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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.

As qualifications of faculty members are of great importance, they have higher academic skills and knowledge to give comprehensive lectures to the students, says Senior General



State Administration Council Chairman Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing addresses the coordination meeting on the higher-education sector at the MoE office on 17 January 2022.

AS it is necessary to train the students to have experiences for life as well as learning education at the university, good environments must be created for students to widen their scopes, said Chairman of the State Administration Council Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing at the coordination meeting on the higher education sector of the

Ministry of Education, at the ministry in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday morning.

In his speech, the Senior General first and foremost expressed his wish to improve the education standard of the country. But states and ethnic areas faced weakness of rural education due to language barriers and poor transport facilities. In successive eras of the govern-

ments, weakness happened in the education sector because of lesser number of teachers.

In the socialist era, the academic system was weak in learning English. Hence, students faced difficulties in studying high education to keep abreast of the international community. In the time of the State Law and Order Restoration Council,

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Hence, the 30-year national education programme is being implemented for the development of the education sector.

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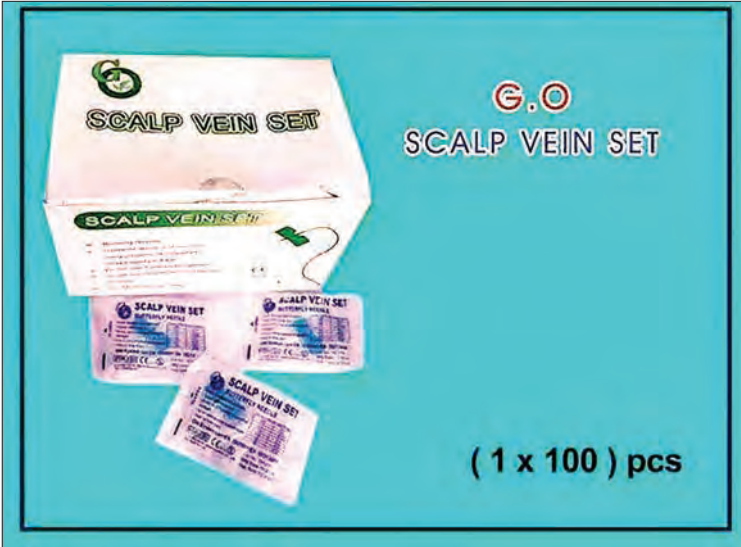
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Information release on detection of SARS-CoV-2 Omicron variant

17 January 2022

1. The Ministry of Health is continuously conducting “COVID-19 Molecular Disease Surveillance”, and releasing information on detection of SARS CoV-2 Omicron variant from those who return by the relief flights in a timely manner.
 2. The laboratory samples of the COVID-19 virus of the returnees were sent to the National Health Laboratory on 17-1-2022 and the SARS-CoV-2 Omicron variant was found in 42 laboratory samples.
 3. Thirty-six Myanmar nationals and six foreigners, who returned by relief flights, have tested positive, and 21 returned from India, while 12 from Malaysia, four from the Philippines, three from Thailand, one each from the UAE and Singapore.
 4. The patients are admitted to the designated hospitals for medical treatment and the passengers, who returned together with them, now undergo strict quarantine and lab tests.
 5. Therefore, it is announced that the ministry is stepping up the COVID-19 disease monitoring and protecting measures plus disease prevention, control and treatment activities.
- Ministry of Health

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



THE Ministry of Commerce is overseeing the importation of essential medical supplies plus anti-COVID devices that are critical to the COVID-19 prevention,

control and treatment activities, including liquid oxygen and oxygen cylinders, through trading posts, international airports and seaports.

Anti-COVID-19 equipment was imported by one company using one vehicle. A total of 94 oxygen concentrators were imported via the Chinshwehaw trade zone yesterday.

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 inquiries can be reached through the Ministry’s Website —www.commerce.gov.mm. — MNA

Sixth batch of vaccination carried out in Manaung, Rakhine state

PEOPLE over the age of 18 in Manaung Township, Rakhine State, were receiving their first dose of the Covishield vaccine at the Township Public Hospital from between 9 am and 3 pm yesterday.

The inoculation was carried out under the supervision of the Township COVID-19 Prevention, Control and Emergency Response Committee, and staff from the General Administration

Department, health professionals, ward administrators worked together for the successful immunization.

It is reported that a total of 38,198 people has received the second doses of the COVID-19 vaccines and 37,498 people have received their first doses of the vaccines in Manaung Township, according to the Township Public Health Department. – Thein Pe (IPRD)/GNLM



Inoculation continues in Rakhine State. PHOTO: THEIN PE (IPRD)

101 new cases of COVID-19 reported on 17 January, total figure rises to 533,245

MYANMAR’S COVID-19 positive cases rose to 533,245 after 101 new cases were reported on 17 January 2022 according to the Ministry of Health. Among these confirmed cases, 511,333 have been discharged from hospitals. Death toll reached 19,304 after 2 died.—MNA

COVID-19 vaccine drive continues in various regions, states



Pulaw residents receive jabs against COVID-19.

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

COVID-19 vaccine is being given daily to target groups regardless of race or religion, including Buddhist monks and nuns, local people over the age of 40, students, religious leaders, prisoners, people with disabili-

ties, ethnic armed groups, people with chronic diseases, people in IDP camps and over 12-year-old students, respectively.

On 16 January and yesterday, doctors and nurses from public hospitals, medical teams from the Tatmadaw, relevant healthcare workers in collaboration with volunteers gave COVID-19 vaccines to 2,268 people from eight townships in northern Shan State, 1,600 people from three townships in eastern Shan State, 4,654 people from 13 townships in Mon and Kayin States, 2,233 people from three townships in

Yangon Region, 520 people from Pulaw Township of Taninthayi Region, 18,913 people from 26 townships in Ayeyawady Region, 8,949 people from 11 Townships in Rakhine State, and 8,824 people from seven districts in Mandalay Region among others.

Similarly, healthcare officials administered the vaccines to 564 students from 26 townships in Ayeyawady Region.

It is reported that officials from the respective Military Commands visited the site and coordinated the necessary work. —MNA

The government always invites peace talks

THE government always invites peace talks. As such, it is expected that peace talks will be held in the future to boost the benefits related to peace. Having all tasks concerning the last point of the five-point road map of the State Administration Council been accomplished, a new election will be held and the State power will be handed over to the winning party.

(Excerpt from the speech by State Administration Council Chairman Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing at the meeting 4/2021 of Union Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar on 30-12-2021)

As qualifications of faculty members are of great importance, they have higher academic skills and knowledge to give comprehensive lectures to the students, says Senior General

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emphasis was placed on the passing of examination rather than having actual knowledge from learning. Hence, the 30-year national education programme is being implemented for the development of the education sector.
As the development of a country depends on a larger number of educated persons, officials of the education sector must strive for an increasing number of educated persons. Some three million people among 55 million are graduates. Hence, it can be seen that less than 10 per cent of people can learn higher education. More than 18 million of the population could join the primary and middle school education. As education is crucial for the development of the nation, efforts are being made to develop the education sector during the period when the Tatmadaw took the State responsibilities.

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Universities are institutions to create environments for the students to consider knowledge and skills and take the learning opportunities.

Universities are institutions to create environments for the students to consider knowledge and skills and take the learning opportunities. Classrooms and practical rooms must be systematic for students to have easy access to the learning. As the qualifications of faculty members are of great importance, they have higher academic skills and knowledge to give comprehensive lectures to the students.

Universities must be facilitated with sports grounds and gymnasiums for students to take sports. Faculty members need to teach students with good behaviours, good morals, techniques and critical thinking. As it is necessary to train the students to have experiences for life as well as learning education at the university, good environments must be created for students to widen their scope of vision.

University education is not to do rote learning but studies and thinking. Interactive discussions between students and faculty members can create uplift of critical thinking of students. While the government is striving for the development of the country, faculty members and students need to improve the education sector. The government is carrying out physical and mental improvement of the

students.
Academicians need to teach students to have actual skills and knowledge and urge the students to read a lot for the improvement of their educational qualifications.
Officials from the academic sector must be assigned in the academic sector and those from the management sector in the relevant sectors for ensuring smooth administration and management measures. Refresher courses must be conducted for faculty members to be able to study newer knowledge.
The Senior General stressed the need for spending the budget under the financial rules and regulations as well as laws. Finance must be allotted properly. Administrative measures must be taken fairly. All tasks must be carried out with goodwill.
Later, the Senior General cordially conversed with rectors, principals and attendees.—MNA

MIFER holds reform workshop

UNION Minister for Investment and Foreign Economic Relations U Aung Naing Oo presided over a reform workshop on better administration and capacity development of the ministry in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.
During the workshop, the Union minister discussed better public services, the emergence of a proper administrative system to conduct operations faster, improvement of abilities of staff, effective departmental cooperation and set up of quality machinery in policymaking and administration sectors using references.

Then, Deputy Minister U Than Aung Kyaw explained the emergence of a strong institution and collective leadership, and the permanent secretary explained the ongoing and future work plans to draft a reform plan of the ministry.
The two-day workshop was attended by the staff of the Ministry of Union Government Office, Directorate of Investment and Company Administration and Foreign Economic Relations Department, while other employees of state and regional branch offices joined virtually.— MNA



The Reform Workshop of the Ministry of Investment and Foreign Economic Relations in progress.

Prevention and control of COVID-19 affect bilateral trade between Myanmar and China, says Vice-Senior General Soe Win



State Administration Council Vice-Chairman Deputy Prime Minister Vice-Senior General Soe Win presides over the coordination meeting of the committee on Covid centre and preventive and control measures at Myanmar-China border cities yesterday.

RELEVANT ministries have been informed to further cooperate with China in line with the policy, law and procedures of Myanmar and prevention and control of rules and regulations of COVID-19, said Chairman of COVID-19 Control and Emergency Response Committee Vice-Chairman of the State Administration Council Dep-

uty Prime Minister Vice-Senior General Soe Win at the coordination meeting of the committee on COVID-19 centre and preventive and control measures of the pandemic at Myanmar-China border cities, yesterday afternoon, held at the office of the SAC Chairman in Nay Pyi Taw.

In his address, the Vice-Senior

General said prevention and control of COVID-19 affect the Myanmar-China border trade. The People's Republic of China gave assistance to Myanmar in controlling COVID-19 of Myanmar and has more plans to assist. Hence, relevant ministries have been informed to further cooperate with China in line with the policy, law and

procedures of Myanmar and prevention and control of rules and regulations of COVID-19.

It was known that the prevention and control of COVID-19 hamper the bilateral trade between Myanmar and China. Hence, it is necessary to fully cooperate with China in control of the pandemic in accord with the restrictions.

As such, the pandemic would be controllable and preventive, lessening the unacceptable disadvantages.

Hence, the Vice-Senior General invited the participation of relevant officials in discussions on prevention and control of the pandemic, ongoing processes and future plans for control and emergency response to COVID-19 at Myanmar-China bilateral trade.

Leader of the Secretariat of the COVID-19 Control and Emergency Response Committee Deputy Minister for Home Affairs Maj-Gen Soe Tint Naing reported on results of bilateral discussions and anticipation for prevention and control of the pandemic related to the bilateral trade between Myanmar and China.

Union ministers U Wunna Maung Lwin, Dr Thet Khaing Win, Dr Pwint San and U Khin Yi, Kachin State Chief Minister U Khet Htein Nan and Deputy Minister U Nyunt Aung explained matters related to the relevant sectors.

The meeting ended with a concluding remark by the Vice-Senior General. — MNA

Bar Council holds 1/2022 meeting

THE Bar Council organized its 1/2022 meeting in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

During the meeting, Union Minister for Legal Affairs Union Attorney-General Dr Thida Oo, in her capacity as chairperson of the council, said the Bar Council members will be able to work for the benefits of the people widely without political intentions. The Union Supreme Court transfers the complaints filed against the advocates to take proper actions according to the main procedures of the Bar Council. The council also organized the plenary session of the Union Supreme Court in seeking opinions on whether to take action under the Bar Council Act Section 10 (1) for violations

of rules of conduct of lawyers and it takes proper actions that are conformity with the dignity, responsibilities and rights of the lawyers. In seeking views of Bar Council whether it objects regarding the applications for registrations of advocates, the Bar Council Enrolment Scrutiny Committee is organized to make comments as per enrol rules.

For the registration of advocates for the employees of respective ministries and those who completed the online Post Graduate Diploma in Law of the Yangon University of Distance, the Union Supreme Court inspects whether the submissions are conformity with the enroll-



The first meeting 1/2022 of the Bar Council in progress.

ment points of advocates and releases their opinions. Moreover, it also approves the complaints against advocates transferred

by governmental organizations to send to Union Supreme Court to conduct the inspection.

The meeting was attend-

ed by the vice-chairman of the council Union Supreme Court Judge U Myo Tint and other law officers. — MNA

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Diamond Jubilee Union Day organizing working committee holds 3rd coord meeting

THE Ministry of Information held the third coordination meeting of the Diamond Jubilee Union Day Organizing Working Committee yesterday morning in Nay Pyi Taw.

The meeting was attended by Chairman of the committee Union Minister for Information U Maung Maung Ohn, Vice Chairman Union Minister for Sports and Youth Affairs U Min Thein Zan, Nay Pyi Taw Council Chairman Dr Maung Maung Naing, Committee Secretary Deputy Minister U Ye Tint, Deputy Ministers Maj-Gen Soe Tint Naing, U Tun Ohn, U Aung Kyaw Tun, U Zaw Win, Dr Aye Tun, U Min Htein and U Zaw Aye Maung, Vice-May-



The third coordination meeting of the Diamond Jubilee Union Day Organizing Working Committee is held in Nay Pyi Taw.

or of Nay Pyi Taw U Maung Maung, Advocate-General of Yangon Region Government U Htay Aung, senior Tatmadaw officers from the Office of the Commander-in-Chief, Nay Pyi Taw Council Member U Myint Soe, ministers of the region/ state governments, permanent secretaries and invitees.

At the meeting, Union Minister U Maung Maung Ohn

noted that the current activities, including the Diamond Jubilee Union Day, which falls on 12 February, should be taken more seriously than usual as they are the image of the country. Preparations need to be made for all possible issues, including unseasonal rains and COVID-19 control measures, he added.

Afterwards, Deputy Minister U Ye Tint explained the progress of the ceremony and the work to be done for the successful holding of the ceremony, and the participants discussed sectors-wise. The committee chairman added necessary suggestions and concluded the meeting. — MNA

Officials welcome back Myanmar returnees at various borders



Returnees queue up for the reception process.

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

On 16 January, a total of four returnees – two males and two females – came back home through Laukkai, northern Shan State and 82 returnees – 72 males and 10 females – through Myawady, Kayin State,

respectively. Healthcare officials from relevant public hospitals and members of the Tatmadaw Medical Corps conducted COVID-19 tests and provided quarantine entry documents for the returnees. Next, instructions of the Ministry of Health were explained systematically and de-

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

PDF terrorists brutally kill monks

NUG, CRPH and PDF terrorists commit threats, murders and robberies on administrative officials, government employees and innocent civilians in some regions of the country and also kill monks for various reasons. At about 10:30 am on 16 January, the donors noticed that Sayadaw Bhaddanta Patita of Panthagon Monastery in Kanbalu Township in Sagaing was missing when they came to donate ‘Soon’ (day meals) at the monastery. At about 8:50 pm on that day, Sayadaw was found dead with knife wounds and burn injuries about two furlongs from the west of the monastery. Similarly, security forces received a tip-off that a monk fell on Seinpan road of industrial zone ward of Monywa Township at 9:50 pm and they went to the incident place and found the

dead body of novice Javana (aka) Nyein Chan with bruises from Ywahtaung monastery in Latzin village-tract of Monywa Township. According to the investigation, when the novice was walking alone on Seinpan road, a motorcycle ran into him and he was beaten to death. The terrorist groups commit brutal murder cases against the monks, and a total of 20 monks was killed with seven being injured to date. The terrorists brutally killed not only innocent people, who do not support them, and also even the monks. The people are urged to cooperate with officials to prevent such murder cases and report to the nearest security forces regarding the movements of the terrorists. — MNA

Over 49 tonnes of illegal timber seized in Bago

UNDER the management of the Illegal Trade Eradication Special Task Force, a combined inspection team led by the local Forest Department confiscated 47.5822 tonnes of illegal teak (estimated value of K8,088,400) and 2.3162 tonnes of hardwood(estimated value of K347,640, altogether over 49 tonnes of timber from the forest

reserves of Toungoo, Pyay and Thayawady districts in Bago Region yesterday. It is reported that action is being taken under the rules and regulations of the Department of Forest, according to the Illegal Trade Eradication Steering Committee which has been supervising to take legal action against illegal trades. — MNA



Confiscated timber in Bago Region.

Over K490 mln worth of heroin seized in Mogok

AUTHORITIES seized heroin worth over K490 million in Mogok township, according to Myanmar Police Force. Acting on a tip-off, a combined team comparing the anti-narcotics police stopped

a six-wheel Nissan diesel vehicle en route to Mogok from Monglon driven by Tun Lin Htet with Kyaw Yin on board at Legyi checkpoint, Mogok Township, Mandalay Region on 14 January at 7 pm. Then, the team

found heroin weighing 19.8 kilos worth over K490 million from the vehicle. Police have filed charges against both of them. Further investigation is being conducted to arrest chains of suspects.—MNA

Records on 11th press conference held by Information Team of the State Administration Council on 14 January

(CONTINUED FROM
YESTERDAY)

The State Administration Council tried to reopen schools when the infection rate of COVID-19 declined to a certain percentage. Terrorist NUG, CRPH and PDF set fire to some 500 schools and killed about 20 educational staff. Some educational staff staged the CDM campaign. Schools were opened amid threats. According to the 2019 interim census, about four million of the population above five years old had never attended the schools. Hence, the State Administration Council emphasizes the enhancement of the education sector. Except for 46 townships due to COVID-19, the remaining townships reopens basic education schools at which more than 5.2 million children enrolled. Of them, over 4.1 million students took the first-semester examination, accounting for 98.8 per cent. Universities, colleges and institutes reopened on 6 January 2022, with 4,409 enrolled students and 2,281 attendees. Up to now, education staff were not disturbed in EAO regions and insurgency areas. They gave even help to the education staff. Now, NUG and PDF terrorists have targeted to attack health and education sectors.

Everybody knew the events in Kayah State. KNPP

and PDF terrorists attacked a passenger aeroplane landing at Loikaw Airport with the use of 107mm launchers. Security forces stopped suspect vehicles on Dimawhso-Koingan old village-Dawkayakhu-Moso earthen road. These vehicles did not stop and opened fire at security forces. Terrorist groups from hill-ocks around Moso Village also attacked security forces with the use of heavy and small arms. So, both sides exchanged fire. Seven vehicles between the clash were ablaze in bullet-hit. Because these vehicles carried fuel and cooking oil from villages. Despite trying to rescue persons from the vehicles, security forces were failing to do so. Due to terrorists, firefighters delayed rushing to the scene. A BGF camp is located near Moso Village. During the fighting, some PDFs sought help from the BGF camp. Four BGF in civilian suits followed them. Then, they were killed at hands tied behind their back. When they left the camp, they wore civilian suits. When their dead bodies were found, they wore BGF uniforms. It was an attempt to instigate between BGF and the Tatmadaw. The commander and the director enquired about the event and solved the problems to avoid misunderstanding.

On 10 January, PDF terrorists killed innocent people



Panels display photo records at the 11th press conference.

from a vehicle and took some K10 million obtained from proceeds of selling betel leaves in Mandalay. An escaped person told that PDFs killed them. PDF terrorists also killed PAT Daw Hla Hla Nyunt and husband U Aung Zaw Moe in Patee Village of Taze Township on 8 January. Teachers from basic education post-primary school in Letpanzin Village of Katha Township and the headmistress of Daunggyi Village BEHS Branch were threatened not to open the schools after taking mobile phones on 10 January. PDF terrorists also kidnapped headmaster U Thet Naung Tun from Apaw Village of Sedoktara Township on 9 January to change him with K10 million. PDF terrorists also opened fire at a 20-tonne liquid oxygen bowser in Myawady Township on 3 January. PDF terrorists took a position at Marathsein Village BEPS in Htigyaing Township on 13 January and withdrew from the scene when security forces attacked. At 10 pm, they set fire to the school to clear their shreds of evidence.

Then, a video clip on Maung Kyaw (a) Phyo Zeyar Thaw was presented. Maj-Gen Zaw Min Tun explained Maung Kyaw (a) Phyo Zeyar Thaw confessed that 178 times of mine blasts were committed in Yangon Region. Up to now, 292 State servants and 1,538 innocent people, totalling 1,830 were killed in terrorist acts.

From 1 February 2021 to 12 January 2022, 4,044 bomb blasts happened in major cities. Security forces arrested 1,480 terrorists with 116 assorted guns, 1,175 rounds of ammunition, 21 grenades, 741 homemade mines and explosives. Moreover, 10,069 terrorists preparing to commit

crimes were detained with 3,335 assorted guns, 159,499 rounds of ammunition, 715 grenades, 7,161 homemade mines and explosives in time.

The Tatmadaw engaged with KNU Brigades 5/6 and related areas, MNDAA in Shan State, KNPP and NUG, CRPH and PDF terrorists in Kayah State, PDF terrorists in some areas of Sagaing and Magway regions. A total of 7,479 people among 28,573 people of Papun Township have been vaccinated. Tatmadaw vehicles transport COVID-19 vaccines to Papun region. KNU Brigade-5 planted mines and attacked these vehicles at the entrance to Papun. KNU/KNLA Brigade-5 does not abide by the order of the KNU leading committee and violates the NCA to destroy the peace process.

UEC spokesperson U Khin Maung Oo said the UEC has inspected accounts of political parties as of the fourth week of August to date. So far, 51 political parties have been inspected. In the 2020 general elections, there were 1,077 electoral cases. Of them, 546 cases were taken action under the electoral law. Moreover, a total of 2,169 persons were prosecuted for double and triple voting with a single citizenship scrutiny card in regions and states. In this regard, scrutiny is being conducted to take action against former president U Win Myint, former state counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, former minister U Min Thu, former UEC Chairman and members, former region and state chief ministers, Hluttaw candidates, party victorious committee members, members of election sub-commissions, totalling 422 and 2,483

chairmen and members of UEC and sub-commissions will be taken action for failure to systematically supervise the electoral tasks in the 2020 general election.

From 24 to 26 December 2021, the UEC met with political parties at the hall of Yangon Region government and Yangon Region Hluttaw to hold the group-wise meetings, attended by 115 representatives from 62 political parties. UEC Chairman U Thein Soe explained the change of exercising the electoral system in Myanmar. Representatives of political parties held discussions on 24 and 25 December and compiled the papers on Proportional Representation at relevant Hluttaws. On 26 December, they read the papers and made clarifications. All groups submitted that a closed-list PR system should be practised and they agreed to practise the FPTP system for constituencies of ethnic Hluttaw representatives of region and state Hluttaws and six self-administered zones and division of the Amyotha Hluttaw. In his concluding remarks, the UEC Chairman said the necessary laws will be amended for practising the PR system from the FPTP system with the participation of the government, UEC, political parties and people.

The UEC will continue cooperation with township based political parties and relevant stakeholders in the compilation of the voter list. Moreover, the bill is being drawn for recalling the MPs. The UEC cooperates with relevant departments and organizations for holding the multiparty democracy general election in accord with the fifth point of the five-point road map. — MNA



Eight Chinese enterprises put \$93.4 mln of FDI into Myanmar in past three months

EIGHT China-listed enterprises brought in US\$93.4 million into Myanmar between October and December 2021 of the six-month mini-budget period, according to data released by the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration (DICA).

China is the top source of FDI so far and Singapore is placed as the second-largest investor of Myanmar.

Those enterprises listed

from China, Singapore, India, Republic of Korea, France, Hong Kong (SAR) and China (Taipei) also made investments this year.

Chinese companies primarily invested in the manufacturing sector.

Myanmar has drawn foreign direct investment of more than US\$2.46 billion during the October-December period, including expansion of capital by existing enterprises and invest-

ments in the Thilawa Special Economic Zone, DICA's statistics indicated.

Of 17 foreign enterprises permitted and endorsed by MIC and the respective investment committees in the half of the mini-budget period, 11 enterprises pumped FDI into the manufacturing sector. Agriculture, power, construction, hotels and tourism received each project and other service sectors attracted two projects. — KK/GNLM



The Directorate of Investment and Company Administration (DICA).

Newly Myanmar pigeon pea enters Mandalay market with upward price



Pigeon pea comes in multiple colours, such as red, white and mixed in Myanmar. The pigeon pea is mainly grown in the Mandalay region, Magway region and Sagaing region.

NEWLY harvested Myanmar pigeon pea is supplied to the Mandalay market abundantly with an upward trend in price in January, according to the Mandalay pulses traders.

"The fresh pigeon pea is currently entering the Mandalay market from Kyaukse, Sagaing, Monywa, Myinmu and Myaung regions. This year, the quality of pigeon pea is quite good due to fine weather. The prices of pigeon peas stood at K70,000 per three-basket bag in the same pe-

cent of pigeon pea is exported to India. The price is unlikely to drop as India is continually buying Myanmar pulses. Myanmar's pigeon pea is primarily shipped to India and also exported to Nepal, Bangladesh and Pakistan. Now, about 10,000 bags of pigeon pea are daily entering the Mandalay market. The pigeon pea will be coming out from Shwebo and KhinU very soon," he added.

Pigeon pea comes in multiple colours, such as red, white and mixed in Myanmar. The pigeon pea is mainly grown in the Mandalay region, Magway region and Sagaing region. Now, its plantation has extended in Chin, Kayah, Shan State (South and North).

Under the memorandum of understanding, India will purchase about 100,000 tonnes of pigeon pea in five consecutive years (from the 2021-22FY to the 2025-26FY). Therefore, the plantation of pigeon pea should be expanded. — Min Htet Aung (Mandalay Sub-Printing House)/GNLM

Direct Yuan-Kyat trade assures traders in Muse border

THE use of Yuan or Kyat in the bilateral transaction is officially allowed in the border areas between Myanmar and China, and traders can legally open a foreign currency account at the designated banks, ensuring trade finance security for the traders engaged in Muse cross-border trade with China, said U Min Thein, vice-chair of the Muse Rice Wholesale Centre.

"China often freezes accounts of Myanmar traders, supposedly linked to illegal activities. The traders suffered from it. If they lift the freeze, payment is made in full. If not, traders cannot help. Now, the bank accounts can be legally opened and cannot be frozen as it is white money. It will definitely facilitate transaction in import and export," he elaborated.

The direct Yuan-Kyat trade platform commenced on 12 January 2022. Traders can open foreign currency accounts linked to Bank in China, CBC and BOC, by depositing 30 Yuan (which

is equivalent to K10,000) at Myanma Economic Bank in Muse.

"Some traders might face challenges to do so as they used to make payments through private banks. There might be red tape in opening accounts. However, this platform will assure the traders in the long term," U Min Thein shared his opinion.

This move is aimed to boost bilateral cross-border trade, facilitate trading and bilateral transaction, increase the use of domestic currency and lessen the reliance on the US dollar.

The direct Yuan-Kyat payment has no impact on the domestic freight forwarding, a Mandalay-Muse freight forwarder.

China shut down all the border posts with Muse city in the wake of COVID-19 impacts. Of them, Wamting and Kyinsankyawt border posts between Myanmar and China resumed operations. Mang Wein and Kyalgaung posts have still suspended the trade. — Ko Naing (Bago)/GNLM

Total border trade down nearly \$1.3 bln

THE total border trade value exceeded US\$1.6 billion, down over \$1.3 billion in the first three months of the current mini-budget year compared with the same period last year, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

From 1 October to 7 January of 2021-22 mini-budget year, the total border trade amounted to \$1.63 billion, a decrease of

\$1.25 billion compared with the last year's figure of \$2.88 billion. The total border trade value included \$1.13 billion in exports and \$493 billion in imports.

Myanmar is trading with neighbouring countries such as China, Thailand, Bangladesh, and India with 19 border trade camps.

Myawady border sees the highest value of border trade

with an estimated cost of more than \$656 million this FY followed by Hteekhee with \$444 million and Muse with \$324 million.

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



One of the Sino-Myanmar border trade zones.

Beware of prevention and control for new variant Omicron

NOWADAYS, the Saturn COVID-19 does not disappear across the world and it can still pose threats to the global people. The Omicron, a variant of the COVID-19 pandemic, stretches its wings to most of the countries throughout the world.

The Ministry of Health of Myanmar is constantly monitoring and surveillance on the infection of the disease-related to Omicron while making efforts for beefing up the prevention and control measures, preparing 418 quarantine centres and 93 treatment centres. Now, laboratory tests claim Omicron confirmed patients who returned from other countries by relief flights.

The harmonious efforts among the health staff, the people and relevant departments and social organizations could show better and better results on plunging the number of infected patients and mortality rate. But, they all should not be in a daze for the decreased infection rate and they have to notice the possibility of increasing the infection rate at any time.

Moreover, the ministry emphasizes preparations for providing oxygen, medicines and medical equipment in cooperation with local authorities, those from charity organizations and well-wishers to be able to encounter the possible threats of the Omicron variant. Even though they follow the health guidelines issued by the Ministry of Health it may be enough for encountering the Omicron.

As a regular measure, the people need to strictly abide by the health restrictions for COVID-19. Those suspects have to inform nearby health units about their sufferings so as to take proper treatments. As part of preventing the infection, people need to take full vaccination of anti-COVID-19. All walks of life should join hands with the Ministry of Health in prevention, control and treatment activities of the pandemic.

No matter what the variants of COVID-19 emerge, the basic needs of preventive measures are wearing masks, washing hands, taking social distancing and avoiding public places and crowds. If so, everybody or every country is sure to overcome the impacts and challenges of forthcoming variants of COVID-19. Otherwise, they can mitigate the casualties in the infection of COVID-19 variants.

Unity is strength. Prevention is better than cure. Hence, all the people in Myanmar should not waste valuable time in their daily life with preparatory tasks against the COVID-19 in and out of their residences. Their minds should be inserted with compassion and sympathy over confirming patients by giving a helping hand to them.



US battles COVID-19 with new guidance, free tests

The US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has updated its guidance on masks for the general public, saying that people can choose to wear N95 and KN95 masks because they offer the best protection against COVID-19.

HOWEVER, the agency stopped short of saying that people should opt for certain masks instead of others, noting that the “CDC continues to recommend that you wear the most protective mask you can that fits well and that you will wear consistently.”

Previously, the CDC did not recommend that the general population wear N95 masks or KN95s, fearing that a run on those higher-quality masks would impact the supply in healthcare settings. The CDC now says shortages are no longer a concern, according to an NBC News report.

“When worn consistently and properly,” the agency wrote on its website, N95 respirators approved by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health “provide the highest level of protection from particles, including the virus that causes COVID-19.”

FREE COVID-19 TESTS

Americans will be able to request free rapid coronavirus tests from the federal government beginning on Wednesday, but the tests will take seven to 12 days to arrive, senior Joe Biden administration officials have said.

The administration’s website

to process the requests, covid-tests.gov, was up and running on Friday, the latest sign of its efforts to ramp up access to testing since the fast-spreading Omicron variant sent coronavirus case counts soaring.

“But the delay in accepting orders and the lag in shipping mean that people are unlikely to receive the free tests until the end of January at the earliest,” reported The New York Times. In some parts of the country, that may be after the peak of the current surge of cases.

US President Joe Biden said last month that his administration would purchase 500 million rapid at-home coronavirus tests and distribute them to Americans free of charge. On Thursday, he announced plans to buy an additional 500 million tests, bringing the total to one billion.

CRUISE SELF-POLICING

The nightmare cruises of spring 2020 are back as Omicron sends passenger case rates soaring. Yet the CDC is poised to loosen the industry’s COVID-19 leash, saying cruise lines are now positioned to police themselves, reported major US news portal Politico.

On Saturday, despite a 30-fold increase in on-board COVID-19 cases, with cruise ships being turned away at ports and passengers getting sick, the CDC plans to lift all of its COVID-19 restrictions on the cruise industry. Just two weeks ago, the agency was recommending against cruising even for vaccinated passengers, and the agency’s official guidance states “even fully vaccinated travelers may be at risk for getting and spreading COVID-19 variants.”

“It’s the latest in a series of mixed messages from the CDC — not only about how safe it is to cruise but on a host of other COVID-19 restrictions—as the agency copes with Omicron’s onslaught,” said the report. “It’s also a stark example of the thorny decisions the Biden administration and other officials must navigate almost two years into the pandemic, as it tries to balance public health and a still-fragile economy.”

WORKFORCE SHRINKING

The past few weeks have been “hellacious”, Delta Air Lines CEO Ed Bastian told a Thursday conference call with stock analysts and reporters, adding that 8,000 of his employees have contracted COVID-19 in the last



Medical workers test a patient for the novel coronavirus, COVID-19, at a drive-thru testing facility in San Francisco, California on 12 March 2020. PHOTO: JOSH EDELSON/AFP

four weeks alone — about 10 per cent of the carrier’s workforce — a toll that contributed to more than 2,200 cancelled Delta flights since 24 Dec.

Although a precise count of the number of employees who are out sick or quarantining is hard to come by, about 5 million Americans could be isolating due to COVID-19 at the peak of Omicron, Andrew Hunter, senior U.S. economist at Capital Economics, was quoted as saying in a CBS News report. That could reflect about 2 per cent of the nation’s workforce forced to stay home due to illness, he added.

Stew Leonard Jr., chief executive of supermarket chain Stew Leonard’s, said that about 8 per cent of his staff was out sick or quarantining last week. That af-

fects what shoppers find on store shelves. “That’s the highest we’ve ever had,” he was quoted as saying. “What we are doing is the same as every other business — you have to limit your product line.”

“A record spike in COVID-19 cases due to the Omicron variant is causing a nationwide worker ‘sickout’, disrupting businesses ranging from grocery stores to airlines,” reported the national broadcaster, noting that “the latest worker shortages are compounding earlier pandemic problems, including supply-chain disruptions and shortages of some services”.

PANDEMIC TO ENDEMIC

The pandemic could start moving into an endemic phase in 2022, though countries will need to

stay vigilant as the Omicron variant spreads, according to Moderna Inc. co-founder Noubar Afeyan.

“2022 may be the year that the pandemic enters an endemic phase, but it really depends on what happens and the decisions that are made across the world,” Afeyan told Bloomberg on Friday.

Although the Omicron variant is highly transmissible, “on the other hand it’s having a lesser effect in terms of seriousness of disease,” he said, though adding that for now, the world still remains in the pandemic’s grasp. While some countries slowly begin to consider treating COVID-19 as an endemic disease, like the flu, World Health Organization officials have said it’s too early to make that call as cases surge.

Source : Xinhua

Covax delivers one billionth Covid vaccine dose

THE Covax scheme aimed at equitable global access to Covid-19 vaccines hit a “key milestone” on Saturday when it delivered its one billionth dose, one of its key backers said.

The Covax facility was set up in 2020 by the World Health Organization, Gavi the Vaccine Alliance and the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations to ensure that poorer countries could access the vaccines needed to battle the

pandemic.

“Covax has delivered its first billionth dose of Covid-19 vaccines to 144 countries & territories across the world,” Gavi chief executive Seth Berkley tweeted.

“It’s a key milestone in the largest and most rapid global vaccine rollout in history.” Mr Berkley said when the plane carrying the shipment with the one billionth dose had touched down in Kigali, Rwanda, on Saturday night, “I felt proud but

also humbled knowing how far we have to go to protect everyone and solve vaccine inequity”.

Covax hit the one billionth mark less than a year after delivering its first vaccine dose late last February – to Ghana.

All countries have been permitted to order doses through the mechanism, but lower-income countries have received the jabs free of charge.

Source : AFP



Myanmar Gazette

Heads of Service Organizations transferred, appointed and confirmed

1. THE State Administration Council has transferred and appointed the following persons as heads of Service Organizations shown against each of their names from the date they assume charge of their duties.

Name	Appointment
(a) Dr Than Than Myint Director-General Department of Study and Assessment Bureau (Research) Ministry of Education	Director-General Department of Educational Research, Planning and Training Ministry of Education
(b) Dr Nay Win Oo Rector Lashio University Department of Higher Education Ministry of Education	Rector University of East Yangon Department of Higher Education Ministry of Education

2. The State Administration Council has confirmed the appointment of the following persons as Heads of Service Organizations shown against each of their names after the one-year probationary period.

Name	Appointment
(a) U Aung San Oo	Rector National University of Arts and Culture (Mandalay) Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture
(b) U Myint Cho	Director-General Department of Consumer Affairs Ministry of Commerce



Myanmar Daily Weather Report

(Issued at 7:00 pm Monday 17 January, 2022)

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

FORECAST VALID UNTIL AFTERNOON OF THE 18 January, 2022: Light rain or thundershowers are likely to be isolated in Kachin, Shan, Chin, Kayah States. Degree of certainty is (60%). Weather will be generally fair in Nay Pyi Taw, Bago Region and Rakhine State and 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 rain or thundershowers in Bago, Yangon, Ayeyawady, Taninthayi Regions and Kachin, Shan, Kayah, Kayin, Mon States.

FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 18 January, 2022: Generally fair weather.

FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 18 January, 2022: Partly cloudy.

FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 18 January, 2022: Generally fair weather.

Indian states clamour for Tesla plant after Musk tweet

INDIAN politicians are clamouring for Elon Musk's attention on Twitter, chasing the coveted right to host a Tesla factory, after the billionaire said government "challenges" were delaying his electric car company's local launch.

Tesla's hopes to sell its vehicles in one of the world's biggest markets have been stalled by efforts to negotiate lower import duties, which can be as high as 100 per cent.

After being quizzed about a

potential launch date last week, Musk tweeted that his California-based company was "still working through a lot of challenges with the government", without giving further details.

The comments have since prompted ministers from several Indian states to respond on Twitter with public overtures to the world's wealthiest man — himself a prolific user of the social media platform.

"Hey Elon, I am the Industry & Commerce Minister of Telan-

gana state in India," KT Rama Rao tweeted in response to Musk on Friday. "Our state is a champion in sustainability initiatives & a top notch business destination." Three other states put their own cases forward over the weekend.

West Bengal's minority affairs minister said his corner of the country boasted the best infrastructure and "vision". In Mumbai the development minister touted his state's "progressive" credentials.

And in Punjab, lawmaker

and retired international cricketer Navjot Singh Sidhu promised a commitment to green jobs and sustainable development. Musk has tweeted numerous times since his "challenges" comment last week, but has so far not responded to any of his Indian entreaties.

New Delhi has introduced incentives for foreign carmakers to manufacture their vehicles locally but Musk has said he wants to gauge demand with imports first.

India imposes a 100 per cent

tax on imported electric vehicles worth more than \$40,000, and Tesla fears the steep duties will price them out of the cost-sensitive Indian market.

Electric cars accounted for only 1.3 per cent of all vehicles sold in the country in 2020-21, according to research by digital consultancy Techarc.

The government's target is for 30 per cent of private cars to be electric by 2030 as part of a wider push to decarbonize the transport sector. — AFP ■

Millions hunker down as storm hits eastern US



Travellers sit at Union Station in Washington, DC Pedestrians walk along the National Mall during a winter storm in Washington, DC, on 16 January 2022. **PHOTO: AFP**

MILLIONS of Americans hunkered down as a major winter storm hit the eastern United States with heavy snow and ice knocking power out for an estimated 130,000 customers as of early Monday.

The National Weather Service (NWS) said the storm was bringing a miserable combination of heavy snow, freezing rain and high winds, impacting the southeast and coastal mid-Atlantic before moving up to New England and southern Canada.

A swath from the upper Ohio Valley north to the lower Great Lakes region could expect

more than a foot (30 centimetres) of snow Monday, it warned.

In all, more than 80 million people fell under the winter weather alerts, US media reported.

About 235,000 were without power Sunday but by early Monday that had fallen to around 130,000 along the east coast and Kentucky as supplies were restored, according to the website PowerOutage.US.

The storm spawned damaging tornadoes in Florida and flooding in coastal areas, while in the Carolinas and up through the Appalachians icy conditions

and blustery winds raised concerns.

Transport was seriously disrupted, with thousands of flights cancelled, and a portion of busy interstate highway I-95 closed in North Carolina.

More than 3,000 flights within, into or out of the United States were cancelled Sunday.

Charlotte Douglas International Airport in North Carolina was the worst-affected with 95 per cent of its flights grounded, according to the FlightAware website. A further 1,200 flights had been cancelled early Monday. — AFP ■

Iran says diplomats in Saudi for Islamic bloc posts

IRANIAN diplomats are in Saudi Arabia to start work at a global organization representing Muslims, a first since the two rivals cut ties in 2016, Iran's foreign ministry announced on Monday.

"The delegation is now in Jeddah to start its work at the Organization of Islamic Cooperation," Saeed Khatibzadeh said in his weekly press conference.

This "can be a good prelude for the two sides to send delegations to visit their embassies," he added.

Shiite-majority Iran and the Sunni Kingdom of Saudi Arabia are both members of the pan-Islamic body of 57 member states. The two regional rivals have so far held four rounds of talks since April aimed at improving relations.

"We have given our written points of interest to the Saudi delegation at the fourth round of negotiations in Baghdad and

we are awaiting the response," Khatibzadeh stressed.

Riyadh and Tehran support opposite sides in several conflict zones across the region including in Syria and Yemen.

In 2016, the kingdom's execution of revered Shiite cleric Nimr al-Nimr saw protesters attack Saudi diplomatic missions in Iran. Riyadh responded at the time by cutting ties with Tehran, while OIC foreign ministers condemned the violence.

Khatibzadeh reiterated Iran's position that Tehran is "ready to open its embassy" but that depends on what "practical steps" Saudi Arabia takes. In December, foreign ministry officials in both countries said the kingdom had granted visas to three Iranian diplomats to the OIC.

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation describes itself as the collective voice of the Muslim world. — AFP ■

China's birth rate at record low in 2021: official

CHINA'S birth rate plummeted to a record low last year, official data showed Monday, as analysts warn that faster-than-expected ageing could deepen economic growth concerns.

Beijing has been grappling with a looming demographic crisis as it faces a rapidly ageing workforce, slowing economy and the country's weakest population growth in decades.

The birth rate of the world's second-biggest economy slipped to 7.52 births per 1,000 people, according to National Bureau of Statistics data, down from 8.52 in 2020.

The figures are the lowest since records began in 1949, when Communist China was founded, according to NBS data.

It also marks the lowest figure logged in China's annual

Statistical Yearbook data — a yearly assessment of the country's economy — dating back to 1978. Although officials relaxed the nation's one-child policy in 2016 — allowing couples to have two children and easing some of the world's strictest family planning regulations — the changes have failed to bring about a baby boom.

Last year, Chinese authorities extended the policy further to allow couples to have three children. But in 2021, the country logged 10.62 million births, according to official data, bringing its population to 1.41 billion.

The natural population growth rate plunged to 0.34 per 1,000 people, from an earlier 1.45 figure.

"The demographic challenge is well known but the speed of population aging is

clearly faster than expected," said Zhiwei Zhang, chief economist at Pinpoint Asset Management. "It also indicates China's potential growth is likely slowing faster than expected," he said. Last year, results of a once-in-a-decade census showed that China's population had grown at its slowest rate since the 1960s.

Higher costs of living and a cultural shift, with people now used to smaller families, have been cited as reasons behind the lower number of babies.

The one-child policy was introduced by top leader Deng Xiaoping in 1980 to curb population growth and promote economic development, with exceptions for rural families whose first-born was a female and for ethnic minorities. — AFP ■

Japan looks to declare COVID quasi-emergency in Tokyo, vicinity

THE Japanese government is nearing a decision to declare a quasi-state of emergency for Tokyo and three nearby prefectures amid a rapid increase in the number of novel coronavirus cases in the region, a government source said Monday.

The governors of Tokyo, Saitama, Chiba and Kanagawa decided at a virtual meeting to jointly ask for quasi-emergency measures to be applied to their prefectures, as Japan is in the midst of a sixth wave of the COVID-19 pandemic due to the highly transmissible Omicron strain.

Separately, Aichi, Gifu and Mie prefectures in central Japan are expected by Tuesday to ask the central government that they too be covered by a quasi-state of emergency to prevent hospitals being overwhelmed by a spike in COVID-19 cases.

Once a declaration is made, governors can request that dining establishments shorten their business hours and stop serving alcohol. Residents in these areas would also be asked to refrain from traveling across prefectural borders.

Tokyo Gov. Yuriko Koike revealed that the occupancy rate of hospital beds for COVID-19 patients in the Japanese capital is expected to surpass the 20 per cent threshold required for the metropolitan government to seek quasi-emergency steps. Tokyo's daily count of coronavirus cases came to 3,719 on Monday, after topping 4,000 on Friday for the first time since late August.

Nationwide, the number of newly confirmed coronavirus cases has been rising sharply in recent days with community transmissions of Omicron confirmed in city areas such as Tokyo, Aichi, and Osaka.

The Japanese government suggested it will swiftly consider declaring the quasi-emergency if requested, with Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirokazu Matsuno saying the number of new cases "is surging at an unprecedented speed, not just in the metropolitan area but elsewhere too." — Kyodo ■

People wearing masks for protection against the coronavirus walk in Tokyo's Ginza area on 17 January 2022. Tokyo and its three neighbouring prefectures agreed the same day to jointly ask the central government to place the area under a quasi-state of emergency in an attempt to curb surging COVID-19 cases. **PHOTO: KYODO**



A health worker gets ready to take a COVID-19 nasal sample from an elderly lady for a PCR test, following an increase in Covid-19 infections, inside a tent at the IESS Quito Sur General Hospital, in Quito, on 4 January 2022. **PHOTO: AFP**

Ecuador declares red alert in most of country over Omicron

ECUADOR on Sunday declared a red alert in most of the country following a ten-fold increase in Covid-19 cases. The red alert applies to 193 of the South American country's 221 cantons, including major population hubs such as Quito and Guayaquil.

Schools have also been shut until 21 January.

Daily cases rose from an average of 4,000 in the week around Christmas to more than 42,000 in

the second week of January, Deputy Health Minister Jose Ruales told reporters.

"This number of infections is the highest we've recorded since the beginning of the pandemic," said Ruales. The record number of average daily cases up to the end of 2021 was just over 13,000 from 25 April to 1 May last year, according to the Johns Hopkins University. Ruales said the recent spike was a combination of

the greater contagiousness of the Omicron variant and recent Christmas and New Year celebrations.

Ecuador has registered 614,000 cases and 34,200 deaths from Covid-19 in a population of 17.7 million, according to an AFP count based on official figures.

In December, Ecuador made vaccines obligatory and has started immunizing everyone from the age of five upwards. — AFP ■

Source tracing links Beijing's first local Omicron case with int'l mail

THE possibility of Beijing's first locally transmitted Omicron case being contracted from international mail cannot be ruled out, a local health official said Monday.

The patient received an item of mail on 11 January delivered from Canada to Beijing via the United States and the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. She said that she touched the outside of the package and the first page of the document inside, said Pang Xinghuo, deputy director of Beijing's centre for disease control and prevention, at a press conference.

Pang said they collected 22 environmental samples from the piece of international mail, and the nucleic acid tests all came back positive.

The patient had no travel history in other provinces or cities within 14 days before the onset of symptoms, nor did she have contact with risk groups.

So far, the results of nucleic acid tests of 69 close contacts and more than 810 environmental samples have come back negative except for those collected from her home and workplace, Pang said. — Xinhua ■

Covid vaccination required for athletes competing in France: government sources

ALL athletes who wish to compete in France will have to be vaccinated against Covid-19, government sources told AFP on Monday.

This appears to contradict what Sports Minister Roxana Maracineanu said last week, that certain events like the French Open had a special exemption, when asked whether Novak Djokovic could play in the tournament.

For ordinary citizens entering France it is not obligatory to be vaccinated but will be for those wishing to enter an establishment which has a public attendance (ERP).

Major events like the French Open previously permitted non vaccinated athletes to compete as they operated a health bubble around the tournament.

The first major event to be directly affected would be the upcoming Six Nations rugby championship when France will host Italy



This screen grab from AFPTV shows Serbia's Novak Djokovic (C) as he disembarks from his plane at the airport in Dubai on 17 January 2022, after losing a legal battle on 16 January in Australia to stay and play in the Australian Open tennis tournament over his coronavirus vaccination status. **PHOTO: STR / AFPTV / AFP**

(6 February), Ireland (12 February) and England (19 March). — AFP ■

World leaders to reflect on “State of the World” during Davos Agenda 2022: WEF



Founder and Executive Chairman of the World Economic Forum (WEF) Klaus Schwab is seen at the opening of the WEF Davos Agenda virtual sessions at the WEF's headquarters in Cologne near Geneva on 17 January 2022. **PHOTO: AFP**

THE Davos Agenda 2022 kicking off Monday will provide an opportunity for world leaders to reflect on the “State of the World” and shape solutions for critical challenges in the year ahead, according to the World Economic Forum (WEF).

Two years since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the five-day online event “will focus on driving concerted action among key global stakeholders,” said the WEF in a news release published on its website.

Key sessions of the event will cover such issues as the COVID-19 pandemic, the fourth industrial revolution, energy

transition, the climate crisis, sustainable development and the global economic outlook, according to the WEF.

Participants will also share their views on climate change, the social contract and vaccine equity, among others, said the WEF.

“Everyone hopes that in 2022, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the crises that accompanied it, will finally begin to recede. But major global challenges await us, from climate change to rebuilding trust and social cohesion. To address them, leaders will need to adopt new models, look long term, renew cooperation

and act systemically,” said Klaus Schwab, founder and executive chairman of the WEF.

Last month, the WEF announced that due to continued concerns over the Omicron variant, it will defer its annual meeting, which is usually held in the Swiss ski resort of Davos. Initially scheduled to take place between 17 January to 21 January, it is now planned for early summer.

Instead, participants joins the virtual Davos Agenda 2022 from 17 January to 21 January, bringing together global leaders to find solutions to the world's most pressing challenges. — Xinhua ■

World's 10 richest men doubled wealth during Covid: report

THE world's 10 wealthiest men doubled their fortunes during the first two years of the coronavirus pandemic as poverty and inequality soared, a report said on Monday.

Oxfam said the men's wealth jumped from \$700 billion to \$1.5 trillion, at an average rate of \$1.3 billion per day, in a briefing published before a virtual mini-summit of world leaders being held under the auspices of the World Economic Forum.

A confederation of charities that focus on alleviating global poverty, Oxfam said the billionaires' wealth rose more during the pandemic more than it did the previous 14 years, when the world economy was suffering the worst recession since the Wall Street

Crash of 1929.

It called this inequality “economic violence” and said inequality is contributing to the death of 21,000 people every day due to a lack of access to healthcare, gender-based violence, hunger and climate change.

The pandemic has plunged 160 million people into poverty, the charity added, with non-white ethnic minorities and women bearing the brunt of the impact as inequality soared.

The report follows a December 2021 study by the group which found that the share of global wealth of the world's richest people soared at a record pace during the pandemic.

Oxfam urged tax reforms to fund worldwide vaccine pro-

duction as well as healthcare, climate adaptation and gender-based violence reduction to help save lives.

The group said it based its wealth calculations on the most up-to-date and comprehensive data sources available, and used the 2021 Billionaires List compiled by the US business magazine Forbes.

Forbes listed the world's 10 richest men as: Tesla and SpaceX chief Elon Musk, Amazon's Jeff Bezos, Google founders Larry Page and Sergey Brin, Facebook's Mark Zuckerberg, former Microsoft CEOs Bill Gates and Steve Ballmer, former Oracle CEO Larry Ellison, US investor Warren Buffett and the head of the French luxury group LVMH, Bernard Arnault. — AFP ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Beijing airports expect 6.58 mln passengers over Spring Festival season

THE two major airports in Beijing will see 6.58 million passengers during the 40-day Spring Festival travel season, which kicked off Monday. About 60,000 flights will arrive at or depart from the Beijing Capital International Airport and the Beijing Daxing International Airport during the travel season, which will last from 17 January to 25 February this year, according to the two airports.

During the season, many people will travel to reunite with their families for the Lunar New Year, or the Spring Festival, which falls on 1 February this year. — Xinhua ■

Indonesia trade surplus in December 2021 shrinks to US\$ 1.02 bln

INDONESIA recorded a declining trade surplus of 1.02 billion US dollars in December 2021, down from 3.51 billion dollars in the previous month, official data showed on Monday. The exports in December last year were valued at 22.38 billion dollars, and imports were valued at 21.36 billion dollars, according to Statistics Indonesia (BPS). BPS head Margo Yuwono told a virtual press conference in Jakarta on Monday that the shrinking surplus was caused by declining exports. — Xinhua ■

Paris fashion gets physical despite Omicron

THE city may still be deep in the throes of the Omicron surge and adapting to the latest Covid restrictions, but Paris Fashion Week will nevertheless launch Tuesday.

The industry is determined to get back on the catwalks after nearly two years during which most brands were forced to retreat online.

Despite the complications caused by the pandemic, the fashion community is stepping out regardless. Most fashion houses are returning to live

shows as the menswear week kicks off, followed immediately by haute couture shows.

Some 17 of the 76 brands of the official Paris menswear calendar — including big names like Dior, Hermes and Rick Owens — will be back on the catwalk, up from just six last summer.

And nearly 30 others are opting for other types of in-person event — inviting journalists, buyers and other taste-makers to less formal gatherings around the French capital.

There will be a bittersweet

taste to the first week, however, as Louis Vuitton presents the final collection from US designer Virgil Abloh, who died in November at the age of 41 after a private battle with cancer.

Such is the interest around Abloh, a close partner of Kanye West who helped break through glass ceilings for black designers, that Louis Vuitton is presenting the show twice on Thursday.

Many are also excited to see what streetwear veteran Nigo does as the new artistic director of Kenzo. — AFP ■



(FILES) In this file photo taken on 17 January 2019 US designer for Louis Vuitton, Virgil Abloh, acknowledges the audience at the end of the Louis Vuitton men's Fall/Winter 2019/2020 collection fashion show in Paris on 17 January 2019. **PHOTO: AFP**

Asian markets mostly up as Fed hikes loom, China growth slows

ASIAN investors started the week on a broadly positive note Monday but uncertainty remained as they assessed the outlook ahead of an expected series of interest rate hikes by the Federal Reserve, while data showed growth in China's economy slowed at the end of last year.

While the fast-spreading Omicron coronavirus variant continues to cast a shadow across trading floors, the focus is on the

US central bank's plans to tighten monetary policy to fight surging inflation. Fed officials were out in force last week flagging the merits of raising borrowing costs as soon as March, though boss Jerome Powell said they would be careful to ensure they do not knock the recovery in the world's top economy off course.

Still, expectations that the era of cheap cash that has helped power markets to record or multi-year

highs has weighed heavily for months, while data showing consumer prices rocketing at a pace not seen in four decades has added to the downbeat mood.

A weak reading on retail sales for December caused by concern about the latest Covid wave and higher prices was compounded by a University of Michigan survey showing consumer sentiment fell sharply in January.

That saw Wall Street

turn in a tepid performance Friday, with disappointing bank earnings also dragging sentiment. Despite the uncertain start to 2022 for global markets, Eli Lee at Bank of Singapore remained upbeat about the outlook. "As we head into 2022, we believe that the post-pandemic bull market remains broadly intact," he said in a commentary.

"Historically, bull markets do not end at the beginning of rate hike cy-



A trader works on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange at the closing bell 14 January 2022, in New York, New York. **PHOTO: TIMOTHY A. CLARY / AFP**

cles, and positive trends in global economic growth and earnings continue to be positive fundamental drivers for the market."

Asia mostly rose, with Tokyo, Shanghai, Sydney, Singapore, Wellington, Taipei, Mumbai and Bangkok up but Hong Kong, Seoul, Manila and Jakarta were down. — AFP ■

Unilever still eyes GSK-Pfizer unit after £50 bn bid rebuffed

CONSUMER goods giant Unilever on Monday revealed ongoing interest in a consumer healthcare unit jointly owned with pharmaceutical groups GlaxoSmithKline and Pfizer after a bid of £50

billion (\$68 billion) was refused.

"GSK Consumer Healthcare would be a strong strategic fit," Unilever said in a statement as it unveiled a strategy update in the wake of

the weekend's takeover news.

Unilever said it was "committed to accelerating the company's growth and repositioning the portfolio into higher growth categories.

GSK said on Saturday that it had received three unsolicited offers from Unilever for GSK Consumer Healthcare, but they were all rejected as the company said the unit was undervalued.

"As a result of the reporting of Unilever's interest in GSK Consumer Healthcare, we are today bringing forward a planned update, setting out the strategic direction that the company is pursuing," Unilever said.

Unilever said its "future strategic direction lies in materially expanding its presence in health, beauty and hygiene". — AFP ■

Notice for Change of Distributor

We, **Shanghai E-Tong Chemical Co., Ltd** would like to change the Distributor of the following products, which registered under Pesticide Registration Board, Myanmar, From **Network Marketing Co., Ltd** to **Yonta Myanmar Co., Ltd**. If any objection or enquiry, please contact to Co-secretary Pesticide Registration Board, Plant Protection Division, Department of Agriculture, West Gyogone, Insein Township, Yangon From here to next (2) weeks.

No.	The Old Distributor	Trade Name	Active Ingredient	Registration Type	Registration no.	The New Distributor
1	Network Marketing Co.,Ltd	E-T Ametin 1.8 EC	Abamectin 1.8% EC	F2019-2081	Insecticide	Yonta Myanmar Co., Ltd
2	Network Marketing Co.,Ltd	E-T Fate 75 SP	Acephate 75% SP	F2019-2082	Insecticide	Yonta Myanmar Co., Ltd
3	Network Marketing Co.,Ltd	E-T Car 95 SP	Cartap 95% SP	2016-3174	Insecticide	Yonta Myanmar Co., Ltd
4	Network Marketing Co.,Ltd	E-T Dimet 50 WP	Dimethomorph 50% WP	2016-3178	Fungicide	Yonta Myanmar Co., Ltd
5	Network Marketing Co.,Ltd	E-T Melax 25 WP	Metalaxyl 25% WP	F2019-2070	Fungicide	Yonta Myanmar Co., Ltd
6	Network Marketing Co.,Ltd	E-T Gold Fit 30 EC	Pretilachlor 30% EC	F2019-2071	Herbicide	Yonta Myanmar Co., Ltd

Address : Yonta Myanmar Co., Ltd, No.177, Ka 3rd road, Ka Quarter, Insein Township, Yangon.
Tel : 09-971410041

Notice for Change of Distributor

We, **Shanghai E-Tong Chemical Co., Ltd** would like to change the Distributor of the following products, which registered under Pesticide Registration Board, Myanmar, From **Myanmar Golden Byter Co., Ltd** to **Yonta Myanmar Co., Ltd**. If any objection or enquiry, please contact to Co-secretary Pesticide Registration Board, Plant Protection Division, Department of Agriculture, West Gyogone, Insein Township, Yangon From here to next (2) weeks.

No.	The Old Distributor	Trade Name	Active Ingredient	Registration Type	Registration no.	The New Distributor
1	Myanmar Golden Byter Co.,Ltd	E-T Oni 32.5 EC	Pendimethalin 32.5% EC	P2018-4281	Herbicide	Yonta Myanmar Co., Ltd
2	Myanmar Golden Byter Co.,Ltd	E-T Weapon 32 WP	Bensulfuron Methyl 4% + Quinclorac 28%WP	P2018-4280	Herbicide	Yonta Myanmar Co., Ltd

Address : Yonta Myanmar Co., Ltd, No.177, Ka 3rd road, Ka Quarter, Insein Township, Yangon.
Tel : 09-971410041

Notice for Change of Distributor

We, **Zhejiang E-Tong Chemical Co., Ltd** would like to change the Distributor of the following products, which registered under Pesticide Registration Board, Myanmar, From **Anawrahta Production Co., Ltd** to **Yonta Myanmar Co., Ltd**. If any objection or enquiry, please contact to Co-secretary Pesticide Registration Board, Plant Protection Division, Department of Agriculture, West Gyogone, Insein Township, Yangon From here to next (2) weeks.

No.	The Old Distributor	Trade Name	Active Ingredient	Registration Type	Registration no.	The New Distributor
1	Anawrahta Production Co.,Ltd	K.4 Acephate 75 SP	Acephate 75% SP	F2018-1490	Insecticide	Yonta Myanmar Co., Ltd
2	Anawrahta Production Co.,Ltd	K4-Cyper 25 EC	Cypermethrin 25% EC	F2017-1447	Insecticide	Yonta Myanmar Co., Ltd

Address : Yonta Myanmar Co., Ltd, No.177, Ka 3rd road, Ka Quarter, Insein Township, Yangon.
Tel : 09-971410041

CLAIMS DAY NOTICE

M.V FILOTIMO VOY.NO. (202W)

Consignees of cargo carried on **M.V FILOTIMO VOY.NO. (202W)** are hereby notified that the vessel will be arriving on **18-1-2022** and cargo will be discharged into the premises of **MITT/MIP** where it will lie at the consignee's risk and expenses and subject to the byelaws and conditions of the Port of Yangon.

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

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

Phone No: **2301185**

Shipping Agency Department
Myanma Port Authority

Agent For:

M/S SEALAND MAERSK ASIA PTE LTD

Ads Call 09251022355
09974424848

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Photo taken on 12 September 2021 shows a scene of the joint strategic exercise “Zapad-2021” by Russian and Belarusian armed forces at a training ground in Belarus. **PHOTO : XINHUA**

Russian troops to stay near Ukrainian border amid NATO pressure: Kremlin

RUSSIA will station troops on its own territory near the Ukrainian border due to tensions with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Sunday.

“We find it necessary to keep those troops due to a very tense situation and very unfriendly environment,” Peskov said in an interview with US broadcaster CNN.

Russia has to take measures of precaution in response

to NATO military build-up, drills and frequent flights of fighter jets and reconnaissance planes near the Russian borders, he said.

However, Russia is not considering a military action even if negotiations with the United States and NATO on security guarantees fail, Peskov stressed.

Nevertheless, Russia is “ready to take countermeasures” if both sides cannot reach a consensus, he said.

Earlier this week, Russian

diplomats held talks with the United States in Geneva, with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe in Vienna, and then with NATO in Brussels. They all ended without any breakthrough.

Peskov told CNN that NATO is reluctant to promise that it will not grant Ukraine membership or deploy offensive weapons on the Ukrainian territory, which are part of Russia’s red lines. — Xinhua ■

NEWS IN BRIEF

Facing arrest, ex-leader returns to ‘defend Ukraine’ from Russia

UKRAINE’S ex-president Petro Poroshenko returned to Kyiv from Europe on Monday despite the risk of arrest, vowing to help protect the ex-Soviet country from a possible Russian invasion.

Poroshenko, who served as president from 2014 to 2019, was placed under investigation for high treason and left Ukraine in December.

He returned to Kyiv early on Monday on a flight from Warsaw and passed through passport control amid chaotic scenes, saying later that border guards had tried to prevent him from entering the country.

A court in Kyiv was to decide later Monday whether to place Poroshenko in pre-trial detention.

Thousands of his supporters gathered near the airport to meet Poroshenko. He told them he had returned to help Ukraine face the “growing threat of Russian invasion” and accused his successor, President Volodymyr Zelensky, of “betrayal” of the country.

Tensions are at an all-time high between the West and Russia, which Ukraine accuses of having massed troops on its border ahead of a possible attack.

On Friday, Washington accused Moscow of sending saboteurs trained in explosives to stage an incident that could be a pretext to invade the pro-Western neighbour. — AFP ■

Fire breaks out, leading to explosion of 3 oil tanks in Abu Dhabi

THE Abu Dhabi police announced that a fire broke out on Monday morning in the Musaffah area, leading to the explosion of three oil tanks of Abu Dhabi National Oil Company nearby, WMA news agency reported.

There was also a small fire at the construction area of the Abu Dhabi International Airport, causing little damage, the police added.

Initial investigations show the fires and explosion were possibly caused by unidentified drones in the area. — Xinhua ■

Tonga cut off by volcanic blast, fears grow for coastal towns

THE Pacific Island nation of Tonga was virtually cut off from the rest of the world Monday, after a massive volcanic blast that crippled communications and stalled emergency relief efforts.

It is two days since the Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha’apai volcano exploded, cloaking Tonga in a film of ash, triggering a Pacific-wide tsunami and releasing shock waves that wrapped around the entire Earth.

But with phone lines still down and an undersea internet cable cut — and not expected to be repaired for weeks — the true

toll of the dual eruption-tsunami disaster is not yet known. Only fragments of information have filtered out via a handful of satellite phones on the islands, home to just over 100,000 people.

Tonga’s worried neighbours are still scrambling to grasp the scale of the damage, which New Zealand’s leader Jacinda Ardern said was believed to be “significant”. Both Wellington and Canberra scrambled reconnaissance planes Monday in an attempt to get a sense of the damage from the air.

And both have put C-130 mili-

tary transport aircraft on standby to drop emergency supplies or to land if runways are deemed operational and ash clouds allow.

There are initial reports that areas of the west coast may have been badly hit. Australia’s international development minister, Zed Seselja, said a small contingent of Australian police stationed in Tonga had delivered a “pretty concerning” initial evaluation. They were “able to do an assessment of some of the Western beaches area and there was some pretty significant damage to things like roads and some



This handout photo taken and released by the Royal Australian Air Force and the Australian Defence Force shows a Royal Australian Air Force P-8 Poseidon aircraft (R) preparing to depart from RAAF Base Amberley in the state of Queensland to assist the Tonga Government after the eruption of the Hunga-Tonga - Hunga-Haa’pai volcano on 15 January. **PHOTO : LACW EMMA SCHWENKE / AUSTRALIAN DEFENCE FORCE / AFP**

houses,” Seselja said.

“One of the good pieces of news is that I understand the

airport has not suffered any significant damage,” he added. — AFP ■

Israel police in standoff with Palestinians over Jerusalem eviction

ISRAELI police were in a standoff Monday with a Palestinian man who carried a gas cannister on the roof of his home in a Jerusalem flashpoint as his family faced eviction.

Israeli media reported that

Mohammed Salhiya had threatened to set himself on fire if the eviction order from Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood of Israeli-annexed east Jerusalem was carried out. Salhiya, whose family has been facing an eviction threat

since 2017, was on the roof of his home with a large gas cannister, police and an AFP journalist said.

Police and the Jerusalem municipality said in a joint statement delegates went to the home early Monday to carry out a evic-

tion ordered after the land was allocated for school construction “for the benefit of residents of the neighbourhood”. An 11-day Gaza war between Israel and the Palestinians erupted last year, fuelled by anger in Sheikh Jarrah where

families battled eviction orders.

Police said their “negotiators” were at the Salhiya home after several residents of the house “began to fortify themselves with a gas cannister and other flammable material”. — AFP ■

Japan to allow in some foreign students, making exception to ban

JAPAN plans to allow 87 government-sponsored foreign students into the country, making an exception to the country's entry ban on nonresident foreigners that is currently in place amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the top spokesman said Monday.

Entry of the students will be allowed possibly from later this month and they will be required to quarantine for 10 days after arrival at hotels prepared by their schools, government sources said.

Tokyo decided on the exception "considering public interest and the urgency of the matter," Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirokazu Matsuno told a press conference at the prime minister's office in Tokyo on 17 January 2022. **PHOTO: KYODO**



The 87 students have less than one year left until they graduate or finish their studies and the government decided to allow them in so they can finish their schooling, Matsuno said.

Japan introduced the entry ban on 30 November last year amid growing concerns over the highly transmissible Omicron variant of the coronavirus. The ban was extended last week until the end of February.

The government has said it will ease the entry restrictions if there are "special circumstances," including visits to those who are seriously ill or for funerals, but it has stuck to its policy since the emergence of the Omicron variant. Matsuno said the government will consider individual cases in making further exceptions.

The move comes as academic and economic circles have continued to voice concerns after a growing number of foreign students gave up on studying in Japan in the face of the country's strict border controls. — Kyodo ■

Malaysian Hindus mark festival under strict Covid curbs

MALAYSIAN Hindus carried offerings up hundreds of steps to a major temple Monday to mark the annual Thaipusam festival in celebrations that were scaled back due to the coronavirus pandemic. The event sees Hindus, a sizeable minority in multi-ethnic Malaysia, show their devotion to the deity Lord Murugan. Hundreds headed to the Batu Caves temple complex outside Kuala Lumpur and walked barefoot up 272, multi-coloured steps to reach the site, carrying offerings such as milk pots.

But celebrations were muted compared with the years before the pandemic, when huge crowds would throng the site, with officials limiting numbers to cut the risk of Covid-19.

Once a common sight at Thaipusam, "Kavadis" — ornate metal structures that devotees affix to their bodies with sharp metal spikes — were also

banned this year. Hindu devotee Krishnan Karuppan told AFP that he arrived at the temple before dawn.

"Many people are afraid (to come)," he said. "My own children didn't come — they're all at home."

Another worshipper at the temple, Ariyenthiran T. Somasundram, added that "to be on the safe side, it is better" to limit numbers. But, he said, "I'm really sad... because the crowd of millions of people are not here". Local media reported that authorities were limiting attendance at the temple to several thousand over Thaipusam, which officially falls on Tuesday.

Malaysia faced a serious coronavirus outbreak last year, and has reported more than 2.8 million cases and 31,000 deaths, although infection rates have dropped in recent months. — AFP ■

North Korea fires more suspected missiles, flouts new sanctions



A woman walks past a television screen showing a news broadcast with file footage of a North Korean missile test, at a railway station in Seoul on 17 January 2022, after North Korea fired an unidentified projectile eastward in the country's fourth suspected weapons test this month according to the South's military. **PHOTO: AFP**

NORTH Korea fired two suspected ballistic missiles Monday, Seoul said, its fourth weapons test this month as Pyongyang flexes its military muscle while ignoring offers of talks from the United States.

Despite biting international sanctions, Pyongyang has conducted a string of weapons tests this year, including of hypersonic missiles, as leader Kim Jong Un pursues his avowed goal of further strengthening the military.

Reeling economically from a self-imposed coronavirus blockade, impoverished North Korea has not responded to Washington's offers of talks, while doubling down on weapons tests and

vowing a "stronger and certain" response to any attempts to rein it in.

The launches come at a delicate time in the region, with North Korea's sole major ally China set to host the Winter Olympics next month and South Korea gearing up for a presidential election in March.

Two suspected "short-range ballistic missiles" were fired east from an airport in Pyongyang early Monday, the South Korean military's Joint Chiefs of Staff said, with Japan also confirming the launch.

Fired just before 9 am (0000 GMT), they flew 380 kilometres (about 240 miles) at an altitude

of 42 km, the JCS added.

The frequent and varied tests this year indicate North Korea "is trying to improve its technology and operational capability in terms of covert actions", Japanese Defence Minister Nobuo Kishi told reporters.

Pyongyang said it successfully tested hypersonic gliding missiles on 5 January and 11 January, with the second launch personally supervised by Kim.

In response, the United States last week imposed fresh sanctions on five North Koreans connected to the country's ballistic missile programmes, prompting an angry reaction from Pyongyang. — AFP ■

China says freight train trade with North Korea resumes after two years

CHINA said Monday that its border with North Korea has reopened for freight train trade,

some two years after it was shuttered by Pyongyang because of the coronavirus pandemic.



A train crosses the Friendship Bridge, which spans the Yalu River between China and North Korea, in the Chinese border city of Dandong, in China's northeast Liaoning province on 22 February 2019. **PHOTO: AFP**

A freight train from North Korea arrived at the Chinese border city of Dandong for the first time since early 2020 on Sunday, Japanese and South Korean media reported earlier.

China confirmed those reports on Monday.

"Due to the impact of the pandemic, rail traffic between China and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) had been suspended for some time," said foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian at a routine briefing, referring to North Korea by its official name. "Now freight trains carrying goods between Dandong and the DPRK have resumed operation. — AFP ■

Republic of the Union of Myanmar State Administration Council Nine Objectives

1. Political affairs

- (a) To build a Union based on democracy and federalism, through a disciplined and genuine multiparty democratic system that is fair and just.
- (b) To emphasize the achievement of enduring peace for the entire nation in line with the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA).
- (c) To continue implementing the principle of peaceful co-existence among countries through an independent, active and non-aligned foreign policy.

2. Economic affairs

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

- (b) To develop a stable market economy and promote international investment in order to enhance the economic development of the entire National people.
- (c) To promote and support local businesses to create employment opportunities and increase domestic production.

3. Social affairs

- (a) To ensure a strong and dynamic Union spirit, the genuine spirit of patriotism.
- (b) To respect and promote the customs and traditions of all National peoples and preserve and safeguard their cultural heritage and national characteristics.
- (c) To enhance the health, fitness and education quality of the entire nation.

2022 AFC Cup group matches set for Myanmar clubs

WITH the supervision of the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) the 2022 AFC Cup group stage drawing lots event was held online on 17 January, with Myanmar club Shan United in Group H and Hanthawady in Group I.

The 2022 AFC Cup will be divided into zones, while Myanmar clubs will compete in the ASEAN zone.

The ASEAN Zone will consist of 12 teams and will be divided into three groups of four.

Kaya FC of the Philippines, Bali United of Indonesia, Kedah Darul Aman FC of Malaysia are placed in Group G, while Kuala Lumpur City FC of Malaysia, Shan United of Myanmar, Tampines Rovers FC of Singapore, and PSM Makassar FC of Indonesia

are in Group H.

Next, Hanthawady United of Myanmar will face Viettel FC of Viet Nam, Hougang United of Singapore, and Phnom Penh Crown FC of Cambodia in Group I.

In the qualifiers, Cambodian club Visakha will play against Lao club Young Elephants, with the winner advancing to the group

stage.

It will be divided into East Asia, West Asia, South Asia Zone, ASEAN Zone and Central Zones and 39 teams will compete.

The ASEAN Zone Group Games will be held from 24 to 30 June in the form of a Centralized Venue, with each group selected by the host country.

Myanmar clubs Shan United

and Hanthawady have not been able to take training yet due to the COVID-19 outbreak in Myanmar.

Shan United has qualified for the AFC Cup for the fourth time, while Hanthawady will compete for the first time.

The AFC Cup ASEAN Zone competitions could not be held in 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. — Ko Nyi Lay/GNLM

Nadal, Barty impress but Djokovic looms over Australian Open



Spain's Rafael Nadal hits a return against Marcos Giron of the US during their men's singles match on day one of the Australian Open tennis tournament in Melbourne on 17 January 2022. **PHOTO: BRANDON MALONE / AFP**

RAFAEL Nadal and Ashleigh Barty made devastating starts to their Australian Open title campaigns on Monday as the Grand Slam attempted to move on from the Novak Djokovic visa saga. Naomi Osaka launched the defence of her women's crown with victory but Coco Gauff was an early big-name casualty, the American 17-year-old dumped out in straight sets

by Wang Qiang, who is ranked outside the top 100.

The only Australian Open champion in the men's draw after nine-time winner Djokovic's deportation, Nadal started his quest to become the first male to win 21 Grand Slams by sweeping aside 66th-ranked Marcos Giron, 6-1, 6-4, 6-2.

The draw has opened up for the Spanish great with defend-

ing champion Djokovic out of the picture and the other member of the "Big Three", Roger Federer, not at Melbourne Park because of injury. But the 35-year-old Nadal said he was just relieved to be playing tennis after Djokovic's refusal to get vaccinated against Covid overshadowed the first Grand Slam of the year right up until the last moment.

Although Djokovic's absence is good news for Nadal's tilt at men's tennis history, he said he would rather the world number one from Serbia was playing.

"The ideal situation in the world of sport is that the best players are on court," said Nadal, who plays Germany's Yannick Hanfmann in the second round. He may not be there, but Djokovic still looms over the tournament. Nadal was all guns blazing at Rod Laver Arena, showing no apparent ill effects from a foot injury he suffered last year and then being "very sick" with Covid in December. — AFP ■

China cancels plans to sell Olympic tickets to public

CHINA on Monday cancelled plans to sell tickets to the public for the Winter Olympics in Beijing, allowing only invitees to view the action as part of strict virus control measures.

Games organizers last year said there would be no international spectators — partly due to the country's weeks-long quarantine requirements — but they had promised to allow domestic audiences. But these plans were dropped on Monday as China reported 223 new Covid-19 cases — the highest number since March 2020 and just three weeks before hosting the Winter Olympics.

"In order to protect the health and safety of Olympic-related personnel and spectators, it was decided to adjust the original plan to sell tickets to the public and (instead) organize spectators to watch the games on-site,"

the Beijing Olympic organizing committee said in a statement. It is unclear how these spectators will be selected and whether they will have to quarantine before or after the Games. China, where the coronavirus first emerged in late 2019, has stuck to a strict policy of targeting zero Covid cases even as the rest of the world has reopened.

Athletes and officials have already started to land in Beijing ahead of the Games, immediately entering a tightly controlled bubble separating them from the rest of the population.

The 2022 Winter Olympics are set to kick off on 4 February and run until 20 February at venues in and around Beijing, making the Chinese capital the first city in modern history to host both a summer and winter Olympics. — AFP ■