TAKE SEVERE ACTION AGAINST ILLEGAL TRADERS UNDER RESTRICTED RULES 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.

Second batch of Covishield vaccines purchased from India arrives at Yangon Int'l Airport

THE Ministry of Health extensively conducts vaccination programmes in Nay Pyi Taw Union Territory and Regions/States according to the target groups.

The 6.7 million doses in the second batch of Covishield purchased from India arrived at the Yangon International Airport yesterday, and the country received a total of 13.4 million doses of the vaccine. These 6.7 million doses were received by the head of the Yangon Region Medical Services and Public Health Department.

A total of 13.78 million people aged above 18 were fully vaccinated, while 5.37 million received first shots till 28 December.

Therefore, inoculation covers more than 51 per cent of the population as there are about 19.15 million people over 18 who were immunized more than one time.

Covishield vaccines are unloaded at Yangon International Airport yesterday.

MoH officials receive the second delivery of Covishield vaccines.

Moreover, the government launched vaccination for middle and high school students over 12 across the nation. A total of 1.29 million students have been fully inoculated and 188,836 received their first shots. The Ministry of Health obtained 56.36 million doses of the vaccine — 44.4 million doses of procurement and 11.96 million doses of donation. The government will continue the immunization processes accordingly to the target groups in 2022.

The Ministry of Health urged the people to get vaccinated without fail and those who receive the first shots to have the second jabs on the due date or within the fixed period at the nearest vaccination sites and to participate in the processes actively. — MNA

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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.

U Tin Yu concurrently accredited as Ambassador of Myanmar to United Arab Emirates

CHAIRMAN of the State Administration Council Prime Minister of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has appointed U Tin Yu, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, concurrently as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar to the United Arab Emirates.—MNA

74th Independence Day Talk Show held in Kamayut Township

A talk show commemorating the 74th Anniversary of Independence Day was held at the Community Centre of Information and Public Relations Department, Kamayut Township, Western District of Yangon Region at 10 am yesterday to hail the perpetually unforgettable Independence Day.

During the talk show, Township Staff Officer Daw Sein Lei and Author Shwegu May Hnin from Township Writers' Association discussed how to preserve the image of independence, the value of independence, the history of the independence and the future generations to preserve the essence of the independence.

The talk show was held following the rules and regulations of COVID-19 issued by the Ministry of Health. — Sein Lei (IPRD)/GNLM

Talk Show in commemoration of the 74th Independence Day.
PHOTO: SEIN LEI (IPRD)

Sports contests held to hail 74th Anniversary of Independence Day in Sinbaungwe Township

THE sports meets to mark the 74th Anniversary of Independence Day were held at No (1) Ward Basic Education Post-Primary School Sinbaungwe, Thayet District, Magway Region, starting from 9 am yesterday.

Students competed in the 50m sprint, intermediate level squash, sack race, and potato-picking games.

The sports events were held for the purpose of training and physical fitness in order to make students appreciate independence and collaborate with one another. The winners will be awarded on the 74th Anniversary of Independence Day, officials said. —Naing Lin (Township IPRD)/GNLM

Myanmar traditional games are held to welcome the 74th Independence Day.
PHOTO: NAING LIN(TOWNSHIP IPRD)

276 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 29 December, total figure rises to 530,276

MYANMAR'S COVID-19 positive cases rose to 530,276 after 276 new cases were reported on 29 December 2021 according to the Ministry of Health. Among these confirmed cases, 507,806 have been discharged from hospitals. Death toll reached 19,262 after 2 died.

COVID-19 vaccine is being injected to those of priority groups in regions and states for prevention and control of the disease. Up to 28-12-2021, a total of 20,617,815 people have been vaccinated. Of them, 15,062,251 people have been vaccinated two times and 5,555,564people once.—MNA

National Unity

National unity does not only mean unity amongst leaders, but it also means unity amongst the entire national peoples across the nation regardless of nationality, religion, gender and groups or associates. All should unite both physically and mentally in accomplishing national tasks in order to fulfil the aspirations of all national peoples not just verbally but practically as well.

(Excerpt from the speech delivered by Bogyoke Aung San to the assembly at the Shwedagon Pagoda on 20 January 1946)

Government of the People's Republic of China donates funds to Myanmar's peace processes

THE Government of the People's Republic of China held a donation ceremony yesterday morning at the National Unity and Peacemaking Centre in Nay Pyi Taw to support the implementation of the peace process in Myanmar.

Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to Myanmar Mr Chen Hai and delegation, Chairman of the National Unity and Peace Restoration Coordination Committee, Chairman of the Joint Monitoring Committee on the Union-level Ceasefire (JMC-U), Union Minister at the Union Government Office (1) Lt-Gen Yar Pyae and members, Union-level Joint Monitoring Committee on Ceasefire (JMC-U) Vice-Chairman (2) U Pyae Sone and officials attended the ceremony.

A donation ceremony in progress.

Cash assistance for Myanmar's peace processes from China.

At the ceremony, Ambassador Mr Chen Hai talked about the reason for donating money for the Myanmar peace process.

Next, US$300,000 was donated to the National Unity and Peacemaking Committee and US$200,000 to the Joint Monitoring Committee on Ceasefire (JMC).

Union Minister Lt-Gen Yar Pyae received the donation and the Union Minister and JMC-U Vice-Chairman (2) U Pyae Sone returned the certificate of honour and commemorative gifts to the ambassador.

The Union Minister then thanked them for the donation.

Then, the Union Minister and the ambassador had a cordial discussion on the progress of the peace process in Myanmar. —MNA

47th Akha New Year Festival, Akha National Day Dinner held

THE 47th Akha New Year Festival and Akha National Day Dinner were held in the courtyard of Amei Yinkwin School in Kaungkan No. (1) Ward, Kengtung Township, on 28 December.

First, participants saluted the National Flag and the Akha flag and sang the Akha anthem.

Next, Triangle Region Command Commander Brigadier-General Myo Min Tun gave a speech and the commander and Chairman of Shan State Administration Council Branch U Ye Naing donated K500,000 each to the festival organizing committee.

Then, U Min Nyo, Patron of the Event Organizing Committee addressed the gathering and Patron of the Event Organizing Committee, U Thaung Kyaw, read the Akha National Day message sent by the Chairman of the Akha Ethnic Literature and Culture Committee.

Afterwards, the participants were treated to a traditional Akha dinner and then ethnic young men and women entertained them with beautiful dance and music.

"The Akha people, although different in their dress code, respect only the highest form of genealogy, culture, and language. All the Akha people are urged to preserve this tradition. Let the Akha people be socially and economically prosperous," the National Day message said. —Maung Maung Naing (Kengtung)/GNLM

Akha damsels are performing their traditional dances. **PHOTO : MAUNG MAUNG NAING (KENGTUNG)**

Security forces search money, jewellery of victims killed by PDF terrorists, returning them to family members of victims

Security forces find and return the belongings of the victims' families in Taze Township.

SECURITY forces searched the money and jewellery of Daw Gyan Taw and Daw Khin Swe Myint who were brutally killed by PDF terrorists in Dauntgyi Village of Taze Township of Sagaing Region on 15 December, and the handover ceremony to the victims' family members was organized at the meeting hall of the Ministry of Planning and Finance yesterday.

First, Deputy Minister for Planning and Finance U Maung Maung Win made an opening speech.

Then, the money and jewellery of the victims were returned to the victims' families by Brig-Gen Myo Min of the office of the Commander-in-Chief (Army) and Police Maj-Gen Aung Aung.

Officials handed over 20 kinds of gold wares, K2,113,800, one original pension book for the retired person, one ID card and one household registration during the event.

The PDF terrorists killed Daw Gyan Taw and Daw Khin Swe Myint in Dauntgyi Village of Taze Township in Sagaing Region on 15 December and set the house on fire. Their family members from Nay Pyi Taw asked for help to search the money and jewellery kept near the burnt house via the ministry concerned. Therefore, security forces searched, found, and returned their belongings to the family members of the victims.

Although security forces have to raid houses any time as security measures to look for arms and ammunition in towns, villages and wards, they focused on arms and ammunition and mines of terrorist groups, and served the duties without affecting property of the public and to assist them in line with the directives.

However, due to the fraudulent activities of some fake security forces, victims can report their phone numbers to the relevant authorities if they are affected during the search. — MNA

Innocent locals return after fleeing from armed conflicts in Lay Kay Kaw

Villagers from Lay Kay Kaw and its vicinity line up for the reception process.

SECURITY forces arrested NUG and PDF terrorists in Lay Kay Kaw town of Kayin State and after that case, the armed engagement broke out between security forces and NUG and PDF terrorists, including members of KNU/KNLA, who want to break NCA, starting 15 December. The innocent residents fled to the other country.

Security forces controlled that area on 28 December and reinvited these displaced persons using loudspeakers in Kayin and Myanmar languages. The Thai-Myanmar border committees negotiated and a total of 1,708 displaced people — 807 males and 901 females — from Ingyin Myaing, Min Let Pan, Mae Htaw Tha Lay and Myitta Lin Myaing villages returned to their respective areas yesterday.

Officials systematically received the returnees and provided necessary assistance. — MNA

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Due to limitation of space we are only able to publish **"Letter to the Editor"** that do not exceed 500 words. Should you submit a text longer than 500 words please be aware that your letter will be edited.

To issue citizenship scrutiny cards to the people

THE errors in the voter list caused some problems in the 2020 multiparty democracy general election. As such, the Ministry of Immigration and Population was formed to issue the citizenship scrutiny cards to the people under the Pankhin project as over three million cast votes without identity cards.

(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)

Sagaing plans to grow over 300,000 acres of summer paddy

During the 2021-2022FY winter crop season, the Sagaing region has cultivated the summer paddy since October 2021 and about 887 acres of paddy have been developed so far. **PHOTO : LU LAY**

SAGAING region has targeted to grow more than 300,000 acres of summer paddy, it is learnt.

In order to yield about 120 baskets of summer paddy per acre, Sagaing Region Agriculture Department is providing training, field inspection, distributing of pamphlets and providing technical assistance and paddy seeds to local farmers.

"We have targeted to grow over 300,000 acres of summer paddy this year. The summer paddy is grown mostly in the Shwebo district. There are around 280,000 acres of summer paddy, using the irrigated water from the Thaphanseik Dam in the Shwebo district. The summer paddy will be cultivated only using dam water and river water. The summer paddy can be planted in the Sagaing region if the dams can store the water. Sagaing region has not sowed the summer paddy for two years in the 2017-18 financial year and 2018-19FY due to insufficient water supply from the Thaphanseik Dam. So far, around 70,000 acres of summer paddy have been grown," said U Aung Kyi Win, the deputy head of the Sagaing Region Agriculture Department.

During the 2021-22FY winter crop season, the Sagaing region has cultivated the summer paddy since October 2021 and about 887 acres of paddy have been developed so far.

According to the official statistics of the Sagaing Region Agriculture Department, the Sagaing region grew a total of 887 acres of summer paddy, including 792 acres of paddy in Katha township in Katha district and 26 acres of paddy in Wuntho and 69 acres of paddy in Kawlin township in Kawlin district. – Lu Lay/GNLM

Construction of Thakhut River Bridge completed

THE construction of the Thakhut River Bridge is now completed, it is learnt.

The bridge is located on the road of Dala-Thakhut-Letkhokkon-Kanyinkon connecting Dala township and Kawhmu township, Yangon region.

The bridge construction project was started in the 2019-2020 financial year and it was developed by the construction task force-3, the Bridge Department under the Ministry of Construction.

The bridge is a section of the road that is used by many vehicles daily. It is also major access for transporting goods.

Earlier, the old Thakhut River Bridge has started its construction in 1991. Due to the longevity and weakening of the bridge, the new Thakhut River Bridge was constructed. The bridge is 24 feet wide and 495 feet long, flanked by three feet and six inches wide pedestrian walkways. The reinforced concrete and steel girder bridge is constructed with spending of K 2,503 million.

So far, the new Thakhut River Bridge has now completed 100 per cent. The bridge will be able to connect Dala, Kawhmu and Kungyangon townships from the Yangon District (South).

Upon completion of the bridge project, local people will have easy access and the bridge will accomplish the basic requirement of the local people for regional development and transportation.

It will also greatly help the socio-economic life travelling and trade flow. — Thuta/GNLM

So far, the new Thakhut River Bridge has now completed 100 per cent. The bridge will be able to connect Dala, Kawhmu and Kungyangon townships from the Yangon District (South). **PHOTO : THUTA**

Daily newspapers available online

FOR those who would like to read the Myanma Alinn, the Kyemon and the Global New Light of Myanmar, published daily by the Ministry of Information, please visit www.moi.gov.mm/mal, www.moi.gov.mm/km, www.moi.gov.mm/nlm and www.gnlm.com.mm/e-paper.

News and Periodicals Enterprise

MoC facilitates daily imports of essential anti-COVID-19 equipment

THE Ministry of Commerce is overseeing the importation of essential medical supplies plus anti-COVID 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 two companies using two vehicles. A total of nine tonnes of masks were imported via the Myawady and Chinshwehaw trade zones yesterday. In addition, one oxygen bowser carried liquid oxygen from the Myawady trade zone to Yangon.

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 Shinbweyang Town

Inoculation drive is underway in Kachin State. **PHOTO : SHINBWEYANG(IPRD)**

HEALTH officials administered first and second doses of Sinopharm COVID-19 vaccines to over 18-year-old people and students at Rural Health Centre in Shinbweyang Town, Myitkyina District, Kachin State yesterday morning.

The COVID-19 vaccination was carried out by the military medical doctor, health staff Daw Thida from the Shinbweyang Rural Health Centre and health workers keeping in line with vaccination guidelines.

The vaccine will be given next to the students over the age of 12 from four wards and six villages in Shinbweyang Town and over 18-year-old people who have never been vaccinated before.

Town Administration Officer U Lwin Oo and officials provided necessary assistance to the vaccination site. — Shinbweyang IPRD/GNLM

Prices list of medicines commonly used against COVID-19 till 29-12-2021

No	Product Name	Pack Size	Price in Kyats (Retail)	Company Name
Antiviralt				
1	Injection - Remdesivir	Vial	70,000	GHI
Anti thrombosis				
2	Injection Enoxaprim 40 mg	1 Pre-Filled Syringe	7,000	Nyi Lay Naing
3	Injection Enoxaprim 60 mg	1 Pre-Filled Syringe	9,000	Nyi Lay Naing
Symptomatic				
4	P.O Paracetamol 500 mg	10X10's tablets/ Box	1,500	AA Medical
5	P.O Dextromethophan	10X10's	1,450	AA Medical
6	P.O Bromhexine	10X10's tablets/ Box	1,000	Medi Myanmar
7	P.O Cetrizine	10X10's / Box	2,200	AA Medical
Supportive				
8	P.O Multivitamin with/ without zinc	3X10's / Box	5,600	OLIVE
9	P.O Vitamin C	10X10's / Box	700	Pai Brother
10	P.O - Pantocid	10X10's / Box	7,000	PL

Please visit the Website (www.mccpmd.org) and Facebook Page https://www.facebook.com/ 32330252139 2189/posts/ 1720802588308835/ ?d=n to know the prices of other medicines.

CRIME NEWS

Mother of the victim, Chinese man jailed for human trafficking

MOTHER of the victim of human trafficking, who sold her daughter to a Chinese man, and the Chinese man who forcibly cohabited with the victim was sentenced to 10 years in prison with labour in Kyaukse, Mandalay Region, according to the Myanmar Police Force.

Daw Pyone, the mother of the 14-year-old victim, who lives in Myitthar Township, Mandalay Region, received money from Law Pan (a) Arr Tae, a resident of Yunnan Province, China, to let him cohabit with her daughter.

A case was filed in the Myittha Township Police Station under Section 24 of the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Law and the Kyaukse District Court sentenced defendant Daw Pyone and Law Pan (a) Arr Tae to 10 years each in prison with labour under the law. — MNA

Three sentenced to prison under Anti-Trafficking in Persons Law in Yangon

ACCORDING to the Myanmar Police Force, three people who forced a woman into prostitution were sentenced in prison with labour in Yangon Region.

Ma Tin Lin Khaing (a) Ma Mi Pont, a resident of Hlinethaya Township in Yangon Region, and Ko Kyaw Wunna who lives in Mayangon Township, and Ma May Thu Lin who lives in Hlinethaya Township, persuaded the victim aged 20 to work as a cook in Bago and Pakokku. They then forced her into prostitution and took the profit.

A case was filed against them under Section 24/32 of the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Law at the Hlinethaya Myoma Police Station, and the North District Court sentenced Ma Mi Pont, who is under 18, to three years in prison without labour under Section 88 (c) of the Child Rights Law on 14 December, and other two were sentenced to 10 years each in prison with labour under Section 24 of the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Law. — MNA

Fuel oil price edges up on Kyat depreciation

THE prices of fuel oil remained on the upward trend in the domestic market, tracking the Kyat weakening against the US dollar, the market's data indicated.

On 1 December, the prices stood at K1,250 for Octane 92, K1,300 for Octane 95, K1,230 for diesel and K1,240 for premium diesel, whereas it jumped to K1,340 for Octane 92, K1,390 for Octane 95, K1,315 for diesel and K1,325 for premium diesel. There is a price gap of K85-90 per litre within a month, according to the local fuel oil market.

The fuel oil price is highly correlated with the exchange rate. At present, the exchange rate is pegged at around K1,900 in the local forex market.

When a dollar was valued at only K1,330 in early February, the fuel oil was estimated at K590 per litre for Octane 92, K610 for Octane 95, K590 for diesel and K605 for premium diesel in early February 2021 in the domestic retail market.

Consequently, in a bid to steer the dollar rally in the local forex market, the Central Bank of Myanmar (CBM) sold US$88 million at its auction market rate in December.

Additionally, the Ministry of Commerce in coordination with the Myanmar Petroleum Traders Association carried out a scheme to distribute fuel oil at a fairer rate through the government-sponsored petrol station chains. The total volume of fuel oil that are sold at very cheap rates is equivalent to the amount that the oil importers directly purchased the foreign currency from the CBM.

The CBM has directly sold $53.4 million to the fuel oil sector so far. Normally, Myanmar yearly imports six million tonnes of fuel oil from external markets, the Ministry of Commerce stated. — NN/GNLM

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More than 10,000 acres of garlic cultivated in Sagaing region

Winter crops season of the 2021-22 financial year, Sagaing region started cultivating the garlic in October 2021. So far, about 11,370 acres of garlic have been completely cultivated. Each acre of garlic cultivation will cost K1.5 million and it can be harvested about 1,500 or 2,000 visses.

MORE than 10,000 acres of garlic have been cultivated in the Sagaing Region so far. The garlic is grown mostly in the Shwebo district.

According to the official statistics of Sagaing Region Agriculture Department, the Sagaing Region grew 11,370 acres of garlic, including 487 acres in Mawlaik district, 40 acres in Tamu district, 1,263 acres in Kalay district, 84 acres in Hkamti district, 192 acres in Naga area, 347 acres in Monywa district, 1,253 acres in Yinmabin district, 6,956 acres in Shwebo district, 81 acres in Sagaing district, 535 acres in Katha district and 132 acres in Kawlin district.

"The garlic cultivation in the Sagaing region is not as high as that of onion. There are fewer acres of garlic cultivation. People from the Sagaing region are growing the garlic on a manageable scale for their house use. The cultivation of the garlic plant is a bit costly," said U Aung Kyi Win, the deputy head of the Sagaing Region Agriculture Department.

Winter crops season of the 2021-22 financial year, Sagaing region started cultivating the garlic in October 2021. So far, about 11,370 acres of garlic have been completely cultivated. Each acre of garlic cultivation will cost K1.5 million and it can be harvested about 1,500 or 2,000 visses.

Sagaing Region Agriculture Department is making effort to get a better price, to be able to grow under GAP method and to make good quality garlic and, providing technology to make garlic a bit last longer, it is learnt. — Lu Lay/GNLM

Myanmar earns over $242 mln from various pulses export from October to mid-December

MYANMAR exported US$ 242.467 million worth of 291,229 tonnes of various pulses from 1 October to 17 December in the current mini-budget period (October 2021-March 2022), according to the Ministry of Commerce.

During the period, 275,752.333 tonnes of various beans and pulses worth $229.955 million were exported via maritime trade routes and 15,477.517 tonnes worth $14.521 million via border trade routes.

During the FY2020-2021 ended 30 September, the export value of beans and pulses amounted to over $1.57 billion, the ministry reported.

The Indian government signed a memorandum of understanding with Myanmar to import 250,000 tonnes of mung bean and 100,000 tonnes of pigeon pea through the private sector from 2021-2022 to 2025-2026.

During the FY2019-2020, the country delivered 1.6 million tonnes with an estimated value of $1.195 billion, the ministry's data showed.

There are more than 11 million acres of plantations of beans and pulses. The black bean plantations are yielding around 400,000 tonnes annually in Myanmar. Besides, Myanmar has also produced about 50,000 tonnes of pigeon peas yearly.

The black bean, which is mainly bought from India, is mainly grown in Myanmar. Other pulses, including green gram and pigeon pea, are grown in Africa and Australia in addition to Myanmar, according to Myanmar Pulses, Beans and Sesame Seeds Merchants Association. — Aye Maung/GNLM

Myanmar daily conveys about 10,000 rice bags to China through Muse border

ABOUT 10,000 bags of rice and broken rice are daily delivered to China via the Muse cross-border post, said U Min Thein, vice-chair of the Muse Rice Wholesale Centre.

Earlier, export volume to China was approximately 60,000 bags of rice and broken rice per day.

"Trade cannot go as smooth as like before. Only one checkpoint between Myanmar and China is available for border trade at the moment. As a result of this, about 10-12 trucks carrying 10,000 bags left for China," said U Min Thein.

China shut down all the border crossings with Myanmar in the wake of COVID-19 negative consequences. Of the land borders, Kyinsankyawt has been reopened on a trial run from 26 November.

Myanmar exports about 40 truckloads of goods, including rubber, various beans and pulses, dried plum, watermelon, muskmelon and other food commodities to China via Kyinsankyawt every day.

Myanmar has shipped more than 500,000 tonnes of rice and broken rice to foreign trade partners between 1 October and 30 November in the current mini-budget period (2021-2022), the Myanmar Rice Federation (MRF) stated.

The country sent over 27,000 tonnes of rice and broken rice to the neighbouring countries through border trade zones, whereas it placed over 470,000 tonnes in the international market via maritime trade.

Myanmar also generated an income of US$700 million from two million tonnes of rice exports to the foreign countries in the past 2020-2021 financial year.

Myanmar shipped rice to nearly 60 foreign countries and of them, China is the main buyer of Myanmar rice and broken rice.

On 26 February 2021, China gave the green light to 47 Myanmar companies to import the rice via the Muse border trade camp this year. — NN/GNLM

30 DECEMBER 2021
THE GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR

Take severe action against illegal traders under restricted rules

THE government eases some restrictions related to trade in conformity with the changing systems while minimizing the illegal trade and tax evasion of businesspersons.

Illegal trade is one of the factors to hamper the economic development of Myanmar. The booming of the illegal trade sector hinders all legal work processes. Declining of the border trade volume is related to the illegal trade as figures of legal trade of Myanmar with neighbouring countries are very different from that of the illegal trade.

Myanmar stands in the 82nd position of 84 countries across the world in the illegal trade index 2018 based on four indices such as policy, demand and supply, transparent trade and customs procedures.

> Indeed, everybody knows illegal traders cannot escape from legal action for their violation of existing rules and regulations. That is why they all need to change their mindsets in the trade process for the State and the people.

As illegal goods flow into the country via border areas, micro-, small- and medium-scale enterprises face hardship, in the long run, to compete with that of illegal trade.

The government formed the Committee on Ensuring Smooth Flow of Trade and Goods on 20 February 2021 to prevent illegal trade in line with the provisions from the duty and functions of the committee.

Only when the authorities take deterrent action against those who violate the illegal trade measures will businesspersons reach the route of legal trade. Consequently, tax for the State can be earned from the increasing legal trade volume. Verily, businesspersons need to compete in the market with their products through fair rules in order to develop the economic sector of the State.

The Illegal Trade Eradication Steering Committee constantly monitors the trade process through shipping, aviation and borderlands. It aims to scrutinize the trade process for levying the deserved tax for the State under the rules and regulations of respective departments.

Currently, the combined task forces perform the checking of illegal trade products at the Yaypu checkpoint on Mandalay-Muse Union Highway and the Mayanchaung checkpoint on Myawady-Yangon Union Highway. The task forces seize a large volume of illegal trade products on a daily basis. Businesspersons commit illegal trade processes in various ways not to pay tax to the State while violating the rules of trade for gaining profits beyond the income of legal trade for businesspersons.

Indeed, everybody knows illegal traders cannot escape from legal action for their violation of existing rules and regulations. That is why they all need to change their mindsets in the trade process for the State and the people.

■ ■ ■

Hailing the 74th Anniversary of Independence Day

History in a nutshell

By Maha Saddhamma Jotika Dhaja, Sithu Dr Khin Maung Nyunt

1. History in a nutshell. The writer wishes you to tell.
2. Now our Independence regained with might and main. And brawn and brain.
3. Within a short period of 62. We regained our Independence.
4. From British India British colonialism extended to Myanmar.
5. Without firing a single shot. Last Myanmar King Thibaw was brought.
6. To British Indian's Ratnagiri where he died in captivity.
7. Immediately, resistance broke out. To drive British invaders out.
8. It took five years of putting down resistance which the British called the Pacification Period.
9. But it was a short lull before the storm.
10. The British began introducing Colonial Rule. Setting up British Colonial School.
11. The first colonial college was Rangoon College affiliated with Calcutta University. By no means it was a College of Myanmar.
12. Typical English Colleges and Universities. To teach and train to produce faithful civil servants for Her (His) Imperial Majesty.
13. Only aristocracy landed gentry and children of the high salaried class. Not every Tom, Dick and Harry thus.
14. Residential University with all needs, equipment and services to teach, to train and to turn out.
15. "Black English men of Anglophile totally forget and reject their racial and cultural origin.
16. Charging each student monthly fees of Rs42 (Rupees). At that time township officers got a salary of Rupees30.
17. Police Rupees7 and 8 monthly. Gatekeeper is happy with Rupees 5 and 7 annas.
18. Myanmar students requested all day scholars to attend also. But the British Government persisted.
19. Rangoon University Boycott broke out. With far-flung consequences thrown out.
20. Boycott leaders set up a council of National Education setting up National College and National Schools across the country.
21. Making National Day or National Victory Day. Because the Government yielded and gave financial support to National Schools.
22. Thus, a new batch of Patriots was born sooner. They called themselves Thakhin.
23. Thakhin Aung San, Thakhin Nu, Thakhin Thein, Thakhin Mya, Thakhin Aung Gyi, Thakhin Soe, Thakhin Than Tun, Thakhin Thein Pe [Thein Pe Myint] Tet Phone Gyi, U Thant, U Khant, Thakhin Shu Maung [General Ne Win], Thakhin Po Hla Gyi of Yenangyoung oil fields leading labour movement protest to Yangon for periods of frustration, revolution disillusionment, an outbreak of World War II. Bringing blessings in disguise. To wake up Myanmar Nation to raise colonial difficulty was nationalists' opportunity. Fourth batch of Yebaw Thonegeik Thakhin Aung San. In quest of allies and funds, first to China they turn. But Chunkin Government was on the run.

Due to the Japanese fascist military government. Promising them to give modern warfare on the island of Hainan. As soon as they set up Myanmar soil. They would give Myanmar Independence though. It was a sham under Japanese fascism that began the Period of A.F Anti-Fascist movement. By secretly making an alliance with a similar government on the promise of giving Independence. As soon as Japanese fascism was driven out, now came the Period of British hypocrisy and Myanmar blatant diplomacy.

The British brought a similar white paper which wound rebuild repairs and rehabilitation plan. It was indeed a British hypocrisy Aung San would face it with blatant diplomacy. On his departure to London for a talk with Mr Attlee. As spoke out bravely we hope for the best but prepare for the worst. The long-standing British Empire was declining. Mr Attlee was changing it to British Commonwealth of Nations colonies are life millstones around our neck. Our grown children should have their own houses in the compound of the British Commonwealth of Nations. Thus, Aung San. Attlee Agreement was signed. Aung San and colleges began political campaigning across the country. Panglong Agreement was reached. All ethnic nationalities agree to set up the Republic of the Union of Myanmar with the British parliamentary model for Myanmar. But a great price had to be paid. On 19 July 1947, General Aung San and his colleagues were assassinated at the guns of traitors.

On 4 January 1948, Myanmar was declared Independent State. The Union Jack flag slowly went down as Myanmar 5-star flag went up. Regaining Independence with 6 decades and 2 years. Is the achievement of might and main and brown and brain. We have regained. But the task ahead is not plain sailing. We have to pull and push together.

Divided we fall!
United we stand!

■ ■ ■

WHO warns of 'very high' Omicron risk as Covid surges worldwide

OMICRON still poses "very high" risk and could overwhelm healthcare systems, the WHO warned on Wednesday, as the highly transmissible coronavirus variant fuelled record outbreaks in many countries.

Case numbers have shot up 11 per cent globally in the last week, forcing governments from China to Germany and France to find a difficult balance between anti-virus restrictions and the need to keep economies and societies open.

The Netherlands and Switzerland said Omicron had become the dominant strain in their countries, and while some studies suggested it causes milder Covid-19, the World Health Organization urged caution.

"The overall risk related to the new variant of concern Omicron remains very high," the UN health agency said in its Covid-19 weekly epidemiological update.

"Consistent evidence shows that the Omicron variant has a growth advantage over the Delta variant with a doubling time of two to three days."

The WHO said early data from Britain, South Africa, and Denmark — which currently has the world's highest rate of infection per person — suggested there was a reduced risk of hospitalization for Omicron compared with Delta.

But it added that further data was needed to understand Omicron's severity.

And despite those studies, Omicron's rapid growth "will still result in large numbers of hospitalizations, particularly amongst unvaccinated groups, and cause widespread disruption to health systems and other critical services", warned WHO Europe's Covid Incident Manager Catherine Smallwood.

The Omicron variant of the coronavirus has fuelled surges in case numbers around the world, including the United States and Europe. **PHOTO: AFP/ BRYAN R. SMITH**

Painful restrictions

Europe was again one of the hotspots for the pandemic, which is known to have claimed more than 5.4 million lives around the world.

France, Britain, Greece and Portugal all reported record daily case numbers on Tuesday. France reported almost 180,000 infections over 24 hours.

To hold back the tide, many nations on the continent have brought back curbs with heavy economic and social consequences.

Contact restrictions were in place in Germany for the second year in a row heading into the New Year, as Europe's biggest economy shut nightclubs and forced sports competitions behind closed doors.

It also limited private gatherings to 10 vaccinated people — or two households where any unvaccinated people are present.

Finland on Tuesday said it would bar unvaccinated foreign travellers from entering. Only residents, essential workers or diplomats will be exempt.

The Nordic country, like Sweden, had begun requiring negative tests for incoming non-resident travellers from Tuesday, a day after Denmark applied the same measure.

But the Belgian government's plans to introduce further restrictions were thwarted as a court suspended an order closing entertainment venues.

Prime Minister Alexander De Croo had announced the original measure on December 22 as Belgium saw a sharp increase in the percentage of tests showing the Omicron variant.

Travel chaos

The Covid spikes around the world have caused severe disruptions to travel over the holidays, with thousands of flights cancelled worldwide.

They are also threatening sports events again.

England's top football league is grappling with record cases, while China has imposed strict lockdowns on millions of people to control the spread of the Delta variant ahead of the Beijing Winter Olympics.

Mexico City's mayor on Tuesday cancelled the capital's massive New Year's Eve celebrations as a preventative measure after a rise in Covid-19 cases.

The top American sports leagues have also been hit, as the United States battles a surge fuelled by Omicron, as well as large pockets of unvaccinated people and a lack of access to quick and easy testing.

The US Centres for Disease Control has halved the isolation period for asymptomatic cases to try and limit disruptions and mass labour shortages.

President Joe Biden said the United States was generally well prepared, though some hospitals could be "overrun". As New Yorkers marked "Good Riddance Day" at Times Square — burning pieces of paper representing their worst memories of 2021 — many just wanted to say goodbye to Covid-19.

SOURCE: AFP

MYANMAR GAZETTE

Confirmation and Appointment of Heads of Service Organizations

1. The State Administration Council has confirmed the appointment of Dr Nay Win Oo, Rector of Lashio University, Department of Higher Education under the Ministry of Education, on the expiry of the one-year probationary period.
2. The State Administration Council has appointed Dr Aye Aye Han, Pro-Rector of Myingyan University, Department of Higher Education under the Ministry of Education, as Rector of the same university on probation from the date she assumes charge of her duties.

Republic of the Union of Myanmar Ministry of Education Department of Higher Education Announcement Opening of University Day Classes

ALL the universities, degree colleges and colleges under the Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education, will open the following bachelor and master day classes for the Academic Year 2019-2020 and the Academic Year 2021-2022 on 6 January 2022.

(a) Fourth Year (Law) Semester II
(b) Fourth Year (Education) Semester II
(c) Master (Qualifying) Semester I
(d) Master (1st Year) Semester I
(e) Master (2nd Year) Semester I

Department of Higher Education
Ministry of Education

Myanmar Daily Weather Report

(ISSUED at 7:00 pm Wednesday 29 December 2021)

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

FORECAST VALID UNTIL OF THE 30 December 2021: Rain are likely to be isolated in Upper Sagaing, Taninthayi Regions and Kachin, Chin States. Degree of certainty is (60%). Weather will be partly cloudy in Shan, Rakhine, Kayah, Kayin and Mon States and generally fair in the remaining Regions and States.

STATE OF THE SEA: Sea will be moderate in Myanmar waters. Wave height will be about (5-7) feet off and along Myanmar Coasts.

OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS: Likelihood of slight decrease of night temperatures in Shan State.

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 30 December 2021: Generally fair weather.

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 30 December 2021: Generally fair weather.

FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 30 December 2021: Generally fair weather.

Philippines lifts ban on new open-pit mines

This photo taken on 16 June 2016 shows a barge being loaded with nickel ore at a private port in Infanta town, Pangasinan province, north of Manila. **PHOTO: TED ALJIBE/AFP**

THE Philippines has lifted a four-year ban on new open-pit mines, an official said Wednesday, in a bid to revitalize the country's coronavirus-battered economy slammed by activists as "short-sighted".

The move sees the Philippine government reverse a ban imposed in 2017, when the then-environment minister blamed the sector for widespread ecological damage.

Manila has since reversed course, encouraging mining investments to shore up government revenues as lockdowns and quarantine restrictions ravaged the economy. In April, President Rodrigo Duterte — who had previously threatened to shut down the sector completely — lifted a nine-year ban on new mining deals set by his predecessor.

Wilfredo Moncano, the director of the mines and geosciences bureau (MGB), told AFP Wednesday that the environment secretary Roy Cimatu had signed an order lifting the ban on open-pit mining in the country.

"We offered the mining [industry] as a potential contributor to the recovery of the economy," Moncano said.

"Once these are commercially producing... these are the ones that will be helping pay our loans to fight the pandemic."

Moncano said about nine prospective mining projects stand to benefit from the order and that the government could generate up to 80 billion pesos ($1.6 billion) in taxes and royalties annually once commercial operations begin.

Open pit mining directly extracts minerals on the ground and differs from other methods that require tunneling or underground mining.—AFP ■

Chilean scientists study climate change at 'end of the world'

CHILEAN scientists studying organisms in one of the most remote places on Earth are urging regional leaders to step up efforts to tackle climate change.

A recent expedition, which was delayed by a year due to the coronavirus pandemic, sought to investigate harmful organisms and how they are impacting climate change.

Chile's Magallanes region — on the southern tip of South America where the Atlantic and Pacific oceans meet — is known as the "end of the world" and extends from Punta Arenas through the Magallanes Strait to the Beagle Channel.

Sailing through peak-lined straits past glaciers and soaring birds, the scientists on board the oceanographic research vessel Cabo de Hornos had their focus trained on the water, which has lower levels of acidity, salt and calcium than other seas and oceans, especially in their shallowest parts.

Scientists believe the conditions found in the water will appear in other parts of the world in the coming decades, as the impact of climate change mounts.—AFP ■

A recent expedition on board the oceanographic research vessel Cabo de Hornos in the far south of Chile sought to investigate harmful organisms and how they are impacting climate change. **PHOTO: MERCOPRESS/AFP**

Experiments show algae can survive in Mars-like environment

CHINESE researchers have demonstrated that algae can survive in a Mars-like environment during four experiments since 2019, raising the hope that mankind might be able to turn the barren planet into an earth-like green one in the future.

In a seven-hour experiment which took place in September this year, algae were carried by a helium balloon to an altitude of 30,000 metres and survived for four hours in lower than minus 30 degrees Celsius with intense ultraviolet light and oxygen deprivation, according to a report from the Changjiang Daily based in Wuhan, central China's Hubei Province.

The research team from the Institute of Hydrobiology of the Chinese Academy of Sciences conducted the four experiments in north China's Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region and northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region.

The experiments proved that algae are robust. But further experiments are also needed to learn whether the species can grow or even multiply on the surface of Mars, said Wang Gaohong, a researcher at the Institute of Hydrobiology. Algae have gradually changed and improved the environment of the Earth since the plant was born at the very beginning. Liu Yongding, director of the Chinese Society of Phycology, believes that algae were crucial for the origin and evolution of species on Earth.

Algae are primary producers of the earth's biosphere, accounting for 30 per cent to 40 per cent of all life, and playing an important role in maintaining biosphere stability. The conditions on Mars are very similar to those on early Earth, Liu said. And algae might be useful for human exploration of the red planet.—Xinhua ■

A staff worker driving a wheel loader clears algae along the beach in Qingdao, east China's Shandong Province, 17 July 2021. **PHOTO: XINHUA/LI ZHENG**

NEWS IN BRIEF

Study finds exposure to toxic metals may lead to clogged arteries

A research has found that environmental exposure to low levels of the toxic metals arsenic, cadmium and titanium appears to increase the risk of plaque buildup in arteries in the neck, heart and legs.

The study has been published in the 'Arteriosclerosis, Thrombosis and Vascular Biology Journal'.

Traces of metal may enter the body through contaminated soil that infiltrates food, through drinking water, air pollutants or tobacco smoke. There is strong evidence that toxic metals, such as arsenic and cadmium, are cardiovascular risk factors. Arsenic and cadmium are often found in tobacco and food, while arsenic is also found in water. Titanium exposure is mainly derived from dental and orthopaedic implants, screws, pacemaker encasings, cosmetic products and some foods.—ANI ■

South Africa court halts Shell seismic survey plan in key ruling

A South African court on Tuesday blocked Shell from using seismic waves to explore for oil and gas in the Indian Ocean, handing a landmark victory to environmentalists worried about the impact on whales and other species.

Backing a suit filed by conservationists and local groups, the High Court in the Eastern Cape town of Makhanda declared Shell was "interdicted from undertaking seismic survey operations", a decision that has immediate effect. Consultations with coastal communities had been "substantially flawed", and this made Shell's survey application "unlawful and invalid", Judge Gerald Bloem said.—AFP ■

Brunei, China tourism cooperation continues to strengthen despite COVID-19: minister

Kampong Ayer in the heart of Brunei's capital city Bandar Seri Begawan. **PHOTO: AFP**

DESPITE the COVID-19 pandemic, the tourism cooperation between Brunei and China continues to strengthen, Haji Ali, Brunei's Minister of Primary Resources and Tourism, said on Monday.

During the closing ceremony of Brunei-China Year of Tourism 2020 held virtually, the minister said in a pre-recorded remarks that as the two countries embarked into the "new normal," tourism activities were organized via online platforms, including a virtual training programme held in November 2020 for Brunei's local tour guides and tourism professionals to further improve their Chinese and communication skills.

He said the country is also grateful to the support extended by the Chinese government for Brunei's national carrier Royal Brunei Airlines to operate in China's Beijing, Changsha, Haikou, Hangzhou, Hong Kong, Nanning and Shanghai.

"These connections have further led to increased economic activities and opportunities in the areas of tourism, agriculture, construction, maritime and others," the minister said.

"With over 74,000 tourist arrivals in 2019, China has always been regarded as one of the top three source markets for Brunei. We hope to welcome more tourist arrivals once travel resumes in the near future," the minister added.

Yu Hong, Chinese ambassador to Brunei said at the ceremony that the event would bring a successful conclusion to this year's series of celebrations for the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries as well as the China-Brunei Year of Tourism 2020.

"Although the pandemic has hindered us from celebrating face-to-face, it cannot stop the kind wishes of both peoples to deepen mutual understanding," the ambassador said. —Xinhua ■

South Korea approves Pfizer's COVID-19 oral pill for emergency use

Manufacturing Pfizer's Covid treatment, Paxlovid, at a centre in Freiburg, Germany. **PHOTO: PFIZER/ANI**

'PAXLOVID,' the COVID-19 oral treatment developed by a global pharmaceutical company Pfizer, received emergency use authorization from the Ministry of Food and Drug Safety (MFDS) on 27 December. It is expected to be used from the end of January next year as the first oral COVID-19 treatment in Korea.

The authorization was passed through the discussion by the 'Medical Products Safety Management and Supply Committee for Responding to Public Health Crisis'. The committee comprehensively evaluated the necessity of oral drugs, the safety and effectiveness test results provided by the MFDS, and the experts' opinions.

The Minister of Food and Drug Safety Kim Gang-rip said in a briefing on the 27th, "We expect that Paxlovid will help diversify the types of treatments along with injection-type treatments currently used in hospitals, and will prevent patients from being severe." Currently, 'Regkirona,' developed by Celltrion, is used for the injection-type treatment.

Paxlovid blocks the '3CL protease' to prevent the production of protein needed to replicate the COVID-19 virus, inhibiting virus proliferation. Therefore, it has an antiviral effect.— ANI ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

World Bank loans USD 221mn to Vietnam for economic recovery from COVID-19

THE World Bank has signed an agreement with Vietnam in the amount of $221.5 million to finance the country's recovery from the coronavirus pandemic.

"The government of Vietnam and the World Bank has signed an agreement for financing of US$221.5 million to support Vietnam's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic through policy reforms aimed at improving financial inclusion and spurring greater environmental resilience," the World Bank release said on Monday.

The loan will be provided in a form of budget support for a period of 30 years with a grace period of five years, the release said.—ANI ■

Spain records highest-ever 14-day incidence of COVID-19 after Christmas break

THE Spanish Ministry of Health on Monday evening said that the 14-day incidence of the coronavirus rose by 294 points in the four days from 23 December to 1,206.21 cases per 100,000 people after the Christmas holiday weekend.

This increase, which comes after the ministry reported 214,619 new infections over the past four days, was the highest 14-day incidence ever recorded in Spain since the pandemic started.—ANI ■

Qatar suspends leave for healthcare staff amid Covid surge

QATAR'S main healthcare provider has suspended leave for all medical and administrative staff dealing with Covid, as infections surge across the Gulf.

The six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states — Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, as well as Qatar — have been recording their highest numbers of new cases in months.

"Due to the recent increase in the number of people infected with Covid-19 in Qatar... the difficult decision has been made to put on hold all approved and future employees' leave requests for clinical and admin staff who are working in Covid-19 activities," the state-owned Hamad Medical Corporation said in an internal memo circulated on Monday and seen by AFP.

"This decision comes into immediate effect and until further notice."

It said staff would be compensated for working overtime, as the country gears up to host the 2022 World Cup.—AFP ■

A health worker, wearing personal protective equipment, collects a swab sample from a man at a drive-thru testing service for COVID-19 coronavirus in the Qatari capital Doha. **PHOTO: AFP**

NEWS IN BRIEF

Japan's industrial output in November surges record 7.2%

JAPAN'S industrial production surged a record 7.2 per cent in November compared to the previous month, with auto output rebounding from a decline triggered by a global semiconductor shortage and supply chain disruptions, government data revealed Tuesday.

The seasonally adjusted production index for factories and mines stood at 97.7 against the 2015 base of 100, rising for the second consecutive month and marking the sharpest month-to-month gain since February 2013 when comparable data became available, according to a preliminary report by the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry.

The latest figure came after an upwardly revised growth of 1.8 per cent was registered in October.—Xinhua ■

US holiday e-commerce sales growth slows down: report

US e-commerce sales expanded at a much slower pace in the holiday season of 2021, according to a report issued by Mastercard Inc. on Sunday.

US e-commerce sales from 1 Nov to 24 Dec grew 11 per cent from the same period of 2020 in comparison with a hefty year-on-year increase of 47.2 per cent in the holiday season of 2020, according to Mastercard SpendingPulse reports.

The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in robust expansion of online sales in the United States, but the breakneck growth has slowed down due to economic reopening and fading growth momentum.

E-commerce sales made up 20.9 per cent of total retail sales in the holiday season of 2021, slightly higher from 20.6 per cent in 2020. By contrast, e-commerce only accounted for 14.6 percent of total retail sales in the holiday season of 2019. —Xinhua ■

Vietnam's growth slides to new 30-year low

VIETNAM reported economic growth for 2021 of just 2.58 per cent on Wednesday, beating a 30-year low set last year as the pandemic continues to take a toll.

The communist state has long been a success story among Asian economies, posting growth of seven per cent in 2019.

But shutdowns caused by coronavirus have battered the export-reliant economy, sending GDP growth plunging to 2.91 per cent in 2020 — the lowest reported in three decades.

The General Statistics Office (GSO) in Hanoi said fourth quarter growth was at 5.22 percent, but the annual figure was dragged down by a contraction of 6.02 per cent in the third quarter.

Vietnam has long been a success story among Asian economies, posting growth of seven per cent in 2019 . Photo taken on 1 June 2018 shows fruits on display and sold during the 2018 Southern Fruit Festival in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. **PHOTO: XINHUA/HOANG THI HUONG**

"The complicated situation of the Covid-19 pandemic since the end of April seriously impacted commercial and service activities... pulling down the growth of the service sector and the whole economy," GSO said in a statement.

For at least three months, almost the entire country was in complete lockdown, with a huge impact on production, supply chains and businesses.

GSO head Nguyen Thi Huong gave an upbeat gloss, saying that achieving even the modest growth under such difficult circumstances was a "huge success" in remarks reported by state media.

Vietnam is now trying to reopen by shifting away from its strict "zero-covid" policy.

Around 88 per cent of adults in Vietnam have been fully vaccinated, the country's health ministry said.—AFP ■

Studies show the switch to the euro did not cause the price increases that consumers have denounced. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

Two decades on, euro can't shake reputation as price driver

EUROPEANS have been living with euro banknotes and coins for 20 years now, but many still point the finger at the single currency for covertly driving up consumer prices — despite plenty of evidence to the contrary.

"The euro is a catastrophe, it's catastrophic," says Maria Napolitano, a 65-year-old Italian living in Frankfurt.

"With 100 deutschmarks, you could fill up your shopping trolley. Now, 100 euros aren't enough to fill two bags."

It's an impression that is shared by many across the eurozone, from Paris to Rome, Madrid to Athens.

Victor Irun, a 53-year-old teacher in Madrid, said that for Spaniards the switch to the euro was "like entering a club for rich people while not wearing the right clothes. "You had the impression we weren't yet ready," he told AFP. "It was as if we were living in Spain, but paying with French or Dutch money."

Some Germans even coined a new nickname for the single currency — "teuro", a pun on the German word for expensive, "teuer".

Perception and data

In a 2006 study, university professor Hans Wolfgang Brachinger compiled an index of "perceived" inflation among Germans, which measured a "felt" increase in consumer prices of seven per cent between 2001 and 2002, compared with around two per cent normally. In reality, however, official statistics showed no pick-up in inflation in Europe's biggest economy.

"There was a very strong feeling in several countries that prices had gone up, and yet we had official stats telling us otherwise," said Giovanni Mastrobuoni, an economics professor at the University of Turin.—AFP ■

Turkish crisis turns books into vanishing luxuries

TURKISH doctoral student Gulfer Ulas saw the first edition of her favourite Thomas Mann collection published for 33 liras.

She found the second print of the same two-volume set selling months later at her Istanbul book shop for 70 liras (about $6 at the latest exchange rate).

The jump exemplifies the debilitating unpredictability of Turkey's raging economic crisis on almost all facets of daily life — from shopping to education and culture.

Publishers fear it could also kill off an industry that offers a rare voice of diversity in a country where most media obey President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's socially conservative government.

"I am a PhD student in international relations so I have to read a lot. I spend almost 1,000 liras a month on books on my reading list even though I also download from the internet," Ulas said.

"Book prices are skyrocketing."

'Essentials over books' -

The Turkish book industry — almost entirely dependent on paper imports — pinpoints one of the flaws in the economic experiment Erdogan has unleashed on his nation of 84 million people in the past few months. Erdogan has ripped up the economic rule book by orchestrating sharp interest rate cuts in a bid to bring down chronically rising consumer prices.—AFP ■

Turks such as doctorate student Gulfer Ulas are paying more than double for their books than they did just months ago **PHOTO: AFP**

S Korea's business sentiment improves in December

SENTIMENT among South Korean businesses over the economic situation improved this month due to export growth, central bank data showed Wednesday.

The business sentiment index (BSI) for all industries stood at 87 in December, up 1 point from the previous month, according to the Bank of Korea. The outbound shipment continued to rise this month, offsetting the negative effect of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Export, which accounts for about half of South Korea's gross domestic product (GDP), jumped 20 per cent for the first 20 days of this month compared to the same period of last year.

The index among manufacturers advanced 5 points over the month to 95 in December, while the reading for non-manufacturers fell 1 point to 82 this month. Non-manufacturers, especially those focusing on offline services, were roiled by the pandemic resurgence that led the government to tighten anti-virus measures earlier this month. In the latest tally, the country reported 5,409 more cases of COVID-19 for the past 24 hours, lifting the total number of infections to 620,938. The daily caseload rose above 5,000 in three days.— Xinhua ■

Inside the ECB's secret lab to sniff out fake euro bills

ON the 23rd floor of the European Central Bank's towering Frankfurt headquarters, on the other side of a security door, anti-counterfeiting experts are poring over some of the best fake banknotes in the eurozone.

The room, off limits to outsiders, at first glance recalls a high school science lab — an unusually well-equipped one.

Lined up on the workbenches are 3D microscopes, ultra-sensitive scales and special devices designed to detect around a dozen of the safety features embedded in genuine euro banknotes -- and spot the forgeries.

European Central Bank experts spot fake euro notes with 3D microscopes, ultra-sensitive scales and special devices. **PHOTO: AFP**

The analysis done by the handful of specialists in the room helps the ECB keep up to date with the latest counterfeiting techniques, and hopefully stay a step ahead.

Twenty years after the launch of the single currency, the risk of a eurozone citizen holding a fake euro note is "very slim", said Jean-Michel Grimal, head of the ECB's currency development division.

And the chances have been getting slimmer by the year.

According to the ECB — responsible for issuing bills while the central banks of the 19 eurozone nations each produce their own coins — banknote counterfeiting fell to a historically low level in 2020.

Around 460,000 fake euro bills were taken out of circulation last year, an 18-per-cent drop on 2019.— AFP ■

Biden bets on shorter Covid-19 isolation time amid labour crunch

EYEING an Omicron surge that has exacerbated US labour stress especially in front-line industries, President Joe Biden's administration is betting shorter Covid-19 quarantine times will lessen the economic hit from the latest variant.

The announcement Monday to cut isolation times in half was cheered by airlines and hospitality industries, but sharply criticized by labour unions who question whether public health concerns have been short-changed.—AFP ■

After airlines cancelled thousands of flights due to Covid-19 cases, the Biden administration moved to cut the isolation time for Covid-positive workers. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

THE REPUBLIC OF THE UNION OF MYANMAR
MINISTRY OF ELECTRICTY AND ENERGY
MYANMA OIL AND GAS ENTERPRISE
(INVITATION FOR OPEN TENDER)
(7/2021-2022)

1. Open tenders are invited for supply of the following respective items in Myanmar Kyats.

Sr No.	Tender No.	Description	Remarks
(a)	DMP/L-001(21-22)CAP (MINI)(Retender)	14", 10", 4" HFERW API 5L Grade X-42 3LPE Coated Steel Line Pipe (3) Items	Ks

2. The Open Tender forms including Description of Materials / Qtty with details specifications and Tender Terms & Conditions can be available during office hours commencing from **30 December 2021** at the Finance Department, Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise, No. (44) Complex, Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar.
3. The interested Bidders should submit the **Technical Specifications with Original Bid Bond and Commercial Quotation in each separate sealed envelopes** on which to be addressed to the Managing Director, Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise and should reach in Tender Box of the Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise not later than **12:00 pm** on **20 January 2022**.
4. Tender Closing Date & Time – **20-1-2022, 12:00 pm**

Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise
Ph No. + 95 67 – 411206

Advertise with us/ Hot Line :09974424848

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE
M.V MCL 21

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V MCL 21 VOY. NO. (V11)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **29-12-2021** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **WILMAR** 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: **2301928**

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

M/S BEN LINE AGENCIES (S'PORE) PTE LTD

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE
M.V HANSA COBURG VOY.NO. (150S)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V HANSA COBURG VOY.NO. (150S)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **30-12-2021** 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 TOSEI MARU

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V TOSEI MARU VOY.NO. (V.203)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **31-12-2021** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **MITT** 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: **2301928**

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

M/S CHUN AN INTERNATIONAL LOGISTICS CO LTD

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE
M.V BRONCO

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V BRONCO VOY.NO. (V1)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **30-12-2021** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **WILMAR** 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: **2301928**

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

M/S BEN LINE AGENCIES (S'PORE) PTE LTD

Somalia's Farmajo and Roble: leaders at loggerheads

WHEN veteran diplomat Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed was elected president of Somalia in February 2017, supporters hoped he would provide stability in a failed state notorious for corruption and extremism.

But less than four years later, Somalia was plunged into a political crisis when the president extended his mandate without holding elections.

He is now locked in an escalating standoff with Prime Minister Mohamed Hussein Roble, who accuses him of an "attempted coup".

Here are portraits of the two rivals:

Bustup: President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed, left, and Prime Minister Mohamed Hussein Roble. **PHOTO: AFP**

Farmajo: Wily president

The 59-year-old president is popularly known as Farmajo, a name derived from the Italian word for cheese, although it is unclear why he earned this nickname.

He spent several years studying and working in the United States but gave up his American citizenship in 2019.

Farmajo was elected president by MPs in a converted aircraft hangar after a six-month voting process marred by widespread allegations of vote-buying and corruption.

The father of four inherited a deeply unstable nation where Al-Shabaab jihadists still hold swathes of countryside despite being routed from the capital Mogadishu in 2011.

"This is the beginning of unity for the Somali nation, the beginning of the fight against Shabaab and corruption," a triumphant Farmajo said.

Born in Mogadishu to activist parents from the Darod clan, the politically savvy Farmajo was welcomed by many Somalis who wanted change after a series of Hawiye presidents in a country where clan divisions dominate politics. He himself had served as prime minister for a brief stint in 2010-11 when he notably implemented the first monthly stipends for soldiers and established an anti-corruption commission.—AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Japan to join ASEAN's emergency hotline linking defence authorities

Japanese Defence Minister Nobuo Kishi said Tuesday that Japan will join ASEAN's emergency security hotline linking defence ministries, which the group aims to expand to major powers including the United States and China.

During a teleconference with his counterpart from Brunei, this year's chair of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, Kishi said his country will take part in and actively utilize the ASEAN Direct Communications Infrastructure known as the ADI, the Japanese Defence Ministry said in a press release.—Kyodo ■

UN nonproliferation talks to be postponed again due to pandemic

A UN conference on nuclear nonproliferation scheduled for next month is expected to be postponed again amid the surge of the Omicron variant of the novel coronavirus, diplomatic sources said Tuesday.

The gathering to review the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons was scheduled to be held 4 to 28 January in New York after repeated postponements from its original date in 2020 due to the pandemic.

The United States and some European countries have seen a sharp rise in COVID-19 cases with the advent of the Omicron variant, prompting authorities to bring back some restrictions at indoor venues and on public transportation.—Kyodo ■

Philippines to buy two new South Korean warships for $556M

THE Philippines has ordered two new warships from South Korea's Hyundai Heavy Industries, Defence Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said Tuesday, modernizing Manila's navy as it faces a maritime dispute with Beijing.

The Philippine Navy had become run down in recent decades — even featuring US craft from World War II — until President Rodrigo Duterte's predecessor, Benigno Aquino, began a modest modernization programme in 2010.

Tuesday's 28 billion pesos ($556 million) deal with the South Korean shipbuilding giant comes five years after the firm also won a contract to build two new frigates for the Philippine Navy.

Corvettes and frigates are small, fast warships mainly used to protect other vessels from attack.

"This project will give the Philippine Navy two modern corvettes that are capable of anti-ship, anti-submarine and anti-air warfare missions," Lorenzana said in a speech at the signing ceremony in Manila.

The deal "will ensure commonality and interoperability with our existing assets," he added, as well as "ease of maintenance and repairs".

Manila has since acquired two former US Coast Guard cutters and three landing craft from Australia, as well as coast guard patrol vessels from Japan.—AFP ■

Relatives of Philippine Navy sailors wave their national flags as the navy's newly-acquired vessel, the Pohang-class corvette BRP Conrado Yap (PS39), docks at the international port in Manila on 20 August 2019. **PHOTO: TED ALJIBE/AFP/FILE**

Yemen's Huthi rebels say a Saud-led coalition air strike on Sanaa airport last week forced the halt to UN aid flights into the rebel-controlled capital. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

Yemen rebels allow aid flights to resume after Saudi-led strikes

YEMEN'S Huthi rebels said Tuesday they have allowed the temporary resumption of UN aid flights into the capital Sanaa, a week after a halt due to Saudi-led coalition air strikes.

"The civil aviation authority announces the resumption of UN and other organization flights into Sanaa airport on a temporary basis," the rebel-run Al-Masirah television reported.

"The (rebel administration's) foreign ministry was contacted to notify the UN and all international organizations that Sanaa airport was ready to receive flights."

Yemen has been wracked by civil war since 2014 pitting the government — supported by the Saudi-led coalition — against the Iran-backed Huthis who control much of the north.

Tens of thousands of people have been killed, in what the United Nations has described as the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

Flights into the rebel-held capital have been largely halted by a Saudi-led blockade since August 2016, but there have been exemptions for aid flights that are a key lifeline for the population.—AFP ■

US sees possible progress in Iran nuclear talks

THE United States said Tuesday it had seen possible progress in talks with Iran but joined European negotiators in pressing for urgency in rolling back Tehran's nuclear programme.

Negotiations resumed Monday in Vienna in a fresh push to make headway on reviving a landmark 2015 agreement that curtailed Iran's nuclear activities in return for sanctions relief.

"There may have been some modest progress," State Department spokesman Ned Price told reporters in Washington.

"But it is in some ways too soon to say how substantive that progress may have been. At a minimum any progress, we believe, is falling short of Iran's accelerating nuclear steps and is far too slow."

Former president Donald Trump in 2018 withdrew from the nuclear accord and imposed a slew of punishing sanctions, including a unilateral US ban on Iran selling its key export of oil.

President Joe Biden supports a return to the agreement but Iran has kept taking steps away from compliance as it presses for sanctions relief.

This photo released 5 November 2019, by the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran, shows centrifuge machines in the Natanz uranium enrichment facility in central Iran. **PHOTO: ATOMIC ENERGY ORGANIZATION OF IRAN/AFP/FILE**

The Vienna talks began after Biden's election but stopped in June as Iran elected a new ultra-conservative government. They resumed in late November with Iran agreeing to keep talking after a brief break.

"This negotiation is urgent," negotiators from Britain, France and Germany said in a statement.

"We are clear that we are nearing the point where Iran's escalation of its nuclear programme will have completely hollowed out the JCPoA," the so-called E3 powers said, referring to the deal's official name by its acronym.

"That means we have weeks, not months, to conclude a deal before the JCPoA's core non-proliferation benefits are lost."

Israel, Iran's arch-enemy, has warned of military options if the Islamic republic's programme advances and is suspected in a shadowy campaign that has included the assassination of Tehran's top nuclear scientist.

The Biden administration has also warned of a return to pressure if talks fail and Iran pursues its nuclear work.— AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Hong Kong police raid local media outlet, arrest six for 'seditious publication'

HONG KONG police raided the office of local media outlet Stand News and arrested six current and former staff on Wednesday for "seditious publication".

Suppression of Hong Kong's local press has increased in the wake of huge and often violent democracy protests two years ago and the subsequent imposition of a sweeping national security law.

More than 200 officers were deployed to search the Stand News office with court authorization to seize journalistic materials, police said, confirming six arrests.

An AFP reporter saw Stand News acting editor-in-chief Patrick Lam being led handcuffed into the office building.

Shortly before dawn, Stand News had broadcast live on Facebook that national security police were outside the door of deputy assignment editor Ronson Chan.—AFP ■

Russia to consider shutting down Memorial's rights centre

A Moscow court on Wednesday hears a case against the rights centre of Memorial group, which chronicled Soviet-era purges, a day after the Supreme Court outlawed the main organisation in a watershed moment in Russia's history.

The ruling against Memorial International on Tuesday sparked an international outcry, with the United States, France and the Council of Europe condemning its closure.

Founded in 1989 by Soviet dissidents including Nobel Peace Prize laureate Andrei Sakharov, Memorial is Russia's most prominent rights organization. It has chronicled Stalin-era purges and also campaigned for the rights of political prisoners and other marginalized groups.

On Tuesday, Russia's Supreme Court ordered the closure of Memorial International, which maintains the network's extensive archives in Moscow and coordinates the work of regional offices.—AFP ■

US keeps carrier in Mediterranean amid Russia tensions

THE United States has ordered an aircraft carrier to remain in the Mediterranean in a bid to reassure European allies amid fears Russia will invade Ukraine, an official said Tuesday.

Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin ordered the USS Harry S Truman aircraft carrier strike group to stay in the region and hold off on its scheduled onward voyage to the Middle East.

The "schedule change reflects the need for a persistent presence in Europe, and is necessary to reassure our allies and partners of our commitment to collective defence," a defense official said.

The move comes despite an agreement by the United States and Russia to hold talks on 10 January on Geneva on tensions including over Ukraine.

President Joe Biden's administration has insisted on working in lockstep with European allies, with NATO representatives also slated to meet with Russia.

Crew members of US aircraft carrier USS Harry S Truman lift a missile into place on the wing of an F18 Hornet fighter jet on the flight deck of the ship in the eastern Mediterranean Sea in 2018. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**

Western officials say that Russia has amassed tens of thousands of troops near the Ukrainian border, raising fears of a repeat of 2014 when Moscow seized the Crimean peninsula and a pro-Moscow insurgency broke out in eastern Ukraine.

Russian President Vladimir Putin denies plans for an invasion but has called for security guarantees against an eastward expansion of NATO, the US-backed alliance.

The Harry S Truman carrier group set sail on 1 December from its base in Norfolk, Virginia on a regularly scheduled deployment.

Last week it conducted joint exercises with the Tunisian military before sailing east.—AFP ■

Debate on reforms sparks scuffles in Jordan parliament

A live-streamed televised debate in Jordan's parliament on constitutional reforms including gender equality degenerated into scuffles between MPs on Tuesday, forcing the session to be adjourned.

A heated row — amid much pushing and finger-wagging — broke out between deputies and parliament speaker Abdelkarim al-Daghmi.

The argument erupted during a debate on an amendment adding the female noun for a Jordanian citizen, to a chapter in the constitution guaranteeing equal rights of all citizens.

Several MPs angrily disputed the amendment as "useless", in the session broadcast on Al-Mamlaka television channel.

Daghmi walked out and the session was adjourned to Wednesday.

Among other constitutional reforms to be discussed are the creation of a "National Security Council", and the halving of the house speaker's mandate to one year from the current two-year terms.— AFP ■

Jordanian MPs are separated during a heated row in parliament in the capital Amman. **PHOTO: AFP**

Intense schedule makes Premier League glory sweeter: Guardiola

Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola. **PHOTO: AFP**

MANCHESTER City boss Pep Guardiola says winning the Premier League would be sweeter than ever given the intense schedule faced by top-flight teams this season.

Guardiola is one of many Premier League managers who believe the fixture list needs to be reduced during the Christmas period.

The festive programme and its implications for player welfare has been the subject of considerable debate,

Those issues have been exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic, with 16 Premier League games called off in December, leaving clubs facing a further fixture backlog later in the campaign.

Yet Guardiola has proved he can successfully negotiate the pitfalls of the packed English schedule, having won eight major trophies, including three Premier League titles, at the Etihad Stadium.

Reigning champions City are guaranteed to be top of the table heading into 2022.

Guardiola's men can move nine points clear of second placed Liverpool — beaten 1-0 by Leicester on Tuesday — if they win at Brentford on Wednesday.

"Right now we have games on the 29th and the first, two away fixtures against absolutely difficult, tough opponents. The Premier League is like this," Guardiola said as he looked ahead to the Brentford game and Saturday's trip to in-form Arsenal.

"That is why it is the most satisfying competition if you are able to win it. You play against all the big teams in different circumstances and you have to solve it. It will be no exception in the next two games."— 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.

No 'Big Three' would be disaster for Australian Open - Kyrgios

NICK Kyrgios has urged Rafael Nadal and Novak Djokovic to play at the Australian Open, saying Wednesday it would be a "disaster" if the 'Big Three' were missing.

Swiss ace Roger Federer has already pulled out as he recovers from a knee injury and Nadal's plans are unclear after contracting Covid-19.

Djokovic is on the entry list for the first Grand Slam of the year, which begins in less than three weeks, but has refused to confirm if he has been vaccinated, casting doubt on whether he will turn up.

Nick Kyrgios says tennis still needs the 'Big Three'. **PHOTO: AFP**

The dominant 'Big Three' have won 20 Grand Slam titles each and Kyrgios said tennis still needs them, starting in Melbourne next month.

"I honestly don't know Novak's current situation with anything Covid-related or what he needs to play," the colourful Kyrgios told the Melbourne Age newspaper.

"I hope he's had a good Christmas and I hope he's able to play in the sport for as long as possible because I've voiced before I think Federer, Nadal and Djokovic need to be (playing).

"If all three aren't there, it's a disaster. It's an absolute disaster for the fans and the people that enjoy tennis.

"Yes, it's obviously a good opportunity for some of the younger guys to come through and make an impact, but as a whole, we do need them to be part of the sport." Adding to the Australian Open woes, Dominic Thiem, who lost to Djokovic in a five-set classic in the 2020 final, said late Tuesday he would miss the event with a wrist injury.

Meanwhile, Russian world number five Andrey Rublev and Canada's Wimbledon semi-finalist Denis Shapovalov are also recovering from coronavirus, casting a shadow over their preparations.— AFP ■

Black Jack takes the honours at last in Sydney to Hobart race

SUPERMAXI Black Jack won the prestigious Sydney to Hobart yacht race on Tuesday ending years of frustrating near misses.

Owned by Australian Peter Harburg and skippered by Mark Bradford, Black Jack took line honours after a tight tussle with Law Connect on the River Derwent after two days 12 hours 37min and 17sec of racing.

For Harburg it was his first win in the race after several times falling short and comes in a boat named after Australian Formula One legend and three-time world champion Jack Brabham, who was also a friend of his.

Harburg's decision to stay on shore for the first time and not be on the boat — which he bought ahead of the 2017 race — paid off handsomely.

Indeed Harburg had been on board when it finished second (2018), third (2017) and fifth (2019) — the latter occasion it led before being overtaken by four other boats.—AFP ■

The Sydney to Hobart yacht race is one of the most challenging ocean events in the world. **PHOTO: AFP/FILE**