UPGRADE TATMADAW (NAVY) TO SEE A BETTER FUTURE PAGE-8 (OPINION)

THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

Vol. VIII, No. 253, 10th Waning of Nadaw 1383 ME www.gnlm.com.mm Tuesday, 28 December 2021

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.

If our Tatmadaw and families have only one concept, one sight, one belief and one attitude, our unity will endure forever, says Senior General

State Administration Council Chairman Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Maha Thray Sithu Min Aung Hlaing inspects the graduation company at the parade ground of the Defence Services Institute of Nursing and Paramedical Sciences in Yangon on 27 December 2021.

TELEMEDICINE is a telecommunication technology that can be used to deliver medical cover and medical assistance to remote areas by communication, said Chairman of the State Administration Council Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Maha Thray Sithu Min Aung Hlaing at the graduation parade of the 19th Intake (Male) and the 6th Intake (Female) of the Defence Services Institute of Nursing and Paramedical Sciences at the parade ground of the institute in Yangon yesterday morning.

The Senior General took the salute of the trainee companies and inspected the graduation company. The trainee companies saluted the Senior General with the slow-march-past and the quick-march-past.

The Senior General presented the Best Trainee Award to trainee Min Ko Ko Khant, the Excellent Award in Training to trainee Kyaw Toe and

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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.

200 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 27 December, total figure rises to 529,813

MYANMAR'S COVID-19 positive cases rose to 529,813 after 200 new cases were reported on 27 December 2021 according to the Ministry of Health. Among these confirmed cases, 507,435 have been discharged from hospitals. Death toll reached 19,257 after 3 died.—MNA

Announcement on findings from COVID-19 mutation surveillance process

THE Department of Public Health, the Department of Medical Research, and the Department of Medical Services and the Department of National Health Laboratory, under the Ministry of Health, have been conducting the "COVID-19 Mutation Surveillance Process" continuously in collaboration with the Tatmadaw Medical Research Unit.

According to this process, of the people who have returned from Malaysia and Thailand in December 2021 by relief flights, 20 laboratory samples of those who have been affected with COVID-19 were performed with SARS-CoV-2 Variant Omicron Real-Time PCR Testing and found no SARS-CoV-2 Variant Omicron.

Ministry of Health
27 December 2021

Of 13.4 mln doses of Covishield vaccine purchased from India, 6.7 mln arrive in Yangon

OUT of 13.4 million doses of the Covishield vaccine purchased from India, 6.7 million doses in first batch arrived at the Yangon International Airport yesterday and were received by the team led by the Head of the Yangon Region Department of Medical Services and Public Health.

The Ministry of Health has been conducting the vaccination against the COVID-19 disease to target groups across the country and as of 27 December 2021, 13.45 million people aged over 18 have been fully vaccinated with two doses and 5.54 million people aged over 18 have been injected once. As it makes 19 million people over the age of 18 inoculated at least once, over 50 per cent of the target population have accessed the vaccination. In addition, as above 12-year-old students have been jabbed, a total of 1.28 million students were fully immunized and 189,104 students have received vaccines once.

The Ministry of Health has purchased 37.7 million COVID-19 vaccines and received 11.96 million doses as a donation, totalling 49.66 million doses.

The vaccination will continue in the coming year 2022 to increase the vaccination coverage and the people are urged to receive full doses of the vaccine and those who have received the first dose to visit the nearest immunization centre in order to get jabbed for the second time and actively participate in the inoculation programme by the Ministry of Health. — MNA

The first batch of Covishield vaccine arrives at Yangon International Airport.

Broader outlook and farsightedness

Everyone who knows the world's history can consider that the nation-building task is too difficult to avoid encountering various kinds of ups and downs in this mundane world.

Therefore, with a broader outlook and farsightedness, we shall seize whatever opportunity we have. That's the way we love Myanmar. We can build our Myanmar.

(Excerpt from the broadcasting speech made by Bogyoke Aung San to the national peoples in November 1944)

If our Tatmadaw and families have only one concept, ...

State Administration Council Chairman Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Maha Thray Sithu Min Aung Hlaing addresses the graduation and trainee companies at the DSINPS parade ground.

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the Excellent Award in Studies to trainee Hein Thet Soe in the 19th Intake (Male) of the Defence Services Institute of Nursing and Paramedical Sciences.

The Senior General presented the Best Trainee Award to trainee Thinza Htwe, the Excellent Award in Training to trainee Aye Aye Myo and the Excellent Award in Studies to trainee Zun Phu Ngon in the 6th Intake (Female) Defence Services Institute of Nursing and Paramedical Sciences.

In his speech, the Senior General said: Throughout the history of our Tatmadaw, military nurses had efficiently accomplished the designated missions and obligations. To safeguard the sovereignty of the State and the lives of the citizens, military nurses had vigorously accompanied in many operations and one of them was awarded gallantry certificate of the Commander-in-Chief of the Defence Services and nine others were each awarded an honorary certificate of the Commander-in-Chief of the Defence Services.

Furthermore, the very first Florence Nightingale award winner from Myanmar, Major Daw Khin Ohn Mya, who was awarded the most honourable award in the nursing profession, also brightened the country and Tatmadaw's image by the nursing profession. I would like to exhort you to maintain and follow the good impression and image of these military nurses.

While Myanmar was suffering from COVID- 19 infections as other nations, our military personnel dedicated our immense efforts in controlling and fighting

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The Senior General presents the silver sword to the Best Trainee awardee (male).

The Senior General gives the silver sword to the Best Trainee awardee (female).

If our Tatmadaw and families have only one concept, ...

State Administration Council Chairman Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Maha Thray Sithu Min Aung Hlaing returns the salute of the trainee and graduation companies at the DSINPS parade ground in Yangon yesterday.

FROM PAGE-3

against the disease by financial, physical and mental means. In preventing, controlling and fighting missions against COVID-19, military nurses accompanied the military physicians at the fore.

We have been studying western medicine that is developed over time integrating with Myanmar traditional medicine, which is trusted by the public, and so we must find a way in coming with their time.

Nowadays, telemedicine technology is widely applied as military medicine in the domain of international medicine. Telemedicine is a telecommunication technology that can be used to deliver medical cover and medical assistance to remote areas by communication.

In the process of providing medical cover, the appointed medical officers and young physicians can obtain advice and decision concerning COVID-19 disease treatment from professors and consultant physicians at the same time.

In the domain of Myanmar Tatmadaw military medicine and orthopaedic disease and treatment, as telemedicine technology is utilized in line with the times, you must study continuously to become the person who can comprehend the progressing medical technologies and apply them practically. If our Tatmadaw and families have only one concept, one sight, one belief and one attitude, our unity will endure forever.

I would conclude by calling upon you, to become competent healthcare providers for the armed forces community, and those of the indigenous people, and the public at large in accordance with the motto, "**Skilful and Supportive Medical Corps**", to strive for the development and production of Myanmar traditional medicine utilizing modern technologies and to make relentless efforts become competent nursing and paramedical specialists of physical and mental prowess in the building of the modern armed forces.

The Senior General took the salute of the trainee companies and left the parade.

After the ceremony, the Senior General received the outstanding trainees at the parlour of the headquarters of the Institute and spoke words of thanks.

In his speech, the Senior General said as the State and the Tatmadaw gave military and literary training to the trainees within four years to become good soldiers with many investments, those trainees have to serve the State and the Tatmadaw as good soldiers. **The advice of parents aims to improve their children. Likewise, military disciplines of the Tatmadaw are set to a systematic lifestyle of service personnel along with their lives and contribute to their social life and not to cause loss of valuable human resources for the parents, the country and the Tatmadaw**. As they have chosen the life of military personnel and medical technicians, they have to march forward with the life of good soldiers and serve the Tatmadaw and the people with their professions. **They have to avoid indulgence with going to an appropriate place, with associating with appropriate persons, with doing the appropriate works and with talking about the appropriate topics**. —MNA

Recruitment Ceremony for DSINPS Graduates and Trainees held

CERTIFICATES of appointment were presented to trainees from 19th Intake (Male) and 6th Intake (Female) of Defence Services Institute of Nursing and Paramedical Sciences yesterday morning at the Institute's Convocation Hall.

Lt-Gen Myo Zaw Thein, Adjutant-General of the Office of the Commander-in-Chief (Army), senior military officers from the Office of the Commander-in-Chief, Brig-Gen Win Bo, Commandant of the Defence Services Institute of Nursing and Paramedical Sciences and trainees attended the ceremony.

After the commandant of the institute and senior military officers took the podium, Lt-Gen Myo Zaw Thein presented a medical staff appointment letter to each graduate and trainee.

The ceremony concluded after delivering the speech by Lt-Gen Myo Zaw Thein. —MNA

Those who have been vaccinated may face lesser percentage of impact

ALTHOUGH the Omicron virus has not infected the country yet, such kind of virus spreads in some neighbouring countries and regional countries. It is reported that those who have been vaccinated may face the lesser percentage of impact. If the infection rate is high, treatment will be given at the hospitals and clinics where preparations have been made.

(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 of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar on 13-12-2021)

First meeting of Coastal Resources Management Work Committee held

THE meeting of the Coastal Resources Management Work Committee (first time) was held at Ingyin Hall, the Forest Department yesterday morning.

Chairman of the Work Committee and Union Minister for Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation U Khin Maung Yi, Vice-Chairman of the Work Committee and Union Minister for Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation U Tin Htut Oo and committee members attended the meeting by virtual format.

The first meeting of the Coastal Resources Management Work Committee in Progress.

First, Union Minister U Khin Maung Yi spoke about the social and economic development of Myanmar's coastal resources to manage the three pillars of the economy and environmental protection.

"Only multi-departmental cooperation can effectively carry out long-term development work. Integrated Coastal Management is being drafted for Myanmar," the Union minister said.

"The system is based on the principles adopted by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992. Carbon dioxide, which is a major cause of climate change, is being stored in large quantities by mangroves and coastal ecosystems, which could exacerbate climate change if coastal resources are depleted.

"Myanmar's natural heritage along the coast, such as mangroves, coral reefs, seagrass and archipelagos are in danger due to the climate change", the Union minister added.

He also said that good governance practices need to be developed as shrimp production and fisheries could be affected.

Next, Union Minister U Tin Htut Oo, Vice-Chairman of the Work Committee, said that Myanmar is the largest country in the mainland of Southeast Asia and is made up of various ecosystems.

"The ecosystems: mangroves, coral reefs and seagrass beds play an important role in the socio-economic development and environmental protection of the country as they are a source of various products and services of the country," he said.

"Myanmar can implement economic development in the best way without harming the coastal marine natural resources. At the 38th ASEAN Summit held on 26 October 2021, the ASEAN member states have pledged to implement the ASEAN Blue Economy.

"Coastal development-related activities such as agriculture, fisheries, hotels and tourism, coastal environment, such as resource extraction, socio-economic and ecosystems, and biodiversity conservation activities will be effectively implemented based on the long-term interests of the country.

Then, the implementation of the duties and responsibilities of the work committee according to the relevant sectors, and difficulties encountered were focused and the committee members made decisions on the future plans. — MNA

DSINPS holds its 24th Convocation

THE Defence Services Institute for Nursing and Paramedical Sciences (DSINPS) held the 24th Convocation yesterday afternoon in Mingaladon Township, Yangon. The ceremony was attended by Commandant Brig-Gen Win Bo and members of the dean of faculties.

The commandant and members of the dean of faculties entered the Convocation Hall and took their seats at the designated places. The National Anthem was played and the convocation ceremony was opened. Afterwards, the commandant announced the holding of the convocation and pledged to abide by the code of conduct for the graduates.

The rector presented degree certificates to 52 BNSC graduates, four BPharm graduates, seven B.Med Tech graduates, five graduates in radiology and imaging techniques, five graduates in Physiotherapy and two graduates in prosthetics and orthopaedic technology. The commandant then allowed them to wear uniforms corresponding to the degrees. At the ceremony, 15 graduates BNSC(Bridge) were awarded distant learning degrees and allowed them to wear uniforms corresponding to the degree. The commandant then signed the graduation record book and delivered the convocation speech.

The Defence Services Institute for Nursing and Paramedical Sciences has been holding convocations since 2003. To date, the institute has conferred PhDs in Nursing Science on 24 students, Postgraduate Diploma in Medical Education on 241 students, Master of Science in Nursing on 420 students, Master in Pharmacology and Medical Technology on 184 students, Bachelor of Science in Nursing Bridge on 113 students, Diploma in Medical Ultrasound Diagnostics on 16 students, Diploma in Intensive care Nursing on 22 students, Diploma in Surgery Nursing on 65 students, Bachelor in Nursing Science on 3,216 students, Bachelor in Pharmacology on 213 students, and Bachelor in Medical Technology on 626 students.

The 24th Convocation of the DSINPS is held in Yangon yesterday.

The institute has been sending teaching instructors abroad for training to acquire international skills, and one student for PhDs in Nursing Science in 1998, two students for PhDs in Nursing Science in 1999, two students for PhDs in Nursing Science and eight students for Master in Nursing Science in 2001 were sent to La Trobe University in Australia. In addition, six students were graduated from Mahidol University and Ching Mai University in Thailand and two students were graduated from the Air Langer University in Indonesia. — MNA

Kengphawng hot spring in Kengtung packed with visitors in public holidays

Kengphawng Hot Spring, located on the Kengtung-Taunggyi Pyidaungsu Highway, in Lwelon village-tract, is a natural hot spring, and departmental officials and local people have renovated the area for the public to have free access to the hot spring. **PHOTO : SAI SHWE AUNG (IPRD)**

KENGPHAWNG Hot Spring in Kengtung Township, Shan State (East), was packed with families during the Christmas holidays.

Kengphawng Hot Spring, located on the Kengtung-Taunggyi Pyidaungsu Highway, in Lwelon village-tract, is a natural hot spring, and departmental officials and local people have renovated the area for the public to have free access to the hot spring. Visitors can not only relax for free but also taste local foods such as roasted sticky rice and papaya salad and bamboo sticky rice.

People have to take COVID-19 precautionary measures even though the COVID-19 infection has dropped down in Kengtung Township, and visitors usually come and relax in the area especially in winter and public holidays. – Sai Shwe Aung (IPRD)/GNLM

MoC facilitates daily imports of anti-COVID-19 equipment, medical products

THE Ministry of Commerce is overseeing imports of essential medical supplies plus anti-COVID-19 devices that are critical to the COVID-19 prevention, control and treatment activities, including liquid oxygen and oxygen cylinders, through trading posts, international airports and seaports.

Anti-COVID-19 equipment was imported by one company using one vehicle.

A total of 20 tonnes of liquid oxygen carried by one bowser was imported via the Myawady trading post yesterday.

The bowser carrying liquid oxygen transported it to Yangon via the Myawady border.

Officials from the relevant departments are cooperating to facilitate and expedite the standard operating procedures, including online registration for the import process.

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

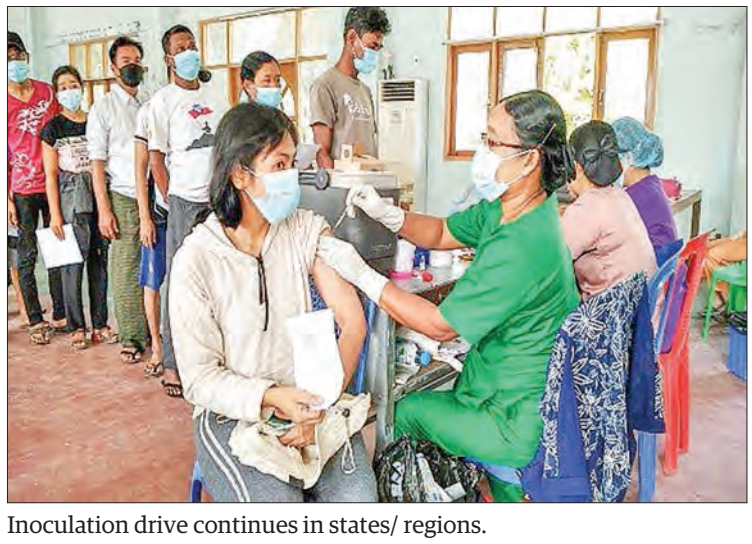
COVID-19 vaccination continues in different states, regions

DOCTORS and nurses from public hospitals, medical teams, healthcare workers and volunteers are working hard to give 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, people in IDP camps and students over the age of 12 respectively.

Doctors and nurses from public hospitals, medical teams, relevant healthcare workers in collaboration with volunteers have already given COVID-19 vaccines to 5,630 people from seven townships in northern Shan State, 6,225 people from six townships in eastern Shan State, 7,533 people from eight townships in Mon and Kayin States, 1,250 people from Pulaw Township, Taninthayi Region, 3,840 people from four townships in Yangon Region, 23,334 people from 26 townships in Ayeyawady Region, 12,575 people from eight townships in Chin and Rakhine States, 85 people from Salingyi Township, Sagaing Region, 7,938 people from seven districts in Mandalay Region and two Buddhist monks and 674 local people from Ottwin and Htantabin Townships, Bago Region respectively.

Similarly, healthcare officials gave the vaccines to 330 students from Mongkhat and Kengtung townships in eastern Shan State, 815 students from 26 townships in Ayeyawady Region, 296 students from Pauktaw Township, Rakhine State and 20 students from Hkamti and Salingyi Townships, Sagaing Region respectively.



Inoculation drive continues in states/ regions.

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

Officials welcome Myanmar returnees at different land borders

MYANMAR nationals from abroad are welcomed at various border crossings this month.

On 25 and 26 December, a total of five female returnees came back home through Laukkai, northern Shan State.

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

Next, instructions of the Ministry of Health were explained systematically and departmental officials provided necessary assistance.

The township administration then escorted them to their respective places in passenger vehicles, and the infected people were kept in separate places to facilitate necessary medical and administrative matters, officials said. — MNA

BRIC prioritizes labour-intensive factories for investments

BAGO Region Investment Committee (BRIC) has been primarily focusing on labour-intensive businesses such as garment factories on the Cutting-Making and Packing basis for sustainable economic growth in the region, the Bago region chief minister gave a remark at the BRIC meeting held on 27 December at Taw Win Hantha Hall of Bago Region government office.

Afterwards, the chief minister delivered that the investors have to enjoy the entitled rights and protections for business. Furthermore, since infrastructure plays a pivotal role in the industry, he instructed the attendees to fulfil the needs of industrial enterprises.

Later, the director of Bago Region Directorate of Investment and Company Administration explained investment projects and capital expansion matters. The committee members also discussed investment-related matters.

The Bago Region Chief Minister guided the committee to endorse the proposals under Myanmar Investment Law.

Between 1 February and December, Bago Region attracted foreign investments of US$91.139 million and K2.44 billion of domestic investments made by Myanmar citizens, which creates 4,717 job opportunities for local people.—MNA

Myanmar prepping for cattle shipment to Bangladesh

Live cattle export was allowed in late 2017, to eradicate illegal exports, creating more opportunities for breeders and promoting their interests.

MYANMAR has been planning to ship cattle to Bangladesh, said U Soe Naing, chair of the Mandalay Region Cattle Exporters Association.

Bangladesh buyers contacted the association. They are currently observing trade routes. After that, the association will report this to the related department, he continued.

"We will keep the authorities posted on how trade will be conducted. Maungtaw border is available for trading at present. We are exploring trade routes," U Soe Naing mentioned.

The live cattle can be shipped to Bangladesh through Maungtaw and Sittway through maritime trade.

Myanmar's live cattle trade is mainly relying on China. The legitimate market has halted since late 2020. Nevertheless, Chinese traders are constantly purchasing cattle on the black market across the border between Myanmar and China, despite the suspension of cross-border trade. At present, the black market has been stronger, with 1,000 head of cattle daily sent to China, the association stated.

Live cattle export was allowed in late 2017, to eradicate illegal exports, creating more opportunities for breeders and promoting their interests.

The Ministry of Commerce grants a permit to each company for 100 cattle export and the permit is valid for three months. The companies can be taken legal action if they do not sell the cattle within three months.

The country exports cattle that are above five years old, along with vaccination certificates, health certificates, and farming registration certificates. According to the 2018 cattle census, there are 11.5 million heads of cattle in the country, with 1.8 million buffalo and 9.7 million cows and bulls. The Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation will also strive for investments in dairy farming and value-added production businesses.

Of them, 1.1 million cattle are old enough to be placed in the market every year. Myanmar can yearly export over 600,000 heads of cattle beyond domestic consumption of 400,000 head, according to the ministry. — NN/GNLM

Myanmar's foreign trade reaches over US$6.004 bln in mini-budget of 2021-22FY

FOREIGN trade value in Myanmar was over US$6.004 billion till 17 December in the current mini-budget of the 2021-2022 financial year, declining by over $504 million when compared to the same period of last FY, according to the ministry of commerce.

From 1 October to 17 December 2021, the foreign trade was $6.004 billion, while the previous FY saw $6.509 million in the same period.

During this mini-budget year, the country's export amounted to over $3.067 billion, down over $231 million compared with last's figure. The country's imports also hit over $2.937 billion, declining over $273 million.

Myanmar exports agricultural products, animal products, minerals, forest products, and finished industrial goods, while it imports capital goods, raw industrial materials, CMP raw materials and consumer goods.

According to the annual data released by the commerce ministry, the country's foreign trade value was $18,045.929 million in 2012-2013FY, $27,714.826 million in 2015-2016FY, $29,209.607 million 2016-2017FY, $33,578.052 million in 2017-2018FY, $18,728.815 million in 2018 mini-budget year and $35,147.012 million in the 2018-2019FY.

Agro-based food production, textile and clothing, industry and electronics, fisheries production, forestry production, digital production and services, logistics services, quality management, trade information services and innovation and entrepreneurship sectors are the main priority areas of the National Export Strategy (NES) 2020-25. — ACM/GNLM

Exotic tomato along Mu River receives handsome price

THE tomato of Chinese Taipei origin, cultivated along Mu River, is fetching a good price in Thirimala Commodity Wholesale Market, Mandalay Region.

About six to 12 six-wheel truckloads of tomatoes are daily supplied to the Thirimala Market. Last month, the price moved in the range of K40,000 to 42,000 per 18-viss box (a viss equals 1.6 kilogrammes). The price rose to K45,000-50,000 per box this month, said U Aung Moe Naing, Aung warehouse owner in Mandalay.

Last month, the price moved in the range of K40,000 to 42,000 per 18-viss box (a viss equals 1.6 kilogrammes). The price rose to K45,000-50,000 per box this month.

"At present, tomato cultivated along both banks of Mu River is constantly flowing into the market. The price is also higher in December. Some regions did not cultivate tomatoes owing to the price collapse in the previous year. Consequently, price hike occurs on low supply. Transport obstacle is another reason for a price hike," he elaborated.

Those tomatoes are steadily flowing into the Mandalay market, fetching a handsome price. The tomatoes produced in Myinmu, Monywa and Madaya areas are priced at K2,400-2,500 per viss. Similarly, the prices of cabbage, cauliflower, broccoli, potato and Chinese cabbage are of exorbitant high in the domestic market. — Min Htet Aung (Mandalay Sub-Printing House)/GNLM

28 DECEMBER 2021
THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

Upgrade Tatmadaw (Navy) to see a better future

A country standing tall among the global countries depends on its sovereignty and unity. Possessing a highly capable defence force is the best guarantee for the perpetuity of the sovereignty of the country.

The Tatmadaw (Navy) is being upgraded to have the capacity to become the three-dimensional combat-ready navy in order to fully defend the separate economic zone of Myanmar seas for the first phase, followed by the establishment of the submarine fleet, building own naval vessels and making human resources better.

Myanmar manages more than 140,000 square miles of waters including over 1,260 miles long coastal line. As such, the Tatmadaw (Navy) is crucial for safeguarding the above and underground resources, ensuring the safety of the ocean-based economy and fighting against any maritime invasions.

> The Tatmadaw (Navy) should always try hard to develop itself with individual high capacity of fighting as well as to improve skills of naval personnel to apply the modern techniques to comprehensively join the modern warfares. Skill and a wider range of knowledge are essential not only for individual naval personnel but for the whole navy.

The Tatmadaw (Navy) turns out not only naval servicemen but naval servicewomen. Depending on the higher human resources, female military personnel are assigned aboard the naval vessels for serving the State defence duties. They have to uplift their capacity for raising individual value.

The Tatmadaw (Navy) upgrades itself to become a reliable force for the State by turning out deck officers, deck crew members and servicemen for engine room while sending scholarship students abroad to learn the naval architectural professions and shipbuilder professions. On the other hand, the Tatmadaw (Navy) stands on its own in building naval vessels and other vessels under its own designs to establish naval fleets and flotillas for raising its capacity.

So far, the Tatmadaw (Navy) has built 88 vessels within a decade from 2011 to 2021. Hence, the Tatmadaw (Navy) needs to march onward to improve its capacity of State defence duty and ship-building duty.

The naval power will support the security measures of the nation. To do so, the Tatmadaw (Navy) has been taking training for many years so as to form the submarine fleet as part of preparing the improvement of human resources. As such, everybody should know that upgrading the human resources in advance contributed to the rapid undertaking of the assigned duties.

The Tatmadaw (Navy) should always try hard to develop itself with individual high capacity of fighting as well as to improve skills of naval personnel to apply the modern techniques to comprehensively join the modern warfares. Skill and a wider range of knowledge are essential not only for individual naval personnel but for the whole navy.

Study finds breakthrough infections develop super immunity against COVID-19

COVID-19 vaccination provides a foundation of protection that's enhanced by breakthrough infection; 'the key is to get vaccinated'.

ACCORDING to new research, breakthrough infections greatly enhance the immune response to variants of the virus that causes COVID-19.

The study has been published in the 'JAMA Journal'

The laboratory results revealed that a breakthrough infection generated a robust immune response against the delta variant. The authors said the findings suggested the immune response is likely to be highly effective against other variants as the SARS-CoV-2 virus continued to mutate.

The study is the first to use live SARS-CoV-2 variants to measure cross-neutralization of blood serum from breakthrough cases.

"You can't get a better immune response than this," said senior author Fikadu Tafesse, PhD, assistant professor of molecular microbiology and immunology in the OHSU School of Medicine.

"These vaccines are very effective against severe disease. Our study suggests that individuals who are vaccinated and then exposed to a breakthrough infection have super immunity," Tafesse added.

The study found that antibodies measured in blood samples of breakthrough cases were both more abundant and much more effective — as much as 1,000 per cent more effective — than antibodies generated two weeks following the second dose of the Pfizer vaccine.

Immune response

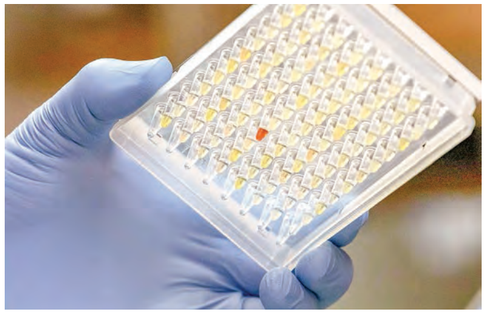
The study suggested each exposure following vaccination actually served to strengthen the immune response to subsequent exposures even to new variants of the virus. "I think this speaks to an eventual end game," said co-author Marcel Curlin, M.D., associate professor of medicine (infectious diseases) in the OHSU School of Medicine who also serves as medical director of OHSU Occupational Health.

"It doesn't mean we're at the end of the pandemic, but it points to where we're likely to land: Once you're vaccinated and then exposed to the virus, you're probably going to be reasonably well-protected from future variants," Curlin added.

"Our study implies that the long-term outcome is going to be a tapering-off of the severity of the worldwide epidemic," Curlin explained. Vaccine immunity is currently undergoing a real-world test against the new omicron variant.

"We have not examined the omicron variant specifically, but based on the results of this study we would anticipate that breakthrough infections from the omicron variant will generate a similarly strong immune response among vaccinated people," Tafesse said.

The study compared blood samples collected from a total of 52 people, all employees of OHSU who were vaccinated with the Pfizer vaccine and subsequently enrolled in the study.



A scientist holds a plate of plasma samples that contain COVID-19 antibodies, to be evaluated in OHSUs in-house COVID-19 testing lab. Researchers have been studying antibody testing approaches.
PHOTO: OHSU/KRISTYNA WENTZ-GRAFF/ANI

A total of 26 people were identified through OHSU Occupational Health testing as having mild breakthrough infections following vaccination. Among the sequence-confirmed breakthrough cases, 10 involved the highly contagious delta variant, nine were non-delta and seven were unknown variants.

Breakthrough cases

Working in a Biosafety Level 3 lab, researchers then measured the immune response to live viruses exposed to blood sampled from people with breakthrough cases and compared it with the immune response to the control group. They found the breakthrough cases generated more antibodies at baseline, and they found that those antibodies were substantially better at neutralizing the live virus. With as many as one in five eligible Oregonians still vulnerable to infection — and vaccination rates even lower elsewhere in the country and around the world — the new study underscores the fact that vaccination remains the key to ending the pandemic.

"The key is to get vaccinated," Curlin said.

"You've got to have a foundation of protection," Curlin added. The study was funded by an unrestricted grant from the M.J. Murdock Charitable Trust; an unrestricted grant from the OHSU Foundation; the National Institutes of Health training grant T32HL083808; and OHSU Innovative IDEA grant 1018784.

SOURCE: ANI

Study finds why some COVID cases are more critical than others

A new study has found that some COVID cases are more critical than others due to the antiviral inflammatory response to the virus, with the help of humanized mice. The study, led by Yale University's Richard Flavell, has been published in the 'Nature Biotechnology Journal'.

The study also showed that two well-known therapies - the use of monoclonal antibodies and the steroid dexamethasone — can help treat COVID-19 infections. But in the case of the antibodies, treatment is only effective if administered early in the course of the disease. In the case of steroids, it's only effective if administered during later stages of the disease.

Different immune system

The different immune system responses to the virus as observed in standard laboratory animals and humans have made it difficult for scientists to pinpoint the tipping point between mild and severe cases of COVID-19.

A health care worker tends to a person with COVID-19 in London, where the viral variant B.1.1.7 caused cases to surge.
PHOTO: KIRSTY WIGGLESWORTH/AFP

But Flavell's mice, which were engineered to have a human-like immune system, offered an opportunity to answer the question.

"If you infect a standard laboratory mouse with SARS-CoV-2 they will get infected, but not get seriously ill," said Flavell, Sterling Professor of Immunobiology at Yale and senior author of the paper.

"But our humanized mice get sick and just don't get better. Their whole immune system is on fire," he added.

The research team — which was led by first author Esen Sefik, a Howard Hughes Medical Institute (HHMI) Fellow at the Damon Runyon Cancer Research Foundation — introduced the SARS-CoV-2 virus taken from seriously ill human patients into the nasal passages of their humanized mice and then followed the course of the disease.

They found that the infected mice exhibited the same symptoms as severely ill human patients, such as lung damage, weight loss, and a heightened, persistent inflammatory immune response that damaged tissues. They then treated the mice with monoclonal antibodies provided by Michel Nussenzweig, an immunologist at Rockefeller University and, like Flavell, an HHMI investigator. These antibodies, which specifically targeted the virus, were effective if given before or very early after infection but did little to stifle symptoms if administered in later stages of infections, they found.

Immune suppressant

Conversely, during the early stages of infection, the immune suppressant dexamethasone was fatal to mice when it suppressed the initial immune response that was crucial to combat the virus. However, it helped clear infection during later stages of the disease by suppressing the inflammatory response that had begun damaging organs.

"Early in the course of the disease, a strong immune response is crucial for survival. Later in the disease, it can be fatal," Sefik said.

The humanized mice models might also reveal strong clues to the causes and potential treatments of so-called long and severe COVID, the scientists said. The research was done in collaboration with Yale's Akiko Iwasaki, Craig Wilen, Yuval Kluger, Eric Meffre, and Stephanie Halene.

SOURCE: ANI

Myanmar Daily Weather Report

(Issued at 7:00 pm Monday 27 December 2021)

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

FORECAST VALID UNTIL NOON OF THE 28 December 2021: Rain are likely to be isolated in Upper Sagaing, Tanintharyi Regions and Kachin State. Degree of certainty is (60%). Weather will be partly cloudy in Mandalay Region and Shan, Chin, Kayin, Mon States and generally fair in the remaining Regions and States.

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

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Slight decrease of night temperatures in Nay Pyi Taw, Upper Sagaing, Mandalay Regions and Kachin, Shan, Chin States.

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 28 December 2021: Generally fair weather.

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 28 December 2021: Generally fair weather.

FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 28 December 2021: Generally fair weather.

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Large Israel bird flu outbreak kills 2,000 wild cranes

A bird flu outbreak has killed more than 2,000 wild cranes on a reserve in northern Israel, an unusually high toll for the seasonal flu, the parks authority said Sunday.

In addition to the 2,000 dead, another 10,000 are believed to be infected, Ohad Hatsofe, a specialist at the Israel Nature and Parks Authority, told AFP.

The virus affects Israel annually, but this year's outbreak is much larger than previous years, said Uri Naveh, a senior scientist at the authority.

Naveh described the number of dead cranes as "exceptional".

Like every year, roughly 100,000 wild cranes reached Israel since October, most stopping in the Hula Valley, an important point on their migratory path towards Africa.

More than 40,000 cranes are estimated to have remained in the area.

The avian flu ravaging the population, H5N1, has been detected in some chicken populations in northern Israel, Israel's agriculture ministry said.

The ministry has suspended egg sales from affected farms.

It is rare for H5N1 to spread among humans, but there have been past outbreaks. — AFP ■

Gray Cranes fly above the northern Israeli Hula valley, an important point on their migratory path towards Africa, on 26 December 2021. A bird flu outbreak has killed more than 2,000 wild cranes on a reserve in northern Israel, an unusually high toll for the seasonal flu, the parks authority said today. **PHOTO: MENAHEM KAHANA / AFP**

Bangladesh arrests ferry owner after blaze that killed 39

The burnt-out ferry is anchored along a coast a day after it caught on fire killing at least 37 people in Jhalkathi, 250 kilometres (160 miles) south of Dhaka, on 24 December 2021. **PHOTO: AFP**

BANGLADESH police on Monday arrested the owner of an overcrowded ferry that caught fire and killed at least 39 people last week, after investigators blamed the toll on a disregard for safety.

The blaze broke out in the middle of the night on Friday when many of the ferry's 700 passengers were sleeping near the southern district of Barguna.

Survivors relayed harrowing stories of having to jump into the Sugandha river from the three-storey ferry, which was only designed to carry 420 people.

Most of the victims burnt to death while others drowned in frigid waters while trying to escape.

Ferry owner Hum Jalal Sheikh was arrested Monday, a police spokesman told reporters, a day after a court issued an arrest warrant for eight people including the captain and crew of the Obhijaan-10.

Marine police officer Mahbubur Rahman said the vessel did not have adequate fire extinguishers and buoys to face a major mid-river accident. "We spoke to the survivors and they said the driver of the ferry kept the vessel moving for nearly an hour after its engine room caught fire," he told AFP. — AFP ■

Iran, Hezbollah aid Yemen rebel strikes: Saudi-led coalition

THE Saudi-led coalition on Sunday accused Iran and Hezbollah of helping Yemen's Huthi rebels to launch missiles and drones at the kingdom, where two people were killed.

Since the coalition intervened almost seven years ago to support Yemen's government, Saudi Arabia has regularly accused Iran of supplying the Huthis with weapons and Hezbollah of training the insurgents.

Tehran denies the charges. Lebanon's Iran-backed Shiite militant movement Hezbollah has previously denied sending fighters or weapons to Yemen.

The latest Saudi accusation came as the coalition intensified an aerial bombing campaign against the Iran-backed Huthis in retaliation for deadly attacks on the kingdom.

Coalition spokesman Turki al-Malki told a news conference the Huthis were "militarizing" Sanaa airport and using it as a "main centre for launching ballistic missiles and drones" towards the kingdom.

Malki showed reporters a video clip which he said depicted "the headquarters of Iranian and Hezbollah experts at the airport" where, he alleged, "Hezbollah is training the Huthis to booby-trap and use drones".

Malki showed other clips which he said depicted a Hezbollah member placing explosives in a drone, and a man he identified as a Hezbollah official telling Huthi members "we must strengthen our ranks".

The footage could not be independently verified. — AFP ■

Afghanistan's tumultuous year and uncertain future

FEW nations endured as tumultuous a year as Afghanistan in 2021, and the country's woes are far from over as a bitter winter draws in.

The Taliban's astonishing return to power caught everyone on the wrong foot — not least the hardline Islamists themselves — and Afghans are stumbling to make sense of what happened, and what the future holds.

For the Taliban, the biggest challenge remains being able to transform from an insurgent force into an administrative body that can govern a complex and diverse nation.

For Western nations such as the United States and its NATO partners, the fear is twofold: that conditions will deteriorate and prompt tens of thousands more Afghans to flee abroad, and that terror groups such as Al-Qaeda will again find safe haven.

And for ordinary Afghans, food, shelter and employment are a priority — with women in particular bearing the brunt of the Taliban's oppressive social policies.

"The consequences of the takeover were calamitous and immediate," Kate Clark wrote in a special report for the Afghanistan Analysts Network (AAN).

The Taliban, she argued, "had no plans for how they would run the Afghan state without aid, an entirely predictable outcome of their decision to push for a military victory".

"In opposition, they taxed the population under their control effectively, but were able to leave public services entirely up to the government, NGOs and ultimately donors," Clark added.

"Now, in power... (they) find government revenues greatly reduced and they have an entire population to look after."

Women and girls on front line

One of the biggest problems facing the Taliban is the effective collapse of the bureaucracy.

Over 120,000 Afghans were evacuated in the chaotic last days of the US withdrawal — mostly people who had worked with foreign powers in managing the aid-dependent administration and economy.

Many civil servants had not been paid for months before the Taliban takeover, and have little incentive to go back to work without knowing when they will get a salary.

"I go to the office in the morning but there is nothing to do," said Hazrullah, a mid-level technocrat at the foreign ministry.

"Before, I was working on trade deals with our neighbours. Now we have no instructions on how to proceed. Nobody knows anything." Some of the Taliban's leadership have been at pains to present the new regime as different to the hardline rule that characterized their first stint in power from 1996 to 2001, and — superficially at least — there have been some changes. — AFP ■

Covid-hit Xi'an tightens measures as China sees 21-month case record

THE Chinese city of Xi'an, where 13 million residents are currently confined to their homes, announced tightened restrictions on Sunday as the country recorded its biggest Covid-19 infection numbers in 21 months.

China has stuck to a "zero-Covid" strategy involving tight border restrictions, lengthy quarantines and targeted lockdowns.

Authorities have been especially vigilant in recent months to avoid an outbreak before February's Beijing Winter Olympics, but there have been sporadic flare-ups.

But on Sunday the country reported 206 new Covid infections — the highest daily number since March 2020.

"In the coming days, a number of cases are still likely to be detected," Xi'an official He Wenquan warned, calling on the city's population not to panic.

The northern metropolis — about 900 km (560 miles) from the Olympics venues — reported 155 new Covid patients on Sunday, bringing the total to nearly 500 over the past few weeks.

About 29,000 people have been placed in hotel quarantine, He said.

Xi'an residents have already been tested several times, authorities said, and a "total" disinfection was to begin Sunday evening.

Restrictions on movement have also been tightened.

Each household can only send one member out to buy basic necessities once every three days — down from two days under previous rules.

All businesses except supermarkets, convenience stores and medical facilities have been ordered to close. — AFP ■

This photo taken on 25 December 2021 shows residents undergoing a nucleic acid test for the Covid-19 coronavirus in Xi'an in China's northern Shaanxi province. **PHOTO: STR / AFP**

New York sees increase in hospitalized children as Omicron hammers US

People queue at a street-side Covid-19 testing booth in New York's Times Square on 20 December 2021. **PHOTO: AFP**

WITH Omicron cases on the rise, New York health officials have reported an increase in hospitalized children, as the White House promised Sunday to quickly resolve the United States' Covid-19 test shortage.

The New York State Department of Health warned "of an upward trend in peadiatric hospitalizations associated with Covid-19", in a statement Friday.

In New York City, it "identified four-fold increases in Covid-19 hospital admissions for children 18 and under beginning the week of 5 December through the current week", it said.

Approximately half of the admissions are younger than five, an age group that is vaccine ineligible, the department added.

The number of Covid-19 cases in the United States is on the rise, with an average of nearly 190,000 new infections daily over the past seven days, according to figures from Johns Hopkins University.

The arrival of the new Omicron variant, compounded by holiday celebrations that typically include travel and family reunions, have caused a rush on tests in the United States, where it is difficult to get one in many locations.

Top US pandemic advisor Anthony Fauci on Sunday acknowledged a Covid "testing problem" and vowed to make more tests available to Americans next month. "One of the problems is that that's not going to be totally available to everyone until we get to January and there are still some issues now of people having trouble getting tested," Fauci told ABC News.

"But we're addressing the testing problem," he added, saying it should be corrected "very soon." — AFP ■

US monitoring Covid-hit holiday cruise ships

US authorities on Sunday were monitoring dozens of cruise ships hit by Covid-19 cases, with several reportedly denied port in the Caribbean.

Over 60 vessels were under observation after "reported cases of Covid-19 have met the threshold for CDC investigation," the US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention said.

The Washington Post reported that several cruise liners were denied port at their scheduled destinations. Brenda Hammer, who was set to board the Odyssey of the Seas, a Royal Caribbean cruise ship, told AFP: "I'm a little nervous about it. I wasn't sure I still wanted to come." Earlier this week, 55 people on the ship tested positive for Covid-19 which spread among passengers and crew members despite 95 per cent of people on board being vaccinated, the company said. Hammer, 69, said that she ultimately decided to go ahead with her vacation because "I already paid my money." The ship did not dock at the Caribbean islands of Curacao and Aruba, the last scheduled stops on its eight-day voyage out of precaution, before it returned to port at Fort Lauderdale, Florida on Sunday.— AFP ■

People watch the departure of American operator Royal Caribbean Cruise ship (RCCL) new cruise ship "Wonder of the seas" leaving the "Chantiers de l'Atlantique" shipyard in Saint-Nazaire, western France, on 5 November 2021, heading for Marseille's harbour. **PHOTO: AFP**

NEWS IN BRIEF

New Zealand reports 34 new community cases of COVID-19 Delta variant

NEW Zealand reported 34 new Delta variant cases of COVID-19 in the community on Monday, bringing the total number of confirmed cases in current community outbreak to 10,653.

Among the new infections, 21 were recorded in the largest city of Auckland, seven in nearby Waikato, two in Bay of Plenty, three in the Lakes and one in Canterbury, according to the Ministry of Health.

A total of 41 cases are being treated in hospitals, including eight in intensive care units or high dependency units, a ministry statement said.– Xinhua ■

Hong Kong reports 9 new imported COVID-19 cases, 14 additional Omicron infections

HONG Kong's Centre for Health Protection (CHP) on Monday reported 9 new imported cases of COVID-19, taking the total tally of confirmed cases to 12,598.

The newly reported cases involved mutant strains and were five males and four females, aged 19 to 59.

A total of 101 cases have been reported in the past 14 days. One of them is an import-related case, while the rest are imported cases, according to the CHP.– Xinhua ■

Mongolia logs lowest daily COVID-19 cases since early March

MONGOLIA'S Health Ministry on Monday confirmed 83 new COVID-19 infections, including seven imported cases in the last 24 hours, the lowest number since 7 March when 67 daily cases were reported.

With the new infections, the country's COVID-19 tally increased to 389,700, the ministry said in a statement.

Meanwhile, one more COVID-19 patient has died in the past day, raising the death toll to 1,982, it said.– Xinhua ■

Gov't maps out steps to enable smaller firms to transfer costs

THE Japanese government on Monday unveiled a package of steps aimed at enabling small and midsize companies to pass on costs from higher raw material prices and pay hikes properly to bigger firms, as Prime Minister Fumio Kishida pushes for wage growth.

The government aims to strengthen monitoring to prevent big firms from taking advantage of their relative superiority and setting unfairly low prices when they do business with subcontractors. Such a practice, which goes against the country's law, often squeezes profitability at small and midsize companies.

Kishida sees wage growth as an integral part of his drive to create a new form of capitalism that aims to achieve economic growth and wealth redistribution. The first three months of every year will be a designated period to intensify efforts to tackle issues faced by small and midsize firms as annual wage talks between management and labour unions go into full swing.

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida gives an address at a meeting with business leaders at the premier's office in Tokyo on 27 December 2021. **PHOTO: KYODO**

"We will set the stage for small and midsize companies, which support employment in local economies, to be able to properly pass on costs to their prices and make profits," Kishida said during a meeting with business leaders.

Representatives from 27 organizations attended the meeting, including the powerful business lobby Japan Business Federation and the Japan Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

The package envisages doubling the number of G-men, or government investigators in charge of checking the reality facing subcontractors, to 248 in the next business year starting in April from the current 120. They will conduct interviews with over 10,000 small and midsize companies a year.

The Japan Fair Trade Commission and the government agency for small and midsize companies plan to compile a report by June on unfair practices. To this end, a new website will be set up, enabling subcontractors to anonymously submit information on bigger companies whose practices are seen as illegal.

Based on the results, three sectors in which big companies appear reluctant to allow smaller firms to transfer higher costs will be chosen every year for intensive on-site inspections.

To avoid bigger firms from exploiting startups and marketing products based on their business secrets, the government will conduct a survey covering around 5,000 firms. Many small and midsize firms are still facing difficult business conditions as their recovery from the COVID-19 fallout has lagged. Surging energy and raw material costs have become a headache for companies as they need to carefully decide to what extent they will raise prices to transfer such costs.— Kyodo ■

Weather disasters cost $20 bn more than last year: NGO

THE ten most expensive weather disasters this year caused more than $170 billion (150 billion euros) in damage, $20 billion more than in 2020, a British aid group said Monday.

Each year, UK charity Christian Aid calculates the cost of weather incidents like flooding, fires and heat waves according to insurance claims and reports the results.

In 2020, it found the world's ten costliest weather disasters caused $150 billion in damage, making this year's total an increase of 13 per cent.

Christian Aid said the upward trend reflects the effects of man-made climate change and added that the ten disasters in question also killed at least 1,075 people and displaced 1.3 million.

The most expensive disaster in 2021 was hurricane Ida, which lashed the eastern United States and caused around $65 billion in damages.

After crashing into Louisiana at the end of August, it made its way northward and caused extensive flooding in New York City and the surrounding area. Spectacular and deadly flooding in Germany and Belgium in July was next on the list at $43 billion in losses. — AFP ■

'Spider-Man' surpasses $1 bn globally, holds N America box office top spot

THE hit new "Spider-Man" became the first billion-dollar-grossing film of the pandemic era over the Christmas weekend, reaching the milestone while holding firmly to the North American box office top spot, industry watcher Exhibitor Relations said Sunday.

A giant inflatable Spider-Man is displayed on the red carpet for the "Spider-Man: Far From Home" World premiere at the TCL Chinese theatre in Hollywood on 26 June 2019. **PHOTO: CHRIS DELMAS / AFP**

"Spider-Man: No Way Home," British star Tom Holland's third solo outing in the wildly popular role, has grossed $467.3 million in North America and $587 million internationally, raking in more than $1 billion over 12 days and proving analysts' predictions that it could reach the milestone sum.

It rocketed to that benchmark at a speed only matched by 2015's "Star Wars: The Force Awakens," according to industry outlet Variety, and comes even as the rapid spread of the Omicron Covid-19 variant casts a pall over holiday outings worldwide.— AFP ■

Climate change 2021: There's no turning back now

Protesters march past the venue of the conference behind a large banner displaying a message against the use of fossil fuels, during a climate change demonstration outside of the COP26 Climate Change Conference in Glasgow on 12 November 2021. **PHOTO: AFP**

ACROSS a quarter century of UN climate conferences tasked with saving humanity from itself, one was deemed a chaotic failure (Copenhagen/2009), another a stunning success (Paris/2015), and the rest landed somewhere in between.

This year's COP26 inspired all these reactions at once.

Swedish activist Greta Thunberg, leading a 100,000-strong march through the streets of Glasgow, dismissed the two-week meet as a "greenwashing festival". But dedicated experts in the negotiating arena hailed solid — even historic — advances in beating back the existential threat of global warming.

More often than not, observers vacillated between approval and criticism, hope and despair.

"The Glasgow Climate Pact is more than we expected, but less than we hoped for," Dann Mitchell, head of climate hazards at Britain's Met Office, said with haiku-like economy.

Gauging the efficacy of measures announced at the COP26 summit largely depends on the yardstick used to measure them. Compared to what came before, the first-ever call by 196 countries to draw down coal-fired power, or a promise to double financial aid each year — to roughly $40 billion — so poor nations can brace for climate impacts, are giant steps forward. Likewise a provision obliging countries to consider setting more ambitious targets for reducing carbon pollution every year rather than once every five years.— AFP ■

US retail sales up 8.5 per cent this holiday season

US consumers were in the mood to spend this holiday season, with retail sales soaring 8.5 per cent over last year, a study released Sunday showed.

Online sales were up 11 per cent and in-store sales up 8.1 per cent between 1 November and Christmas Eve, according to the Mastercard SpendingPulse study.

The increase, which was the strongest in 17 years, does not reflect automobile sales.

"Consumers splurged throughout the season," said Steve Sadove, senior advisor for Mastercard and former CEO of Saks Incorporated.

The boom saw "apparel and department stores experiencing strong growth as shoppers sought to put their best dressed foot forward," he said.

Americans flocked to clothing, which experienced a 47.3 per cent increase in sales year-to-year as well as jewellery, with a 32 per cent increase.

The period included several weeks before the Omicron Covid-19 variant spread widely in the United States.

Department store sales were up 21.2 per cent, while electronic products experienced 16.2 per cent growth. "It's been a resurgent season for retailers as consumers stocked their carts with gifts and gadgets," Mastercard said.— **AFP** ■

People shop at the Citadel Outlets ahead of the Christmas holidays on 9 December 2021 in Los Angeles, California. **PHOTO: AFP**

Debt-crippled Evergrande vows 'full steam ahead' to deliver homes

People walk past a sign showing Evergrande Group's China operation at a housing complex by the property developer in Beijing on 8 December 2021. **PHOTO: NOEL CELIS / AFP**

EMBATTLED Chinese firm Evergrande will deliver almost four times the number of housing units to buyers in December than in the previous three months, its chairman said, as the real estate behemoth grapples with massive debts.

Evergrande — drowning in $300 billion in liabilities — has struggled to repay bondholders and investors after becoming ensnared in Beijing's deleveraging crackdown on the bloated property sector.But the group — which officially defaulted on a major bond payment this month — has insisted it will be able to complete tens of thousands of units and pay off some debts.

"Since the company's troubles began, we delivered fewer than 10,000 units in September, October and November," chairman Hui Ka Yan — known as Xu Jiayin in Mandarin — told a company meeting Sunday evening, according to a post on Evergrande's official WeChat account. —**AFP** ■

Asian shares dip as virus fears linger

ASIAN shares dipped in thin holiday trade on Monday as fears lingered over the impact of the Omicron coronavirus variant.

The highly transmissible strain has sent new cases skyrocketing across the globe, with countries reviving lockdowns, major sports leagues cancelling fixtures, and cruise ships returning to port with Covid-infected passengers.

Even in China, where a "zero-Covid" strategy has largely kept infections in check, officials recorded 206 new infections Sunday — a count tiny by worldwide standards, but the country's biggest such figure in 21 months.

Tokyo fell 0.4 per cent, while Shanghai and Seoul also ended lower. Hong Kong and Sydney were closed for a holiday.

"Concerns about Omicron weighed on the market," said Toshikazu Horiuchi, a broker at IwaiCosmo Securities.

And senior strategist Yoshihiro Ito of Okasan Online Securities warned that "the sense of caution over the spread of infections (due to Omicron) remains strong".

"The market also lacked strength, with the number of investors limited due to the year-end holiday," Horiuchi told AFP.

In early European trade, Paris was down 0.2 per cent, while Frankfurt was down 0.2 per cent. London was closed for the holiday.

On Friday before the Christmas break, markets wavered in similarly subdued trade.

A day earlier on Wall Street, the S&P 500 ended the last session before the long holiday weekend at a fresh record following a raft of mostly decent US economic data. And a study released Sunday showed US consumers were in the mood to spend over the holiday season, with retail sales soaring 8.5 per cent over last year. —**AFP** ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

China releases shortened negative lists for foreign investment

CHINA on Monday unveiled two shortened negative lists for foreign investment, as part of efforts to further open up the economy and promote high-quality economic development.

The number of items that are off-limits for foreign investors will be cut to 31 in the 2021 version of the negative list from 33 in the 2020 version, according to a statement jointly released by the National Development and Reform Commission and the Ministry of Commerce.

China also unveiled its 2021 negative list for foreign investment in pilot free trade zones, cutting the number of items to 27 from 30. The two new negative lists will take effect on 1 January 2022.– Xinhua ■

Tokyo stocks close down in thin holiday trade

TOKYO stocks closed lower in thin holiday trade on Monday as fears lingered over the impact of the Omicron coronavirus variant.

The benchmark Nikkei 225 index fell 0.37 per cent, or 106.13 points, to 28,676.46, while the broader Topix index was down 0.45 per cent, or 8.88 points, to 1,977.90.

"Concerns about Omicron weighed on the market," said Toshikazu Horiuchi, a broker at IwaiCosmo Securities.

Senior strategist Yoshihiro Ito of Okasan Online Securities also warned in a note that "the sense of caution over the spread of infections (due to Omicron) remains strong".

Japan is on alert after cases of the new variant were reported in major cities including Tokyo, following a long period of declining daily Covid-19 infections nationwide.

"The market also lacked strength, with the number of investors limited due to the year-end holiday," Horiuchi told AFP.

The dollar fetched 114.43 yen in Asian afternoon trade, up from 114.38 yen in New York on Friday.

SoftBank Group dropped 2.95 per cent to 5,220 yen following reports that Credit Suisse has launched legal action to recover funds the bank says the Japanese conglomerate owes.

Airlines were lower with Japan Airlines falling 0.32 per cent to 2,170 yen and ANA Holdings losing 0.29 per cent to 2,376 yen.

But chip-making equipment manufacturer Tokyo Electron jumped 2.08 per cent to 65,600 yen thanks to strong demand for semiconductors.– AFP ■

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE
M.V ALS SUMIRE VOY.NO. (001N/S)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V ALS SUMIRE VOY.NO. (001N/S)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **28-12-2021** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **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.

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European cities to meet in support of nuclear ban treaty in March

MUNICIPAL leaders from some European countries including Britain, France and Germany plan to hold a meeting in support of banning nuclear weapons in March in Vienna, the mayor of Hannover has said.

It will be timed with the first meeting of signatories to a UN treaty banning nuclear arms in the Austrian capital from 22 to 24 March, Belit Onay, the mayor of the German city, said in an online interview with Kyodo News on Sunday.

Onay said the mayoral meeting is aimed at encouraging European countries to join the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which entered into force in January this year, adding he hopes the heads of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and survivors of the US atomic bombings of the two Japanese cities in 1945, will join the event.

"They will be able to report and document about their experiences," he said. "The voices of the survivors should serve as a reminder."

Officials in the two cities in Japan, the only country in the world to have suffered the devastation of atomic bombings, welcomed the idea of organizing such a meeting and voiced hope to be part of the event if possible.

Hannover is a sister city to Hiroshima and one of the vice-presidents in Mayors for Peace, a nongovernmental organization composed of over 8,000 cities in 165 countries and regions.

Touching on the scrapping of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, a 1987 key arms control pact between the United States and Russia, Onay said, "Fatal military and warlike consequences cannot be ruled out anymore, especially for Europe."

"At the same time, the potential for armed conflict is also increasing dramatically," he said as nuclear disarmament efforts are "not working or not really taking effect." The new UN treaty completely outlaws the development, testing, possession and use of nuclear weapons. But it only binds states that have formally signed and ratified it. More than 50 countries, including Austria, Malaysia, New Zealand and South Africa, have ratified the accord. But nuclear weapon states, including Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States, are not signatories.— Kyodo ■

Brazil flooding death toll mounts, thousands more displaced

A man makes his way through the water during a flood caused by heavy rains, in Itapetinga, Bahia State, Brazil, on 26 December 2021. **PHOTO: AFP**

THE death toll from heavy rains that have battered the Brazilian state of Bahia since November rose to 18 on Sunday, amid incessant torrents that have displaced 35,000 people, authorities said.

Bahia firefighters confirmed the death of a 60-year-old man who drowned in a river in the south of the state on Sunday.

Two people are also missing, while 19,580 have been displaced and another 16,001 forced to seek shelter, bringing the number of people driven from their homes to 35,000, the Bahia civil protection agency Sudec said.

Another 286 people have been injured since the start of the downpours, Sudec added.

According to estimates more than 430,800 people have been impacted, and the situation has only worsened in recent days.

By Sunday afternoon, the number of municipalities in a state of emergency had risen to 72, of which 58 are in crisis due to flooding, according to Sudec.

"It's an enormous tragedy," said Governor Rui Costa, who surveyed damaged areas by plane Sunday. — AFP ■

Scrapped flights, resurgent Covid deliver Christmas gut punch

HOLIDAY travel headaches and safety worries swelled Sunday with thousands of flights cancelled, events scrapped and new Omicron cases soaring, as people wrap up Christmas celebrations bruised by a resurgent Covid-19 pandemic.

Some 8,300 flights have been grounded and tens of thousands more delayed from Friday through Sunday — one of the busiest travel periods of the year — with multiple airlines acknowledging that Omicron spikes have prompted staffing shortages.

Effects have rippled worldwide and the hurt was expected to bleed into the work week, with more than 1,100 flights already facing cancellations Monday and almost 300 more on Tuesday, according to flight tracker FlightAware.

The highly transmissible Omicron strain has sent new cases skyrocketing across the globe, with countries reviving dreaded lockdowns, major sports leagues cancelling Boxing Day football and rugby fixtures, and cruise ships returning to port with Covid-infected passengers.

In China's Xi'an city, 13 million residents were confined to their homes Sunday amid tightened restrictions, as the country recorded its biggest Covid-19 infection numbers in 21 months.

Desperate to keep a lid on outbreaks before February's Beijing Winter Olympics, China has implemented a vigilant "zero-Covid" strategy, involving tight border restrictions, lengthy quarantines and targeted lockdowns. But there have been sporadic flare-ups.

Governments worldwide are also scrambling to boost testing and vaccinations.

In the United States, top pandemic advisor Anthony Fauci warned of a Covid "testing problem" and vowed to make more tests available next month, as the virus overwhelms the nation. — AFP ■

Anti-apartheid icon Desmond Tutu dies at 90

SOUTH Africa began a week of mourning events for anti-apartheid icon Archbishop Desmond Tutu, described as the country's moral compass, on Monday as tributes poured in from across the world for the outspoken Nobel peace laureate.

Tutu, who died on Sunday aged 90, had largely faded from public life in recent years but was remembered for his easy humour and characteristic smile — and above all his fight against injustices of all colours.

His funeral will be held on 1 January at Cape Town's St George's Cathedral, his former parish, his foundation said in a statement.

South Africa's President Cyril Ramaphosa called him a man of "extraordinary intellect, integrity and invincibility against the forces of apartheid".

Ramaphosa said Tutu's death was "another chapter of bereavement in our nation's farewell to a generation of outstanding South Africans who have bequeathed us a liberated South Africa," after the country's last apartheid-era president FW de Klerk died in November.

Former US president Barack Obama, the country's first Black leader, hailed Tutu as a "moral compass".

"A universal spirit, Archbishop Tutu was grounded in the struggle for liberation and justice in his own country, but also concerned with injustice everywhere," Obama said in a statement. Mourners gathered at St. George's Cathedral, while others massed at his home, some holding flower bouquets, according to an AFP journalist.

South Africa's cricket team wore black armbands in Tutu's honour on day one of the first Test against India in South Africa. Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta said Tutu had "inspired a generation of African leaders who embraced his non-violent approaches in the liberation struggle". European leaders joined the chorus, with UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson calling him a "critical figure" in the struggle to create a new South Africa and French President Emmanuel Macron saying Tutu had "dedicated his life to human rights and equality". Britain's Queen Elizabeth II said Tutu's death "deeply saddened" her, while the Vatican said Pope Francis offered "heartfelt condolences to his family and loved ones".— AFP ■

A South African anti-apartheid icon Archbishop Desmond Tutu (C) statue is seen on the wake of his death at the Victoria and Albert Waterfront in Cape Town on 26 December 2021. **PHOTO: GIANLUIGI GUERCIA / AFP**

Singapore eases restrictions on Omicron cases

SINGAPORE has eased restrictions related to people infected with the Omicron coronavirus variant as there have been fewer cases of serious disease caused by the strain than those of the Delta strain globally.

Starting Monday, people testing positive for the Omicron variant are allowed to stay at home or at community care centres to receive medical care, while they had been obliged to isolate in dedicated facilities before, the Singapore Ministry of Health said in a statement issued Sunday night.

Those who were in close contact with the Omicron cases will be required to take a daily coronavirus test for seven days, instead of the 10 days previously, the ministry said.

"International evidence indicates that the Omicron variant is likely to be more transmissible but less severe than the Delta variant," the ministry said, adding that community infections have not been severe with no cases requiring intensive care at hospitals.

It said COVID-19 vaccines, especially booster shots, are effective in preventing symptoms caused by Omicron from worsening as a reason of easing the restrictions.

People enter a Covid-19 coronavirus vaccination centre set up at a community centre in Singapore on 7 October 2021. **PHOTO: AFP**

But the ministry has tightened vaccination rules for workers by prohibiting those who are not fully vaccinated from going to workplaces, effective from 15 January.

From February, the ministry will also make vaccination a condition for the approval of new applications and renewal of long-term passes, such as work permits or student passes, as well as permanent resident visas.

Regarding entry restrictions, the ministry lifted a ban on travellers from 10 countries including Botswana and South Africa on Sunday, allowing people arriving from the nations to enter and transit through Singapore.

As of Saturday, the country reported 546 cumulative Omicron cases comprising 443 imported cases and 103 local cases.— Kyodo ■

Record snowfall hits western Japan areas, disrupts traffic

Photo taken on 27 December 2021, from a Kyodo News helicopter shows vehicles stranded on roads in the Shiga Prefecture city of Hikone, western Japan, due to record-breaking snow that has hit the region. **PHOTO: KYODO**

HEAVY snow continued to hit areas on the Sea of Japan coast from the country's north to west on Monday, with many vehicles stranded, air and railway traffic disrupted and some cities in western Japan seeing record snowfall due to a strong winter pressure pattern.

Hikone in Shiga Prefecture saw 68 centimetres of snow accumulate while Asago in Hyogo Prefecture got 71 cm in a 24-hour period through early Monday, both the most ever since such statistics started being compiled, the Japan Meteorological Agency said.

The agency warned that heavy snowfall as well as icy roads and high waves could continue through Tuesday, and also cautioned against possible lightning and strong wind gusts due to extremely unstable atmospheric conditions in some places. Elsewhere, the deepest snowfall was recorded at Aomori in the northeastern prefecture of Aomori at 190 centimetres, while snow also accumulated in the cities of Kyoto, Nagoya and Hiroshima.— Kyodo ■

Philippines typhoon death toll rises to 388: govt

THE death toll from one of the most destructive typhoons to hit the Philippines in recent years rose to 388 on Monday, the government said, as disease outbreaks threatened some of the stricken areas.

Typhoon Rai struck the south and centre of the Asian nation on 16 and 17 December, toppling power lines and trees and unleashing deadly floods that also left hundreds of thousands homeless.

The civil defence office in Manila raised the death toll from Rai to 388 with 60 others missing and hundreds injured. Police previously put the death toll at 375.

Civil defence officials said more than four million people were receiving typhoon aid in 430 cities and towns where about 482,000 houses were damaged or destroyed.

More than 300,000 people remain in evacuation camps, with more than 200,000 others sheltering in the homes of relatives or friends.

Some survivors have likened Typhoon Rai to Super Typhoon Haiyan, which left 7,300 people dead or missing across the central Philippines in 2013 and remains the country's deadliest on record.

The archipelago gets hit by an average of 20 cyclones each year.

As the government rushed to bring food, water and clothing to devastated areas, a new threat appeared in recent days with at least 140 people falling ill from suspected contaminated water.

Eighty people were taken ill with acute gastroenteritis in the southern province of Dinagat Islands, while 54 people are being treated for diarrhoea in hospital on the neighbouring tourist island of Siargao, health undersecretary Maria Rosario Vergeire said. The central city of Cebu reported 16 diarrhoea cases, she told reporters.— AFP ■

NATO chief seeks NATO-Russia Council meeting in January

NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg has sought a meeting of the NATO-Russia Council next month and contacted Moscow to secure its attendance, an alliance spokesman said Sunday.

Stoltenberg has on several occasions in recent months offered to resume dialogue with Moscow through this body, set up in 2002 but currently inactive because of the conflict in Ukraine.

But the Russian authorities have not responded favourably.

"We are in touch with Russia" about the 12 January meeting, said the NATO spokesman, who asked not be identified.

NATO has consistently denounced Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea from Ukraine and has called on Moscow to respect its neighbour's territorial sovereignty.

The West has long accused the Kremlin of providing direct military support to pro-Russia separatists in eastern Ukraine, who seized two regions shortly after Moscow annexed Crimea in 2014.

Russia denies the claims and Putin has suggested that the conflict, which has claimed over 13,000 lives, is genocidal.

The Kremlin has grown increasingly insistent that the West and NATO are encroaching dangerously close to Russia's borders.

Earlier this month, Moscow presented the West with sweeping security demands, saying NATO must not admit new members and seeking to bar the United States from establishing new bases in former Soviet republics.

The 12 January meeting is the first proposed by Stoltenberg since Moscow made its demands.

A two-day meeting of the military chiefs of NATO's 30 member states is scheduled to start the same day in Brussels.— 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 inves tment 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.

Six of the best for Man City as Chelsea get back on track

MANCHESTER City opened up a six-point lead at the top of the Premier League with a first half demolition of Leicester in a thrilling 6-3 win as Chelsea got back on track with a 3-1 victory at Aston Villa on Sunday.

Three of the scheduled nine Boxing Day matches were postponed due to coronavirus outbreaks as Britain battles record numbers of cases caused by the Omicron strain of the virus.

Earlier this week, Premier League clubs rejected the option of temporarily halting the season to allow a circuit breaker for infections.

And a stop to the season may be the only way to slow City's charge towards a fourth title in five seasons as Pep Guardiola's men have now won nine league games in a row.

Manchester City's English midfielder Raheem Sterling (2R) scores his team's sixth goal during the English Premier League football match between Manchester City and Leicester City at the Etihad Stadium in Manchester, north west England, on 26 December 2021. **PHOTO: ANTHONY DEVLIN / AFP**

Leicester appeared to have been blown away by four goals inside 25 minutes, but rallied to 4-3 at one point hurting City with rapid breaks to make the champions fight for the three points.

Kevin De Bruyne blasted home to open the floodgates before Riyad Mahrez netted against his former club from the penalty spot.

Ilkay Gundogan rounded off a brilliant City team move to make it 3-0 before Raheem Sterling won and converted the champions' second penalty.

Leicester produced a stirring second half fightback thanks to James Maddison.

The midfielder pulled a goal back before leading a break finished off by Ademola Lookman.

Kelechi Iheanacho made it 4-3 when he bundled home from close range after Ederson could only turn Maddison's shot onto the bar.

But City quickly restored some order as Aymeric Laporte powered home from a corner and Sterling rounded off the scoring from close range.

"It was a roller coaster," said Guardiola. "It was a typical Boxing Day game, lots of goals. It was entertaining for everyone."

After one win in their previous four league games, Chelsea came from behind against a Villa team without boss Steven Gerrard due to a positive Covid test.

Hampered by injuries and Covid absences, Chelsea had surrendered top spot during a spluttering run before Christmas. — AFP ■

Rough weather batters Sydney to Hobart yacht race

TREACHEROUS conditions have pummelled the annual Sydney to Hobart yacht race, forcing dozens of withdrawals as Black Jack led a tight battle for line honours.

Sunday's starting fleet of 88 yachts for one of the world's toughest ocean events was cut down to 56 by Monday evening, as competitors peeled off after suffering damage or minor injuries to crew.

A close scrap for line honours was being fought out at the front of the pack between super maxis Black Jack, SHK Scallywag, LawConnect and the slightly shorter 80-foot (24-metre) Stefan Racing.Black Jack, skippered by Mark Bradford, was race leader as they headed into the Bass Strait.

Cruising Yacht Club of Australia Commodore Noel Cornish said although the conditions had been "very tough", the challenge of a "great adventure" is what drew competitors. "That's why in the non-Covid world, people come from all over the world to sail in this race. It's an iconic blue-water challenge," Cornish said.

The race leaders were now through the worst of the weather and were expected to arrive in the Hobart by Tuesday afternoon if conditions held, he told media in the Tasmanian capital.

"(The) yachts that are out there now are hunkered in, they're going hard and they're really looking forward to getting down here." — AFP ■

Canada's Shapovalov tests positive for Covid in Sydney

Canada's Denis Shapovalov returns the ball to Spain's Rafael Nadal (unseen) during the third-place play-off match of the Mubadala World Tennis Championship in the Gulf emirate of Abu Dhabi on 18 December 2021. **PHOTO: AFP**

WORLD number 14 Denis Shapovalov has tested positive for Covid-19 after arriving in Sydney, he said Sunday, highlighting the virus threat to the Australian Open.

The 22-year-old was among the first players to enter Australia ahead of the ATP Cup teams event from 1 January, where he was supposed to be playing for Canada, and with the first Grand Slam of the year three weeks away. He said on Twitter he was experiencing mild symptoms and isolating — the latest player who competed at an Abu Dhabi exhibition this month to get coronavirus. "Hi everyone, just wanted to update you that upon my arrival in Sydney, I tested positive for Covid," Shapovalov said.

"I am following all protocols, including isolation and letting the people who I've been in contact with know. "Right now I am experiencing minor symptoms and look forward to getting back on the court, when it is safe to do so." — AFP ■