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.

The message sent by Chairman of the State Administration Council of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing to Kayin New Year Day

2 January 2022

Esteemed national people in Myanmar,

Today on 2 January 2022 which is also 2761 Kayin era and 1st Waxing of Pyatho 1383 Myanmar era, is the significant Kayin New Year Day, adored by Kayin ethnic people. As it is the significant New Year Day valued by all Kayin nationals, I extend greetings to all and pray for all Kayin nationals to be physical and mental wellbeing with auspiciousness.

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Fisheries export to Bangladesh earns over $6 million within 2 months

MYANMAR'S fisheries export to Bangladesh earned more than $6 million between mid-October to the end of December in the 2021-2022 financial year.

Within over two months, the marine export sector received more than $6 million, while there was only $4.77 million within nine months of the previous FY. Thus, the marine export netted much foreign income within a few months due to the income taxes of vessels that directly export to Teknaf land port in Bangladesh.

Export cargoes are loaded onto the vessel. **PHOTO: KA NU**

"The exports to Bangladesh collected $4.77 million during the previous FY. We brought in more than $6 million within two months and a half of the 2021-2022FY. The income is also secured from the vessels that directly export fisheries products to the port of Bangladesh. We always look for a way to earn income for the country and submit it to the state government. We discussed with state government officials and the department carried out effective systems to bring in the foreign income much more than the previous years," said U Thet Oo, the Head of the Fisheries Department of Rakhine State.

The Sittway and Maungtaw border trade camps of Rakhine State resumed operations on 14 October 2021. The department set an estimation to obtain extra income starting October and it received $5 per tonne of vessels and $50 for vessel registration. In November, it earned $1,025.59 for 11 vessels. Between October and December 2021, the 5,547.575 tonnes of freshwater fish and dried fish export generate $6,677,029.60.

Sixty-five per cent of freshwater products are exported to Bangladesh, while there is 75 per cent of freshwater Rohita. Other fish species, onion, jaggery and some seeds are also shipped to Bangladesh. Myanmar's fishery products are packaged and re-exported to the Middle East via Bangladesh.

The rice, dried anchovies, sea fish, corn, peanut and betel products of Rakhine State were exported to Bangladesh and currently, the operation is suspended, and the trade flow runs with the marine products of Yangon and upper Myanmar. The Rakhine State Fisheries Department obtained more than $6 million from the fisheries export within two months of the 2021-2022FY for the country.—Nyein Thu/GNLM

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Announcement on Extension of the Precautionary Restriction Measures Relating to Control of the COVID-19 Pandemic until 31 January 2022

1. With a view to the further strengthening of measures to contain the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has issued the following announcements regarding temporary entry restrictions for visitors from all countries. All those restrictions were extended until 31 December 2021 by the Ministry's announcement dated 30 November 2021.

(a) Announcement dated 15 March 2020 regarding precautionary measures for all travellers visiting Myanmar;
(b) Announcement dated 20 March 2020 regarding additional precautionary measures for travellers visiting Myanmar and temporary suspension of issuance of visa on arrival and e-visa;
(c) Announcement dated 24 March 2020 regarding additional precautionary measures for travellers from all countries visiting Myanmar;
(d) Announcement dated 28 March 2020 regarding temporary suspension of all types of visas (including social visit visas) and visa exemption services.

2. In order to continue its effective response measures to protect the population of the country from the risks of importation and spread of the COVID-19, the Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar has decided to extend the afore-mentioned entry restriction measures until 31 January 2022.

3. In case of urgent official missions or compelling reasons, foreign nationals, including diplomats and United Nations officials, who wish to travel to Myanmar by available relief or special flights, may contact the nearest Myanmar Mission for possible exceptions with regard to certain visa restrictions. However, all visitors must abide by existing directives issued by the Ministry of Health relating to the prevention and control of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Nay Pyi Taw
Dated. 1 January 2022

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

The Global New Light of Myanmar
www.gnlm.com.mm
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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.

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) Third Year (Honours) Semester I
(d) Master (Qualifying) Semester I
(e) Master (1st Year) Semester I
(f) Master (2nd Year) Semester I

Department of Higher Education
Ministry of Education

Yezin Agricultural University to reopen undergraduate, postgraduate classes

1. Yezin Agricultural University under the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation will open the following undergraduate and postgraduate classes for the Academic Year 2019-2020 and the Academic Year 2021-2022 on 6 January 2022.

(a) Fourth Year (Semester II)
(b) PhD (Semester I)
(c) Master (Semester I)
(d) Postgraduate Diploma (Semester I)
(e) Postgraduate Master of Philosophy (Semester I)

2. Vaccination must be reported at the time of enrolment with the immunization card. If the vaccine has not been administered yet, officials will continue to work with the Ministry of Health as soon as possible to provide the vaccine.

3. Details will be posted on the website www.yau.edu.mm. For more information, please call 0925-4325-155 and 0925-4023-383.

Yezin Agricultural University

112 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 1 January, total figure rises to 530,946

MYANMAR'S COVID-19 positive cases rose to 530,946 after 112 new cases were reported on 1 January 2022 according to the Ministry of Health. Among these confirmed cases, 508,487 have been discharged from hospitals. Death toll reached 19,272 after 4 died.—MNA

The most important thing is the strength of the patriotic people, who love their nation and people and aspire for national integrity, peace and stability, and development. We shall build a nation that is modern and developed which practises a genuine, discipline-flourishing democratic system as well as the future of Myanmar in line with the aspirations of the national people of Myanmar through honest politics. Collaborative efforts of all ethnic nationals are solemnly requested in this regard.

(Excerpt from the speech delivered by State Administration Council Chairman Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing on the occasion of the six-month period in the assumption of State responsibilities on August 2021.)

The message sent by Chairman of the State Administration Council of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing to Kayin New Year Day

2 January 2022

FROM PAGE-1

Everybody knows the New Year ceremony has been held in auspiciousness happily and pleasantly on Thalayhtaikhokpo 1st Waxing of Pyatho yearly since BC 739 when Kayin forefathers started settlements in Myanmar. On the occasion of the Kayin New Year which has already passed the old year, I firmly believe that all would be physical and mental freshness and activeness after taking lessons from the experiences of the past.

Although all ethnic national people residing in Myanmar together have diverse customs and traditions, they all foster the family spirit and pay respect to each other. No matter how diverse their native, literature, language, religion, customs and traditions are, they all live in the same place in unison through thick and thin by sharing their future.

According to the historical evidence, all Kayin ethnic nationals residing in Myanmar are humble with honesty and peace as their nature bearing a smile each forever. They all are brave and faithful. In line with their long history, Kayin nationals possess fine traditions and customs as well as invaluably cultural heritage of their forefathers.

As Kayin State, a hub of the border trade is teeming with virgin natural scenic beauties, rich natural resources and valuable forests, it is a state with successful agricultural tasks under favourable weather. The most significant symbol of Kayin State is the River Thanlwin as well as the cultural emblem of Kayin ethnic nationals is the ceremonial bronze drum. The New Year festival, the housewarming ceremony, the new harvest feast and the festival of summoning the spirit of a dead person are famous in Kayin State and the Kayin don dance is a favourite of the people. These cultural heritages are invaluable for Kayin ethnic nationals.

Kayin ethnic nationals residing in Myanmar and all Kayin ethnic brethren from all parts of the nation have to preserve the traditions and customs in unison and hand them over to new generations. I'd like to urge new ethnic national generations of the future to continuously maintain the language, literature, culture, fine arts, customs, historical heritage, honesty, hard work, loyalty and precise acts that the forefathers of Kayin ethnic national had preserved in successive eras. If all national people from the country always sustain their fine traditions, the Union will be in perpetual existence.

Thanks to a good attitude over the country, Kayin ethnic nationals can enjoy the fruits of peace in addition to development. Improving these good results and sustaining the legacy of peace for their posterity is a historical duty of Kayin ethnics.

Currently, the State Administration Council is taking various responsibilities of the State in accord with the Constitution by adopting the five-point road map and nine political, economic and social objectives as its basic principles while expediting the efforts for peace and stability of the country, development and improvement of socio-economy of the ethnic national people with might and main.

All Kayin ethnic nationals should accept courage based on wisdom and braveness based on compassion are noble spirits, and they are heartily invited to join hands with the government in shaping a better New Year.

The government is making utmost efforts for building a Union based on democracy and federalism in accord with the aspiration of the entire national people. The basic factor to strengthen the genuine and disciplined democracy of the nation is Our Three Main National Causes—Non-disintegration of the Union, Non-disintegration of national solidarity and Perpetuation of sovereignty.

Hence, I'd like to urge all ethnic national people to continuously build the nation through their united strength.

The perpetuity of the Union, development and peace and prosperity of all ethnic nationals primarily need the strong and dynamic Union spirit and restoration of the perpetual peace in the nation. Hence, all ethnic nationals and stakeholders need to participate in these measures. The government is striving for enabling all ethnic armed organizations to sign the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement-NCA for restoring the perpetual peace. Officials and stakeholders need to harmoniously implement the plan in unison with the true goodwill and the keen wishes.

I send this message while praying for all Kayin ethnic national brethren to be able to enjoy fruits of good wishes and welcome the pleasant New Year with noble spirit as well as for the whole country including Kayin State to have peace and stability, unity and development while happily enjoying the New Year festival.

Sd/Min Aung Hlaing
Senior General
Prime Minister
Chairman
State Administration Council

Union Minister Dr Charlie Than inspects Zayawady Sugar Mill, No (3) Industrial Training Centre (Thagaya)

UNION Minister for Industry Dr Charlie Than inspected the Zayawady Sugar Mill in Pyu Township of Bago Region on 31 December.

Regarding the explanation of the factory in charge, the Union minister underlined the need to make a plan for full capacity during sugarcane season, purchase the spare parts of machines in advance, save the raw materials, emphasize the safety of consumers and reduce the sugar import volume.

He also talked about the sugarcane grinding processes, cultivation of sugarcane with the plans of the mill, production of quality sugarcane species for local sugarcane farmers to improve their income and living standard and educating programmes.

At noon, the Union Minister visited No (3) Industrial Training Centre in Yedashe Township and met with the instructors and trainees.

During the visit, he discussed the continuous learning of students and conducting of ToT (Training of Trainer) and other matters. He then cordially greeted the students and inspected the dormitories. — MNA

Yangon Mayor inspects city drainage system

MINISTER for Yangon Region Development Affairs Mayor U Bo Htay inspected the construction of a water ground tank in Thaephyuchaung in Miyata Ward of Mingala Taungnyunt Township together with YCDC deputy chairman, secretary and members yesterday.

The water ground tank is constructed at the confluence of Thaephyuchaung and drainage canal so that the water can be temporarily stored at high tide and flood can be also prevented in Mingala Taungnyunt and Pazundaung townships.

Then, the mayor and party also examined the construction of Linear Park on the old Thakayta Bridge over Pazundaung Creek and gave necessary instructions.

The officials went to the construction site of RC Ground Tank that can store 100,000 gallons of water in Yangon City Hall of Kyauktada Township at noon and offered necessary guidance.—MNA

MoC facilitates imports of anti-COVID-19 equipment

THE Ministry of Commerce is overseeing imports 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.

From 1 December 2021 to 1 January 2022, a total of 364 tonnes of liquid oxygen carried by 218 vehicles, two empty oxygen (gas) tanks, three oxygen containers, three oxygen distributors, 13,001 empty oxygen tanks, four oxygen plants, 661 oxygen concentrators, 1,957 COVID-19 test kits, 35,180 PPE suits, 32 tonnes of gloves and 1,169 tonnes of the mask were imported.

In the meantime, 16 bowsers transported liquid oxygen to Yangon, two to Mandalay, and one to Monywa and three oxygen plants were also transported to Mandalay and one to Muse respectively.

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

Public Notice

THE flag hoisting and message reading ceremony to mark the 74th Independence Day will be conducted at the City Hall of Nay Pyi Taw. The road section from the municipal guesthouse traffic light on the Pyinmana-Taungnyo road in Zabuthiri Township of Nay Pyi Taw to the Thabyaygon Market traffic light corner will be blocked from 02:00 am to 08:00 am on the dress rehearsal day 2-1-2022 and the day of ceremony 4-1.2022.

The people can use a detour from the municipal guesthouse traffic light on the Pyinmana-Taungnyo road in Zabuthiri Township of Nay Pyi Taw to Taw Win Yadana road heading to Shwekyapin traffic light or from the Thabyaygon Market traffic light corner to Padauk street heading to Ayeyawady road on these two days.

Nay Pyi Taw Supervisory Committee for Traffic Rules Enforcement

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Press release on statement of UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Martin Griffiths

IT is learnt that the UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Martin Griffiths released a statement containing five points on 26 December 2021 regarding the causalities of civilians near Moso Village of Prusho Township of Kayah State occurred on 24 December 2021.

The statement said at least 35 civilians have been killed including a child, and two workers from the Save the Children remained missing after their vehicles were attacked and burned in the incident. He condemned the grievous incident and all attacks against civilians throughout the country. He called upon the authorities to immediately commence a thorough and transparent investigation into the incident so that perpetrators can be swiftly brought to justice. He also called for Myanmar Tatmadaw and all armed groups in Myanmar to take all measures in order to protect civilians from harm.

Since Tatmadaw temporarily took over the State responsibilities under the 2008 Constitution on 1 February 2021, it adopted the least force to systematically control the protest crowds, armed attacks and violent incidents in line with the existing law and international norms. During its assumption of the State power, the State Administration Council has laid down the five-point roadmap and nine objectives for the stability of the State, the rule of law and community peace.

When the SAC makes efforts with specific aims and ambitions, the terrorist groups CRPH and NUG announced D-Day on 7 September 2021 to launch terrorist attacks across the nation along with some ethnic armed organizations and their subordinates PDF terrorists.

After their announcement, the terrorist groups accelerated their attacks on security forces in some places of Kayin, Kayah and Chin states, Sagaing and Yangon regions and they especially killed unarmed civilians and government employees, including the ones who do not support them under the name of informants, took the valuable things by forces, committed arson attacks on buildings and properties and threatened to support them. The cases expressed in the statement of UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Martin Griffiths occurred as follows: - On the morning of 24 December, the security members of Kayah State arrived near Moso Village of Prusho Township.

When they stopped seven vehicles for security inspection but they did not stop their cars and shot them using small firearms, and ran away. Then, about 10 terrorists who were waiting on the hills of the village attacked with RPG, 40mm launcher and other arms. Therefore, security forces inevitably counter-attacked them. In the incident, KNPP and PDF terrorists, including newcomers for explosive training, were arrested dead together with one M-16, one point-22, three percussion lock firearms, seven grenades, 25 M-16 bullets, two magazines, guerilla uniforms and other related materials. The seven vehicles carrying petrol, diesel and foodstuffs collected from the villages by force for the terrorist groups were burnt.

That terrorist group also attacked the passenger flight with rockets at Loikaw airport on the same day and they ran away in their normal suits, according to the residents. The news has also announced via the State-run media channels and newspapers on 24 December 2021.

After CRPH and NUG terrorist groups declared D-Day, numerous attacks, including this incident, targeting civilians occurred in some regions of the country.

Terrorist groups colluded with unscrupulous media outlets and journalists that do not want peace and stability in the country and the plot was drawn up based on their whims and fancies to occur such misleading comments. It is here announced that the security forces strictly follow the rule of engagement-ROE and serve duties not to harm the people according to the international conventions. — MNA

Passenger plane shot by KNPP members, PDF terrorists while landing at Loikaw Airport

A flight of the Myanmar National Airlines landed at Loikaw Airport at about 8:35 am yesterday.

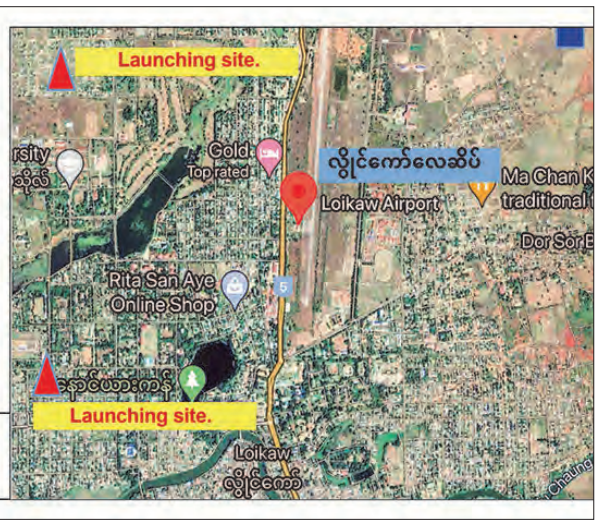
Meanwhile, a combined team, including KNPP members and PDF terrorists, arrived in the wards and shot it down with 107mm rockets.

The flight carrying 64 passengers left for Loikaw from Yangon and landed at Loikaw Airport.

Then, the group containing KNPP members and PDF terrorists attacked the flight with four 107mm rockets from the cemetery near Bardoe Village in Daw Paw Kale Village-tract in the west of Loikaw Township.

The rockets exploded at about 2,000 metres from the airport and no one was injured. The flight returned to Yangon carrying 38 passengers at about 8:55 am.

The KNPP members and PDF terrorists intentionally committed attacks on people who are not related to military affairs to cause mass casualties. Security forces investigated to arrest the terrorists. — MNA



The 107mm rocket launching site.

The 107mm rocket launching site and news item.

Four killed, one injured in Pyuntaza explosion

FOUR men were killed and one was injured when a landmine exploded while five men were planting the landmines to carry out acts of violence in Pyuntaza, Nyaunglebin Township, Bago Region.

According to reports, the explosion took place in Myoma (3) ward in Pyauntaza at around 7:30 pm on 31 December, and security forces went to investigate it.

Aung Pyae Sone Tun, Kyaw Swar and Si Thu Tun were found dead with landmine injuries all over their bodies on the left side of a one-story RC building owned by U Soe Thein in Myoma (3) Ward, while Aung Myint Myat Tun was found dead with landmine injuries on his lower body.

According to the reports, U Soe Thein's son Zin Ko Lwin, 26-year-old, Aung Pyae Sone Tun, Kyaw Swar and Si Thu Tun were injured in an explosion while planting a landmine for use in acts of violence.

There were taken to Pyuntaza Hospital for treatment. Security forces searched the house in detail and seized a damaged pistol and two rounds of ammunition near the scene of the blast.

Zin Ko Lwin, who was involved in the incident, was found dead with a landmine wound on the roof of his house, which was about 12 feet high.

The bodies of four men, including Zin Ko Lwin, who died in an explosion, were taken to Pyuntaza Hospital.

Security forces are still working to identify and arrest those involved in the incident.—MNA

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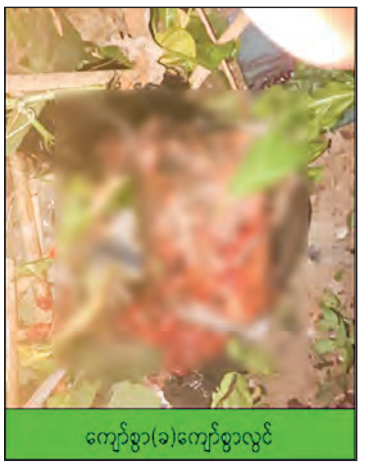
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Deputy Construction Minister inspects road, bridge development

DEPUTY Minister for Construction U Win Pe inspected the Yangon-Pyay-Aunglan-Magway section carried out by MAX Highway Co; Ltd by the (BOT) system on the morning of 31 December.

He also inspected the completion of the Kyay Ni Creek Bridge at Mile (225/6 - 226/0) and ordered the completion of bridge access roads and the installation of safety signs.

Next, the Deputy minister and party arrived at the Ayeyawady Bridge (Thayat-Aunglan) Construction Project Hall and person-in-charge of the bridge construction project and Deputy Director-General U Khin Maung Swe of the Department of Bridges explained the construction of the Ayeyawady Bridge (Thayat-Aunglan).

The MoC deputy minister inspects the road and bridge development.

After that, the Deputy minister discussed water safety, bridge load capacity, and ongoing action plan on approach roads,

He also instructed officials to work in accordance with the regulations to ensure the safety of the workplace and to prevent the spread of COVID-19 disease.

After that, the Deputy Minister and party crossed the Ayeyawady River by car and drove along the waterfront road to inspect the operation of the RP9 Bored Pile.

The Ayeyawady Bridge (Thayat-Aunglan) is an important crossing of the Ayeyawady River across the Kyaukpyu Special Economic Zone.

The Deputy minister and party visited Thayat District. Construction of (Aunglan-Sambula) Road by the Department of Rural Road Development in Aunglan Township.

He also inspected concrete paving work and earthworks of Shwebontha-Ywathaya Road in Pantaung Township, Pyay District, Hinthada District and completion of new Pauk Tu Chaung Bridge in Ywathitgyi Village, Ahlone Village-Tract, Kyan Khin Township.

Then, the Deputy minister and party arrived in Pathein and inspected the strength of the Pathein Bridge. — MNA

Returnees come back home through Lay Kay Kaw; officials provide necessary health check-ups

KAYIN State people from villages in the Lay Kay Kaw area returned to their respective places, authorities said.

Terrorists were identified and arrested by the security forces in the new town of Lay Kay Kaw, but the remaining group has been calling for violence on 15 December, with innocent civilians fleeing to the other side of the border.

The area has been under the control of security forces since 28 December, and loudspeakers have been used to bring back innocent civilians fleeing to other parts of the country using both Myanmar and Kayin languages.

The returnees were systematically accepted by the relevant authorities, officials said.

A total of 1,484 returnees, including 636 men and 848 women, are among those fleeing.

A total of 5,872, including 2,712 male returnees and 3160 female returnees, have arrived back to date.

Health officials from relevant public hospitals, members of the Tatmadaw Medical Corps conducted medical check-ups and provided quarantine entry documents and systematically explained the instructions of the Ministry of Health.

Officials from the Regional Command and departmental officials also coordinated the medical and other needs. —MNA

Returnees from villages in the Lay Kay Kaw area.

Visitors throng Mann Shwesettaw Pagoda during new year holidays

PILGRIMS visited Mann Shwesettaw Pagoda in Minbu (Sagu) Township of Minbu District in Magway Region during the new year holidays, according to the pagoda board of trustees.

On 1 January 2022, the lower and upper Buddha's footprints at Mann Shwesettaw Pagoda were crowded with visitors, including day-trippers who donated flowers, candles and water to the pagoda and chanted Parittas and Pathana. Stalls were also packed with visitors and there were people playing water in Mann Creek daily, said U Thein Hlaing, in charge of the lower Buddha's footprint.

The temporary bamboo bridges and wooden bridges for vehicles to the lower Buddha's footprint were also constructed for pilgrims to pay for visits conveniently and peacefully. — Maung Maung (Minbu)/GNLM

Daily newspapers available online

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News and Periodicals Enterprise

Rubber price reaches around K1,000 per viss despite raw rubber entering market

ALTHOUGH raw rubber materials are entering the market, the rubber price still hit around K1,000 per viss, according to Myanmar rubber entrepreneurs.

Currently, the prevailing price of local 3 rubber fetched K990 per pound (0.45 kilogrammes), while the local 3 ribbed smoked sheet (RSS) hit K 1,000 per pound in the market. Due to the market demand and the Kyat revaluation in the local foreign market, the rubber price is still hiking in the market, it is learnt.

There is demand from China and the dollar exchange rate against Myanmar Kyat stood at around K1,900 per dollar.

Consequently, although the resumption of the rubber plantation starting from last September and the availability of raw rubber in the market has increased, the price of rubber is unlikely to fall lower than K700 as last year due to rising market demand and international exchange rate, according to the rubber traders.

Rubber is primarily cultivated in Mon and Kayin states and Taninthayi, Bago, and Yangon regions in Myanmar.

Nevertheless, the prices of raw rubber materials aren't likely to rise to continue in the future. The local 3 or RSS5 lower quality rubbers are vastly produced in Mon State. As China is also purchasing these low-quality rubbers mostly, the price is likely to fluctuate around K1,000 per pound, the rubber trader predicted.

Regarding the trade route to China, the previous closed Chinshwehaw border trade post has permitted the re-import of industrial agricultural raw products such as sugarcane, rubber, tragacanth gum herb and cotton, making it easier to export rubber products.

Similarly, the Kyinsankyawt border post which has been shut down earlier was reopened on 26 November and the rubber is being exported through it.

Rubber is primarily cultivated in Mon and Kayin states and Taninthayi, Bago, and Yangon regions in Myanmar. As per 2018-2019 rubber seasons' data, there are over 1.628 million acres of rubber plantations in Myanmar with Mon State accounting for 497,153 acres, followed by Taninthayi Region 348,344 acres and Kayin State with 270,760 acres, according to the MRPPA.

Further, about 300,000 tonnes of rubber are produced annually across the country. Seventy per cent of rubber made in Myanmar goes to China. In addition to China, the country also shipped rubber to Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, Viet Nam, the Republic of Korea, India, Japan, and other countries. In the last FY 2020-21, the country generated $449.10 million from the export of raw rubber to foreign countries, according to the official statistics of the Ministry of Commerce. — NN/GNLM

New monsoon onions enter Pakokku market with price hitting around K500 per viss

THE new monsoon onions are abundantly entering the Pakokku market at the end of December and the maximum price of onion hit around K500 per viss due to the lack of demand, according to the onion traders.

The monsoon onion from Pakokku and Yesagyo townships have been sold at a low price since it entered the market, making it difficult for local farmers to get a profit.

The highest and the lowest monsoon onion price are currently fixed around K400-600 per viss on 25 December and K400-K500 per viss on 27 December.

"Earlier, the onion price went up slightly as more and more the onions are being purchased. About 200,000 visses of onion have entered the market today.

But the price of onion dropped to K100 per viss in the market on the back of weak demand. The local growers are unhappy with the current prevailing price of onion," said a local trader from Pakokku Township.

Since 2020, the onion growers have suffered extreme losses on a downward trend of the onion price. In 2021, the farmers have suffered losses again for two years constantly because the onion price is still falling in the market.

The onions are primarily grown in Mandalay, Magway and Yangon regions, Nay Pyi Taw and Shan State. — Aye Maung/GNLM

Agricultural export down by $90.7 mln as of 17 Dec

THE value of agricultural exports plunged to US$827.97 million as of 17 December in the current mini-budget period (October 2021-March 2022), indicating a drop of $90.7 million as against the year-ago period, as per the statistic of the Ministry of Commerce.

The agro exports stood at $918.75 million in the corresponding period of the 2020-2021FY.

The figures dropped only after China gave the go-ahead to border trade. China's import regulations and prevention measures for the COVID-19 caused a delay, exporters said.

The use of Yuan or Kyat in the bilateral transaction is officially allowed in the border areas between Myanmar and China in a bid to encourage trade. Therefore, trade is expected to increase in the coming months.

China constitutes 90 per cent of Myanmar's fruit and vegetable exports. During the previous financial year, the closure of border posts by China adversely affected the fruit growers.

During the mini-budget period, the coronavirus pandemic impacted the foreign demand for agricultural products, livestock, mineral and finished industrial goods. On the contrary, the exports of the fishery, forest products and other goods rose slightly.

In the exports sector, the agriculture industry performed the best, accounting for 37 per cent of overall exports. The chief items of export in the agricultural sector are rice and broken rice, pulses and beans and maize. Fruits and vegetables, sesame, dried tea leaves, sugar, and other agro products are also shipped to other countries.

Myanmar agro products are primarily exported to China, Singapore, Malaysia, the Philippines, Bangladesh, India, and Sri Lanka. Sometimes, the export market remains uncertain due to unsteady global demand.

The country requires specific export plans for each agro product, as they are currently exported to external markets based upon supply and demand. The G-to-G pact also ensures a strong market for the farmers. Contract farming systems, involvement of regional and state agriculture departments, exporters, traders, and some grower groups, are required to meet production targets, the Agriculture Department stated.

The Commerce Ministry is endeavouring to help farmers deal with challenges such as high input costs, procurement of pedigree seeds, high cultivation costs, and erratic weather conditions. The agricultural exports jumped to US$4.6 billion in the financial year 2020-2021, despite the downward trend in other export groups. — KK/GNLM

Myanmar agro products are primarily exported to China, Singapore, Malaysia, the Philippines, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka.

Firmly join hands to restore perpetual peace

ALTHOUGH all ethnic national people residing in Myanmar together have diverse customs and traditions, they all foster the family spirit and pay respect to each other. No matter how diverse their native, literature, language, religion, customs and traditions are, they all live in the same place in unison through thick and thin by sharing their future.

Based on the historical evidence, all Kayin ethnic nationals residing in entire Myanmar are humble with honesty and peace as their nature bearing a smile each forever. In line with the long history of Kayin ethnic people, they possess fine traditions and customs as well as invaluably cultural heritages of their forefathers.

> Peace is not a trademark for a specific person or group. Truly, peace is a national concern. Hence, all ethnic nationals have the equal term of rights to enjoy the fruits of perpetual peace in happiness and pleasure.

Kayin ethnics scatter in all regions and states. Likewise, various ethnicities are residing in Kayin State. It shows the acts of integrated living of ethnic nationals.

As part of maintaining tangibly and intangibly natural symbols, Kachin ethnic can be seen together with Manaw festival, Kayah ethnics with the Ngwetaung Dam, Kayin ethnics with the ceremonial bronze drum, Chin ethnics with Rhododendron flower, Bamar ethnics with Pathein parasol, Mon ethnics with Ruddy Shelduck, Rakhine ethnics with Byal and Shan ethnics with the traditional long drum.

The New Year festival, the housewarming ceremony, the new harvest feast and the festival of summoning the spirit of a dead person are famous in Kayin State, and the Kayin don dance is a favourite of the people. Kayin State with valuable cultural heritages is teeming with virgin lands and scenic beauties attracting local and foreign travellers.

All Kayin ethnic nationals across the nation have to preserve the traditions and customs. To maintain an actual situation of living beings and cultural heritages, not only Kayin ethnic nationals but all national races need to restore the perpetual peace.

The government is making utmost efforts for building a Union based on democracy and federalism in accord with the aspiration of the entire national people. The basic factor to strengthen the genuine and disciplined democracy of the nation is Our Three Main National Causes—Non-disintegration of the Union, Non-disintegration of national solidarity and Perpetuation of sovereignty.

Peace is not a trademark for a specific person or group. Truly, peace is a national concern. Hence, all ethnic nationals have the equal term of rights to enjoy the fruits of perpetual peace in happiness and pleasure.

■ ■ ■

Why law matters so much?

By U Khin Maung (A retired diplomat)

Introduction

FIRST and foremost, please allow me to assert with all my sincerity and honesty that law is so delicate, so demanding, so difficult and so wide a subject that nobody could claim that he knows all the best about the laws. As such, there is a common and simple concept that "a good lawyer is the one who knows where to find the law, applicable and relevant to the case. Anyway, let's study what law means? In essence, "law" is the regime that orders human activities and relations through the systematic application of the force of politically organized society or social pressure, backed by force, in such a society. It is the legal system.

Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines the term "Law" as follows:

"Law is the whole system of rules that everyone in a country or society must obey." According to a great philosopher, Aristotle, "Law is a form of order, good law means, therefore, good order." Generally speaking, there are two main kinds of laws: local law or domestic law and international law. In brief, domestic law means the law of, or the law relating to one's own country. It is also known as the law of the land. International law is "the legal principles governing the relationships between nations, more modernly, the law of international relations, embracing not only nations but also such participants as international organizations, multinational corporations, non-governmental organizations and even individuals (such as those who invoke their human rights or commit war crimes.)

Some significant legal terms and their meanings.

There are quite a number of significant legal terms and their meanings in our daily life. To mention just a few, they may be as mentioned below:

(A) Equality before the law.
(B) Ignorance of the law is no excuse.
(C) Law and order.
(D) The Rule of Law etc.

Out of those few, I would like to emphasize the rule of law, and law and order. "Law and Order" are often equated with the rule of law, and in that equation, the punitive and deterrent functions of law tend to be emphasized. In Parliament (The Pyithu Hluttaw) when emergency powers are demanded by the "Government". so that may uphold the rule of law, the justification invariably is that the legislative sanction for such powers is granted by proper procedure; rule of law is therefore observed both in the motives for the legislation and in the processes that are employed for the legislation.1

Concerning the rule of law, may I explain as follows:

"The rale of law" — This phrase means equality before the law, fair play, uniformity of laws for all private citizens and public officials alike. It also means that disputes and differences will be taken to the courts and peacefully settled. Law and order are often equated with the rule of law. Therefore, I would like to say that law is a necessity for the citizens, for the organizations, for the associations, for the states etc, so as to enjoy peace, harmony and development, such as economic development, technological development etc. The law here means both the law of the land or municipal law and the international law.

In connection with the significance of the rule of law, the first Prime Minister of our independent and sovereign union, U Nu said in the address to the Parliament (The Pyithu Hluttaw) "is to base all our activities firmly on the rule of law."2 And the chairman of the State Administration Council, and the Prime Minister, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing also expresses the significance of the rule of law on every occasion, relevant, proper, and necessary.

May I assert emphatically that "law is founded on morality, and morality finds its foundation in the moral integrity of the individual? Destroy this and we destroy the law." "Law is not, or must not be reduced to mere words in statute books and legal decisions, but is, or should be, an active, ceaseless social process that runs like a nervous system in the living society. Living laws are needed for a living society, and the bloodstream of law needs to be constantly renewed and nourished so that it may accommodate the change in its continuity, youth in its age."3

In conclusion, may I now mention our Myanmar old saying? To express that old saying in English, even though not exactly, but in essence quite similar, it may read as follows: -

"Knowledge and wisdom safeguard our health and raise our life span." "Luck and fortune safeguard our wealth and property".4 So we must change our behaviour and follow the Health Ministry's do's and don'ts instructions, rules and regulations in connection with the Covid-19 pandemic. What do you say, sir?

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WHO: 2022 can mark the end of COVID's acute stage

The UN health agency chief expressed optimism during a press briefing on Wednesday that 2022 maybe the year the world ends the acute stage of the COVID-19 pandemic.

WORLD Health Organization (WHO) Director-General Tedros Ghebreyesus reminded that it was two years ago, as people gathered for New Year's Eve celebrations, that a new global threat emerged.

Since then, 1.8 million deaths were recorded in 2020 and 3.5 million in 2021, but the actual number is much higher. There are also millions of people dealing with long-term consequences from the virus.

Tsunami of cases

Right now, Delta and Omicron are driving up cases to record numbers, leading to spikes in hospitalizations and deaths.

Tedros is "highly concerned" that the more transmissible Omicron, circulating at the same time as Delta, is leading to "a tsunami of cases".

Earlier in the year, during meetings of the world's biggest economies – the G7 and G20 – WHO challenged leaders to vaccinate 40 per cent of their populations by the end of 2021 and 70 per cent by the middle of 2022.

With only a couple of days left in the year, 92 out of 194 Member States missed the target.

Tedros attributed this to low-income countries receiving a limited supply for most of the year and then subsequent vaccines arriving close to expiry, without cost lives and provided the virus with opportunities to circulate unchecked and mutate", he said.

The WHO chief warned that boosters in rich countries could cause low-income countries to

Shoppers return to the central business district in Melbourne, Australia, on 7 July 2021, after the city announced an easing of COVID-19 restrictions. **PHOTO: WILLIAM WEST/AFP/FILE**

key parts, like syringes.

New goals

"Forty per cent was doable. It's not only a moral shame, it again fall short and called on leaders of wealthy countries and manufacturers to work together to reach the 70 per cent goal by July.

"This is the time to rise above short-term nationalism and protect populations and economies against future variants by ending global vaccine inequity", he said.

"We have 185 days to the finish line of achieving 70 per cent by the start of July 2022. And the clock starts now".

Successes

Early on, Tedros acknowledged that beating the new health threat would require science, solutions, and solidarity.

While elaborating on some successes, such as the development of new vaccines, which he said "represent a scientific masterclass", the WHO official lamented that politics too often triumphed over solidarity.

"Populism, narrow nationalism and hoarding of health tools, including masks, therapeutics, diagnostics and vaccines, by a small number of countries undermined equity, and created the ideal conditions for the emergence of new variants", Tedros said.

Moreover, misinformation and disinformation, have also been "a constant distraction, undermining science and trust in lifesaving health tools".

He highlighted as a case in point that huge waves of infections have swept Europe and many other countries causing the unvaccinated to die disproportionally.

The unvaccinated are many times more at risk of dying from either variant.

Future

As the pandemic drags on, new variants could become fully resistant to current vaccines or past infection, necessitating vaccine adaptations.

For Tedros, as any new vaccine update could mean a new supply shortage, it is important to build up local manufacturing supply.

One way to increase production of lifesaving tools, he said, is to pool technology, as in the new WHO Bio Hub System, a mechanism to voluntarily share novel biological materials.

Tedros also pointed to the new WHO Hub for Pandemic and Epidemic Intelligence, based in Berlin.

Finally, the WHO chief called for the development of a new accord between nations, saying it would be "a key pillar" of a world better prepared to deal with the next disease.

SOURCE: UN

■ ■ ■

Myanmar Daily Weather Report

(Issued at 7:00 pm Saturday 1 January 2022)

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

FORECAST VALID UNTIL NOON OF THE 2 January 2022: Light rain are likely to be isolated in Yangon, and Taninthayi regions and Kachin, Eastern Shan and Mon states. Degree of certainty is (60%). Weather will be partly cloudy in the remaining regions and states.

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

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

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 2 January 2022: Partly cloudy.

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 2 January 2022: Partly cloudy.

FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 2 January 2022: Partly cloudy.

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Total border trade value drips nearly $954 mln over first two months of mini-budget year

OVER the first two months of the current mini-budget year of the 2021-22 financial year, the total border trade value exceeded US$1.254 billion, down nearly $954 million compared with the same period of the previous year, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

The first two months of the mini-budget year has seen a decrease in trade of nearly $495 million compared to the last year, that is, from over $ 10.140 billion to $1.254 billion.

In the 2020-21FY, the total border trade value includes $6.890 billion in exports and $3.250 billion in imports. In the 2019-20FY, the total border trade value was shared by the export of $7.187 billion and the import of $3.447 billion.

The country conducts border trade with neighbouring China through Muse, Lweje, Kampaiti, Chinshwehaw and Kengtung checkpoints, with Thailand via Tachilek, Myawady, Kawthoung, Myeik, Hteekhee, Mawtaung and Meisei crossings, with Bangladesh via Sittway and Maungtaw and with India through Tamu and Reed border posts, respectively.

Myanmar's major export items are agro, animal, marine, forest and industrial finished products and other products. Myanmar mainly imports capital goods, raw materials, personal goods and CMP products. — ACM/GNLM

Seizures of illegal products

ACCORDING to the supervision of the Anti-Illegal Trade Steering Committee, effective actions are being taken to prevent illegal trade. On 31 December, the officials inspected the motorcycle spare parts in TEMU-3911040 (1x40') container imported from China at Asia World Port Terminal and seized K105.215 million worth of 10 motorcycle spare parts and K22.56 million worth of network camera recorder 46U.

On 30 December, at Myanmar Industrial Port, the officials examined five items imported from China in ZCSU-T243403 (1x40') container with ID No, 100191620541 (19.12.2021) and there was only one correct item - Item (1) Induction Cooker (1) and other four items were missing. The action was taken for four items that are not included in ID that worth K68.4 million and K6.352 million worth of two chemical items.

Similarly, at Myanmar Industrial Port, the authorities inspected 8 items imported from China in ZC5U-T784408 (1x40') with ID No. 100191619621 (19.12.2021) on 30 December. There was only one correct item- Item (2) Racking System in ID. The remaining 7mitems were not included. They took action against K5.682 million worth of 6 chemical items, K19.03 million worth of 11 cosmetic items, K59.81 million worth of 3 commodities and K10.5 million worth of three vantage clothes.

At Myanmar Industrial Port, 11 items imported from China with ID No. 100191618661 (19.12.2021) were inspected on 30 December. There were only seven items that conform with the ones expressed in ID and the other four items are not included.

The officials took action against K3.115 million worth of two chemical items which are not expressed in ID, K25.43 million worth of seven phone battery items, K11.54 million worth of 6 cosmetic items, K4.36 million worth of four food items and K4.362 million worth of 5 commodity items.

Therefore, on 31 December, there was one arrest which is worth K127.775 million at Asia World Port Terminal, while three arrests were worth K218.581 million at Myanmar Industrial Port. The committee will proceed in line with the Customs procedures regarding these four arrests, according to the committee. — MNA

Domestic gold price soars to K1,823,000 per tical in New Year

THE domestic gold price has mounted to K1,823,000 per tical (0.578 ounces or 0.016 kilogrammes) on New Year Eve, according to the domestic gold market.

The price of domestic gold is on the rise right now because of the rising of the international gold market and the US dollar exchange market. Currently, the US dollar exchange rate is fixed at around K1,900 per dollar in the foreign market, while the international gold gained US$1,829 per ounce.

The domestic gold price is positively linked to the international gold price and US dollar exchange rate.

The pure gold price was up to K2,220,000 per tical in September in the domestic market, while the US dollar exchange rate touches a high of above US$3,000 per dollar.

Last September, there has been a lot of demand in the gold market due to the depreciation of the kyat against the dollar, hence the gold purchase orders were accepted in an appointment system.

Besides, the shops are urged to sell only small pieces of gold bar. The association is also monitoring to stop accepting orders without raw gold material and to stop distance trading.

In January 2021, the gold price was ranged between the minimum of K1,316,000 per tical (28 January) and the maximum of K1,336,000 per tical (6 January). It reached an all-time high of K1,410,000 per tical on 3 February and hit the minimum of K1,340,000 per tical on 2 February. In March, the rate fluctuated between the highest of K1,391,000 (25 March) and the lowest of K1,302,000 (4 March). The price has registered the highest of K1,455,000 (30 April) and the lowest of K1,389,000 (1 April). The price reached an all-time highest of K1,709,000 (12 May) and the lowest of K1,447,000 (3 May). The price moved in the maximum of K1,575,500 (11 June) and the minimum of K1,543,000 (19 June). Last month, it fluctuated between K1,562,300 (26 Jul) and K1,587,000 (9 July), the gold traders said.

According to gold traders, the price of gold reached the lowest of K1,572,800 (3 August) and the highest of K1,698,000 (31 August). The local gold reached the lowest level of K1,703,500 (1 September) and the highest level of K2,220,000 (28 September). In October, the rate ranged between 1,750,00 (27 October) and K2,030,000 (1 October).

The rate fluctuated between the highest of K1,810,000 (6 November) and the lowest of K1,768,500 (24 November). In December, the pure yellow metal price moved in the range of 1,768,500 (6 December) and 1,823,000 (29 December). — NN/GNLM

The rate fluctuated between the highest of K1,810,000 (6 November) and the lowest of K1,768,500 (24 November). In December, the pure yellow metal price moved in the range of 1,768,500 (6 December) and 1,823,000 (29 December).

Sugar price hike rally continues on strong demand

THE price of sugarcane soared to K60,000 per tonne on the back of strong demand by sugar millers, said the sugarcane growers from Katha Township.

"The sugarcane price has risen tracking the hike in sugar price. The sugar millers made an advance purchase. This is why the sugarcane price rose to K60,000 per tonne. It was priced at only K43,000 per tonne last year," said U Myint Thein, a grower from Katha Township.

Following the price rise in sugarcane, the growers are prepping to scale up sowing acreage, he continued.

There are three sugar mills in Katha District and provide capital and technical assistance to the growers.

The sugarcane price hike rally is attributed to the rise in international sugar prices, strong and competitive demand by domestic beverage enterprises and import restrictions on sugar, the millers pointed out. Grate Wall sugar mill offered to buy 700,000 tonnes of sugarcane while Mya Taungtha mill and another mill proposed to purchase more than 60,000 tonnes of sugarcane this sugarcane season. The locally produced sugarcanes have been on sale since 20 December 2021, the millers said.

The sugarcane growers in Katha and Htigyaing townships are cultivating sugarcane on a commercial scale on the eastern side of the Ayeyawady River. There are about 120,000 acres of sugarcane in the Katha District, as per the Agriculture Department.

The sugar market collapsed in 2016 and the growers turned to sesame seeds as crop substitution. Only 400,000 tonnes of sugarcane were produced across the country during the last sugarcane season, which is a drop of K100,000 tonne as against last year's rate.

Winter sugarcane growing season started in October and will finish in May.

The cultivation cost per acre is about K600,000-700,000 and an acre produces about 30 tonnes of sugarcane.

Myanmar produced about 450,000 tonnes of sugar from 440,000 acres of sugarcane plantations in the 2014-2015 financial year, over 390,000 tonnes from 390,000 acres in the 2015-2016FY, over 370,000 tonnes from 400,000 acres in the 2016-2017FY, over 500,000 tonnes from 400,000 acres in the 2017-2018FY, and 500,000 tonnes from 500,000 acres in the 2018-2019FY.

Sugar cane prices were pegged at over K50,000 per tonne in the 2015-2016FY, K45,000 in the 2016-2017FY, K41,500 in the 2017-2018FY, K38,000-40,000 in the 2018-2019FY and K40,000 in the last FY2019-2020, according to the news released online by the Ministry of Commerce. — KK/GNLM

Omicron spoiling US holiday economic comeback

HOLIDAY events have been scrapped in droves, thousands of flights cancelled, cruises are now off limits: the Omicron variant has wreaked havoc in the United States, and the new year could see more issues exacerbating the worker shortage and price increases.

"We are starting to see some initial signs that Omicron is having an impact on the economy, mainly in the sectors where face to face interactions are most important," in particular service sector businesses like bars and restaurants, Oren Klachkin of Oxford Economics told AFP in an interview.

The world's largest economy had been poised to put Covid in the rearview mirror, but on the eve of the new year, the virus is once again playing the spoiler.

The highly contagious Omicron variant, which appeared a month ago, is causing the number of new cases to skyrocket to record levels during the holiday travel season.

After 5,013 cases were reported in US territorial waters between 15 and 29 December, compared to just 162 in the prior two weeks, health authorities warned Americans to avoid cruise travel, even for the fully vaccinated.

People walk at a shopping mall, 20 December 2021, in Santa Anita, Calif. **PHOTO: FREDERIC J. BROWN/AFP**

The cruise industry called the decision by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention disappointing. The warning was "particularly perplexing considering that cases identified on cruise ships consistently make up a very slim minority of the total population onboard -- far fewer than on land -- and the majority of those cases are asymptomatic or mild in nature," the Cruise Lines International Association said in a statement.—AFP ■

Over 71,000 die of coronavirus in Russia in November

Russian authorities have been accused of downplaying the effects of the coronavirus pandemic. **PHOTO: AFP**

RUSSIA'S state statistics agency Rosstat said Thursday that more than 71,000 people died of coronavirus in the country in November, setting a new fatality record since the start of the pandemic.

Overall, 87,527 people with Covid had died in November, the state statistics agency said, adding that in 5,924 of those cases the virus was not considered the cause of death while in 71,187 cases the virus was confirmed as the cause of death.

Russian authorities have been accused of downplaying the effects of the coronavirus pandemic.

The Rosstat tally suggests deaths are much higher than according to an official government taskforce tracking the pandemic, which says the total number of Covid-19 deaths is 307,948.

Rosstat publishes figures under a broader definition for deaths linked to the virus than the taskforce.

Over the past 11 months Russia's natural population decline stood at 945,000 people, compared to more than 574,000 over the same period last year, suggesting significantly increased excess deaths.

Russia is the country hardest-hit in Europe by the pandemic, with authorities struggling to counter widespread anti-vaccine sentiment.

Despite pleas from President Vladimir Putin and the wide availability of the home-grown Sputnik V jab, only 45 per cent of Russians are fully vaccinated. — AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Woman self-isolates in plane toilet after testing positive for Covid

A woman on a flight from Chicago to Iceland tested positive for Covid mid-air, forcing her to spend five hours in the lavatory.

Marisa Fotieo, a teacher from Michigan, said she began to have a painful throat halfway through the trip, so she decided to take a rapid test on the plane, she told NBC news.

"I just took my rapid test and I brought it into the bathroom, and within what felt like two seconds there were two lines," she said in the interview, which indicates a positive test.

Fotieo had received two negative PCR tests prior to the flight, and is now self-isolating in Iceland.

She posted a video from the loo on TikTok, which has been viewed more than 4 million times since it was uploaded on 21 December. She was provided with food and drinks by a flight attendant for the remainder of the flight.—AFP ■

South Africa lifts curfew as Omicron wave subsides

SOUTH Africa, where the Omicron variant was detected last month, says its latest coronavirus wave has peaked without a surge in deaths or hospitalizations, enabling the country to lift a nightly curfew for the first time in 21 months.

The Omicron variant emerged in November to become pandemic's dominant variant, driving new cases at a record rate around the world.—AFP ■

Israel 'leads the way' with 4th Covid jabs for vulnerable

ISRAEL on Friday started giving fourth Covid vaccine shots to people with weakened immunity, becoming one of the first countries to do so in hopes of countering a case surge driven by the Omicron variant. The effort comes almost exactly one year after Israel began a massive vaccination drive on the back of a data-sharing accord with US pharmaceutical firm Pfizer. Israel's health ministry on Thursday approved giving a fourth shot for immunocompromised people, the same day that authorities reported more than 4,000 new cases of the disease, a high not seen since September.

Heart transplant patients were among the first to receive the additional shots at Sheba hospital in Ramat Gan near Tel Aviv, where health workers received test injections this week.

"We had good results with the third dose which only caused secondary effects such as light, localized pain. We can't wait to see the results of this fourth dose," said Galia Rahav, a doctor.

Cardiologist Yael Peled said it would "increase protection against coronavirus".

Israel on Friday also added residents of retirement homes and geriatric patients to those eligible to take the fourth dose.

"This decision was taken for fear of an increase in cases of contamination in such institutions that would endanger the health of these people," the ministry said.

Prime Minister Naftali Bennett has said Israel, which was among the first countries in the world to offer a third shot to the general public, will be a trailblazer for the fourth jab.—AFP ■

An Israeli man receives a fourth dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine against Covid-19 at the Sheba Medical Center in Ramat Gan near Tel Aviv. **PHOTO: AFP**

World's largest trade deal enters into force

Aerial photo taken on 29 December 2021 shows the Thai-Chinese Rayong Industrial Zone. **PHOTO: XINHUA/ WANG TENG**

THE Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) agreement, the world's largest trade deal so far, enters into force on Saturday.

The mega free trade agreement has been applauded by the Asia-Pacific region as an important step toward deeper regional integration and a renewed worldwide momentum for free trade and multilateralism at a time of multiple global uncertainties.

Signed in November 2020, the RCEP groups the 10 members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), as well as China, Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand, covering roughly 30 per cent of the world's gross domestic product and population, and including a mixture of developed and developing countries.

The Jakarta-based ASEAN Secretariat announced in a statement early on Saturday that the RCEP agreement entered into force for Australia, Brunei, Cambodia, China, Japan, Laos, New Zealand, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

In addition, the agreement will also enter into force on 1 Feb for South Korea, according to the ASEAN Secretariat.

According to the agreement, the implementation of the RCEP will begin 60 days after ratification by at least six ASEAN and at least three non-ASEAN countries, which was achieved before 2 Nov 2021.

The expeditious ratification process by signatory states "is a true reflection of our strong commitment to a fair and open multilateral trading system for the benefit of the people in the region and the world," said ASEAN Secretary-General Dato Lim Jock Hoi.

Lim noted that the RCEP reinforces regional economic integration by expanding common accumulative rules of origin, simplified customs procedures, trade facilitation, and coherent trade rules that provide greater transparency, fairness, and predictability for businesses.

"All these will translate into a significant reduction of trade costs and processing time for ASEAN businesses, especially micro, small and medium enterprises," he said.

The pact has also been hailed for its critical role to build economic resilience amid COVID-19 and improve peoples' livelihood.—Xinhua ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

DPRK concludes party plenary session, vowing to focus on economic development

THE Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) ended its key party plenary session on Friday, with focus on rural development and economic issues, the official Korean Central News Agency reported on Saturday.

During the five-day fourth Plenary Meeting of the eighth Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea, the participants reviewed last year's policy accomplishments and set the direction of 2022 policies focused on ways to develop the country's economy and improve the people's livelihoods, the report said.

The plenary meeting was convened in the historic period when the entire Party, the whole country and all the people confidently move toward the next stage and struggle for the overall development of socialist construction, it said.

Kim Jong Un, general secretary of the Workers' Party of Korea, said 2021 is "a year of great victory" that opened up a prelude to the great change toward the overall development of socialist construction despite severe trials, with special achievements in the agricultural field.– Xinhua ■

Pakistan entering New Year with severe issues including unemployment, health and education

PAKISTAN'S struggle of maintaining its financials seems to get no relief ahead of New Year 2022 as Islamabad topped the list of 10 countries with the highest external debt and facing waste of national resources, burgeoning population, rising unemployment, poor health and education facilities.

According to World Bank, SBP, UNICEF, Economic Survey, International Diabetes Federation and UNAID data, Pakistan topped the list of 10 countries with the highest external debt out of 73 states eligible for World Bank's Debt Service Suspension Initiative, The News International reported. After Pakistan; Nigeria, Bangladesh, Angola, Kenya, Mongolia, Uzbekistan, Ghana, Ethiopia and Zambia fall on the list.

At present Pakistan's external debt stands at 127 billion USD, as per the publication.–ANI ■

CES tech show shutting down a day early amid Covid surge

THE CES tech show announced Friday that the Las Vegas event next week will go on in person but will end one day early amid the surge in Covid-19 infections.

Many high-profile participants like Amazon, BMW and Microsoft have pulled out or reduced their footprint at one of the world's largest trade fairs due to health concerns as the Omicron variant has sent US Covid-19 cases to record levels.

CES organizers called the decision to shorten the event an additional safety measure on top of stricter health protocols.

"As the world's most influential technology event, CES is steadfast in its pledge to be the gathering place to showcase products and discuss ideas that will ultimately make our lives better," said Gary Shapiro, head of the Consumer Technology Association.

"We are shortening the show to three days and have put in place comprehensive health measures for the safety of all attendees and participants."

All attendees at the January 5-7 event must present proof of vaccination and have a negative Covid test before entering the venue.—AFP ■

Angola's state oil company to sell 30 pct of its shares from 2022

ANGOLA'S state oil company Sonangol on Thursday announced its plan to sell 30 per cent of its shares in 2022 in a process that will allow private capital to be injected into the country's largest public company.

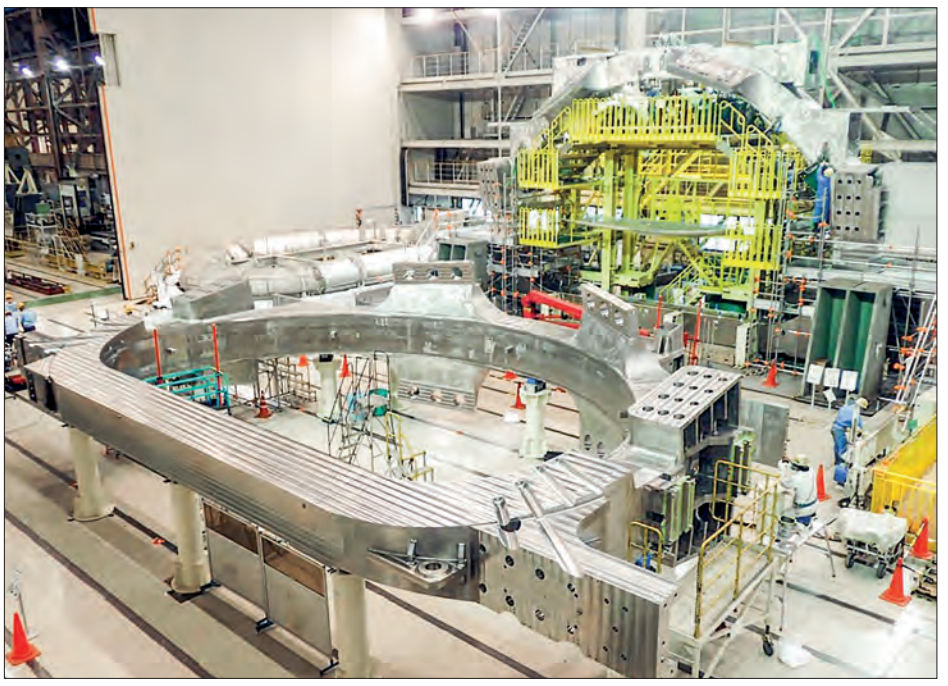
Kaombo Norte, a storage vessel off the coast of Angola. **PHOTO: AFP**

The process could "extend for as long as it takes to adjust the company's attractiveness and the market conditions," said Edson Pongolola, the company's director of planning and control.

Pongolola added that the privatization process will not necessarily start with 30 per cent due to its complexity, but with smaller percentages depending on the attractiveness and market proposals.

"The prospect is to maximize revenue from the sale of these assets and to ensure that the next owner is not harmed by the market's situation since these are assets and businesses with some solidity and conditions to continue," Pongolola said.—Xinhua ■

Japan research body, Mitsubishi to collaborate on US fast reactor



Representative image: The Japan Atomic Energy Agency and Mitsubishi Heavy Industries Ltd. will soon sign a memorandum of understanding with a US venture firm to provide technical support for its fast reactor development project. **PHOTO: ITER/KYODO/FILE**

THE Japan Atomic Energy Agency and Mitsubishi Heavy Industries Ltd. will soon sign a memorandum of understanding with a US venture firm to provide technical support for its fast reactor development project, sources close to the matter said Saturday.

The agency, which has a history of operating sodium-cooled fast reactors such as the Monju prototype fast-breeder reactor in central Japan's Fukui Prefecture and the Joyo experimental fast reactor in Ibaraki Prefecture, is considering providing operational data and designs to TerraPower, a company co-founded by Microsoft Corp. co-founder Bill Gates.

TerraPower plans to build a fast reactor with an output of 345,000 kilowatts using sodium as a coolant in the state of Wyoming from 2024. The US Department of Energy is providing funding for the project, which is expected to be completed in 2028.

While the specifics of the collaboration are still being discussed, the agency is also considering using its sodium experimental facility Athena in Ibaraki Prefecture to develop safety technology, according to the sources.

Japan is pursuing a nuclear fuel recycling policy in which plutonium extracted from spent nuclear fuel at power plants is reused, with fast reactors playing a key role in the plan.

But domestic development has come to a halt following the decommissioning of the Monju reactor, which was intended to be a fast reactor that produces more plutonium than it consumes, prompting resource-poor Japan to explore opportunities for overseas collaboration.—Kyodo ■

Philippine Airlines exits US bankruptcy

PHILIPPINE Airlines has said it has emerged from bankruptcy after a US court approved its plan to slash up to $2 billion in debt and obtain additional capital.

The national carrier of the Philippines had filed for bankruptcy in the United States in September, seeking relief from creditors as it tried to survive the devastation unleashed on the airline industry by the coronavirus pandemic.

Its court-approved reorganization plan includes a $2 billion debt reduction and additional liquidity of $505 million from its main shareholder, PAL said in a statement Friday.

It also has the option to obtain up to $150 million in additional financing from new investors.

"PAL has streamlined operations with a reorganized fleet and is now better capitalized for future growth," the airline added.

Philippine Airlines says it has emerged from bankruptcy after a US court approved its plan to slash up to $2 billion in debt and obtain additional capital. A Philippine Airlines Boeing 767 airplane sits at a gate at Los Angeles International Airport on 24 May 2018. **PHOTO: DANIEL SLIM/AFP/FILE**

Air travel in the Philippines collapsed by more than 75 per cent in 2020 due to travel restrictions imposed to contain the coronavirus, according to government data.

From 60 million domestic and international passengers in 2019, traffic plunged to just over 13 million in 2020.

PAL said in September it had cancelled more than 80,000 flights, wiping out $2 billion in revenue, and let go of more than 2,000 employees.

As borders reopen and travel restrictions ease, the airline said it will resume regular flights, including to cities in mainland China and Australia.—AFP ■

Euro marks 20 eventful years

THE euro on Saturday marks 20 years since people began to use the single European currency, overcoming initial doubts, price concerns and a debt crisis to spread across the region.

Euro banknotes and coins came into circulation in 12 countries on 1 January 2002, greeted by a mix of enthusiasm and scepticism from citizens who had to trade in their Deutsche marks, French francs, pesetas and liras.

The euro is now used by 340 million people in 19 nations, from Ireland to Germany to Slovakia.

Bulgaria, Croatia and Romania are next in line to join the eurozone in the next few years -- though people are divided over the benefits of abandoning their national currencies.

The idea of creating the euro first emerged in the 1970s as a way to deepen European integration, make trade more simple between member nations and give the continent a currency to compete with the mighty dollar. Officials credit the euro for helping Europe avoid an economic catastrophe during the coronavirus pandemic.—AFP ■

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V BLPL FAITH VOY.NO. (3102S)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V BLPL FAITH VOY.NO. (3102S)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **2-1-2022** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **AWPT** where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

Phone No: **2301185**

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

M/S BLPL SHIPPING LINE

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V NORDBORG MAERSK VOY.NO. (149S)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V NORDBORG MAERSK VOY.NO. (149S)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **2-1-2022** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **MITTMIP** 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

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Iran announces new space launch during nuclear talks

Handout picture released by Iran's Defence Ministry on 27 July 2017 shows a Simorgh (Phoenix) satellite rocket at its launch site at an undisclosed location in Iran. **PHOTO: AFP / HO / IRANIAN DEFENCE MINISTRYA**

IRAN on Thursday said it has carried out a new space launch, sparking concern in Washington which said such moves show the need to revive a 2015 nuclear deal.

Tehran successfully put its first military satellite into orbit in April 2020, drawing a sharp rebuke from the United States.

Western governments worry that satellite launch systems incorporate technologies interchangeable with those used in ballistic missiles capable of delivering a nuclear warhead.

Iran insists its space programme is for civilian and defence purposes only, and does not breach the nuclear deal or any other international agreement.

"The United States remains concerned with Iran's development of space launch vehicles, which pose a significant proliferation concern," a State Department spokesperson said.

Iran's state broadcaster aired footage of a rocket rising from a desert launchpad, but gave no details of its location.

"The Simorgh (Phoenix) satellite launcher carried three research cargos into space," said Ahmad Hosseini, spokesman for the defence ministry's space division.

"The research goals foreseen for this launch have been achieved," he added, quoted by state television.

Earlier this month US media reported that preparations for a launch were under way at Iran's space centre in Semnan, 300 kilometres (190 miles) east of Tehran.

Hosseini did not elaborate on the nature of the research, but he said the latest operation was a "preliminary launch" and that more would follow.

Vienna talks see 'progress'

In February, Iran announced it had launched its most powerful solid fuel rocket to date, the Zoljanah, boasting that it can put a 220-kilogramme (480-pound) payload into orbit.—AFP ■

Hopes and fears of 'Israelization' in occupied Golan

Israel's government on Sunday approved a one-billion-shekel ($320-million) five-year plan to double the Jewish settler population of the Golan Heights, a strategic area that Israel seized from Syria in the 1967 Six-Day War. **PHOTO: AFP**

BULLDOZERS in the Israeli-annexed Golan Heights are clearing the ground for middle-class neighbourhoods, part of a plan to dramatically expand Jewish settlements on land still home to thousands of Syrians.

Israel's government on Sunday approved a one-billion-shekel ($320-million) five-year plan to double the Jewish settler population of the Golan Heights, a strategic area that Israel seized from Syria in the 1967 Six-Day War.

Under the plan, more than 10,000 new homes are to be built — a third of them earmarked for the Jewish settlement of Katsrin.

"In 20 to 30 years, Katsrin will grow from a population of 9,000 to a population of 50,000 to 60,000," said its mayor, Dimi Apartzev.

The new buildings are attracting Jewish settlers from across Israel — many motivated by the offer of affordable housing rather than political ideology.

"After years of civil war in Syria, everyone knows that the Golan Heights is quiet, green and blossoming," Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett said at the unveiling of the plan, which still needs cabinet approval.

"The Golan Heights is a wonderful option for people who work from home and prefer clean air, space and quality of life."

Identity crisis

Israel annexed the territory on 14 December 1981, in a move not recognized by most of the international community.—AFP ■

Ronaldo statue kicks up a fuss in India's Goa

Cristiano Ronaldo's statue in Panaji, Goa has sparked controversy. **PHOTO: ANI**

A statue of Portuguese footballer Cristiano Ronaldo has caused a stir in the southern Indian state of Goa, with locals accusing officials of insensitivity for honouring a sports star from the region's former colonial power.

Protesters with black flags gathered at the site after the statue was unveiled this week in the town of Calangute.

They expressed anger that authorities had shunned Indian sports stars and chosen a player from Portugal, which granted Goa independence in 1961.

Micky Fernandes, a former Indian international player who is from Goa, said the choice was "hurtful" and a "hangover" from Portuguese rule. "Ronaldo is the best player in the world but still we should have a statue of a football player from Goa," Fernandes told AFP. Michael Lobo, a local minister with India's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party, told AFP the aim was to inspire young people to excel not just inside the country but internationally "All the boys and girls who want to make football a career will get inspired by people like Cristiano Ronaldo," Lobo said.—AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Stampede at India religious shrine kills 12

At least 12 people died and 13 were injured in a stampede at a religious shrine in India in the early hours of Saturday as thousands of pilgrims massed to offer prayers, officials said.

The disaster happened around 3:00 am (2130 GMT) while it was still dark on the route to the Vaishno Devi shrine in Indian-administered Kashmir, one of the country's most revered Hindu sites.

"People fell over each other... It was difficult to figure out whose leg or arms were tangled with whose," witness Ravinder, who gave only one name, told AFP by phone from the scene.

"I helped pick up eight bodies by the time ambulances arrived after about half an hour. I feel lucky to be alive but am still shaking with memory of what I saw," he said.—AFP ■

France culls over 600,000 poultry in new bird flu outbreak

France has culled 600,000 to 650,000 chickens, ducks and other poultry over the past month, officials said Friday, in a race to contain a bird flu virus threatening to become the fourth major outbreak in the country since 2015.

The Agriculture Ministry reported virus clusters at 26 factory farms, mainly in the southwest – home to France's lucrative foie gras pate industry – as well as 15 cases in wild fowl and three at barnyards.

Several European countries are now battling a highly contagious flu strain, H5N1, just a year after a similar virus decimated flocks.

Belgium and Britain have announced outbreaks, while Czech veterinarians said Wednesday that 80,000 birds would be culled at a single farm where over 100,000 animals have died from the virus since last week.

In France, the government ordered farmers in November to keep poultry indoors in a bid to stop the spread of the virus by migratory birds, though the first case was detected later that month, at a site in the north.—AFP ■

Mali junta moots five-year transition to civilian rule

MALI'S military-dominated government on Thursday suggested that the poor Sahel country might take five years to return to democratic rule after holding a four-day "reform conference".

A transition of between six months and five years will enable the junta to "carry out structural institutional reforms and (organize) credible, fair and transparent elections", according to a document read out at the end of the forum.

"The government will put in place a timetable aimed at ensuring a peaceful and secure constitutional restoration," junta boss Assimi Goita said in a closing speech.

In August 2020, young officers led by Goita toppled the country's elected president, Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, after weeks of street protests over perceived corruption and his handling of a bloody jihadist insurgency.

Under pressure from France and Mali's neighbours, Goita pledged that Mali would return to civilian rule in February 2022 after holding presidential and legislative elections.—AFP ■

File Photo: President of the CNSP (National Committee for the Salvation of the People) Assimi Goita (C) prepares for a meeting between Malian military leaders and an ECOWAS delegation headed by former Nigerian president on 22 August 2020. **PHOTO: AFP**

Putin says Russia 'firmly' defended interests in 2021

People take photos at VDNH (The Exhibition of Achievements of National Economy) with New Year decorations in Moscow, Russia, on 21 December 2021. **PHOTO: XINHUA/EVGENY SINITSYN**

PRESIDENT Vladimir Putin said Moscow "firmly" defended its interests in 2021 — a year marked by an unprecedented crackdown on the opposition and increased tensions with the West — in a New Year's address.

"We firmly and consistently defended our national interests, the security of the country and (of) citizens," Putin said in a televised speech.

The broadcast aired at midnight in the Far Eastern Kamchatka peninsula and was reported by Russian agencies.

This year Russia implemented a major crackdown on organizations and people critical of Putin — starting with the jailing of his top critic Alexei Navalny in February.

Tensions between Russia and the West have also reached new highs over Ukraine.

Putin discussed the soaring tensions in a phone call with US President Joe Biden on Thursday.

The Kremlin chief, in power since 1999, also expressed support to Russians who lost relatives to Covid. His country is among the hardest-hit in the world by the pandemic. —AFP

"The insidious disease has claimed tens of thousands of lives," he said. —AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Australia, North Korea, New Zealand welcome New Year 2022 with dazzling fireworks

COUNTRIES around the world have begun welcoming the New Year 2022. Various nations including Australia, North Korea and New Zealand have started embracing 2022 with new year celebrations.

North Korea welcomed the New Year 2022 with a firework display near the Taedong River.

Australia welcomed the new year with spectacular fireworks at Sydney Harbour. New Zealand's Auckland became the first city in the world to welcome the new year. Fireworks lit up the night sky in Auckland and beams over the SkyTower in Auckland Harbour Bridge marked the new year celebrations today.—ANI ■

Macron takes EU reins as election looms

France takes over the rotating presidency of the European Union on Saturday, affording President Emmanuel Macron the chance to pose as the EU's de facto leader in the run-up to national elections in April.

The 44-year-old has never made any secret of his ambitions to be the motor for further European integration, serving over the last four years as a dynamic sidekick to the more steady German chancellor Angela Merkel in Europe's power couple.

With Merkel now retired and the timely gift of the rotating presidency of the EU Council from 1 January, Macron has announced an ambitious agenda for the 27-member bloc that could also serve his domestic campaign for re-election. "The year 2022 must be a turning point for Europe," he said in a New Year's Eve national address that hailed the EU's role during the Covid-19 crisis.—AFP ■

South Africans bid farewell to Tutu on eve of funeral

People take photos at the Wall of Remembrance, set up outside St. George's Cathedral to honour the memory of South African anti-apartheid icon, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who is lying in repose at the Cathedral, in Cape Town on 30 December 2021. **PHOTO: RODGER BOSCH / AFP**

SOUTH Africans on Friday took their last chance to pay their respects to Archbishop Desmond Tutu on the eve of a funeral for the revered anti-apartheid fighter. Since Thursday, nearly 3,000 mourners have filed through Cape Town's St. George's Cathedral before the simple pine casket containing Tutu's remains.

Members of Tutu's family hugged and consoled each other as the coffin returned for the second and final day of the lying in state and a band, which included a preschooler trumpeter, played in his honour.

The archbishop's successor, Thabo Makgoba, waved a chalice of burning incense over the coffin before pall bearers — Anglican vicars — took the coffin from a silver Mercedes SUV hearse.

They slowly walked up the stairs into the cathedral where Tutu had preached for a decade.

The body will spend the night in the cathedral until the funeral, which will be presided over by President Cyril Ramaphosa. Tutu died peacefully aged 90 on Sunday.

His passing unleashed nationwide grief at the loss of the last great hero of the anti-apartheid era, and tributes from world leaders for a man cherished for his righteous anger and humour.

'Aquamation'

Tutu carefully set down details for his funeral, insisting that his coffin be "the cheapest" available, and that it be adorned by a simple bunch of carnations.

Mourners are being asked to donate money to his charitable foundations instead of sending flowers — and even the disposal of his remains is being conducted in an eco-friendly way.—Xinhua ■

Liverpool's Klopp confident Chelsea game will go ahead despite Covid chaos

LIVERPOOL manager Jurgen Klopp believes his side's crucial match against Chelsea will go ahead on Sunday despite three new coronavirus cases in his camp as another Premier League fixture was called off.

Klopp refused to name the players on Friday as they were awaiting test results but forward Roberto Firmino and goalkeeper Alisson Becker were absent from pictures released by Liverpool of a club training session.

Both sides will regard the match at Stamford Bridge as a must-win game as they seek to keep pace with defending champions Manchester City, who are eight points clear at the top.

"We have three new Covid cases in the team and a few more in the staff so it's not so cool at the moment," Klopp said at his pre-match press conference.

"I'm not able to say who it is because we have to do the whole process, get a proper PCR (test), but you will see the day after tomorrow on the team sheet -- it will be pretty clear who is affected or infected."

Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp. **PHOTO: AFP**

The German, whose side are third in the table, a point behind Chelsea, added: "We never had this proper outbreak where 15 to 20 players had it. For us it is every day, another one, stuff happens more and more often.

"It's like a lottery in the morning, waiting for the result. It is pretty much day-by-day, always one case, then another one.

"In this moment (we will) probably not (ask for a postponement) but we don't know how it will look in a few hours."—AFP ■

Bautista Agut leads Spain to crushing ATP Cup win over Chile

Spain's Roberto Bautista Agut made a winning start for Spain at the ATP Cup. **PHOTO: AFP**

ROBERTO Bautista Agut got Spain's New Year off to a perfect start Saturday with a crushing ATP Cup win over Chilian world number 17 Cristian Garin as he spearheads the team in Rafael Nadal's absence.

The 33-year-old, ranked two places below Garin, barely broke a sweat in the 6-0, 6-3 win at the Ken Rosewall Arena in Sydney, ensuring Spain won their Group A tie on day one of the season-opening tournament.

"I played a very solid game, good rhythm and good speed," he said. "I'm very happy because I won my point for the team."

Bautista Agut, a nine-time ATP Tour titlist, was part of the Nadal-led Spain team that made the final at the inaugural teams event in 2020, when they were beaten by Novak Djokovic's Serbia.

He is the lead singles player this time after 20-time Grand Slam champion Nadal opted to play an Australian Open lead-up event in Melbourne instead.

Whether Nadal would make it to Australia at all was in doubt after he tested positive for the coronavirus after an exhibition tournament in Abu Dhabi last month.

But he tweeted a photo of himself on an empty court at Melbourne Park late Friday with the comment: "Don't tell anyone... here I am."

A number of other players in Abu Dhabi also tested positive, including Russia's world number five Andrey Rublev, who is out of the ATP Cup. Defending champions Russia, who beat Italy in last year's final, start their campaign on Sunday against France.—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.

Southampton-Newcastle match postponed due to Covid-19

SOUTHAMPTON'S home match against Newcastle on Sunday is the latest Premier League fixture to be called off after a coronavirus outbreak in the visitors' camp.

"Sunday's Premier League clash between Southampton and Newcastle United at St Mary's Stadium has been postponed due to ongoing Covid-19 cases and injuries amongst the Magpies' first-team squad," said a Newcastle statement.

The Premier League said it had accepted the request to postpone the match because Newcastle did not have the required number of players available (13 outfield players and one goalkeeper). It is the second successive Newcastle fixture to be postponed following the cancellation of Thursday's scheduled game at Everton. The Premier League assesses applications to postpone matches on a case-by-case basis, based on existing rules and adapted guidance, implemented in light of the new Omicron variant of Covid-19.—AFP ■

"Sunday's Premier League clash between Southampton and Newcastle United at St Mary's Stadium has been postponed due to ongoing Covid-19 cases and injuries amongst the Magpies' first-team squad," said a Newcastle statement **PHOTO: AFP**