar has reported a total of 528,380 COVID-19 infections, with 19,226 deaths as of 21 December. At the same time, a total of 505,761 patients have been recovered from the virus. — Aye Maung/GNLM

According to a statement from the Ministry of Transport and Communications, the international passenger aircraft will not be allowed to operate at Yangon International Airport until 31 December to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus in Myanmar via air travel.

China's Xi'an tests millions as Covid cases rise

THE Chinese city of Xi'an began testing millions of residents for the coronavirus on Tuesday after the detection of more than 40 new cases raised concerns of wider transmission ahead of a busy travel season.

China, where the virus was first detected, has slowed new cases to a trickle since the middle of last year through border restrictions, targeted lockdowns and lengthy quarantines as it pursues a zero-Covid strategy.

But the world's second-largest economy is now fighting local outbreaks in several cities, including key industrial hubs in the east and south.

Authorities are keen to extinguish the flare-ups ahead of a crucial period that will see the capital Beijing host the Winter Olympics in February as well as a surge in cross-country travel during the Lunar New Year.

Xi'an — a historic northwestern city of around 13 million people — recorded 42 new cases on Tuesday, bringing the total number detected since 9 December to 91, according to figures from the provincial health commission.

The city has also shut schools and large indoor recreation venues while encouraging residents to avoid going out and congregating in large groups, according to local government notices.

The museum housing the world-famous Terracotta Army — the 2,000-year-old mausoleum of China's first emperor — said in an online statement that it had closed from Sunday "according to the needs of epidemic prevention work", without giving a reopening date.

Xi'an — a historic northwestern city of around 13 million people known for its Terracotta Army — recorded 42 new cases on Tuesday. **PHOTO: ERIC FEFERBERG AFP/FILE**

Covid-19 is not the only scourge to hit Xi'an in recent weeks, with the city also logging several cases of potentially deadly haemorrhagic fever since the beginning of winter.—AFP ■

EU to decide on new Covid jab as Omicron rages

Poland has fully opened its borders with other EU countries. However, the borders with non-EU countries remain closed. Starting from 28th of December 2020 Polish Government imposed quarantine requirements for certain categories of travellers. **PHOTO: AFP**

THE EU's drug regulator was set to decide Monday whether to approve a fifth Covid jab as the US warned of a bleak winter with the Omicron variant spurring new waves of infections globally.

Since it was first reported in South Africa in November, Omicron has been identified in dozens of countries, prompting many to reimpose travel restrictions and other measures.

Despite indications it is not more severe than the Delta variant — still the dominant strain — Omicron has been shown in early data to have higher transmissibility and a worrying resistance to vaccines. Coronavirus has killed over 5.3 million people since the outbreak emerged in China in December 2019, according to a tally from official sources compiled by AFP.

The UK reported 82,886 cases on Sunday as the new variant rages, with the highest number of infections in London. The European Medicines Agency (EMA) said its human medicines committee would hold an extraordinary meeting to decide on Novavax on Monday, and "will communicate the outcome".

Novavax, which uses a more conventional technology that the US biotech firm hopes will reduce vaccine hesitancy, would be the fifth coronavirus shot authorized for the European Union.—AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

White House employee, who contacted Biden, tests positive for COVID-19

A employee from the Biden administration who contacted him on 17 December has tested positive for COVID-19, the White House announced on Monday.

"On Monday morning, a mid-level staff member, who does not regularly have contact with the President (Joe Biden), received a positive result for a COVID-19 test. Three days earlier, on Friday, that staff member had spent approximately 30 minutes in proximity to the President on Air Force One, on the way from Orange, South Carolina to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania," White House spokesperson Jen Psaki said in a statement.—ANI ■

London cancels New Year event over virus surge

A major New year celebration in London will be cancelled, the British capital's mayor said on Monday, as worries mount over a surge in virus cases sparked by the Omicron variant.

Sadiq Khan said infections were at record levels in the city and he needed to do everything possible to slow the spread of the new variant. "This means that we will no longer be hosting a celebration event for 6,500 people on Trafalgar Square this New Year's Eve," he said. —AFP ■

Hong Kong adds Britain to govt camp virus quarantine tier

TRAVELLERS to Hong Kong from Britain will have to initially quarantine in a government camp from Tuesday, joining 12 African nations and the United States on the city's strictest entry tier.

Throughout the coronavirus pandemic, Hong Kong has maintained some of the world's toughest quarantine restrictions, measures that have kept infections at bay but left the finance hub isolated.

Those policies have been tightened further since the emergence of the Omicron coronavirus variant, which has spread rapidly around the world in the last few weeks.

Most people arriving in Hong Kong must undergo 21 days of hotel quarantine and frequent testing before being allowed out.

But people from countries deemed to have high Omicron infection rates must spend the first four days of quarantine in a government-run camp before seeing out the rest of their isolation in a hotel. Britain was added to that list from midnight on Tuesday.—AFP ■

Throughout the coronavirus pandemic, Hong Kong has maintained some of the world's toughest quarantine restrictions . **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

Japan enacts record extra budget to boost virus-hit economy

Municipalities across Japan offer a range of novel financial aid schemes to help those engaged in cultural and artistic activities ride out the coronavirus pandemic. Kanazawa Geigi, or Geishas from Kanazawa, Ishikawa Prefecture, perform a dance on the stage at Ritsurin Garden, a "daimyo" feudal lord garden in Takamatsu, Kagawa Prefecture, on 25 April 2010. **PHOTO: KYODO/FILE**

JAPAN'S parliament enacted a record supplementary budget worth over $300 billion on Monday as part of measures to bolster the world's third largest economy as the pandemic threat drags on.

The extra budget — larger than the total annual GDP of countries such as Colombia, Vietnam and Finland — will fund part of the massive virus stimulus package announced last month by new Prime Minister Fumio Kishida.

Upper House lawmakers approved the 35.98 trillion yen ($317 billion) supplementary budget for the current fiscal year, with the majority allocated for economic measures.

They include cash handouts for children under 18, subsidies for small businesses, and pay rises for nurses and care-givers.

Japan passed three extra budgets in fiscal 2020-21 as manufacturing slowed during the pandemic and restrictions hit nightlife and tourism, but this marks the first for 2021-22 and the biggest yet.

Kishida became prime minister in October after his predecessor Yoshihide Suga stepped down partly over public discontent with his pandemic response.

After leading the ruling coalition to election victory, Kishida quickly announced a record 56 trillion yen in stimulus spending, roughly 10 per cent of Japan's total GDP. The country has recorded fewer than 18,400 Covid-19 deaths in its population of 126 million, despite avoiding harsh lockdowns.

Emergency measures targeting evening entertainment and crowd sizes at events were in place in major cities and other parts of Japan for much of the year, but were lifted in October.

This month, the Bank of Japan's latest quarterly Tankan business survey showed major manufacturers remain cautious about the economy's trajectory, with business sentiment flat for the quarter.— AFP ■

Qatar Airways launches UK legal challenge against Airbus

QATAR Airways said Monday it had launched legal proceedings against Airbus in the High Court in London, following a dispute with the aircraft manufacturer over degradation of the exterior fuselage surfaces.

The issue has led the airline, one of the Gulf region's "big three" carriers, to ground some of its A350 planes and not accept further deliveries of the wide-body aircraft from the European firm until the problem is resolved.

"We have sadly failed in all our attempts to reach a constructive solution with Airbus in relation to the accelerated surface degradation condition adversely impacting the Airbus A350 aircraft," Qatar Airways said in a statement.

The airline added it "has therefore been left with no alternative but to seek a rapid resolution of this dispute via the courts".

Airbus declined to comment Monday.

The plane manufacturer said earlier this month it was ready to seek independent arbitration to settle the dispute.

It has argued the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) has confirmed its findings that the paint-related issue had "no airworthiness impact on the A350 fleet."

The firm has also accused Qatar Airways of misrepresenting the problem as an airworthiness issue.

In its statement, the airline said it had initiated the legal proceedings in the technology and construction division of London's High Court "to ensure that Airbus will now address our legitimate concerns without further delay". Qatar Airway noted it has currently grounded 21 A350 aircraft.—AFP ■

Qatar Airways is taking Airbus to court in London to resolve a dispute about its A350 fleet. **PHOTO: AFP**

UK Supreme Court sends Venezuelan gold case back to lower court

THE UK Supreme Court on Monday ruled that a dispute over control of 31 tonnes of Venezuelan gold deposited with the Bank of England should be heard again by a lower court.

The latest twist in the long-running case, which hinges on whether President Nicolas Maduro's administration or Juan Guaido's opposition one is considered Venezuela's legitimate government, was welcomed by Guaido's camp as a recognition of his claim to power.

Guaido, who is also president of the country's National Assembly, claims the election was flawed and that he is Venezuela's lawful leader. Both parties have created separate management committees of the Central Bank of Venezuela (BCV), which has some $1 billion worth of gold held in reserve at the Bank of England in London.

Maduro wants to recover the gold, but access has so far been denied as Britain, in line with some 50 other countries around the world including the United States, acknowledges Guaido as interim president.—AFP ■

UBS appeals French tax evasion penalty

A branch of the Swiss giant banking UBS on 14 April 2020 in Gstaad, Switzerland. **PHOTO: FABRICE COFFRINI/AFP**

SWISS bank UBS on Monday filed an appeal with France's top court over 1.8 billion euros ($2 billion) in penalties it was ordered to pay for helping French residents evade tax.

The Paris appeals court last week imposed the penalties upon UBS for its role in helping French residents commit tax fraud between 2004 and 2012.

"UBS has filed an appeal with the French Supreme Court regarding the decision of the Court of Appeal, including a fine of EUR 3.75m, the confiscation of EUR 1bn, and civil damages of EUR 800m," read a company statement.

UBS said it filed the appeal within a statutory five-day notice period to "thoroughly assess the verdict of the Court of Appeal and determine next steps in the best interest of its stakeholders".

The Paris appeals court found UBS guilty of concealing serious tax fraud and illegal banking activities in France between 2004 and 2012, when it sent Swiss bankers to court well-heeled French clients.

French prosecutors said almost 10 billion euros were shielded from the eyes of their tax officials over that eight-year period ending in 2012.

The Appeal Court ruling reduced the original fine of 3.7 billion euros handed down in 2019 by the trial court — France's largest such fine for tax evasion — to just 3.75 million euros. However, it ordered the confiscation of the 1 billion euro caution that UBS had to advance and left unchanged the award of 800 million euros in damages to the French state.

The Swiss bank noted last week that an appeal would only suspend the payment of the fine of 3.75 million euros, whereas the payment of the damages worth 800 million euros is due upon request by the French state.— AFP ■

Foreign shoppers swarm Turkey after lira crash

THE sea of Bulgarian buses parked outside a market in Turkey's historic city of Edirne betrays the scale of the currency crisis impeding President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's path to a third decade of rule.

The mosque-filled city on Turkey's western edge was an early capital of the Ottoman Empire when it was expanding across the Middle East and Europe in the 14th and 15th centuries.

It is now the place where shoppers from Bulgaria and the Balkans — themselves some of Europe's poorest countries — go to stock up on everything from underwear to walnuts at a fraction of their cost back home. "For us, the crisis is good, but it is very bad for the Turkish people," said tour guide Daniela Mircheva before boarding a bus back to her Bulgarian hometown of Yambol.

"We were in a similar situation maybe 10, 11, 12 years ago," the 49-year-old said, in reference to the 2008 global financial crisis. "It is very difficult."

Turkey's beleaguered lira has crashed under the weight of an unusual economic experiment Erdogan is conducting in a bid to boost support before elections due by mid-2023.—AFP ■

Xinjiang port sees surging export of Christmas products

HORGOS port, a border port in northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, has handled a surging amount of Christmas products on China-Europe freight trains this year, according to the port's customs.

Official figures show that the port has exported Christmas products worth 298 million yuan (about 46.6 million US dollars) since the beginning of this year, an increase of 97 per cent year on year.

The peak season of Christmas products export at the port began at the end of July and lasted through November. Christmas products exported in September reached about 90 million yuan. Most of these exported Christmas products came from China's coastal areas such as Zhejiang and Guangdong provinces, and are mainly exported to Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Germany, Britain and other central Asian and European countries. Zhang Yuan, an official with the customs, said this year's Christmas export season is earlier and longer than usual, due to the limited overseas production capacity caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.—Xinhua ■

Most of the exported Christmas products came from China's coastal areas such as Zhejiang and Guangdong provinces, and are mainly exported to Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Germany, Britain and other central Asian and European countries. **PHOTO: XINHUA**

US to return $154 mn stolen by Sony employee and converted to bitcoin

THE US Department of Justice said Monday it has taken action to return more than $154 million allegedly stolen from a Sony subsidiary by one of its Japanese employees who converted it into bitcoin.

According to the civil forfeiture complaint filed Monday in San Diego, Rei Ishii, an employee of Sony Life Insurance Company Ltd in Tokyo, allegedly diverted the $154 million in May when the company attempted to transfer funds between its accounts.

The money was diverted to an account Ishii controlled at a bank in La Jolla, California and he then converted the funds into 3,879 bitcoin, valued at more than $180 million today, according to the US Attorney's Office for the Southern District of California. The funds were seized on 1 December following an FBI investigation, it said.—AFP ■

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C/o **Kelvin Chia Yangon Ltd.,**
Level 8A, Union Financial Centre (UFC),
Corner of Mahabandoola Road & Thein Phyu Road,
Botahtaung Tsp, Yangon,
The Republic of the Union of Myanmar.
Dated **22nd December 2021** lmm@kcyangon.com

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Dated **22nd December 2021** lmm@kcyangon.com

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M.V MAERSK NESNA VOY.NO. (150W)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V MAERSK NESNA VOY.NO. (150W)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **22-12-2021** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **MITT/MIP** where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

No claims against this vessel will be admitted after the Claims Day.
Phone No: **2301185**

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority
Agent For:

M/S SEALAND MAERSK ASIA PTE LTD

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE
M.V SEAMASTER VOY.NO. (149S)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V SEAMASTER VOY.NO. (149S)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **22-12-2021** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **MITT/MIP** where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

No claims against this vessel will be admitted after the Claims Day.
Phone No: **2301185**

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority
Agent For:

M/S SEALAND MAERSK ASIA PTE LTD

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE
M.V BLPL FAITH VOY.NO. (3101S)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V BLPL FAITH VOY.NO. (3101S)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **21-12-2021** 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.
Phone No: **2301185**

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority
Agent For:

M/S BLPL SHIPPING LINE

NEWS IN BRIEF

Honduras' Castro officially declared president-elect

HONDURAS' national electoral body on Monday officially declared Xiomara Castro president-elect ahead of her inauguration next month as the country's first woman leader.

Leftist Castro, 62, received more than 51 per cent of the 28 November vote, comfortably beating right-wing candidate Nasry Asfura who polled at just under 37 per cent.

Despite both the leading candidates' parties claiming victory within an hour of polls closing, two days later Asfura visited Castro to officially concede and congratulate her.

Castro, from the LIBRE party, will serve as president from 27 January 2022 for four years.

Her victory broke 12 years of National Party rule and four decades of its shared rule alongside the Liberal Party.—AFP ■

Missionary hostages escaped Haiti kidnappers: church organization

TWELVE North American gang hostages held for months in Haiti orchestrated their own escape last week, hiking for miles under cover of darkness carrying young children, their church organization said Monday.

Christian Aid Ministries (CAM), which had provided little information on the 16 Americans and one Canadian who were kidnapped in mid-October, on Monday detailed the hostages' ordeal and the mid-December escape of the final 12 hostages, a group that included a 10-month-old, a three-year-old and two teenagers, along with eight adults.

"They walked for possibly as much as 10 miles... travelling through woods and thickets, working through thorns and briars" under cover of darkness to safety, said Weston Showalter, spokesman for the Ohio-based missionary group, in a streamed press conference.

"Two hours were through fierce brambles. We were in gang territory the whole hike," Showalter quoted one of the escapees as saying.—AFP ■

100 service members engaged in 'prohibited extremist activity': Pentagon

The Pentagon building in Washington, DC. **PHOTO: AFP**

ABOUT 100 members of the US military took part in some form of "prohibited extremist activity" over the past year, the Pentagon said Monday as it released new guidelines for service members.

Pentagon chief Lloyd Austin ordered a review in February 2021 of the Defense Department's policies on countering extremism within the ranks.

The review came after the revelation that dozens of former members of the US military took part in the 6 January attack on the US Capitol by supporters of former president Donald Trump.

"The overwhelming majority of the men and women of the Department of Defense serve this country with honor and integrity," Austin said in a statement accompanying the release of the working group report on countering extremist activity. "They respect the oath they took to support and defend the Constitution of the United States," Austin said. "We believe only a very few violate this oath by participating in extremist activities." Pentagon spokesman John Kirby said the review found that "about 100" active duty or reserve members of the US military had participated in prohibited extremist activities over the past year. He declined to specify what type of activity they had been engaged in, but cited advocating the overthrow of the government or "domestic terrorism" as examples of prohibited activities.—AFP ■

Japan hangs 3 death-row inmates in 1st executions in 2 yrs

THREE death-row inmates were hanged Tuesday, the Ministry of Justice said, in Japan's first executions since December 2019 and first under the administration of Prime Minister Fumio Kishida.

The three were identified as Yasutaka Fujishiro, 65, who killed seven of his relatives in Hyogo Prefecture in 2004, and Tomoaki Takanezawa, 54, and Mitsunori Onogawa, 44, who were convicted of killing two employees at two separate pachinko parlors in Gunma Prefecture in 2003.

Following Tuesday's executions, the number of inmates sitting on death row in Japan stands at 107.

Photo taken on 20 December 2021, shows the Ministry of Justice in Tokyo. **PHOTO: KYODO**

The Kobe District Court in western Japan sentenced Fujishiro to death in May 2009 and the decision was finalized in June 2015 after the Supreme Court rejected an appeal.

Takanezawa and Onogawa, who also robbed one of their victims and stole money from one of the pachinko parlours, were sentenced to death by the Saitama District Court near Tokyo. The death penalty on Takanezawa was finalized in July 2005 after he withdrew his appeal, while Onogawa's sentence was finalized in June 2009 at the Supreme Court.

After the executions, Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Seiji Kihara told reporters it is "not appropriate to abolish (the country's death penalty system) considering the current situation in which heinous crimes continue to occur".— Kyodo ■

One woman released after hostage situation

Negotiations led by the Research and Intervention Brigade (BRI) are continuing to free the second hostage, the police said. **PHOTO: AFP**

A man with a knife, known to suffer from psychiatric disorders, took two women hostage on Monday in a hardware shop in rue d'Aligre in Paris, one of whom was released unharmed, police headquarters announced in the evening.

Negotiations led by the Research and Intervention Brigade (BRI) are continuing to free the second hostage, the police said. The first was released shortly before 10 pm on Monday night.

The kidnapper is an individual known to have mental disorders, and is believed to be in his fifties. Given his psychiatric profile, police have ruled out terrorist motivations.

The man is notably known to the police for having harassed a local doctor at his medical office, according to a second police source.

After entering the shop shortly before 3:30 pm, the man first asked to "speak to the Minister of Justice", Eric Dupond-Moretti, according to the two police sources.—AFP ■

Thousands of Argentines mark 20th anniversary of 'great crisis'

TENS of thousands of protesters filled the centre of Buenos Aires on Monday to mark the 20th anniversary of Argentina's "great crisis" when a social outbreak over an economic meltdown saw 39 people killed in a government crackdown.

At around midday, dozens of trade unions, social movements and left-wing parties descended on the Plaza de Mayo square in front of the presidential palace to mark the events from 2001.

On Sunday night, the same groups held a vigil late into the night.

Monday's protest was taking place in a very similar economic context to that of 2001: large scale debt and a deal with the International Monetary Fund — this time worth $44 billion — that has Argentines fearing austerity is heading their way once again.

A demonstrator holds a banner denouncing the International Monetary Fund at a protest to mark the 20th anniversary of the 'great crisis'. **PHOTO: AFP**

"20 December is a very important anniversary in Argentina," Gabriel Solano, a Worker's Party supporter, told AFP.

"But, 20 years later, we see a situation that is more or less the same: large scale poverty, misery and another pact with the IMF that is threatening the people with an adjustment plan.

"We have come back here to Plaza de Mayo to say we don't want another adjustment for the people." Demonstrators held up banners denouncing the IMF and hitting out at "adjusters" — those politicians that favour austerity measures to solve the country's economic woes. In December 2001, years of increasing debt and austerity collided in a cash crisis sparked by a capital flight that resulted in lootings, riots and within 48 hours, president Fernando de la Rua resigning and escaping by helicopter.—AFP ■

Families block road after bloody Guatemala village attack

Relatives blocked a major road in Guatemala with the coffins of victims of a weekend massacre by a rival group to draw attention to violence plaguing their indigenous community. **PHOTO: AFP**

GRIEVING family members on Monday blocked a major road in Guatemala with the coffins of victims of a weekend massacre by a rival group, as President Alejandro Giammattei enacted measures to establish order and prevent further bloodshed.

The road block, which lasted 10 hours, was meant to draw attention to violence plaguing the indigenous community.

Thirteen people, including four children were killed in the attack, part of a long-running land feud between members of the Mayan K'iche community from the neighbouring municipalities of Nahuala and Santa Catarina Ixtahaucan. Giammattei called an emergency cabinet meeting on Monday and announced a state of emergency in the municipalities "in order to establish order and prevent further incidents of violence." Women in traditional indigenous clothing wept as the coffins of seven victims were lined up along the Interamericana highway, which links the area to the capital Guatemala City. Each coffin bore a photo of the victim inside.

"There are no words to describe what these people did," Alonzo Guarchaj, 30, told AFP as he stood next to a coffin containing the remains of his father, an evangelical pastor.—AFP ■

Convicted Danish ex-minister faces vote on parliament expulsion

DENMARK'S former migration minister on Tuesday faces a vote that is likely to expel her from parliament, after she was convicted of violating migrants' rights by separating asylum-seeking couples.

Inger Stojberg was hit with a 60-day jail term for flouting her responsibilities as a minister last week following a trial in a rarely used court that oversees the conduct of ministers.

Her order to separate asylum-seeking couples when the woman was under 18 with no individual examination of the cases was found to have violated the European Convention on Human Rights. The 48-year-old self-styled champion of "Danish values", a hugely popular politician who served as minister from 2015 to 2019, is expected to attend debates in parliament on Tuesday that are likely to lead to her exclusion. Danish law allows for those serving short sentences to remain free, so Stojberg is likely to spend her sentence under restrictions rather than in prison.

Most parties are in favour of pushing Stojberg out, including her former party the liberal Venstre, which she left in February.

"It is unimaginable that one could be in prison serving a sentence while being an MP," Venstre's parliamentary chairman Karsten Lauritzen told reporters last week.

Since 1953, only four members of parliament have been excluded.—AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Belarus says diplomat hurt in London embassy 'attack'

BELARUS said Monday one of its diplomats was injured following an attack on its embassy in London, amid international backlash over a migrant crisis the West blames on the ex-Soviet country.

Western countries accuse Belarus of engineering a migrant influx at its border with EU member Poland by letting thousands of people in and encouraging them to cross into the European Union as a form of retaliation against EU sanctions.

The Belarusian foreign ministry said in a statement that its embassy in London was attacked by suspects it suggested belonged to a "radical immigrant group".

It said they damaged the facade of the building and "physically attacked" diplomats who arrived at the scene.—AFP ■

Polish law poses 'severe risks to media freedom': EU

A draft Polish law adopted by MPs threatens press freedom, the European Commission said on Monday, piling criticism onto what is seen as a bid by Warsaw to silence an independent TV channel.

The legislation, passed by the Polish parliament's lower house on Friday, "puts further pressure" on the media and "poses severe risks to media freedom and pluralism in Poland", a commission spokesman, Christian Wigand, told journalists.

The government says the law, which bars countries from outside the EU and its associated neighbouring states holding a controlling stake in Polish media companies, will protect Poland's media landscape from potentially hostile actors such as Russia.

But critics believe it is aimed at TVN24, a big independent outlet majority owned by the US group Discovery.

It competes with TVP public television, which has become a government mouthpiece of the ruling right-wing Law and Justice (PiS) party.—AFP ■

FIFA seeks to woo member federations with big windfalls for biennial World Cups

FIFA President Gianni Infantino and Arsene Wenger, the head of global development, at a match in Qatar recently. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

FIFA on Monday claimed staging the World Cup every two years would offer enormous financial benefits for its member federations as president Gianni Infantino expressed hope that the highly controversial plans will not be derailed by opposition from Europe and South America.

Infantino was speaking after FIFA held a virtual global summit with federations to discuss the project, although there was no vote on the subject on Monday and he refused to confirm if there would be one at the next FIFA Congress on 31 March.

Football's global body published findings from two separate feasibility studies which it claimed showed there would be "a strong upturn in football's economic situation" if the World Cup was held as a biennial tournament rather than the current four-year cycle for the men's and women's competitions.

One study, by market researchers Nielsen, estimated that approximately $4.4 billion (3.9 billion euros) of additional revenues would be generated over four years, with income from gate receipts, media rights and sponsorship increasing from seven billion dollars to $11.4 billion.

To help convince its 211 member federations — 207 of whom participated in Monday's summit — FIFA vowed to hand over an extra $19 million every four years to each one, with the amount the same for major federations such as Brazil and France as it would be for Andorra or Guam.

Each member would get "around $16 million" allocated from a "Solidarity Fund" of some $3.5 billion in the first four years of the reformed calendar, as well as an increase in funding via its FIFA Forward programme from the current six million dollars to nine million.—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.

Premier League to play on during Covid chaos

PREMIER League clubs on Monday decided against a temporary halt to the season despite a surge in coronavirus cases that has forced mass postponements and threatened to derail the season.

Just four of the weekend's scheduled 10 games went ahead as Britain battles record numbers of positive Covid cases due to the new Omicron strain.

The Premier League board has been considering applications for postponements on a case-by-case basis but there has been criticism over the decision-making process, with fears it jeopardizes the sporting integrity of the competition.

There had been talk of a potential "firebreaker", with suggestions that the middle round of the festive fixtures from 28-30 December could be postponed.

But on Monday the English top flight, following a shareholders' meeting involving representatives from the 20 clubs, said games would continue through the busy festive season.—AFP ■

Liverpool's Andrew Robertson (2L) celebrates scoring his team's second goal against Tottenham Hotspur at Tottenham Hotspur Stadium in London. **PHOTO: AFP**

Tottenham Hotspur's European campaign this season is over after UEFA awarded Rennes victory in their final Europa Conference League group game called off due to the English club having an outbreak of Covid-19. **PHOTO: AFP**

Tottenham out of Europe after UEFA award Rennes victory

TOTTENHAM Hotspur's European campaign for this season is over after UEFA awarded Rennes a 3-0 victory in their final Europa Conference League group match on Monday.

Spurs were unable to fulfil the 9 December fixture due to a swathe of Covid-19 cases in the squad.

No agreement could then be reached between the clubs for a rearranged date before the deadline of 31 December.

As a result Tottenham finish third in the section behind group winners Rennes, who progress directly to the last 16, and Dutch side Vitesse who now face Rapid Vienna in a knockout play-off. "The Uefa Appeals Body took the following decision: to declare the 2021/22 UEFA Europa Conference League group stage match between Tottenham Hotspur FC and Stade Rennais FC, that was initially scheduled to be played on 9 December 2021, as forfeited by Tottenham Hotspur FC, who is therefore deemed to have lost the match 0-3," read the UEFA statement. The match in London was called off after Spurs manager Antonio Conte announced on the eve of the game eight of his players and five members of staff had tested positive for Covid-19. Rennes accused Tottenham of creating a "London fog" as the game was postponed shortly after they had landed in the English captial.—AFP ■